

## Chapter Seven-Challenges and Changes-2011-2018



Rainbows can be painted on shirts as well as the sky.

**MR/DD Board and Media Company Win State Award**

March 31, 2011

“Abilities in Motion,” a video that the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and Media Magic of New Lyme Township, won the Ohio Public Images Award of Excellence for 2011. Ohio Public Images Network sponsors the annual media and awareness awards competition to honor Ohio individuals and organizations creating a greater understanding of people with developmental disabilities.

According to MR/DD Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, Ashtabula County competed with entries from much larger counties with more plentiful resources, but still emerged the winner. “We were very proud of that,” she told county commissioners Peggy Carlo and Joseph Moroski who held their meeting at the Happy Hearts School recently.

Marlene Sartini, the Board’s Director of Community Services, said the video took about six months to create and features the Board’s entire program from early intervention to caring for retirees from the sheltered workshop. “We designed and wrote it internally and Media Magic assisted with the production, which featured staff, clients, and their families. They easily found enthusiastic supporters to go on camera and share their enthusiasm for the contributions the Board has made to their lives. “Everyone had an opportunity to say something. The most poignant comments were from parents of the clients who have been served here.”

The ten-minute video has been shown on local public access channels and will be made available on DVD through the county’s libraries. [The You Tube link](http://www.youtube.com/watch=bgpKFX6qn8U) can be found at: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch=bgpKFX6qn8U>).

The Ashtabula County Commissioners presented Superintendent Zeitler and her staff with a proclamation recognizing March 2011 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

## **Ash/Craft Industries Offers Shredding Service**

April 1, 2011



*Billy Campbell feeds documents into a shredder at the Ash/Craft Industries Workshop. The Workshop’s new shredding service is 35 cents per pound of documents shredded. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl Feather.*

Ash/Craft Production Manager Jim Hornbeck locks his newest piece of machinery up inside a chain link fence, guarding his unburied treasure. His treasure is a paper shredder, a tool that can

quickly rip stacks of checks or boxes of business documents into spaghetti paper strips impossible to put back together.

Jim explains that he recently guided Ash/Craft into the shredding business because Ashtabula County didn't have a readily available shredding service and more importantly, the shredding business matched up well with many of the disabled workers at the Workshop. "We talked to some other developmental disabilities programs in the state and learned that they had started the service," he said.

Although he wanted to have a special building for his shredder, Jim realized that Ash/Craft couldn't afford special quarters for his treasure, so instead he picked an area in the production space for the shredder, His treasure sits in a gated, locked space plainly visible from his office. Clients who want to be absolutely certain their documents are shredded can watch from the comfort of his office to make sure the job is done.

The shredding service costs 35 cents per pound of shredded documents. Jim said that customers can drop off small amounts of material at Ash/Craft and businesses and people with large amounts of documents can arrange for a pickup for a ten-dollar charge. He said that the Workshop provides a certificate of destruction with every finished job. A recycler picks up scrap paper from Mohawk Papers in Saybrook Township and makes a stop for Ash/Craft shredded paper before taking the load to a recycling facility in Cleveland.

As well as providing an essential service, the shredder also helps the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities fulfill its mission of providing developmentally disabled people with productive work. According to Jim, Ash/Craft is always looking for jobs its workers can perform, and clients (workers) can do shredding on an hourly basis and can be paid the minimum wage. "Some of these people in this workshop live on that paycheck, and some of their families, too," he said.

Production Manager Hornbeck said that Ash/Craft Industries weathered the economic recession fairly well, because of diversification and customers coming from as far away as Cleveland, Ohio, and Jamestown, New York. As well as performing assembly and packaging at Ash/Craft, some of its workers also hold jobs outside of the workshop. He added that Ash/Craft is currently in the middle of a contract job for Ashtabula County wineries and woodshop employees are making and painting 320 wood signs shaped like an arrow. The Ash/Craft art department will paint the name of a winery and the distance to it and the arrows will be placed on a pole at every one of the participating wineries. It will repeat the same project for every other Ohio winery.

The Ash/Craft garden shop and greenhouse will open for the growing season on Monday offering flower and vegetable plants and items including wind chimes, garden decorations and furniture built the in Ash/Craft workshop for sale.

# MR/DD Board Seeks Renewal of Levy

July 14, 2011

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is cautiously approaching renewal of the operating levy that expires at the end of the year. On Tuesday, the Ashtabula County Commissioners endorsed the necessity of renewing the one-half mill levy that voters first approved in 1990 and the levy will be placed on the November ballot as a renewal with a term of seven years.

According to the MR/DD Board Director of Finance Lori Burdick, the levy has been generating about \$430,000 annually, an amount based on 1990 tax valuations. but she said she has not received the new certified figure from the auditor. As property values have increased, the effective millage has decreased protecting property owners from tax inflation.

Board President Janet Neville, Director of Finance Burdick and Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, met with County Commissioners, the County Auditor, and County Treasurer on July 7 to present the MR/DD Board's request. President Neville told the County Commissioners that the Board struggled with the decision to choose a renewal rather than a replacement, which would have generated more money. "Because of the economy, we don't feel we want to ask taxpayers to increase the amount they are asked to pay for the support of our programs," she said.

A replacement levy would be calculated on current real-estate valuations. Along with other county school districts, the Board has lost personal-property tax revenue and the state has not replaced it. For the next two years, the new state budget eliminates the phase-out assistance that helped alleviate the loss of that tax income. Director of Finance Burdick said the loss amounts to about one million a year for the MR/DD Board. The Board shared data with the Ashtabula County Commissioners that show expenses would devour a cash surplus quickly in the next two years and slip into a deficit situation by 2014. Replacing instead of renewing the levy could have delayed the deficit until 2015. She said the earliest the Board could replace another operating levy is 2016, unless it attempted to replace a continuous levy with a higher-millage issue.

## **Letter to the Editor, Ashtabula Star Beacon**

November 26, 2011

On behalf of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, we would like to publicly thank the voters of Ashtabula County for the passage of our levy.

We are very fortunate to have the ongoing generous support of the citizens of Ashtabula County.

We would also like to publicly thank Barbara McClure and Jeanne Bento for volunteering their time in organizing and overseeing the efforts and fiscal responsibility of the Happy Hearts - Ash/Craft Levy Renewal Committee. Our employees, families and friends worked jointly with the levy committee to conduct a very successful levy campaign.

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities sincerely appreciates the commitment of our employees, families, friends and the citizens of Ashtabula County to ensure the ongoing delivery of quality programs, services and support to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for supporting Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries.

Janet Neville, Board President

Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent

2012

### **Larry Moroski- One of Original Happy Hearts Students, Dies**

March 15, 2012. Larry G. Moroski, age 65, of Creek Road, Kingsville, died Thursday, March 15, 2012. He was born March 13, 1947, in Conneaut, the son of A. Gene and Nadine Keller Moroski, and lived in the area all of his life. His parents were instrumental in the founding of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries and Larry attended Happy Hearts School from its beginning in 1955. He was one of the first students to graduate from Happy Hearts to Ash/Craft Industries.

Although a member of Kingsville Presbyterian Church, he attended Inez Gaumer's Sunday School class for special needs pupils at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula for 18 years, and he also was a Boy Scout and in the Leo Club at the Maples Home. Other activities he enjoyed

included camping at Camp Cavalry, bowling, music, dancing, and participating in the Special Olympics.

*Believe*

**March is Developmental  
Disabilities Awareness Month**

*Help Us Celebrate...*

**OPEN HOUSE**

March 8 • 10am-1pm

**Happy Hearts School**     **AshCraft Industries**  
2505 South Ridge Road E.     5959 Green Road  
Ashtabula, OH     Ashtabula, OH

**Community Support Services**     **Our Community is Better together**  
500 West Main St. • Geneva, OH



## Happy Hearts Graduation, May 23, 2012

May 23, 2012



*Maureen Hamblin, a student aide with Ashtabula Area City Schools, congratulates Johnathon Lee Peterson on receiving his diploma from Happy Hearts School on May 23, 2012. Johnathon also graduated from Lakeside High School on May 24, 2012.*

Johnathon Lee Peterson's mother, Melissa Townsend, felt special pride and vindication when he graduated from Happy Hearts along with four other classmates on May 23, 2012. Doctors had told her that Johnathon would never walk or talk. “

Not only did her son graduate, he delivered the address to the other four graduates and their families: Herman Eugene Bratton, Phillip John Carlo III, Shari Ann Nagle and Corrine LeAnne Wellbaum.

Melissa said faith accounted for the success of her sons, Johnny and Jimmy. Jimmy previously graduated from Edgewood Senior High. “If you believe in yourself and in God, you can accomplish anything,” she said.

The Edgewood High School Band with Director Connie Sommers, provided the music for the Happy Hearts graduation and the ARC of Ashtabula County hosted a reception for the graduates and their families as well as presenting each graduate with a gift. Michael W. DeMarino, Happy Heart's Director of Education, and Janet Neville, President of the MR/DD Board, conferred the diplomas.

## Special Olympics Summer- Swimming and Bowling

Thursday June 28, 2012

*Ashtabula County Special Olympics swimmers who completed the State Summer Olympic Games last week in Columbus were (front from left) Terri Church; Claude Gaumer; Kelly Mayle; Donneta Settles; and Beth Harley. Back from left, Coach Marie Harley; Dalton McReynolds; Vickie Hippely; Coach Michael Barnes; Lela Holcomb; and Coach Barrie Bottorf.*



*Ashtabula County Special Olympic bowlers who competed at the Ohio State Summer Games in Columbus last week were (from left) Robert Hunter; Karen Miller; Jim Peterson; Aaron Plummer; Amy Jo Turner; John Peterson; Christina Stewart; Alex DeHaven; John Daniel; and Coach Crystal Kelly.*



2013


March is  
**Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**  
*Approximately two of every 100 Americans have a Developmental Disability*

**Look Beyond**  
*"And See My Potential"*

**BRING YOUR UNWANTED OUTDATED DOCUMENTS TO US!**

**Shred Week**  
Ash/Craft Industries  
5959 Green Road  
Ashtabula, Ohio  
March 4-8, 2013 from 9 AM-2 PM


Support individuals with developmental disabilities in Ashtabula County by bringing your unwanted documents to us during Shred Week. Bring in your paper for shredding, the first forty pounds are free! (Additional shredding is only 35 cents per pound!) For more info call Jim Hornbeck at 224-2177 or E-mail him at [jim.hornbeck@ashtabuladd.org](mailto:jim.hornbeck@ashtabuladd.org).



**Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities**  
OPEN HOUSE  
Visit Us On Thursday  
March 7, 2013, 10 AM-1 PM

**Happy Hearts School**  
2505 South Ridge East  
Ashtabula, Ohio

Services include: Early Intervention  
Help Me Grow, ages 0-3 years old;  
preschool for ages 3-5 years old;  
and school age services for ages 6-21 years old.



## Happy Hearts Graduation, 2013

May 30, 2013

Thomas Miles, speaker at the 2013 Happy Hearts graduation, defined a blessing as “a special favor or special gift.” He continued his definition by explaining, “In my life, and I’m sure the other graduates would also say, we have been blessed by the opportunities we have had at school, and through the people that have helped us find those opportunities,” he said.

Besides Thomas Miles, the other 2013 graduates were: Eric Andrew Hagenbaugh; Destiny R. Lagese; Marie R. Lagese; Jamie Paul Lister; Brittany L. Prince; Kodi Allen Renwick; Carly Marie Weber; and Christopher Henry West.

Teacher James Kaiser is proud of the Class of 2013, but he is proud of every graduating class. “This was a big year for the school, but I have been here 31 years and I can say that every year is a big year. We are always so proud of our graduates,” he said.

Jim is especially proud of Destiny Lagese. “I had Destiny as my student for four years,” he said. “It has been a pleasure to see her succeed, to grow in the areas of reading, writing and math.”

Principal Patrick Guliano said this is his first year as the head of Happy Hearts. “My experience is in public schools and high schools.” I have to say the graduations here are so much more emotional. We see these students grow in so many aspects. They show so much persistence.”

The Edgewood High School Band provided the music for the graduation.

“So many people came together to make today special for these graduates,” Principal Guliano said. “We thank the Edgewood band, we thank the students, the parents and the staff for doing their all to make today that much better.”

2014

March 21, 2014

### Warriors Giving Back



*Steve Kray and some members of the Edgewood Girls Basket Ball Team presented a check for \$712 to Ashtabula County Special Olympic Lakers Cathy Prine and Brian Flaughter at Happy Hearts School. The funds were raised when the Lakers took on the Mahoning County Indians.*

### John Pickett: Early Happy Hearts Graduate, Friendship Class, and a Smile

*Inez Gaumer, founder of the Interfaith Religion Class for mentally handicapped adults, helps students John Pickett and Steve Hinkle find a scripture. The class was recognized on its 35<sup>th</sup> year during the Sunday worship service at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula in 2004. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl Feather.*



Sunday March 16, 2014

John E. Pickett, age 69, died on Thursday March 13, 2014.

Born on January 15, 1945, in Ashtabula, he was the son of Margie Louise Johns and Edward Joseph Pickett. He was a resident of Ashtabula County Residential Services (Maples I) since August 1977. A graduate of Happy Hearts School, he worked at Ash/Craft Industries since 1967 until his semi-retirement in 2013,

John belonged to former Boy Scout Troop #24, the Leo Club, the Friendship Sunday School Class of the First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula and the Bridge Class, First Baptist Church of Kingsville. John enjoyed drawing, listening to records, going on vacation, church camp, carousels, Ferris Wheels, having fun and good times. John will always be remembered for his amazing smile.

## Helping Hands Members Rise \$8,000 for Special Olympics

March 30, 2014



*Brian Sabo, President of Trucker's Helping Hands, presents a check for \$8,000 to Lad Marous, treasurer for Special Olympics. Also pictured are athletes Tiffany Peiton,*

*Dillen Wludyga, Beth Harley and David Baker, and Beth Hudson, secretary for the Ashtabula County Special Olympics. Trucker's. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*



The Trucker's Helping Hands held their second reverse raffle on March 8 with a sold out main board and more than 400 people in attendance. Trucker's Helping Hands presented Ashtabula Area Special Olympics with a check for \$6,000. The local Special Olympics raises funds to keep local programs going and to send athletes to the Ohio Special Olympic events, and pays entrance fees for the state track and field events in Columbus, and expenses to send athletes to regional and state events. Lad Marous, treasurer for Ashtabula County Special Olympics, said the local chapter does not get a share of the Polar bear Plunge money. One of the main fund-raisers for local Special Olympics is the annual spaghetti dinner. The dinner will be 4 to 7 p.m. Apr 23 at the Happy Hearts School.

## **Sheltered Workshops Face an Uncertain Future: Change with CMS Waivers Concerns Ash/Craft**

December 29, 2014

(Based on a story by Matt Hutton, Editor, Ashtabula Star Beacon)

Ashtabula County parents and local officials are concerned about the future of sheltered workshops for people with developmental disabilities because of changes in the state and federal regulations that govern them. About 200 people in Ashtabula County work at Ash/Craft's Sheltered Workshop, a workplace where people with developmental disabilities can earn below minimum wage.

Work at Ash/Craft includes a paper shredding operation and a greenhouse as well as other jobs, and another 50 people work with outside employers including Ashtabula County Medical Center, University Hospital Conneaut, Greg Sweet Automotive, and Subway. Ash/Craft also supports enclaves where people work in a group with varying supervision, like the workers who work as custodians at Grand River Academy and the YMCA. "We do offer a lot of opportunities for people who want to work in the community," said Jan Church, Ash/Craft Community Employment Specialist.

Two elements that some people fear could prompt potential changes in sheltered workshops like Ash/Craft are a change in the Federal Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) waiver program, and a group called Disability Rights Ohio. According to Specialist Church, the Center for Medicaid Services waivers allow more freedom for developmentally disabled people to choose where they live by helping to pay for their living situations, supposedly limiting the expansion of group homes. As funding struggles intensify, many counties began to rely on these waivers which require a local match to fund adult services.

Things changed in early 2014, when the State of Ohio said that a change with the Federal Center for Medicaid Service waivers will prevent them from being used in residential or other settings “that have the effect of isolating people” receiving the waivers.

There is also a potential conflict of interest with the waivers if private organizations with case managers steer consumers receiving waivers toward specific services that particular organizations provide. Employment Specialist Church said that to avoid a conflict of interest, organizations taking CMS waivers couldn't have case managers. She explained that Ohio county boards are unique compared to most other states which rely solely on private providers and contractors. Since Ohio's system is unique, the state has always been granted an exemption and been allowed to accept Medicaid waivers while still providing case managers. Now, Ohio, which provides services to more than 90,000 people, is changing its waiver system. Out of 200 consumers working at Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop, about 60 or 70 of them are on waivers, so if Ohio's ruling about CMS waivers stands, they wouldn't be able to continue attending the workshop.

If the waiver issue is not resolved, some counties will have to close down their workshops because so many of their consumers (workers) are receiving the waivers. According to Employment Specialist Church, Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Anne Zeitler deserves credit for not letting Ashtabula County fall into the closing situation by not putting every adult on a waiver. She said that Ashtabula County voters have repeatedly stepped up to support the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, with more than 72 percent of funding for services coming from local tax dollars and the rest split between federal and state money. “It's fair to say the first day you start receiving a federal dollar someone is trying to take it from you,” she said.

Another controversial issue besides the Medicaid Waivers is the Disability Rights Ohio push for the state to completely overhaul its system of serving developmentally disabled people. After investigating, Disability Rights Ohio and the State of Ohio discussed violations that Disability Rights Ohio alleged it had found and the State of Ohio drafted an action plan that it released early in December 2014. Disability Rights Ohio focused much of its scrutiny on group homes and care facilities, and it also investigated sheltered workshops which they said limit the ability of disabled people to get out in the community and pay less than minimum wage. According to Disability Rights Ohio Executive Director Michael Kirkman, his group isn't demanding the closure of sheltered workshops, but it alleges that the state has created a system favoring a segregated setting. He said that sheltered workshops need to change what his group perceives as a bias that isolates disabled people from the community and keeps working for less than minimum wage. “Our point is that they need to change that bias to make sure people have real choices,” he said.

Employment Specialist Jan Church said that she agrees that consumers and families should have choices about where they can work and that Ash/Craft and other sheltered workshops want as many consumers as possible to be integrated into the community, but sheltered workshops need to remain a choice. “We agree with integration. We feel in Ashtabula County we do that. We want to remain a choice for consumers and families,” she said.

According to Jan Church, the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities created a business advisory council with the goal of increasing consumer work options, pointing out that it is the choice of the people who come to Ash/Craft to decide whether or not they want to work in the community and to help determine what they need to do to prepare themselves to work in the community. She pointed out that historically, fewer people have wanted the minimum wage jobs where many of the Ash/Craft clients are placed, so Ashtabula County has been able to work with employers. The situation changed as unemployment increased, creating more competition for minimum wage jobs. “My point is we feel like we’re kind of on the cutting edge of inclusion, looking at the person with disability first. Deciding what they want, and how we can get there. And we feel like we do.”

Responding to the concerns and possibility of fewer sheltered workshops including Ash/Craft, Employment Specialist Church and Wendy Flickinger, Habilitation Manager, other staff, and parents have joined in a grassroots effort to lobby lawmakers about the proposed changes.

Julie Vallimont, whose daughter has Down syndrome and works at Ash/Craft, is concerned. Julie said that her daughter doesn’t make a lot of money in the Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop, but she is safe, adding that she thinks her daughter is served better in a professional instead of a public setting. “...I personally trust the people at Ash/Craft and it’s my job to make sure she’s taken care of.”

Disability Rights Ohio Executive Director Michael Kirkman said that he understands that people are anxious about the unknown, but his organization’s position is that if sheltered workshops are phased out over time, this will not create a larger burden on families. “We are being very clear that is an unacceptable outcome to us. Those with disabilities need to have more meaningful activity with the public, rather than ending up at home for those additional eight hours they would have been at the workshop. We’re not asking for anyone to be satisfied with current services.”

Jan Church said that she did disagree with the initial rhetoric from Disability Rights Ohio comparing workshops to the segregated South in the 1960s. She said that some of the early discussions forecasted sheltered workshops vanishing completely within five years, and although their future is still uncertain, forecasts of their demise have noticeably diminished. She attributes this to a pushback from parents. Now she says there is even talk about the possibility of grandfathering in all consumers or clients (workers) on waivers currently attending sheltered workshops. “I do think that people in Ohio are concerned because I don’t think they expected the reaction that they’re getting from families and parents. Their message to these people is powerful. They are scared out of their minds about what will happen to their sons and daughters.”

# 2015, 60 years and Counting

## Ash/Craft Up Close and Personal

January 31, 2015



(Below) Lee Petrunger and Desiree Orrison work on jewelry boxes and (left) Sam Riggs works on oil pan drain plugs at Ash/Craft Industries. Ashtabula Star Beacon photos by Warren Dillaway.

Ash/Craft Industries, a sheltered workshop, looks like any other business with stacked boxes lining the floors and shelves of the busy warehouse. Employees thread their way through the stacks bound for their work stations or moving items for Premix, Apex, Ashtabula County Medical Center, and the Ohio Wine Associations that the workers have assembled.



A mammoth paper shredding operation takes place behind a fenced in area protecting the confidential documents of customers to be shredded. In another room, workers inspect hundreds of boxes slated for Zippo lighters to be sure the logos are of high quality, the boxes all face the same direction, and they are ready to be shipped to another location to be packed with lighters. Production throughout the

Workshop hums by 9 a.m. and will continue until about 2:30 p.m., minus half an hour for lunch.

The operational patterns are the same between Ash/Craft and other industries, but the people aren't. The 170 clients working at the Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop have disabilities and Ash/Craft is allowed by law to pay some workers below minimum wage. Ash/Craft Production Manager Jim Hornbeck said, "We provide people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to be productive. Not everyone is able to work at the same level and do the same tasks. The key is fitting their skills to the jobs. They don't want your help or sympathy. They just want an opportunity."



He explained that one of many jobs at the Workshop involve making heat trappers for water heaters and some workers can only produce ten per day while others can do 100. Even the workers who can only do limited production can earn some money. He said one employee who could only do about 10 pieces a day saved up enough money to pay for her own haircut.

The companies using Ash/Craft workers benefit because the workers perform with dedication and high standards. Frank Stawicki of Premix said, “The service is great. We don’t have any quality concerns.” He said that Ash/Craft workers are reliable and get the job done. “It’s good for us. It’s good for the community.”

The future of sheltered workshops across Ohio is in doubt because of changes in the Center for Medical Services waiver program which won’t allow them to be used in settings that “have the effect of isolating people.” Since the government is likely to consider sheltered workshops to be isolating, the 60 Ash/Craft workers on the CMS waivers might not be able to continue to work at Ash/Craft. More than 72 percent of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities comes from local tax dollars, with the rest split between federal and state money.

The possibility of losing Ash/Craft devastates some parents who have tried to find their children jobs in the community. Kim Ryel and her 24-year-old son Matthew who has Down Syndrome tried placing him in a community job and prospective employers told her that he would take jobs from “typical” workers or he was too high risk from an insurance point of view. She even volunteered to work with him, but labor laws prevented that. She said some businesses were sympathetic, but didn’t think they had a job that Matthew could do.

Eventually, Matthew got a job at Saybrook Landing working a four-hour shift a week, and although his employer treated him well, Kim said Matthew felt he never truly belonged. In the beginning Kim had been determined Matthew would not be in a sheltered workshop environment. She said that inclusion and acceptance was her “big thing.” Finally, she went to Ash/Craft and now she says she can’t believe she waited so long. “He loves it,” she said. Many workers already knew Matthew from Special Olympics, which helped him feel welcome. “He’s happy here. He’s blossomed.”

Kim is also relieved that she doesn’t have to worry about Matthew when he gets on the bus, because she knows where he’s going and that he’s going to be safe and cared about. “It puts my mind at ease,” she said.

Ash/Craft Employment Specialist Jan Church said that Kim and her son Matthew’s experience demonstrates that Ash/Craft can sometimes be a better fit and a way to prepare those with disabilities for a job in the community at a later time.

Parent Bernadette Cimorelli told a similar story. Her daughter Kayla, 24, graduated from Lakeside in 2009 and went to A-Tech until 2012, receiving training that included working at several locations. When Kayla finished at A-Tech, she and her mother filled out applications, but heard many of the same reasons for not hiring Kayla as Kim and Matthew Ryel had experienced.

“To think the Ash/ Crafts of the world are going to close and they’re going to be working in the private sector is never going to happen,” Bernadette Cimorelli said, adding “Kayla is upset, doesn’t want to leave her job. She doesn’t know where she’d go.”

Michael Kirkman, Executive Director of Disability Rights Ohio which is lobbying the state to extensively overhaul its system believes that experiences like Matthew and Kayla’s show that more resources need to be used in helping make professional settings more accessible and helping businesses hire people with disabilities. He said his organization is not advocating any services be cut, but that services in Ohio be expanded. “Ohio’s system should support any person who wants to live or work or spend their days in the community, regardless of the person’s needs,” he said.

Jan Church said Ash Craft officials fully believe in integration and work to achieve it, but they want to make sure the workshop remains an option for those who want it.

The future is uncertain. State officials have been holding meetings across Ohio explaining the new CMS Waiver rules, reviewing its recommendations to comply with the new federal regulations, discussing the shape of the new system, and receiving feedback on the proposed changes.

Until the issues are resolved, Bernadette said that Kayla will sit in her chair at Ash/Craft every day, sorting through Zippo lighter boxes and loving her job.

## **Ashtabula County Commissioners Support County Developmental Disabilities Board**

March 3, 2015

Despite the fact that state and federal law changes placed county involvement in employment services for developmentally disabled people at risk, the Ashtabula County Commissioners passed a resolution of support for the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities during its meeting at Happy Hearts School. The resolution won’t change the federal and state rulings, but it is a sign of support for the current system, and the Commissioners will forward the resolution to state representatives and senators and to the office of Governor John Kasich.

The Centers for Medicaid Services has enacted changes to Medicaid waivers that could deny day services and case management to county residents who depend on the waivers for employment opportunities and socialization. Until the Center for Medicaid Services proposed the new rules, the state of Ohio DD boards were permitted to use waivers to pay for day services and case management for eligible people. The new rules sparked concerns about conflict of interest that were formerly addressed by a Firewall Document created by the state board and approved by

CMS. The Firewall Document separated board functions and allowed them to administer case management services to about 90,000 people. CMS no longer recognizes the Firewall Document, and caregivers of clients at Ash/Craft and other county-based programs are worried that they will no longer be able to adequately serve clients. Commissioner Dan Claypool said that the fact that a bipartisan board objects to the CMS changes is a clear indicator that the changes would be a step backwards in Ashtabula County.

A nonprofit advocacy group for disabled people called Disability Rights Ohio is also pushing the state DD Department for wider integration of disabled people into the community and including private case management providers in the system. The CMS changes also prohibit waivers to be used on services that it considers isolating such as sheltered workshops like Ash/Craft.

Lynda Perry, Director of Adult Services at Ash/Craft, which provides employment for about 200 people believes that the Firewall Document ensured that disabled people weren't simply being "funneled into the county board" and that county DD Boards must remain a choice for disabled people. She said that if the county commissioners in other counties passed resolutions like the Ashtabula County Commissioners did, it would send a definitive message supporting the current system which has been in place for at least a decade. She added that as caregivers aged and could no longer take care of their disabled family members, the family would have no choice except to go on waivers residentially and for the day services. "What we are asking is that-while private providers may do a good job- we feel the County Board of Developmental Disabilities should remain a choice to administer these waivers. Otherwise, we're afraid that individuals will not have adequate services. We're hoping that they will resubmit the Firewall Document for reapproval."

Ashtabula County Commissioners proclaimed March 2015 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in the County and passed the resolution to support the County DD Board. The audience applauded and Ash/Craft Director of Operations, Steve McClure, applauded first. His 29-year-old son, is an Ash/Craft client who can't walk, talk, or barely sit up on his own, but according to his father "the socialization he gets from Ash/Craft is irreplaceable. Ash /Craft is his life. His mother and I – we can just tell you how content he is when he comes home. He would have a huge void if this program closes."

According to Director of Ash/Craft Operations McClure, if his son no longer received his day services waiver the state would have to pay more money. Since his son receives a Transitions Developmental Disability waiver meaning there is no bill for day services, Ash/Craft doesn't receive any state money for his case. Since his son can't be left unattended, he would require a separate state waiver to pay for home care. "It would be a travesty to have this program closed — for our whole family," Steve McClure said. "It takes a special person to work out here, the way they deal and provide service."

President Commissioner Peggy Carlo said, "I don't know what people would do here without you. It's very near and dear to our hearts."

## **Editorial: Happy Hearts, A Community Asset**

Ashtabula Star Beacon, May 28,2015

One only needs to spend a few minutes at Happy Hearts school, which supports those students with developmental disabilities, to see just how extraordinary the staff and students are there. Staff members truly care about these outstanding students and strive to provide the students with the educational experience they need. These students want and deserve to have all the experiences students in a “normal” public school would be having. For example, last week, students were rewarded for collecting pop tabs to raise money for Ronald McDonald House in Cleveland with a visit from the clown himself and a pizza party. Students were active, engaged and thrilled to watch and participate in his magic show.

On Wednesday, five students graduated from Happy Hearts, and each student is unique in his or her own way. Guest speaker Jean White talked about her daughter, Jalisa, one of the graduates, and how the family had been told when Jalisa was born they were unsure what her mental capacity would eventually be. At graduation, Jalisa sang “Wind Beneath My Wings” to her fellow graduates — Marvin D. Byler, Alice M. Dalrymple, Brandon T. Lee and Andres A. Walsh.

Each student had their own story, from Special Olympics success, to being crowned prom king to belting out tunes in church. But each student is able to make a contribution to the community, and Happy Hearts has helped make that happen for them and their family.

Happy Hearts provides services for students age 6 to 21 who have been referred by local school districts across the county. According to the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, they focus on academics as well as “functional life skills and vocational skills.” Each student has an individualized plan designed and written with the student’s parents with the goal to meet each individual student’s needs. Classrooms at Happy Hearts have students developing traditionally because their interaction can help bring out socialization in the students with disabilities.

We’re glad Happy Hearts is a part of our community here in Ashtabula County and is providing much needed services to some truly remarkable young men and women.



# 2016

## **Happy Hearts Receives a New Industrial Dishwasher**

February 21, 2016

Happy Hearts School will receive a Department of Education grant for a new industrial dishwasher costing about \$3,700 to replace one that is over twenty years old. "It's obsolete. We were unable to get parts for it anymore," Susan Holloman, Happy Hearts Food Service Coordinator said. She added that the dishwasher has been a kitchen problem for at least five years. "We've just been kind of making this one work."

This is the first time that Happy Hearts received the Department of Education Grant and the school was chosen out of 150 school lunch program applications submitted to the Department's office for Children Nutrition. Schools that have few options for equipment funding are located in underserved areas, or have older equipment received funding priority.

Industrial dishwashers can cost anywhere from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for high end models. Happy Hearts chose the same, entry-level model as a replacement which is expected to cost about \$3,700, including delivery, installation, and removal of the old unit. Since the school's adult employees are the ones doing the dishes, Susan wanted a model they were comfortable operating.

## **Rena M. Hudson Graduated from Happy Hearts and Worked at Ash/Craft for Forty Years**

February 28, 2016

Rena M. Hudson, one of Happy Heart's original pupils and a forty-year employee of Ash/Craft Industries died on Sunday, February 21, 2016.



Born October 22, 1943 in Pierpont, the daughter of Myron W. and Elsie Hackathorne Hudson, Rena always proudly pointed out that she was born on her mother's 22nd birthday. She attended Pierpont School and was one of the first students at Happy Hearts in the class of Miss Barbara White. After her graduation from Happy Hearts, Rena went to work at Ash/Craft in its early days and she did such a good job that she was named Employee of the Year. She loved going to Ash/Craft, seeing her friends, supervisors, bus driver aides, and everybody that worked there. She never considered retirement as an option.

As well as watching Lawrence Welk, Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, and Leave it to Beaver on television, Rena enjoyed camping with her parents and going on bus trips with her sister Sue, Cleveland Indians games and other sports activities.

Rena loved people and they loved her. Her family said that couldn't go anywhere with her without someone stopping to talk to her. "Rena never met a stranger."

2017

## **Andrew Misiak Named President of the County Developmental Disabilities Board**

Feb 5, 2017

After spending close to two years on the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Andrew Misiak, 30, has been named its president. The Board oversees Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries as well as other programs. A criminal justice graduate from Bowling Green University, he is a LEADERSHIP Ashtabula County member and is entering his third year as the Ashtabula County Juvenile Court administrator. He previously spent nearly seven years working in the Ashtabula Municipal Court. He told the Ashtabula Star Beacon that he has always been eager to work with developmentally disabled people.



Board Vice President Brett Horvath nominated Andrew for the presidency and the Board voted unanimously to elect him at its meeting last month. "I think Andrew will make a fine president. He's new but he works with young people all the time. ... He's really dedicated to his task and I just want to say he's energized. There's a lot of work involved that's beyond our board meetings," he added. "Someone who's willing to work and work hard and work cooperatively — you can't ask for much more than that."

Andrew said his new role would coincide with his juvenile court administrator job, especially in the programming area, which is the most interesting to him. He said the Board's current objective is navigating through sweeping federal and state changes to all county DD boards involving direct care, segregated sheltered workshops and the phasing out of federal waivers which may force them to privatize or cut back services. "I'm excited for the opportunity and really just putting individuals that we serve at the top of the organization. They are our number one priority," he said.

## **Ash/Craft Industries May Become Private Nonprofit Organization**

March 10, 2017

A Jefferson Gazette story by Gabriel McVey dated March 10, 2017, stated that during its February 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners learned that the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities faces serious challenges because of recent federal regulatory changes by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Ash/Craft Industries may have to privatize. Recent changes to CMS regulations has meant disabled people can't receive services directly from boards of DD. The Ashtabula County Board of DD oversees Ash/Craft as well as Happy Hearts School and Ash /Craft staff are currently Board employees.

Medicaid waiver programs help provide services to people who otherwise would be in an institution, nursing home, or hospital to receive long-term care in the community. Until 1991, the federal Medicaid program only paid for services of people living in institutions. The approval of federal Medicaid waiver programs allowed states to provide services to consumers in their homes and in their communities, CMS stated. Ash/Craft Industries operates a greenhouse, garden shop, and woodworking workshop as well as providing supervised community employment services for disabled people.

According to Ash/Craft Director Lynda Perry, CMS has said that by 2024 county boards of Developmental Disabilities can't provide direct services to anyone on waivers. We're supposed to be making plans to work with private providers. She said the proposed move to make Ash/Craft a private, nonprofit service provider wouldn't affect Happy Hearts School, which is a separate from Ash/Craft also operated by the Board of DD.

Another recent change to CMS regulations that creates problems for Ash/Craft stems from the 2013 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which prohibits Ash/Craft from paying workers between 18 and 26 for piece work. "Under WIOA people under age 26 can't be paid less than minimum wage," Lynda said.

Disabled people between 18 and 26 are supposed to find work with private employers in the community, regardless of their functional level. These people have to spend eight years with vocational rehabilitation services unsuccessfully seeking work before they can apply for services through Ash/Craft according to Director Perry.

Director Perry added that the Ash/Craft spin-off from the DD Board is currently on hold, because the Workshop is waiting for further instructions from CMS. The original deadline that CMS set to shift Board of DD clients to private providers was 2017, but CMS extended it to 2024. "We were really aggressively moving ahead on this and then they moved the deadline, so we put the brakes on," Lynda said.

Making a crucial point for the Ashtabula County Board of DD, Director Perry said that whether or not Ash/Craft remains under the Board of DD or becomes a private service provider, the Ashtabula County Board of DD will still be responsible for 40 percent of service expense for people under its care. “Explaining this to the community will be very important. We will still need a levy to pay that 40 percent,” she said.

According to the Ashtabula County DD Board Fiscal Director Lori Burdick, the Board is currently funded by a 1.3 mill levy first passed in 2003 and most recently renewed in 2016. The Board of DD general fund budget for 2016 was 13.3 million dollars.

## **Critical Ashtabula County DD Board Levy Fails**

November 9, 2017

Ashtabula County voters declined to pass the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities proposed .67 mill increased to its operating levy, which would have bumped it to two mills. The measure failed with 10,616 no votes to 9,466 yes votes or 53 to 47 percent, according to unofficial county Board of Election results.

DD Board President Andrew Misiak said that the Ashtabula County levy was the only one that failed out of thirteen DD levies across Ohio, even some requesting larger increases. “Right now, we’re just trying to swallow this pill. We’re really just looking through all our programs, not looking to cut anything, yet just kind of looking at possible funding options for next year,” he said.

Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler thanked the people who helped with the Board’s levy campaign, and the voters who supported it, noting that the levy proposal faced heavy opposition across precincts in Geneva, and Geneva on the Lake as well as Geneva, Harpersfield, and Austinburg Townships. She said she suspected the DD levy was a casualty of a “no new tax” climate. “We will continue to analyze, look forward, review our options and work on this together,” she said, adding that the Board was relying on the levy to stave off cuts as there were few funding avenues available outside a larger operating levy. “Right now, we’ve accessed just about everything that’s available to us,” she said.

The Ashtabula County Developmental Disabilities Board, which operates Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries, has been spending at a deficit since 2008 and projected that it will run out of money next year. Since 2004, the Board has eliminated 49 positions through attrition and changed salary and benefit schedules for new hires, saving about 26.2 million dollars. It is also replacing its bus fleet with more fuel-economic vans.



## Happy Hearts Plans to Shut Its Doors in June

December 15, 2017

Sixty-three years after its opening at the Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula, Happy Hearts School, snugged in its Kingsville building since 1968, is closing next year.

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities members said they have been looking for a way to keep the school open, but after last month's levy failed by a 53-47 percent margin and an unsuccessful union negotiation, they had to close the school.

In November, the board had sought to increase one of its two 1.33-mill levies to 2 mills, which would have generated an additional \$2 million per year, on top of the \$6 million it currently receives each year in property tax revenue. The board has been spending at a deficit since 2008 and had a cash balance to start this year of only about \$6,000. Since 2004, the Board has eliminated 49 positions through attrition, and changed salary and benefit schedules for new hires, saving 26 million dollars. The Board also worked with labor unions to freeze the Cost of Living wage and lower health insurance premiums for all employees, but Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler said that a deal couldn't be reached with both unions on the insurance plan, which would have saved one million dollars and bought the school another year.

According to Board members, annual losses of state and federal revenues and reimbursements totaling about 2.3 million dollars and rising costs for Medicaid Waivers and transportation made the November levy essential to avoid cutting services. They never specifically said Happy Hearts would close if the levy failed.

The Developmental Disabilities board met Thursday evening to discuss their options, and after meeting in a closed-door executive session, members decided to close the school. "If the levy would have passed, we would have had enough money to keep Happy Hearts open another year," DD Board President Andrew Misiak said. He held out little hope for the possibility for future levy rescues, saying that even if the DD Board brought another levy before voters next year it wouldn't be enough. "If we passed a levy in 2018, we still would have needed three million dollars to carry us over until the levy money was available in March of 2019. We just didn't have it," he said. He added that there is a remote possibility a levy still could go on the November ballot, but there was no way the levy could have gone on the earlier May ballot because the window of opportunity had closed.

President Misiak said, "We looked at every available option, but sadly, Happy Hearts as we know it is no more." He added that Happy Hearts will close at the end of the school year in June, and all 35 Happy Hearts students will attend schools or satellite programs in the districts where they live. He said about 33 teachers and other staff would be laid off at the end of the school year in June and they would be receiving their layoff notices in January. An unknown number of physical therapists, LPNs, and nurse assistants will also be laid off.

The Board hasn't finalized the fate of Ash/Craft Industries, but it will likely be privatized some time in the future. It also hopes to sell its Geneva building and use the DD Board building on Route 84.

About 30 parents, staff members, and teachers attended the meeting. No fiery protests ignited the room, just somber resignation.

## **Officials Weigh Future After Happy Hearts Closes**

Dec 17, 2017

People in Ashtabula County were shocked and saddened when the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities announced the closing of Happy Hearts School this week, but there may be an option.

John Rubesich, Ashtabula County Educational Service Center Superintendent, said he wanted to assure parents of students who attend Happy Hearts that their children will be served. He has planned meetings with the DD Board and hopes to continue the Happy Hearts services and programs through the Educational Service Center. "We run many special needs programs throughout the county...that's what we do. We as an agency are a shared service provider for all of our school districts," he said. He suggested that one possible option would be having the Educational Service Center take over Happy Hearts, but still work with the DD Board. DD Board President Andrew Misiak said the Board is looking at all possible avenues, but if Happy Hearts endures in some form, it will be a different setup and the Board will no longer directly run it. "We are still exploring all of those avenues," Misiak said, adding, "There's going to be some new beginnings. Every new beginning comes from another beginning's end. We are still in the business of providing services for those DD clients."

Finding a way to provide services in a centralized location is important, Rubesich said, because if the students at Happy Hearts and its satellite locations have to return to their home districts then cash-strapped schools will need to hire their own nurses, therapists and paraprofessionals rather than having a centralized and mainstreamed system that gets "the biggest bang for your buck."

According to the DD Board, Happy Hearts receives about 2.9 million dollars, not including transportation costs, of the six million dollars in property tax revenue that the DD Board's levies generate. All money is deposited into the Board's general fund to cover all services provided, which in addition to Happy Hearts includes early intervention; adult services/Medicaid waiver match; community support services; transportation; investigative support services; and administration. Transportation becomes a big expense because the DD Board, not the home school districts, is responsible for transporting all the students to the satellite sites and the Kingsville building, President Misiak said.

The public had some questions about collecting property tax money in the future, as past levies specifically referenced Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft which is likely going to be privatized in the near future. All levy funding goes into the general fund and closing Happy Hearts would not affect the collection.

In addition, Rubesich said the Ohio Department of Education provides \$1 million in direct funding earmarked for Happy Hearts and that is a revenue source for students he doesn't want the county to lose. "Are we in a position to say we don't need that money from the state? I don't think so," he said.

Happy Hearts currently serves a total of 79 children, including 34 at satellite sites the DD Board funds at Geneva, Ashtabula, Grand Valley and Pymatuning Valley, and 45 physically on site at the Kingsville building.

2018

## **Educational Service Center, Developmental Disabilities Board Still Ironing Out Details of Happy Hearts Changeover**

May 15, 2018

The Ashtabula County Educational Service Center plans to move its offices and potentially Happy Hearts to the former Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, Superintendent John Rubesich said. In April, the Educational Service Center (ESC) bought Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, located at 2630 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street, from the Ashtabula Area City School District for \$500,000. It will move its offices there from the former State Road Elementary School.

Since the beginning of the year, the ESC has also been working to take over and save Happy Hearts from closing. In late January, the Board of DD passed a funding agreement for the upcoming school year, involving the county-owned Happy Hearts School in Kingsville, its preschool services and its six satellite classrooms around the county as well as its staff, who will become center employees, receiving ESC salaries and benefits. The board also will pass its \$1.2 million subsidy from the state Department of Education to the ESC.

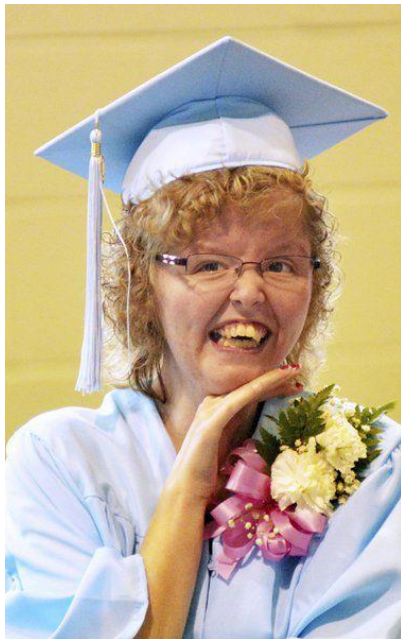
“When we signed it, we thought services would continue at the (current) Happy Hearts School,” said Anne Zeitler, DD Board superintendent. “Then again, that’s up to the ESC.... We are working with the ESC to provide a smooth transition.”

There are still some issues that need to be settled with the Board of DD and the county commissioners. It’s still unclear how the owner-operator relationship between the county and the center would work, Rubesich said, declining to elaborate.

County Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV said the commissioners are working with both parties to sit down with a mediator. “We know it is important to get this done in a timely fashion,” he said.

## Happy Hearts Last Graduations in the 1955 Era Happy Hearts School

May 18, 2018



Alexis Brown, 2018 Happy Hearts graduate, is all smiles. Ashtabula Star Beacon photos by Warren Dillaway.



Jacob Jones, Class speaker, announced each graduate’s family so they could stand and honor their graduate.

### Six Happy Hearts Graduates Start the Next Chapter of Their Lives

Today is your day and your mountain is awaiting you.” —

Alexis Marie Brown; Kristen Nicole Fink; Jasmine Haley-Marie Hillyer; Jacob Anthony Jones; Nicole Adeline Madden; and Chelsie L. Otto eagerly marched into the Happy Hearts School gymnasium to claim their diplomas at the May 18, 2018 Happy Hearts graduation.

Happy Hearts School Principal Patrick Guliano greeted family and friends attending the ceremony. He thanked staff from the school and Ashcraft Industries for their support, saying students and staff have bonded over the school year. “It is a family affair,” he said. Class Speaker Jacob Jones announced each family so they could stand to honor their graduate.

Carol Mentges, a therapist at Happy Hearts who has worked with disabled children for 50 years, was the graduation speaker. Building her speech around the Dr. Seuss book, “Oh, The Places You’ll Go,” she challenged students to reach for their full potential and encouraged them to explore as many places they could reach in their lives.

## **Eleven Students Graduate from Happy Hearts Pre-School**

May 25, 2018



*Ed Dick (left) and Quinn Novak process on Thursday afternoon during their Happy Hearts Preschool graduation at the school on May 25, 2018. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

More than 100 people celebrated the Happy Hearts Pre-School graduation on Thursday afternoon in the school’s gymnasium.

Happy Hearts Principal Patrick Guliano welcomed the families and friends of the graduates to the “large class” of eleven graduates.

The students marched into the gym to the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance,” with aides assisting some of them while others walked down the aisle by themselves. They walked to their seats, each with their name on the back, and some happily waved and smiled at their families. During the short ceremony, teachers presented diplomas to their students, and then everyone enjoyed the cookies, cake, and other snacks on nearby tables.

This graduation could be the last one at the school, because negotiations between the Ashtabula County Developmental Disabilities Board and the Ashtabula County Education Service Center about the fate of the school are still ongoing, according to Andrew Misiak, DD Board President.



# Timeline 2011-2018

## 2011

- March 5, 2011. Richard Flower was honored at the Ashtabula County Branch of the American Red Cross Hero's Breakfast for his part in establishing Special Olympics and his role in creating the Special Olympics Park between Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.
- March 31, 2011. A video about Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft that the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation and Media Magic of New Lyme Township produced won a state award. Titled "Abilities in Motion," the video won the Ohio Public Images Award of Excellence for 2011.
- April 1, 2011. Ash/Craft Industries added a shredding service, charging 35 cents per pound of documents shredded.
- Saturday, April 2, 2011. Kathryn Hart, one of the original students at Happy Hearts School died. She continued to work at Ash/Craft until she became ill in November 2010.
- May 29, 2011. The Concerned Motorcyclists of Ohio Region 13 Special Olympics Race began at Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula Township.
- November, 2011. Ashtabula County citizens voted to renew a one-half mill levy for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

## 2012

- March 15, 2012. Larry Moroski, one of the original Happy Hearts students, dies.
- June 10, 2012. Mary Lou Moody retired as a bus driver and transportation Director for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities after 38 years of service.

## 2013

- March 7, 2013. Open House at Happy Hearts School.
- March 4-8, 2013 is Shred Week at Ash/Craft Industries.
- March, 2013 is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.
- 

## 2014

- John Pickett, early Happy Hearts Graduate, Friendship Class, and Amazing Smiler dies on March 13, 2014.
- March 30, 2014. Helping Hands Members Rise \$8,000 for Special Olympics
- December 29, 2014. Sheltered Workshops Face an Uncertain Future: Change with CMS Waivers Concerns Ash/Craft

## 2015

- January 25, 2015. Ash/Craft Industries begins a paper shredding service.
- March, 2015. Despite federal and state law changes that put county involvement in employment services for developmentally disabled people at risk, Ashtabula County Commissioners pledged support for the county Board of Developmental Disabilities at a meeting at Happy Hearts Schools. The resolution won't change the stat rulings, but it is a signal of support for the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

## 2016

- February, 2016. Happy Hearts School receives a grant for a new industrial dishwasher.
- February 28, 2016. Rena M. Hudson, Happy Hearts Graduate and 40-Year Ash/Craft Employee Dies.
- November. Voters renew 1.3 mill levy.

## 2017

- February. Andrew Misiak is named new president of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.
- November. Critical funding levy for Happy Hearts fails. The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities announces plans to close Happy Hearts School or hand it over to another agency.

## 2018

- May 18, 2018. Happy Hearts graduates six students in its last graduation in the 1955 era school.
- May 25, 2016. Happy Hearts School graduates 11 pre-school students in its last pre-school graduation in the 1955 era school.
- Happy Hearts School closes. Thirty-five Happy Hearts students will attend schools or satellite programs in the districts where they live when the fall semester begins.

## Special Story

### Hope Begins in the Hearts of Parents...



Mari-jo Wilson,  
one of the first  
Happy Hearts  
students.

“We had no place to go before this group. Even our doctors usually said to institutionalize the child or take them home and give them all the love you can.” Nadine Moroski

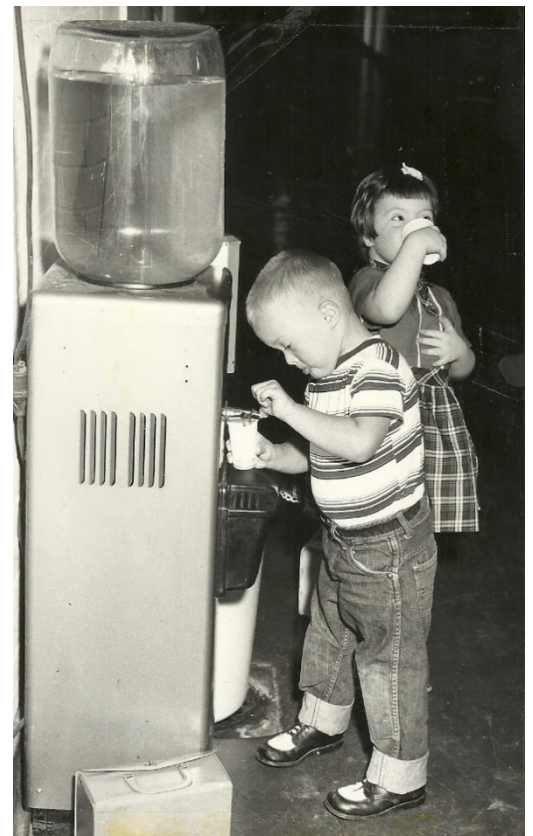
Retarded Children’s Council Chartered

April 18, 1955

A non-profit corporation charter was granted by Ted Brown, Secretary of State, to the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children, Inc.

Trustees listed were Ned V. Collander of Ashtabula; Joseph P. Malone of Geneva; and Robert H. McMurry of Conneaut.

The Council for Retarded Children grew from the united efforts of a few parents interested in addressing the cause of their children to establishment of a school in less than a years' time.







*Two children of the Ashtabula County Child Welfare Board's Happy Hearts School take a drink during a break in their school day. David Patton and Mary- Jo Wilson enjoy the refreshing drink. November 12, 1963.*

## **Hope Races Down the Corridors...**



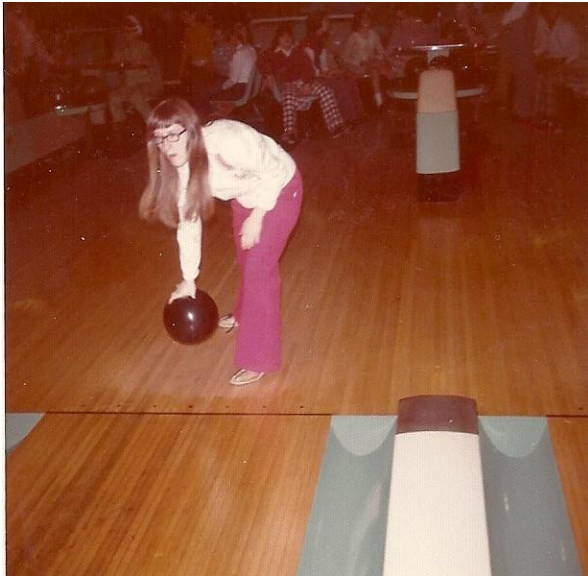
**Opens Doors, Minds, Hearts at Happy Hearts.....**











## Happy Hearts Alma Mater

by Mike DeMarino

Happy Hearts with blue on blue,

The sun shines down on you,

Happy Hearts with blue on blue,

Our colors proud and true.

Through the years we grow and grow.

Our Pride and Love we'll always  
show,

Happy Hearts with blue on blue,

Our Hearts lift up to you.



*Mari-Jo Wilson races her car in the  
Pinewood Derby.*



## Graduates to Ash/Craft ...



Mari-jo Wilson sorts tags at Ash/Craft Industries.

Michael Emery shows how Ashcraft Industries workers prepared 800 miniature Christmas trees for the Ohio Wine Producers Association



Ann Lovas assembles jewelry at Ash/Craft Industries.

Widens the World



The Orff Players perform at Faneuil Hall in Boston with their tour bus in the background.