

Chapter Six: Trail Blazing into the Twenty First Century- 2000-2010



New Directions

Winter 2000

Turning in New Directions

by Larry J. Korland, Superintendent

As we begin the year 2000, this is a good time to reflect on our program and review our direction and path for the future. Almost fifty years ago, programs like Happy Hearts School were springing up throughout Ohio, started by parents who were determined to provide their sons and daughters an education program that would enrich their lives. It was these pioneering families who struggled to raise the funds, run the programs, and advocate for their children. They taught the rest of us that people with disabilities should be a part of and included in the communities, in our schools, and on the job. Because of their efforts and dedication, and the ongoing support of our community, people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities have had the benefit of programs and training offered through Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

Although great strides have been made over these past years, there is still much for us to do, and challenges for us to face. As an organization we must continue to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people we are serving. The children and adults enrolled in our programs along with their families should be the people shaping the future of Happy Hearts, Ash/Craft. and the

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Our role should be to maximize the available resources for our program and then use those funds wisely. We must continue to offer meaningful choices and options for the people we serve. Services to infants through our Early Intervention program is critically important to assure those children and their families receive the training and treatment necessary to maximize their development. Our school age program and sheltered workshop will continue to be a central part of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental disabilities; however, other educational and vocational options must also be available, including expanding our cooperative educational programs with local school districts, along with more supported employment training programs leading to jobs in the community. Perhaps our newest program area, Residential Services, is one that will certainly need to grow over the next several years. With an ever-increasing number of older adults with disabilities who are or will be in need of safe and affordable housing, we must develop the residential options desired by them and their families and provide the support necessary to assure their health and well-being.

By working together to provide vital and meaningful programs responsive to the needs of our people and their families, the future is bright and the potential for our people is limitless.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Shops for Cheaper Insurance Rates

February 18, 2000

With a budget of less than \$8 million, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is spending \$1,125,000 just on insurance.

To rectify the situation, the board has enlisted the help of a specialist from the Ohio Education Association and an insurance broker from Milestone Benefits Agency Inc,

“Cost is our main objective,” President Ron Tate said.

There are many holes in MR/DD’s coverage, including the lifetime maximum coverage amount which is only \$250,000. Most plans provide for at least \$1 million.



A School Day with Kevin Kolman at Happy Hearts

March 19, 2000

Kevin Kolman, 7, swings in the fishnet as he protects his favorite Dr. Seuss book. March 19, 2000.

In every Happy Hearts classroom there's a teacher and at least one assistant. Happy Hearts teachers like first year teacher Melissa Hunter understand the importance of structure and routine in a positive learning atmosphere for mentally retarded students, some who will not be able to be integrated into a regular school system.

A typical Wednesday in Melissa Hunter's class starts with breakfast at 9 a.m., followed by learning time, story time and lunch at 11:30. In the afternoon, there's a group activity, arts and crafts, writing and free time. The daily schedule stays the same except at

10 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 1 p.m., and the students know when and where to go throughout the day. They love their structure and there are no surprises, Melissa Hunter said.

The eight students in her class range in age from 7 to 13, and she classifies her class as "intermediate." This is Melissa Hunter's first year teaching special needs students. For six years she worked in the Canton public school system with normal children, but there were special needs students in her room and she took a special interest in them. She symbolizes the dedication, patience, and pride of Happy Hearts teachers. She said that her students' accomplishments stem from self-satisfaction with what they're doing. "We work really hard promoting independence in here," teacher Melissa said.

Happy Hearts students function at different levels and they learn different skills in different educational time frames. Some aren't able to study academic subjects while others can. Some have to learn physical control and some need therapy. Happy Hearts works with children with mental, emotional, and physical handicaps, according to Director of Education Anne Zeitler. "We don't necessarily classify them by their disabilities. It's how they function."

Four satellite locations are located in Ashtabula County apart from the main school in Kingsville. There is an early intervention site in Andover for children two and younger. A site is located at Austinburg Elementary in the Geneva Area City School District, another at Wallace H. Braden Junior High School in the Buckeye Local School District, and two locations at St. John and St. Paul Catholic School.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities Approves Preschool Program

August 29, 2000

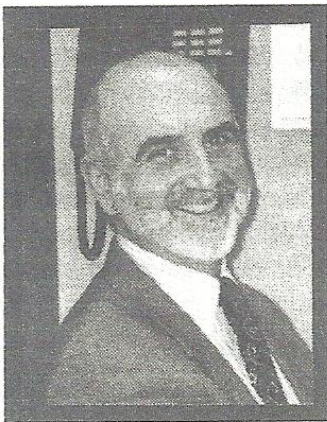
Advancing education is just as important to the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities as it is to any other school district. The Board took steps for its students during its regular meeting Thursday evening. First, the Board approved a preschool program that will include both Happy Hearts students and other children. Information about the program was provided by Superintendent Larry Korland and Anne Zeitler, director of educational Services at Happy Hearts.

The students will attend school in Happy Hearts classrooms. Enrollment has been on a first-come, first-serve basis. There probably will be two units, Superintendent Korland and Director Zeitler said. Six staff members are needed to run a unit. The all-day program will run four days a week at a \$50 fee. Parents are responsible for the transportation of students who are not part of Happy Hearts, Director Zeitler and Superintendent Korland said the school year will run in conjunction with the Happy Hearts calendar.

In other business, the Board renewed Happy Hearts satellite unit agreements with Geneva Area City Schools and Ss. John and Paul Catholic High School as originally approved July 22, 1999.

Superintendent Larry Korland Explores Residential Services

September 23, 2000



To Larry Korland, Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, identifying the scope of the growing need for residential services for people with mental and developmental handicaps is as easy as looking through a shotgun house. At the Board's regular meeting recently, he pinpointed lack of adequate funding as the core of the problem.

He said that thousands of people across the state need residential support as the population of mentally handicapped people over the age of 40 who live with one or two elderly parents increases. There is no solid program to provide for them when their parents die or can no longer care for their adult child.

The Ashtabula County MR/DD Board is joining several similar agencies seeking volunteers to attend a rally in Columbus on October 3rd. Known as the "It's Our Turn," rally, it will take place at 2 p.m. on the State House lawn.

Superintendent Korland pointed out that while state general revenue in the last decade has grown nearly 70 percent, MR/DD revenue has increased less than 32 percent in the last decade. People attending the rally will ask legislators to adequately fund essential residential services, he said.

Board member Miriam Cartner said she is concerned about the issue to the point that she believes it is a crisis for older mentally handicapped people.

Reporting that a proposal for funding an early intervention program submitted to the Board in May, Superintendent Korland said that the proposal was accepted. Funding will be retroactive to September 1 and the program will serve children from birth to age three. "The money will help fund a couple more staff positions," he said. "This is really good news."

People Power

by Larry J. Korland, Superintendent

On October 3, 2000, about a thousand people from across Ohio gathered on the west lawn of the state house in Columbus to let the Governor know that the time is now to provide additional state funding to provide and develop residential services for people with developmental disabilities. People gathered to tell their stories of how long they have waited to receive needed residential supports and assistance. People with developmental disabilities along with family members told of waiting ten years or more for help and some were still waiting. The funding has simply not been available to provide the residential housing that is needed.

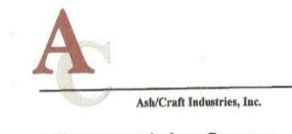
The residential needs for people with developmental disabilities are only going to increase as our population gets older. In Ohio today, there are over 20,000 people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities who are over the age of 18 living at home; of that number, 3,000 of these people are over the age of 40, living with and relying on an elderly parent for their care. Unlike most families whose children eventually move out of the home, these families have cared for their sons and daughters 40 to 50 years without asking for any assistance from the state. This was a choice and decision that these families made many years ago to care for their sons and daughters at home and have quietly done so without asking for help and without complaint. The question now is who will care for their sons and daughters when they are no longer able to do so? Where will their children live? Who will look after them and will their health and safety be assured? These are the questions our parents are asking, and I believe that now is the time for the Governor and the State of Ohio to step forward with the funding necessary.

Over the past ten years the entire state budget has increased by nearly 70 percent. While the department budgets of other state social service and education agencies have kept pace with or exceeded the 70 percent growth of the state budget during these ten years, the budget for the

Department of Mental Retardation has increased only 31.5 percent less than half the growth of the state. The state funding during this period of time has simply not been adequate to meet the needs of people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities, and because of that we are now faced with a statewide residential crisis.

This problem of providing appropriate and adequate residential options for people with developmental disabilities is too large to be solved individually at the local level. To find a fair and reasonable solution it will take a concerted statewide effort of our families working with and talking to their local legislatures, the Governor, and the various state agencies and organizations representing people with developmental disabilities. Our families want to know that their sons and daughters will have a safe and secure place to live when they can no longer care for them. It is not an unreasonable request. The time is now for everyone to come together to find the solution and give our families some measure of peace of mind.

Ash/Craft Board Approves New Hardware and Software



Ken Wiegand, Adult Services Director at Ash/Craft reported that the Ash/Craft Industries Board recently approved new hardware and software that will enable the office to update the payroll and accounting functions and enable them to operate smoothly far beyond the year 2001. The conversion to a Windows-based system will occur over the next few months, Director Wiegand was optimistic about the Ash/Craft specialized payroll system running better than ever.

Poinsettias arrived at the Ash/Craft greenhouses, and the Greenhouse crew is caring for them tenderly so they will be ready for the holidays. "It is amazing how much coddling these beautiful green plants require to turn that lovely shade of red in a few short months. Unlike most of us, poinsettia plants like to be kept in the dark, at least during the lengthening nighttime hours. No night lights here, please!" Director Wiegand said.

Director Wiegand also reported that Ash/Craft Industries has enjoyed a long run of work from its customers, with very little slow or down time recorded over the past year. How do you make a good thing even better? We'll be starting work shortly on a marketing plan for Ash/Craft Industries aimed at increasing the variety of work opportunities for our Ash/Craft employees, and to help ensure a productive new year. The high quality of work produced by Ash/Craft employees is a very positive statement about the abilities and capabilities of person with disabilities. Our current customers know they can depend on the Ash/Craft workforce, and we want them to help us spread the good word!

The Ash/Craft Industries Clerical Team

From scheduling substitutes to preparing client paychecks, the Ash/Craft clerical team plays an important part in almost all aspects of Ash/Craft Adult service programs. This team of four dedicated employees works hard to keep things flowing smoothly and often in the background and usually without thanks or fanfare. A close look at each team member's duties tells the story.

Carol Clayman employed here since 1982, is the Adult Services Secretary. In addition to numerous secretarial tasks, Carol oversees and maintains the accounting, database and payroll systems and provides all of the bookkeeping, banking, and billing functions for Ash/Craft Industries. Carol also serves as the recording secretary for the Ash/Craft Board and has the difficult and challenging task of keeping the Adult Services Director's office organized and running smoothly.

Judy Lemire has worked at Ash/Craft since 1986. Besides greeting everyone at the reception desk, directing visitors to their destinations, answering and routing phone calls, and maintaining hundreds of files, Judy also schedules and coordinates all of the IP meetings for Ash/Craft enrollees. Her ready smile and positive attitude brightens everyone's day.

In the production department, Denise Highley works hard to track daily client attendance, input time sheet data, and run client payroll and various payroll related reports. Denise also answers the transportation radios and phones each afternoon to keep everyone on track on the way home. Denise's lively sense of humor keeps everyone smiling.

Cindy Shearer's day begins at 6 a.m. when she checks the answering service and schedules substitutes for any workshop or school employees who may have called off sick. By 7 a.m. she is at Ash/Craft handling transportation radios, parent calls, and completing the day's substitute arrangements. When things settle down a bit, Cindy helps input data into the computer system for payroll and attendance. Her many years of experience as a bus driver for our program have helped Cindy deal effectively with the many transportation issues that confront us each day.

In an Ashtabula Star Beacon article dated October 10,2000, Lynda Perry, Ash/Craft Supported Employment Coordinator, listed the Ash/Craft employees that are working in the Ashtabula community. Titled Supported Employment Partnerships, Lynda lists each client and where they are employed.

- Dick West, Brian Flaucher, and Jim Flower built fence panels at Thomas Fence.
- Mary Soule kept the chalk boards clean at Grand River Academy.
- Gabrielle Sumner kept the floors sparkling at A. Louis Supply
- Frances Hollaman cleaned tables at Park Haven Nursing Home.
- Robert Stewart prepared sandwiches at Subway Sandwich Shoppe
- Theresa Spang operated the dishwasher at Happy Hearts School.
- Dan Hunt Kept things neat and clean at the Mall Food Court.
- Tony Butler loaded the dishwasher at Geneva McDonalds.
- Mike Emory put away the dishes at Bob Evans.

Robert Stewart has been employed by the Subway Sandwich Shoppe since 1995. Mrs. Mae Stewart, his mother, is thrilled with the maturity and independence her son has developed since obtaining this job and she says that Robert's job has brought him to levels she never thought he would be able to attain. Robert's success has been matched by many others over the past several years.

Ash/Craft's supported Employment Department has provided assistance to nearly 100 adults with developmental disabilities through programs designed to meet individual needs. These

programs provide the opportunity for enrolled adults to learn about local jobs that are available and enable them to make informed choices. They receive assistance in obtaining jobs and then are provided with job coaching services, helping them to learn the tasks and to adjust to the emotional and physical demands that a new job presents.

Over 40 companies throughout the county have participated in the programs, many gaining valuable employees in the process. They have been able to tap into a resource that has provided trained, dependable employees who have a support system in place that is not only an asset to the employee, but to the business enterprise as well. The Thomas Family owners of “Best of County” award winning Thomas Fence, believes that their partnership with the Supported Employment Department at Ash/Craft Industries was one of the best decisions that their company has made. Ash/Craft Industries clients have been building fences at Thomas Fence since 1993.

In addition to adults with developmental disabilities, the Supported Employment Department is assisting students at Happy Hearts School in making a smooth transition from school to work. By providing work experiences in conjunction with a classroom component, students are gaining job and employability skills. Students are encouraged to determine their preferences and to make adjustments in their life goals based on their experiences.

Possible Program Changes at Happy Hearts, Ash/ Craft

October 23, 2000

Changes are in the air at Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School.

Larry Korland, superintendent of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, presented a roster of possible changes that the management team suggested. He emphasized all proposals are preliminary and public input will be sought.

“The team has been looking at where the program is and where we want it to go. We looked at the program first, independent from funding. We asked, what do our people need and then put dollar figures to them to see if they are within the realm of reality,” he said.

Proposals include:

- Changing the title of case manager to service coordinator as well as hiring five additional people to handle cases. Case managers juggle as many as 70 cases each per year. That number would be reduced to 20. Some employees would be reassigned, based on their areas of expertise.
- Providing any training made necessary by the reassignments and additional personnel. Funding would come, in part, through Medicaid with the MR/DD Board paying the balance.
- Establishing a centralized intake process.

- Establishing a centralized senior program for residents of Geneva. A significant number of Genevans now are transported to Kingsville for senior programs. Space at the MR/DD case management office along West Main Street would be utilized for this site.
- Increasing the availability of psychological services from one day every other week to one day each week.
- Utilizing local dollars to enable state MR/DD officials to access federal money for the establishment of residential facilities for MR/DD clients.
- Appointing a transportation supervisor.
- Considering other issues like bus replacement, purchasing computer equipment for the transportation department, other equipment replacement, parking lot repair and other general repairs and renovations.
- Considering community programs for clients.

Sometime after the November 16 meeting, MR/DD board members will hold a workshop to review comments made during the session. A survey of families served by Ash/ Craft and Happy Hearts has been distributed as well. Information from the survey and the public hearing, as well as input from affected employees will be gathered and reviewed at the workshop before final decisions are made or any changes are implemented. Some changes are expected to go into effect early next year, while others won't be implemented until later," Superintendent Korland said.

Teachers Express Concerns Over Proposed Changes

November 18, 2000

Proposed changes at Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School drew comment from teachers at Thursday's meeting of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Potential changes were announced in October by Superintendent Larry Korland who reported on findings of the MR/DD management team.

Teacher Alice Cook said she is more concerned about what was not included in those changes than what was included. Cook mentioned three specific areas of concern. She said there is a need for more assistive technology communication, and devices and functional computers for Happy Hearts students who are non-verbal.

Advances in technology have made the devices presently used virtually obsolete, she said. "It's very important that we begin using the technology that is available," Alice said, adding computers in the classroom are discards, which teachers often have to get up and running on their own.

Alice Cook's second concern is lack of cable television access, which makes books the school has received from station WVIZ unusable.

Third, the fact that three satellite sites for special education programs are not wheelchair accessible is a problem in her eyes because it prevents a significant number of Happy Hearts students from benefiting from those programs, she said.

Fellow teacher Meg Haligren said communication devices presently in use not only are in short supply, but do not adequately allow non-verbal students to express their wants and needs.

All input from Thursday, as well as information garnered from questionnaires recently distributed will be reviewed at a board work session set for 6:30 p.m. November 30th.

Shirley Howland, teacher and member of Ashtabula County Employees Association for the Mentally Handicapped, said the association is compiling a list of its concerns to present to Superintendent Korland prior to the work session. The recent management team report will also be reviewed November 30th said Board President Ron Tate.

Mechanic Mike Kushma urged the Board to consider the needs of the MR/DD transportation fleet when discussing funding issues. A majority of the 22 buses in the fleet have more than 100,000 miles on them. Several others range from 150,000 to 250,000 and one has 300,000 Mike said. Ten buses are more than ten years old and four are more than 16 years old. "It's becoming a struggle to keep the older ones up and safe," Mike Kushma said.

MR/DD Board Reviews Budget

December 3, 2000

Members of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities held a work session Thursday to discuss the 2001 budget. There are few changes from last year, according to Treasurer Lori Burdick. One difference is a \$120,000 Prevention, Retention, and Contingency state grant through the Department of Job and Family Services. "The grant has allowed us to considerably expand our services to children and families of early intervention," Superintendent Larry Korland said.

Among the budget items reviewed Thursday were salaries, material, and supplies, equipment, contract repairs, travel expenses, workers' compensation insurance and employee health insurance. Salaries in 2001 will account for more than half of the nearly \$8 million general revenue fund, coming in at \$4.8 million, Treasurer Burdick said. Workers' compensation insurance is based on 4 percent of the total payroll or \$181,000.

Good news for the board this year came with an announcement that health insurance premiums will not increase in 2001. These premiums typically increase by about 14 per cent each year Superintendent Korland said. However, the MR/DD board's participation in a trust made up of other boards across the state enable it to keep premiums the same. The trust, formed about 12 years ago, now has its own staff to administer claims, he said.

"By reducing fixed costs and eliminating the third-party administrator we were able to realize no increase in premiums, at least for this year," Superintendent Korland said.

The financial picture entering 2003, however, does not look as rosy. Treasurer Burdick projects a carryover of \$800,000 going into that year compared to \$2.8 million in 2001 and about \$1.5 million in 2002. The reason for the steadily dwindling carryover is projected increases in

insurance premiums as well as in salaries, per contractual agreements with employees," Superintendent Korland said.

2001

Happy Hearts Outreach Helps Disabled Children in All Locations

C3 - Star Beacon

Thursday, November 9, 2000

Ashtabula County Board of MRDD

AUSTINBURG SATELLITE



Jose Diaz and John Latif sort and count coins during a classroom activity.



Members of the Austinburg satellite class on a recent field trip to Spring Hill Orchards. (Children left to right: Jose Sarna, Craig Rankin, John Latif, Tommy Miles and Jalisa White; Adults: Penny Ellis, Gladys Chadwick, Heather Hayford.)



Evan Sarna (center) listens to the introduction to the current art project with other first grade students.



Jalisa White and Tommy Miles at lunch with other first grade students.



Students working on academic subjects in the morning at SS. John and Paul satellite.

Satellite Classrooms Help Build Important Skills

Attending Happy Hearts School no longer means attending Happy Hearts School, at least for the 32 students with disabilities who attend the satellite classrooms operated by the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in local schools.

The classrooms - two at SS. John and Paul High School and one each at Braden Junior High and Austinburg Elementary - give MRDD students the opportunity to become part of the larger community as they build friendships and benefit daily from interaction with their non-disabled peers. "The atmosphere at SS. John and Paul is geared to helping the MRDD students mature in their actions and improve in their academic subjects, in order to prepare them for a successful future in the world of work," said Pat Mundi-Potts, an MRDD teacher at SS. John and Paul.

"The students are assigned to grade levels with typical children of similar ages," Penny Ellis said of her class at Austinburg Elementary. "All the children in the satellite class have lunch, recess, gym, art and music with classes of the same age level. The friendships that begin here in kindergarten and first grade will have time to flourish and become solid." Each satellite classroom serves eight students and is funded by the ACBMRDD. The teachers and assistants are employees of the board. It's as if an MRDD classroom was picked up and put down in another location," director of educational services Anne Zeiter said.

David Kinter and Mundi-Potts are the MRDD teachers in the classrooms at SS. John and Paul. Susan Blaud and Maureen Hamblin are the assistants. Kim McCoy is the teacher and Barb Carpenter the assistant at Braden.

Heather Hayford and Gladys Chadwick are the assistants working with Ellis at Austinburg Elementary. Academics are a priority in the classroom," McCoy said. Mathematics, language arts, science and social studies are part of the daily schedule. Independent living skills and work skills are also incorporated into the curriculum." The children at the Austinburg satellite attend programs and assemblies with non-disabled students of the same age. In addition, students in the satellite classroom can, depending upon their age and abilities, participate in other classes with non-disabled children. Currently, the older children in the Austinburg satellite spend about a third of their day in regular education classrooms.

The SS. John and Paul and the Braden satellites are both in their sixth year of operation. The Austinburg satellite is now in its second year. The satellites have been well received by the students, their parents and the host schools. "Beth Harley is proud to attend the SS. John and Paul classroom," Beth's mother Marie Harley said. "She tells everyone that she doesn't go to Happy Hearts School. She says Happy Hearts School is for kids, and she's an adult. And she's right." Most importantly, the satellite program has made a big difference in the lives of the students. "The program Ron is currently enrolled in has been very beneficial," Donna Colby said of her son Ron's experience at Braden. "It emphasizes coping skills, community skills and living skills, all of which will help him prepare for life in the real world. Ron's self-esteem continues to be enhanced as the school year progresses."

BRADEN SATELLITE



The classroom has the responsibility of changing the school's message board throughout the school year.



Ron Colby and Kim McCoy solve a math problem on the chalkboard.



John and Adam Herwin work on a classroom computer with Barb Carpenter.

SS. JOHN & PAUL SATELLITE



Hans Stoltz accesses public transportation to a work experience at Genesis Coast Eagle.



The cafeteria at SS. John & Paul provides work experiences for students.

March 5, 2001

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees every disabled child the right to education in public school.

Every school district in the county provides a special education program Anne Zeitler, director of educational services for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabilities said.

But some parents of children with higher needs want their child in a separate facility, Brett Horovath, administrative assistant for Geneva Area City Schools, said.

Happy Hearts School in Kingsville provides school-age educational services for individuals ages 6 to 22, Zeitler said. There are 83 school age pupils. The school also offers pre-school classes for 16 pupils with disabilities and an early intervention program for 55 toddlers and infants, either disabled or typically developing.

“We generally deal with children with more severe disabilities,” Zeitler said “All our classrooms are considered multi handicapped. We have a teacher and a teacher’s aide, with eight children in each classroom. The school also provides therapy services- physical, occupational, speech and language- adaptive physical education and a full-time nurse. The parents and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team feel the students can learn best here,” she said. The IEP team can be made up of social workers medical personnel, case managers, parents or guardians – people who are concerned with a disabled person’s health and welfare. “Parents are an active part of the IEP team. At the beginning of the school year we have IEP development days working directly with the parents and their needs,” she said.

And not all the students who are enrolled in Happy Hearts attend school there, Educational Services Director Zeitler said. “In early intervention, we have a satellite location in Andover. Our school-age pupils, we have three other satellite locations – Austinburg Elementary, a junior high classroom at Braden and two classrooms for high school age at SS John and Paul,” she explained.

Pupils enrolled at the Braden and SS John and Paul satellites come from throughout the county. They are with their peers. At Austinburg the students come from the district. The Austinburg satellite is what we’re working for – to provide services for students who live in the district” Zeitler said. “The students attend there by choice, if the parents choose. We’re assisting them to provide the services,” Director Zeitler said.

Cookies for Students

Happy Hearts cooks Marge Wood (left) and Lorraine Bean (right) made gingerbread cookies for students, including (from left) Joey Burt, Mason Lija, Ali Kister, and Laura Grasser. December 22, 2001. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.



Special Olympian Jim Flower Will Run with the Olympic Torch

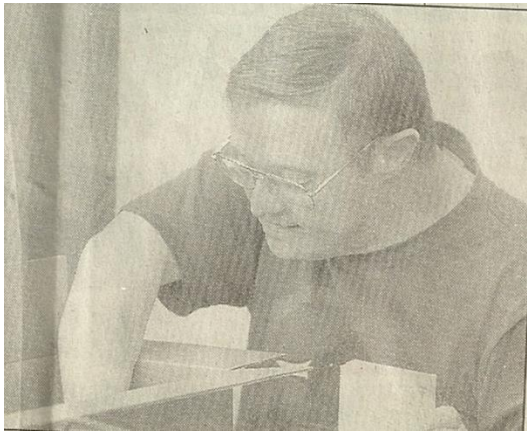
December 31, 2001

Special Olympian Jim Flower will be one of at least three Ashtabula County residents who will run with or carry the Olympic torch through the streets of Erie, Pennsylvania. Jim Flower, a long-time Special Olympian, has been told to arrive at 9:30 a.m. at Hallman Chevrolet for the staging operation. He said he is excited about running in the event after participating in Special Olympics since 1986. He has been training with his father, Richard, at the Ashtabula YMCA.

Jim's brother who lives in St. Louis nominated him to carry the torch. His parents, Richard and Grace, have followed him through his athletic career that has included swimming, softball and cross-country skiing.

After instructions and interviews the runner will be sent to their specific relay segment to receive the torch.

2002



Claude Gaumer packs jewelry boxes at Ash/Craft Industries in March 2002. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo is by Bill West.

An Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated Monday March 18, 2002, narrated some of the history of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries and explored part of the contemporary Ash/Craft story. In 2002, approximately 250 developmentally disabled adults worked from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. five days a week making parts for jewelry boxes, fluorescent lights, and cardboard partitions. They tended plants in the greenhouse and sold them to customers from all over Ashtabula County.

Superintendent Larry Korland said, “All our students and adults are much more like everyone else than different. We see our people with skills and abilities before disabilities. These are individuals that can contribute to the community a variety of ways.”

The story stated that Happy Hearts School served 140 children at the Kingsville main campus as well as in satellite classrooms in Andover, Braden Junior High, SS John and Paul, Austinburg Elementary and Geneva Junior High Schools.

“There are 15 teachers and teacher’s assistants, all of whom are outgoing, creative, and love children with special needs,” said Anne Zeitler, Director of Educational Services.



Rodney Cottrel listens to substitute teacher Carolyn DiLimme read a book during class at Happy Hearts School, March 18, 2002.

Larry Korland plans to retire as MR/DD Superintendent

June 7, 2002

Saying it's the right time, Larry Korland announced Thursday night he will retire as superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities.

He will be replaced by Anne Zeitler, the board's Director of Educational Services, effective August 1.

"I've been working in the field for over 30 years, starting in Geauga County and coming in here in 1976," Larry Korland said in a phone interview. "I just thought this was the right time to be with my family and do some traveling."

He said he and his wife Cassie, have family spread across the country, but they have not yet chosen an itinerary.

The Board's superintendent for the past three years, Larry Korland said he will miss the people with whom he has worked. "I will certainly miss the opportunities to be with the people we serve, both the kids and the adults," he said.

"They have probably taught me more than anyone else about what's important in life."

Despite his retirement, Korland said he will continue to be in contact and support, MR/DD programs, including Happy Hearts School, and Ash/Craft Industries which serve almost 300 children and adults.

Anne Zeitler Becomes Superintendent of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities



ANNE ZEITLER

August 16, 2002

Anne Zeitler has taken over the helm as superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. She replaces Larry Korland, who retired August 1 after three years as superintendent and more than 30 years of service in the field.

It's only been 1 ½ weeks, but I've been organizing and making contacts. I'm also busy working on our annual plan and organizing the leadership team," she said.

Former director of educational services, Anne Zeitler, now oversees Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Industries as well as four satellite schools in Andover, Austinburg, Geneva and

Ashtabula. She's been with MR/DD for 24 years, working in all aspects of the program.

A graduate of Bowling Green University, Anne received her Master's Degree from Cleveland State University. She is also a graduate of LEADERShip Ashtabula County and has earned 64 hours beyond her master's degree at Youngstown State University, Kent State University, and Lake Erie College. She makes her home in Ashtabula Township.

Happy Hearts Music teacher Michael DeMarino took over Anne's old job as Director of Educational Services on August 1st. School begins for students on August 27th.

The school and sheltered industry serve nearly 300 children and adults with mental retardation, autism, and other developmental disabilities in Ashtabula County. Part of the mission of the program is to make sure that independence, growth, challenge, and pride remain important factors in their client's lives outside of school and work, Zeitler said.

Superintendent Zeitler Has a Quiet First Day

August 28, 2002

It was a pretty quiet day at Happy Hearts School, Superintendent Anne Zeitler said. Freshly waxed floors, newly painted walls, and a big pot of colorful petunias greeted 140 children. "We're off to a good week," Anne said. "Everyone arrived safely."

Tuesday was Superintendent Zeitler's first day of school since taking the job as top administrator. She visited classrooms, talked with teachers and of course, had meetings to attend. She replaced Larry Korland who retired August 1 after three years on the job and 30 years of service in the field. Superintendent Zeitler is looking forward to a good year.

2003

Looking at Levies

January 25, 2003

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities voted Thursday to put a new operating levy on the May ballot. The levy will generate about \$2.1 million dollars a year for seven years for the purpose of paying operating expenses, according to Lori Burdick, the district's finance director.

The levy will be 1.33 mills and will be the first new levy on the ballot since November 1990.

In other news, Superintendent Anne Zeitler announced that an in-service is planned for district's teachers on February 17. Teachers will listen to presentations on autism, severe behavior problems and recognizing and preventing child abuse.

In its organization meeting Thursday, the Board:

- Elected Ron Tate as president, Robert Taylor as vice president, and Miriam Cartner as recording secretary.
- Maintained the time and date of regular meetings at 6:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month.
- Appointed members to the ethics committee, which is required by law to review all direct service contracts and conflicts of interest.

MR/DD Board Will Ask for Operating Levy

February 19, 2003

Projecting a \$1.2 million deficit by 2008, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities will ask voters to approve a new seven-year operating levy in May.

In the past few years, MR/DD has been squeezed by funding declines from state and federal sources and a legislative mandate to expand its staffing, Finance Director Lori Burdick and board President Ron Tate told the county commissioners Tuesday. "Everything pretty much flat-lined for us so the levy money is pretty much the only new thing we can tap into," Finance Director Burdick said.

Presented with that scenario, County Commissioners Robert J. Boggs and Joe Moroski passed a resolution to submit a new 1.33 levy to voters, with Deborah A. Newcomb absent because of a family emergency. If ratified, the levy is expected to generate \$2.1 million for MR/DD.

About 70 percent of the Board's funding already arrives through three levies that total 3.83 mills, Board President Tate said. The remainder of its approximately \$9 million budget is fueled by state and federal funding.

Commissioner Boggs said MR/DD's situation was not a surprise because the commissioners had conducted a budget hearing with the board at the end of last year.

By 2008, MR/DD estimates employee insurance costs will more than triple the 2002 rate of \$1.28 million to reach \$4.25 million. Besides a nationwide increase in insurance figures, MR/DD also will be covering more employees because recent legislation required the board to add several positions, including an investigative services department, a business manager, and a Medicaid services manager. Overall, the board has been forced to double its service support department, President Tate said. Board estimates for 2008 reflect a 42 percent increase in salaries from the 2002 numbers.

In turn, the state has reduced its funding through the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities for 2003. Further complicating matters, Governor Bob Taft has threatened to chop 2.5 percent from the budget of the Ohio Department of Education if the General Assembly fails to deliver a balanced budget to his desk by Thursday.

“Unfortunately, you don’t find out until the letter hits the mail instead of your check,” Lori Burdick said about notification of several previous state cutbacks.

MR/DD programs, which include Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries serve about 500 children and adults.

MR/DD Board Meets and Finances a Heavy Lifter

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities finalized a purchase agreement for a hydraulic vehicle lift with Safetylane Equipment Corporation at its meeting. The company will provide and install the bus garage lift at Ash/Craft Industries at a cost of \$29,746. The lift will be delivered early this week and installation will begin soon. The new lift will be able to hold buses weighting up to 35,000 pounds. It will be used to lift buses, delivery trucks and community employment vehicles for repairs. The district doesn’t foresee any additional costs beyond the agreement of \$29,746, said Mike Kushma, the senior mechanic at Ash/Craft Industries.

Addressing other business, the Board formed a Levy Committee that will meet every Wednesday at the Special Olympics Pavilion between Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School. The Board voted at its January meeting to place a 1.33 mill operating levy on the May ballot. The levy will generate about \$2.1 million a year for seven years. Superintendent Anne Zeitler announced that a February 17 in-service taught teachers about positive behavior supports and recognizing child abuse. She also announced that March is MR/DD Awareness month.

In other matters the Board:

- Announced a March 8 spaghetti dinner to benefit Ashtabula County Special Olympics and the Ohio Special Olympic games.
- Accepted a \$2,630 donation from the Ashtabula Lodge #547 of the Loyal Order of Moose to Happy Hearts School. The donation was in care of Donald Coulson.
- Purchased \$4,431 worth of physical therapy equipment from Rifton, a physical therapy company.
- Approved a contract with Ziegler Heating for Ash/Craft Industries.
- Hired Karin Powell and Johanna Roosa as bus drivers and Roy Allen and Randy Johnson as substitutes.
- Accepted the resignation of Shelly Sarna from her position as temporary teacher’s assistant and Tricia Davis from her position as vehicle operator.

House Bill 94 forces MR/DD Board to Hire New Staff

March 24, 2003

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities had to add several positions because of Ohio House Bill 94, which requires it to administer Medicaid services. The board spent \$370,834 on salaries and benefits to create several new positions that

the bill requires, said Financial Director Lori Burdick. The changes were made for this school year.

The Board received equity money of \$413,510 in calendar year 2002 to be used for two years to help pay for the positions. However, the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities also cut the board's operating subsidy funding by about \$100,000 this year, a cut that will continue annually according to Director Burdick.

In personnel matters, the Board transferred four case-management workers to services coordinators and replaced the services coordinators with new staff. It also added a habilitation manager to help individuals with developmental disabilities acquire new skills and live independently. The board also hired two agents to investigate reports of abuse or neglect and is still looking for a person to fill the position of Medicaid services manager.

House Bill 94 also required the Board to establish a Medicaid risk fund and set aside money to cover expenses for Medicaid programs in case a levy is not passed.

Anne Zeitler, Board Superintendent, said that it is trying to pass a levy to pay for mandates and general operating expenses. She said that House Bill 94 emphasizes insuring the health, safety and welfare of individuals with mental retardation and developmental disabilities and although the added positions have added a financial burden on the board, it has improved its services. "We've certainly benefited from it," she said.

Approximately 500 people are eligible for MR/DD services in Ashtabula County.

MR/DD Board Will Recognize Staff at December Dinner

November 27, 2003

Ashtabula County's Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities announced Wednesday that its staff recognition dinner will be held December 10th at the Ashtabula Country Club. The Board oversees Happy Hearts School, which serves 150 developmentally disabled children, and Ash/Craft Industries, where about 275 disabled adults work five days a week.

In the meantime, the Board is busy working on its annual plan for 2004, Superintendent Anne Zeitler said. A second meeting to gather the community's thoughts was held Monday afternoon, with about a dozen people attending. "We're hoping people will continue to share their thoughts with us," she said.

The Board also:

- Renewed an agreement with the Ohio School Council and the Illuminating Company.
- Prepared for spring vocational certification for employment services from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.
- Received the news that MR/DD's preschool program was in compliance with the Ohio Department of Education.
- Thanked the levy committee for its hard work in helping pass the 1.33 mill seven-year operating levy on the November 4th ballot.

2004

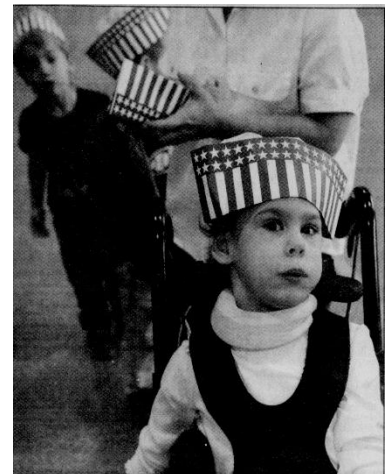


The ARC of Ashtabula County held its first Buddy Walk in October 2004 which benefitted people with disabilities or mental retardation and their families.

Students Participate in a Gym-a-thon for Jim

October 14, 2004

Kenna Gribbons participates in the "Gym-a-thon" to raise money Wednesday at Happy Hearts School for Special Olympian Jim Flower's trip to Japan.





October 14, 2004. Bailey Beres participates in the Gym-a-Thon at Happy Hearts School to raise money for Olympian Jim Flower's trip to Japan. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Bill West.

by Traci Shuman

Students at Happy Hearts School walked, ran, strolled and skated around the gym Wednesday to help send their friend Jim Flower to Japan for the Special Olympics this winter.

Jim, 24, is one of just a handful of Special Olympics Ohio participants chosen to go to Nagano, Japan for the World Special Olympics. Jim will represent the United States in cross country skiing from February 26 to March 5.

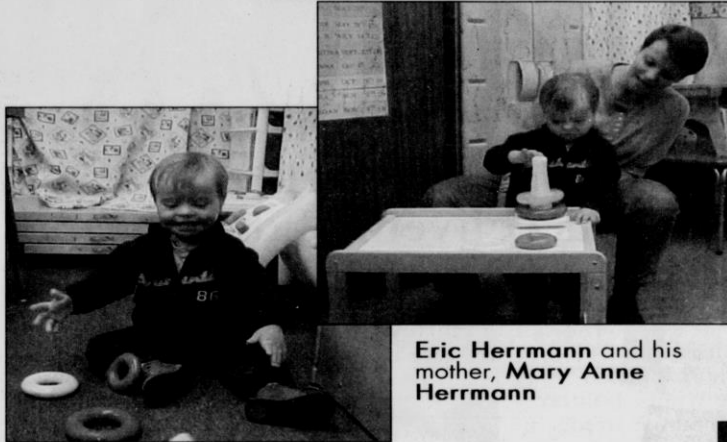
"We're just so proud of him," Tracey Cory, teacher assistant at Happy Hearts said. "I'm sure he'll represent the U. S. well."

During the Gym-a-Thon for Jim, preschool and school age children at Happy Hearts donated time and energy, as parents and community members made monetary donations to support him. Cory and Rose McKeithlan, nurse's assistant, organized the event to help raise money for Jim's trip, for which he must raise a total of \$3,000. Until the snow starts flying, Jim will spend his free time preparing for the event in Japan by working on strength and endurance. Jim actively participates in other sports, including softball and bowling. He has thus far earned 138 medals and 118 ribbons for various athletic competitions.

Jim also trains at the YMCA three days a week for 45 minutes before he starts his workday at Ash/Craft Industries. Friends at Happy Hearts are anxious to tip their hats and bid Jim a fond farewell when he leaves for Japan in February.

We couldn't be more proud," Rose McKeithlan, nurse's assistant at Happy Hearts said.

THINK ABILITY FIRST!



Eric Herrmann and his mother, **Mary Anne Herrmann**

"Early Intervention has been a life saver for us. We had no idea what to expect or where to turn. Everyone in this program is wonderful! Eric has made tremendous progress with the help of his therapists. They all treat him like one of their own family members, which makes a great impact on him and us (his parents)! We want to thank each of them for a job well done."

Mary Anne Herrmann, at Happy Hearts School

"Coming to Ash Craft is great because I really like seeing my friends. I like making up jewelry boxes and working on my computer. I'm getting pretty good at it."

Audrey Thomas, AshCraft Industries



"I have worked at the Mall for 10 years. I really like the people at the Mall and I like Deborah, my supervisor."

Nancy Freeman, Ashtabula Mall



Calendar at a Glance

December 2004

Now thru December 21 Greenhouse Poinsettia Sale (Mon.-Fri. 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.)

December 1, Trim-a-Tree for students at Happy Hearts School

December 14, Santa Visit Happy Hearts

December 15, Employee Recognition Dinner

December 22, Christmas Recess

January 2005

January 3, Program resumes

January 17, Martin Luther King Day (Program closed)

February 2005

February 14, Valentine Dance, AshCraft Industries - ARC of Ashtabula County

**For more information regarding services provided by the
The Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD**

Please call 440-224-2155.

Holiday Concert to Benefit Happy Hearts School

December 12, 2004



Sharon Hopper will be performing at First Church of God on December 12 and at the Ashtabula Mall Community Center on December 21. All of the concert proceeds will go to charity and the second concert is to benefit Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. A collection will be taken to buy needed playground equipment for the school which along with Ash/Craft Industries serves about 300 adults with developmental disabilities.

2005

uesday, February 16, 2005

OPENING DOORS FOR 50 YEARS The Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD 1955



First location "Opens Doors" at First Methodist Church - March 1955



Happy Hearts "Opens Doors" - August 1968



Ash/Craft Industries "Opens Doors" - March 1978

2005

In March of 1954, a group of parents of children with disabilities met and formed the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children. One year later, March 1955, because of the efforts of this group, Happy Hearts School opened at the First Methodist church of Ashtabula. Parents were obligated to pay \$6.00 per week which paid expenses, including one teacher and assistant.

From 1956 through 1968 Happy Hearts School was housed in various locations throughout Ashtabula County, and levies were approved by Ashtabula County voters. Senate Bill 169 was passed which mandated the creation of the Board of Mental Retardation in 1967 and in 1968 Happy Hearts School's current building was built. By 1970 the program had grown to provide services to 233 children and adults, and a fleet of 8 new buses were purchased. In 1977, the construction of the Ash/Craft Industries building began and the Ash/Craft Board adopted their constitution.

Today, the Ashtabula county Board of MR/DD provides services to over 500 children and adults with mental retardation and developmental disabilities, thanks to the ongoing support of citizens of Ashtabula County.

Through the years, we continue to serve families and individuals with developmental disabilities, always remembering to... **Think Ability First.**

Calendar at a Glance

February 2005

- Feb. 11, Valentine Dance - Ash/Craft
Sponsored by ARC
- Feb. 14, Valentine Dance - Happy Hearts School
- Feb. 17, ACBMRDD Board Meeting
- Feb. 21, Marketing Our Schools Staff In-Service

March 2005

- MARCH IS MRDD AWARENESS MONTH
- March 2, Read Across America - Dr. Seuss's Birthday
- March 17, Open House, marking 50 years (AC & HHS)
- March 17, St. Patrick's Day Celebration - Happy Hearts School
- March 17, ACBMRDD Board Meeting

MISSION

The mission of the Ashtabula county Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is to assist eligible individuals with developmental disabilities in choosing and achieving a life of increasing capability such that they can live, work and play in the community, and to assist and support the families of these individuals in achieving these goals.

For more information regarding services provided by the
The Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD
Please call 440-224-2155.

Fifty Years of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries



January 30, 2005

Happy Hearts School alumni who now work at Ash/Craft Industries are (standing from left) Dan Custead, Claude Gaumer (seated from left) Rena Hudson and Diane Dickson.



Students have been coming to Happy Hearts School for 50 years to learn. Students (from left) Nathaniel Emerick, Nicole Madden, and Michael Spaulding attend a class.

Fifty Years of Happy Hearts

January 30, 2005

During its past 50 years of existence, Happy Hearts School has overcome many challenges and to celebrate its 50th Anniversary, the School and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is throwing a six-month party.

“Opening Doors for 50 Years,” will be the theme for the anniversary celebration that will begin in March and continue through September. Several committees have been formed and plans are in progress to commemorate the start of Happy Hearts School.

Parent, Board member, and more solid than a brick foundation supporter Inez Gaumer recalled Happy Hearts started with an ad in the Ashtabula Star Beacon asking if any families were interested in starting a school for the mentally retarded. Five families met who were bound together by the common goal of seeking to find a way for their children to learn and develop despite the dismal prognosis from their family doctors.

The doctors gave Inez and her husband Stanley that dismal prognosis when they advised them to put their son, Claude, in an institution and forget about him. The same doctors also told the Gaumers that Claude, who has Downs Syndrome, would never walk, talk, or function well.

Gene Moroski, of Ashtabula and his ex-wife Nadine had a similar experience. Their doctors gave them two choices about the future of their son Larry, who also was born with Downs Syndrome. The choices were putting him in a state institution or keeping him at home, “meaning keep him inside the house where no one would see him,” Gene recalled.

The Moroskis were one of the original five families who formed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens. These parents worked hard together and with the community to open the doors of Happy Hearts School in March 1955. It was located in the basement of Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula with seven students and one teacher. The Council chose the name “Happy Hearts” to convey the message of hope that the school gave to the parents of special needs children and to reflect the generosity of Ashtabula Countians toward any person with a disability. Council continued to oversee Happy Hearts School and, in 1959, voters in Ashtabula County passed an operating levy that opened a new door of many years of support from the community. The 50 Anniversary celebration includes the people of this county. Without them and their support we would not be here,” Gene Moroski said.

In the early 1960s, the Council was able to add a sheltered workshop, preschool, and home visitor programs as well as an addition of several classrooms. During this time, Claude Gaumer began his education at Happy Hearts. “His Happy Hearts Education has helped him tremendously in his development. We’ve always had such a dedicated staff who really cares about their students and clients,” his mother said.

As student enrollment increased, so did the need for space and Happy Hearts opened its doors in various locations, including the Austinburg Grade School building where Dorothy Bishop of Ashtabula began a 22-year teaching career with Happy Hearts. “I worked with the teenagers teaching them home skills. I loved them all and really enjoyed working with them,” she said.

In 1966, the voters of Ashtabula County approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school building. The Kingsville Township location of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft permanently opened its doors in 1968.” We have progressed from the basements of churches and the old Children’s Home to this beautiful building that is beautifully maintained” Gene Moroski said.

Since that time, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft have far surpassed the dreams of those few parents who met in 1954. Now under the direction of Ashtabula County Board of Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft serve more than 570 people throughout Ashtabula County in a variety of ways. The benefits to mentally retarded and developmentally disabled children and their parents include bus transportation, hot breakfasts and lunch, physical, speech and occupational therapies, adaptive physical education, academic learning and self-care skills, a full-time nurse, Early Intervention, five satellite locations, support services and many others.

The first students at Happy Hearts, now adults, have graduated into Ash/Craft Industries which is a way for them to continue to learn and truly be productive. “Larry gets a paycheck every two weeks. He loves cashing that check, and he is so proud of it,” Gene Moroski said.

Claude Gaumer who is now 49, not only walks, talks and loves his work at Ash/Craft he participates in Special Olympics where he plays softball, runs track, bowls every Saturday and he is an excellent swimmer. “The program gives back to the community, the clients spend their paychecks here and there is a real production of goods being made and grown,” Inez Gaumer said.

The 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee has many things planned, including two open houses, a professionally made historical video and a booth with a story board to be at the Ashtabula Home and Garden Show at Ashtabula Mall in March. “The community really needs to attend the open houses and see the progress of how this program has grown because of the support of the community,” Gene Moroski said.

MR/DD Board Could Face Budget Cuts

March 16, 2005

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities could face a budget cut of nearly \$1 million by the end of June.

According to MR/DD Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, after receiving funds under the Community Alternative Funding System for about 15 years, the Board expects to lose these funds by June 30 of this year. She said that although the loss of funds puts extra pressure on the Board, the Board is operating on a day-to-day basis since the information changes regularly and it plans to address the new challenges creatively.

. “The board will be proactive and prepare for this loss of funding” Superintendent Zeitler said. “It’s out of our control; we just have to be pro-active. We may need to make some changes. When you’re preparing for a \$1 million loss of funding, changes are to be expected.”

Superintendent Zeitler stated that the Board would do its best to make sure the changes have minimal impacts on the employees and the community. She said that for the present, Board

members were discussing best and worst-case scenarios, but it hasn't made any decisions about actions it would take. "No matter what the result, the Board will function as usual. We have goals set for ourselves and we're not going to let this interfere," she said.

New Directions

The newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

Spring 2005

Opening doors for 50 years

High marks for program ACBMR/DD earns 4-year accreditation

The Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD has received a four-year accreditation from the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The accreditation survey took place in the fall and assessed the quality of services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities and the Board's compliance with federal and state rules and statutes.

At the time of the assessment, the program earned seven commendations, which Don Bashaw, the assistant deputy director of the Ohio Department of MR/DD, called remarkable.

"We have come a long way in the last two years," ACBMR/DD superintendent Anne Zeitler said. "Receiving the four-year accreditation gives us the opportunity to receive the highest accreditation award given by the State of Ohio."

The ACBMR/DD's goal is now to obtain CARF certification in all areas.

"With a four-year accreditation and CARF certification in all areas, we will be eligible for a five-year accreditation in 2008," Zeitler said.

When the accreditation survey was completed, Bashaw credited the ACBMR/DD leadership team with creating a culture of excellence which enhances the services provided to children and adults with disabilities.

"I want to commend everyone for their work in our program and their efforts in helping us achieve this standard of excellence," Zeitler said.

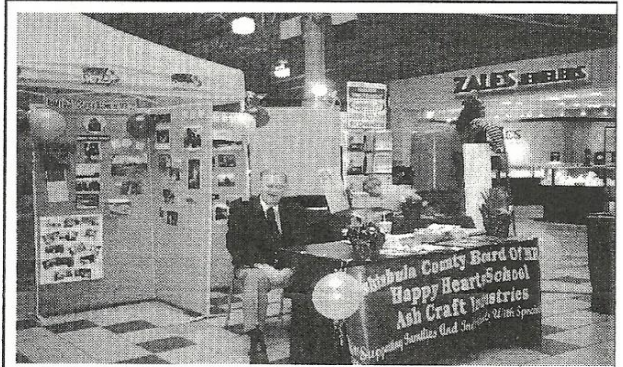
The ACBMR/DD mission

The mission of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is to assist eligible individuals with developmental disabilities in choosing and achieving a life of increasing capability such that they can live, work and play in the community, and to assist and support the families of these individuals in achieving these goals.

Celebrating a half century of service

In the early 1950s, mentally retarded children were not permitted to attend public schools, and Ohio law made no other provision for their education. To address this obvious inequity, several Ashtabula County families met on March 14, 1954 and formed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens and began to explore the possibility of starting a school for mentally retarded children.

Through hard work and the generosity of many people and organizations, Happy Hearts School opened a year later in the basement of the First Methodist Church on



GENE MOROSKI, who helped establish Happy Hearts School 50 years ago, mans the ACBMR/DD booth at the Home and Flower Show in March.

Elm Avenue in Ashtabula. There were five students in the first class, and they were taught by Esther Bennett, who also served as the school's administrator, bus driver and cook for the hot-lunch program.

This March, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities began a year-long commemoration of the efforts of those pioneers and of the people who have followed them. Under the banner "Opening Doors for 50 Years," a number of events are being planned to mark this milestone and provide a starting point for facing the challenges that await us in the next 50 years.

Ashtabula County Fair

August 7, 2005

Nadine Moroski of Kingsville recalled working bake sale booths 50 years ago at the fair to help Happy Hearts School. “Our first year we made candy and handed out literature,” she said. “It helped so much and people were so good about helping us.”

Every year when she started making candy her son Larry, who goes to Ash/Craft Workshop, would excitedly ask, “Where are we going? To the fair?”

Happy Hearts Marks 50 Years

September 2005

Happy Hearts School is celebrating 50 years of operation and to celebrate there will be an open house held. The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is sponsoring an open house “Opening Doors for 50 Years,” that will be held September 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the school, 2505 S. Ridge East and Ash Craft Industries, 5959 Green Road, Kingsville. The day will feature tours of both facilities and a video depicting the history of Happy Hearts and Ash Craft Industries. Parents who came together in 1955 to create Happy Hearts School also will be available to discuss 50 years of memories. Refreshments will be served throughout the event. The community is invited to attend and to share with staff and students the story of Happy Hearts.

September 29, 2005

A large inflatable birthday cake greeted visitors to Happy Hearts School, Thursday. The school held an open house in the afternoon and evening. The open house allowed former students and parents a chance to come back and visit said Happy Hearts Principal Ken Schmiesing. Some of the students were excited because they saw some of their former friends and teachers, Schmiesing said. It was a nice turnout. The event was also open to the public. Ash/Craft industries also celebrated with an open house.

2006

Protecting Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled People from Abusers

April 5, 2006

Anne Zeitler, Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Superintendent, says that although getting an abuser listed on the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is a slow process, the registry is the most effective available tool to protect mentally challenged people from known abusers.

Created to keep abusive employees from working in the system, the registry requires the State of Ohio to review each report of abuse, neglect, or misappropriation to determine whether the report has a reasonable basis. The county MR/DD Boards initiate the investigations and notify the state. If the accusation is criminal, law enforcement officials are notified. Investigations sometimes have criminal and legal implications, taking a case out of the hands of the MR/DD board and adding years to the process. If allegations are substantiated, the state director places the employee's name on the registry.

Time and locality often limit the effectiveness of the registry. It often takes years for an allegation of abuse to make its way through the system and an abuser being listed on the registry. The registry is also limited to the State of Ohio, as many states don't sponsor a registry and no national registry exists. The only thing stopping a known Ohio abuser from crossing state lines for employment are employers willing to search online registries in each state.

"Even background checks won't catch a lot of the criteria for abuse in the mentally challenged. That is why this database is so very valuable to us. It is the first line of defense in catching abuse," Superintendent Zeitler said.

According to Superintendent Zeitler, though it is the most effective and often only paper trail of abuse and misconduct in the industry, there are holes in the abuse registry system that could potentially allow an abuser to work with the developmentally challenged for years after an allegation of abuse. "It is possible that an abuser could work in other facilities after being fired for abuse between the time of the allegation and the time they are registered online. If they are not listed on the registry, there is no way to track misconduct other than a routine background check, which doesn't catch everything," she said.

The MR/DD Superintendent explained that once a person is listed on the abuse registry, he or she is forever banned from working with mentally retarded patients in Ohio. The abuser's name will

remain on the registry for a minimum of five years. Ohio employers are required to check the abuser registry before hiring an applicant and are encouraged to periodically check employee's names with the system. In a recent case, it took three years between when a resident at a local home complained of being threatened and when the abuser was finally listed on the registry. Because many of the accusers of abuse are mentally and cognitively impaired and may be confused about the intentions or body language of a care worker, investigations into abuse must be especially complete. "We have to be fair to everyone, including the person being accused of abuse. The truth comes out during the process and even if abuse is substantiated, the accused must be allowed due process," she said.

Superintendent Zeitler recognizes that the system isn't perfect, but she believes that it is a good system. "This is a process in which we try to be as thorough and fair in our investigation as possible. We are not dragging our feet through investigations, but given the circumstances, we have to be as thorough as possible," she said.

Buddy Walk, Ride set for Sept. 9

Aug 31, 2006

The 2006 Arc of Ashtabula County Buddy Walk and Ride will be Sept. 9 at Lake Shore Park.

Registration for the Buddy Ride with motorcycles will begin at 10 a.m. with the last bike going out at 11:30 a.m. Registration for the Buddy Walk will begin at 1 p.m. and the Walk will begin at 2 p.m. All registrations are at the large pavilion by the Lake. Riders and Walkers will all meet at the Large Pavilion for food, entertainment and prizes. The Buddy Walk and Ride will go on rain or shine. The proceeds of The Arc of Ashtabula County Buddy Walk will benefit both NDSS and The Arc of Ashtabula County.

The Arc of Ashtabula County founded Happy Hearts School and provides ongoing support to Happy Hearts School and Ashcraft Industries as well as other services for those with mental retardation and their families.

MR/DD Employees Auction Cold Snowmen for Palm- Warm Cash

Dec 14, 2006

Showing off their snow men and women are, from left, Mary Lou Moody, Nancy Frey, Lisa Fuller-Grippi, Vicki Sylvester, and Julie Spangler.



Frosty and his cool and smooth wooden pals have rolled into town to help raise money for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities' United Way campaign.

"This year, the five departments of the MR/ DD have each decorated a snowman that will be raffled off to our employees and all the money will go the United Way," said Lisa Fuller-Grippi, service support administrator for MR/ DD's Community Support Services.

Tom Rose of Rose Lumber in Conneaut donated the wood and Greg Stolfer, a shop teacher at Edgewood Senior High School, cut out the snowmen for the project, Lisa said. Each of the snowmen, or snowwomen, stand about 5 feet tall and were creatively decorated by employees of Happy Hearts School, Ash/ Craft Industries, Transportation, the MR/ DD Board Office and Community Support Services.

"Our goal this year is to raise \$975,000 for the 26 local agencies we support," said Randy Jones, executive director of the United Way of Ashtabula County. "Every year, the MR/ DD does such a wonderful job of raising money for us."

"About 35 people contributed their creativity by donating supplies or helping to decorate our snowman," said Deborah Hill, Ash Craft activities coordinator. "We all had a great time, and the campaign enables us to help others who are less fortunate."

2007

Shiny Floors and Faces Open School at Happy Hearts School

Wednesday August 29, 2007



Kim Lambert (center) a teacher's assistant at Happy Hearts School works with Zach Henson (left) 15, and Alice Kangas, 13, the first day of school at Happy Hearts. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

Shiny floors, shiny faces, and equally bright bulletin boards greeted students at Happy Hearts School on their first day back from summer vacation. Happy Hearts provides education and inspiration to developmentally disabled and mentally retarded pupils ages 3 to 21 living in Ashtabula County.

"My kids did wonderful. They came in happy, they stayed happy all day and went home happy," said Michelle Bentley who is a special education teacher of the primary age group. "I'm excited to see how they will develop new friendships and try new things," she said.

"We are looking forward to a very productive year," said Michael DeMarino who is the director of educational services. "Our focus, as always, is to provide the best educational environment and support for our students and their families." He also praised the maintenance and teaching staffs for all their hard work in getting the building ready for school. "Thanks to their dedication, we have a safe and attractive learning environment."

Elaine Marcy who has been the school nurse for more than 17 years, said it is always exciting to see how the kids have grown and progressed over the summer. "The first day always brings challenges, but we work through them one at a time and then by the end of the first week it all just flows," she said.

One of the newer members of the Happy Hearts teaching staff, Michelle Diemer, who is the advanced age special education teacher, said every day is interesting and exciting, not just the first day. "It is a new school year with new routines, new friends and new adjustments for everyone," she said.



Fourth Annual Buddy Walk and Ride

September 6, 2007

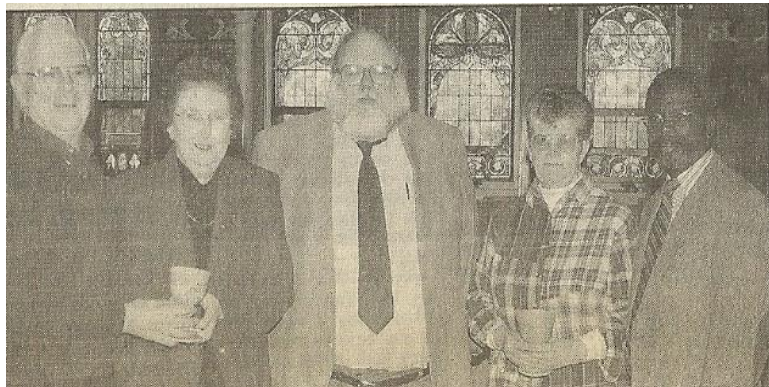
Ray Herrmann (left), Eric Herrmann (center) and Christie Church, all of Conneaut, walk during the Buddy Walk and Ride, an annual benefit for the Association for Retarded Citizens at Lake Shore Park Saturday.

The fourth annual Buddy Walk and Ride will take place Saturday rain or shine at Lakeshore Park in Ashtabula Township. The Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County sponsored the event to raise awareness and acceptance of all people with mental and physical disabilities.

Proceeds benefitted ARC and the National Down Syndrome Society.

Inez and Stanley Gaumer Win Cup of Cold Water Award

December 16, 2007



Reverend John Germaine (center) poses with winners of the Cup of Cold Water awards presented by the Ashtabula Area Ministerial Association. The awards were presented at a Thanksgiving week service that shed light on work done for the benefit of the community. (From left) Stanley and Inez Gaumer, Reverend Germaine, Jeri Bell, and Reverend

Neroy Carter. Jeri Bell was honored for her service as a hospice clown and for providing lap

quilts for people who need them. Reverend Neroy Carter of New Hope Pentecostal Church helped deliver more than 500 wheelchairs to Nigeria. He was also honored for his work in making affordable housing available for senior citizens and physically disabled people. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

Going the extra mile was recently honored by the Ashtabula Area Ministerial Association. Two individuals and a couple received “Cups of Cold Water” awards for their service to the community, said Reverend John Germaine of First United Methodist in Ashtabula. He said the cups are handcrafted by Jim Anderson, a United Methodist minister from Chardon. “It is a community service award that is given to individuals or groups that is given for service beyond the church in the community,” he said.

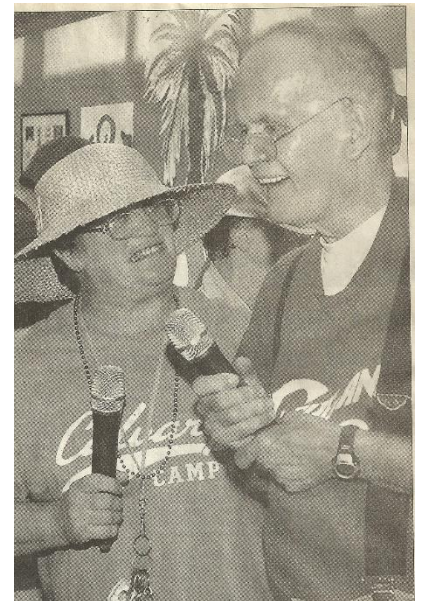
Stanley and Inez Gaumer, of First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula, were honored for decades of service to the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled. For 38 years the Inez Gaumer taught an ecumenical Sunday School class for mentally retarded students. She said her husband Stan also helped with Boy Scouts and Special Olympics. The Gaumer’s also worked on 17 levy campaigns for the Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabilities Board during the last 47 years, Inez Gaumer said. She said she also worked on state and national boards dealing with special needs issues. Inez is a past president of the women’s association of the church and is also a church elder.

2008

Ash/Craft Rewards Clients with An Awards Party

Richard Mast and Bonnie Kray enjoy singing karaoke Friday at the Ash/Craft end of the summer picnic and awards ceremony. August 23, 2008. Ash/Craft clients also participated in various carnival themed activities, played cornhole and took photos. “The clients have all ranges of activities,” said Nancy Ballen, Ash/Craft nurse. “Some of them work in the community,”

There are 12 groups and three classrooms at the facility. A worker within each work group that the teacher recommends was the recipient of an award Friday. “It’s positive reinforcement for the work they’ve done,” Nancy Ballen said. August 23, 2008. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.



Buddy Walk Raises Money for Special Needs People



Oct 12, 2008

More than 100 people walked in the Fifth Annual Buddy Walk at Lakeshore Park in Ashtabula Township, Sunday afternoon. Ashtabula Star

Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

More than 100 people gathered Sunday afternoon to help support special people with special needs. Inez Gaumer, co-chairwoman with Terry Mate, said the fifth annual Buddy Walk was a success as people of all ages were lining up to walk a mile through Lake Shore Park. “The march is to raise awareness of Down Syndrome. Inez stressed that people with Down’s Syndrome are people first and are capable of being educated and accomplishing much in their lives.

Organizers honored individuals and families who raised the most money by allowing them to help lead the walk. The Sundquist family raised \$900 and Claude Gaumer \$509. Inez said the final tabulation of how much was raised would not be completed until mid-week.

Maria Kovacs of Ashtabula joined the walk because of a family connection. “My little sister has Down Syndrome,” she said while starting the walk with dozens of similarly clad walkers in their white and blue tee shirts.

Forgiven, an Ashtabula County Christian Motorcyclist Association, coordinated a ride that raised \$500, said club president Jim Short.

Co-chairwoman Gaumer said proceeds from the event will help a developmentally disabled support group fund a variety of projects at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft. She said the group sends kids to camp, conducts dances, purchases equipment and provides workshops for parents and staff.

The National Down Syndrome Association coordinates similar walks across the country. A lot of local sponsors helped make the event possible, she said.

Voters Endorse MR/DD Renewal Leavy

November 4, 2008

Voters rallied behind a 10-year, 2-mill renewal for the Ashtabula County MR/DD, which oversees Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft. The measure was endorsed by an unofficial 26,367-16,277 total.

2009

Ash/Craft Greenhouse Opens in New Building

April 23, 2009



Richard Stewart stands next to a collectibles display at the Ash/Craft Garden Shoppe on Green Road. Bill West stood the Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.

Excitement swirls inside the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe like dandelion seeds blown in the outside wind. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, the new greenhouse and Garden Shoppe will be hosting a grand opening to launch the new season. The Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe are part of Ash/Craft Industries, 5959 Green Road, between Happy Hearts School and the Ash/Craft workshop.

Ash/Craft Industries is a nonprofit organization that serves the MR / DD adult population with vocation and social skills training, sheltered work shop, community job training and placement services and an adult day activity program, said Lynda Perry who is the director of adult services.

“The Garden Shoppe is so nice. They did a beautiful job,” said Anne Zeitler, superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mentally Retarded/Developmentally Disabled.

Now that the greenhouse has moved from behind the bus garage to its new location along Green Road, it has doubled its former size, allowing Ash/Craft to expand its inventory to include more fall and winter plants and allow the greenhouse, as well as the Garden Shoppe, to be open all year.

“We are all so excited about the move in this direction,” said Sandy Bennett, activities specialist with Ash/Craft for 28 years, who has been working with the consumers on many of the garden gift items for sale in the Garden Shoppe. The workers at the greenhouse are officially known as consumers, because of their MR / DD status as verified and defined by the state of Ohio.

According to Sandy, her consumers will soon be creating the fall items and something extra special for the Christmas season. “We are going to start developing an annual Christmas ornament made by our consumers,” she said.

Just some of the unique items visitors will find in the Garden Shoppe are “Carson” wind chimes, garden-related gift items, bird feeders, bird houses, T-shirts, tote bags, shirts and hoodies with the new Ash/Craft logo, nautical theme items, landscape decorations, Adirondack chairs made by the Edgewood High School woodshop students, and consumer made corn-hole games.

The inside of the greenhouse is bursting with stunning floral varieties by the flat, hanging baskets, window boxes, urns and more. “We have many new varieties of annuals, perennials, grasses, herbs and vegetables,” Director Perry said. “There are many things here like large flower black-eyed Susan’s and the unique screw grass that you can’t get at a big box store.”



Ash/Craft Greenhouse Ribbon Cutting

May 3, 2009

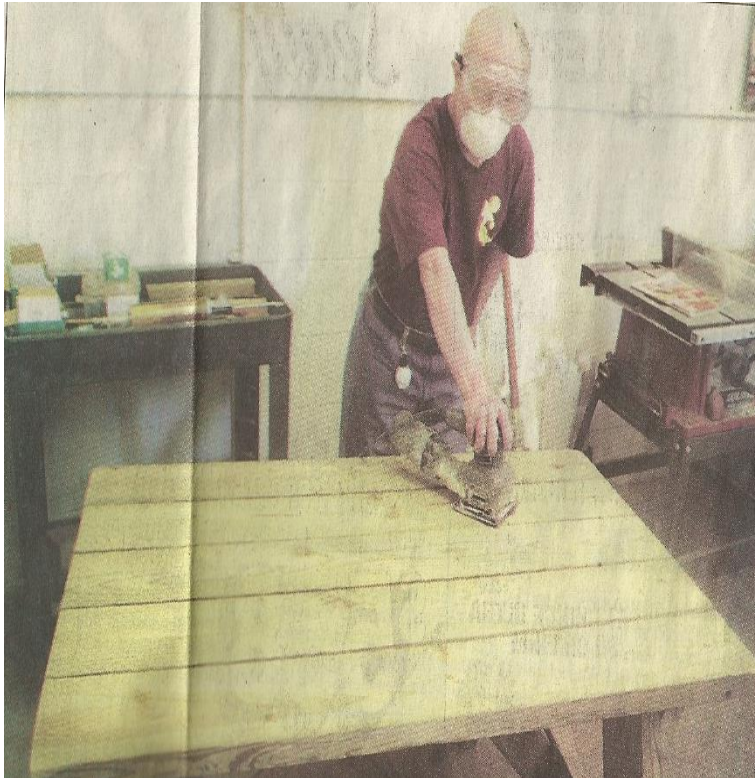
A big crowd was on hand for the April 25 ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe on Green Road in Kingsville Township. Among the dignitaries clustered near the ribbon are Don Cosner, president of the MR/DD Board (standing next to left post); consumers Beth Fogle (next to Cosner) and Jerry Russell (in the ball cap); the Reverend Stephen Long, Ash/Craft Board member (in tie); consumer Richard Stewart (right of long); State Representative Deborah Newcomb (next to Stewart); and Anne Zeitler, superintendent (far right).

Kingsville Township. Fine weather and a good cause highlighted the April 25th grand opening ceremony of the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe on Green Road in Kingsville Township. The new facility is twice the size of the original greenhouse built in 1979 and will be open year around. A variety of garden and gift notions are sold in the new shop, located adjacent to Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries. Members of the Ash/Craft and MR/DD Boards attended the ceremony. Peggy Carlo, Ashtabula County Commissioner, presented a proclamation to the group. Jerry Russell, employee of the greenhouse for 25 years, helped cut the ribbon. Superintendent Anne Zeitler, in her opening remarks, welcomed the group and presented a history of the operation.

2010

Woodworking Department at Ash/Craft Revived

March 8, 2010



Claude Gaumer sands the top of a picnic table at Ash/Craft Industries. The woodworking department was revived this last year after a 16-year hiatus.

Woodworking is the latest opportunity for clients at Ash/Craft industries. Between 150 to 170 developmentally disabled adults work at Ash/Craft Industries creating a variety of products, said Ash/Craft Industries Production Manager Jim Hornbeck. People kept talking about the picnic tables the clients (Ash/Craft workers) built years ago, Hornbeck said. He said the administrators decided to bring wood working back late last spring.

The picnic tables were built at Ash/Craft between 1980 and 1993,

said Linda Moroski, Workshop Specialist. “We’re kind of starting from scratch,” she said of moving her group from floor production to woodworking. She pointed out that several of her clients, including Claude Gaumer, worked in the woodworking area before it was closed. “Claude probably remembers more than I do,” she laughs.

According to Linda, 15 people are employed in the woodworking area, but that will likely be reduced to eight to 10 clients who really enjoy the work and have some proficiency in the craft. In the past year they have sold 40 to 50 cornhole boards and about two dozen picnic tables, Linda said. “We couldn’t keep up with the orders.”

The picnic tables cost \$120 for a 4-foot model to \$175 for the 8-foot table. They are made from treated lumber. Corn hole games range in price from \$105 to \$160. The workshop also builds garden benches and tables and works with Edgewood Senior High School woodshop students on a line of Adirondack chairs.

Ash/Crafts garden shop opens May 1. To place an order before then, call 224-2177. Delivery is available.

MR/DD Board Seeks Renewal Levy

Jul 16, 2010

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities will seek renewal of a 1.33-mill operating levy from voters on Nov. 2. The board voted June 17 to place the renewal on the ballot. The levy expired in tax year 2009, and the final collection will be made this year.

Anne Zeitler, board superintendent, said the countywide operating levy provides funds for the board's educational and vocational training operations, primarily for Happy Hearts School and Ash/ Craft Industries. She said the various programs serve about 500 individuals and their families in Ashtabula County, providing services for infants through adults.

"It's a renewal; it's not a new tax. The levy will not increase taxes," Zeitler emphasized.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Seeks Renewal of 1.33-mill levy

October 26, 2010

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities is hoping Ashtabula County voters will once again vote favorably at the polls on November 2nd. The Board has placed a 1.33 mill renewal levy on the ballot. "For more than 50 years, the Board has served special needs individuals and their families," said Superintendent Anne Zeitler. "This is not a new tax and will not increase anyone's taxes."

The levy is for the current operating expenses of the Board, which includes Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Industries, Early Intervention Program, Pre-School Services, Adult Services, Community Employment, Adult Day Care Services, Community Support Services, Transportation Services, and Investigative Support Services. The levy is over seven years (2010-2016) and will generate about two million dollars per year for the next seven years. It is imperative that the levy passes or we will immediately lose two million dollars," Superintendent Zeitler said.

The Board serves about 500 individuals today. "Our funding from the State of Ohio continues to decrease and we are very dependent on our local support, and we are very grateful to the community's support for us for all of these years," she said.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Honors Employees



September 30, 2010

Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD recently honored 12 employees and one retiree for their years of service. Honorees pictured back row: Arlane Dain; Kathleen Caldwell; Peggy Massi; Lynda Perry; Vickilynn Sylvester. Front row Angela Knapp; Elaine Marcy; Nancy Frey. Not pictured: Lorena Mukina; Joanna Morales; Michelle Valenti; Annette Montgomery; and Bonnie Bashaw.

Not pictured: Lorena Mukina; Joanna Morales; Michelle Valenti; Annette Montgomery; and Bonnie Bashaw.

<p>Vickilynn Sylvester, 30 Years of Service</p>	<p>Arlane Dain Lynda Perry 25 Years of Service</p>	<p>Kathleen Caldwell Elaine Marcy Peggy Massi Lorena Mukina 20 Years of Service</p>	<p>Joanne Morales Michelle Valenti 15 Years of Service</p>
<p>Nancy Frey Annette Montgomery 10 Years of Service</p>	<p>Angela Knapp Five Years of Service</p>	<p>Bonnie Bashaw Retired</p>	

The honorees received special commendations from the Ohio State Legislature signed by Representative Deborah Newcomb, House District 99, and Armond Budish, Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives. Each commendation highlighted the recipient's years of dedicated service.

Timeline, 2000-2010

2000

- **Special Olympians Win**

February 10, 2000

The Ashtabula County Special Olympics group recently took part in the winter games at the Cuyahoga National Recreation Park and came away with numerous honors. Among the local winners in the Nordic Skiing competition were:

Jeff Schultz, gold medalist in the 500 meter 2.37 and gold medalist in the 1-kilometer, 3.59.

William Griswold, silver medalist in the 500-meters, 6.42 and silver medalist in the 100-meters, 51.08.

Jim Flower, silver medalist in the 500-meters, 4.48 and bronze medalist in the 100 meters, 55.28.

Scott Mather, bronze medalist in the 500-meters, 5.15, and bronze medalist in the 100-meter, 57.77 and

Rosemarie Perry, silver medalist in the 100 meters, 3.39.

November 11, 2000

- Fund raiser benefits Happy Hearts School.

Employees of Adelphia Cable raised more than \$1,000 for Happy Hearts School, enabling therapists to buy new physical therapy equipment.

- November 18, 2000

Plan to Move the Retarded Criticized

Private groups supporting the rights of the mentally retarded are divided over a project to move some people out of state-run centers into community-based settings such as group homes.

2001

- Gazette. April 26, 2001. Masons, representing all the Masonic lodges in Ashtabula County, presented a \$1,500 check to Pam Burnett and Connie Payne, co-chairpersons of the Booster Club fund raising committee to help finance the county Special Olympics athlete's trip to the Summer Games in Columbus in June.
- June 19, 2001. Police officers from a variety of area law enforcement agencies put on their running shoes and hit the road to run to raise money for Special Olympics during the Law Enforcement Torch Run.
- Dave Dvorak, financial secretary, Jefferson Council of Knight of Columbus, presented a check to Pam Burnett, treasurer, Ashtabula County Special Olympics on December 5, 2001.

2002

- March 13, 2002

Virginia A. Soliday, who attended Happy Hearts School for many years and worked at Ash/Craft Industries died on March 12, 2002.

- August 2002, MR/DD Superintendent Larry Korland retired August 1 after three years as superintendent and more than 30 years of service in the field. Anne Zeitler, former Director of Educational Services, replaced him.

2003

- The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities met on September 20, 2003, and among other actions approved an agreement with Geneva Area City Schools to continue satellite classrooms in the district. The Board also reminded parents Parent Information Night would be held on September 24 at Happy Hearts School.
- The Board heard from the Levy Committee about its ongoing campaign to get the 1.33 mill operating levy passed in November. They are planning a fundraiser for the week of September 29-October 5 at the Putt-Out Golf course at the Ashtabula Mall.
- The 2003 Ash/Craft Industries, Inc. Board of Directors: Reverend Stephen Long, Chair; Elva Roux, Vice-Chair; Joseph Massi, Secretary-Treasurer; Randy Blum; Richard Flower; Jim Moyer; Robert Norton; Sue Ellen Foote; Hiram Lynch.

2004

- Board members of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in 2004 were Ron Tate, president; Mrs. Miriam Cartner; Don Cosner; Mrs. Janet Neville; and Mrs. Mary Ellen Coneglio.
- Members of the 2004 Graduation Committee were Renee Bell; Sue Bland; Cindy Osburn-Bucci; Cindy Campbell; Alice Cook; Michael W. De Marino; Inez Gaumer; Maureen Hamblin; David Kinter; Jim Kiser; Mo Krumins; Vicki Moyer; and Pat Mundi-Potts.
- The ARC of Ashtabula County held its first Buddy Walk in October 2004 which benefitted people with disabilities or mental retardation and their families.

2005

- After receiving funds under the Community Alternative Funding System for about 15 years, the board expects to lose those funds by June 30 this year, according to Superintendent Anne Zeitler. While this puts extra pressure on the board, she said the plan is to address these new challenges creatively.
- Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries held open houses to celebrate their 50th anniversary of operations, in September 2005. According to this account of the beginning of the School these couples were founding couples:

Present at the Creation

The history of Happy Hearts School and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities can be traced back to a meeting of concerned parents in March 1954 at which the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens was formed. Those at the meeting were:

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Berg; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kapen; Mr. and Mrs. G.L. Klozar; Mr. and Mrs. Gene Moroski; Mr. and Mrs. James Toomey; Mr. and Mrs. Steven Weintz; Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkinson

2006

- April 26, 2006. More than 150 people work at Ash/Craft Industries in Kingsville Township.
- July 18, 2006. A Balloon launch held July 14 during the annual Ash/Craft Industries shop picnic had a patriotic theme. The names and addresses of service men with connections to the sheltered workshop's staff were attached to colorful balloons and launched to float for freedom. The tags encouraged whoever found the balloons to send a card to the serviceman. Nicole Spangler; Barb Ignat; Sandy Bennett; Audrey Thomas; Annette Montgomery; Angela Copeland; and Jenny Richardson helped with the launch. Nancy Vallen, mother of Pfc Aaron Vallen and Vickie Moyer, mother of Lt. Capt. Adam Moyer also helped send the balloons on their mission.

2007

- The Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County sponsored its fourth annual Buddy Walk and Ride at Lakeshore Park on September 8, 2007. The Association sponsors the event to raise awareness and acceptance of all people with mental and physical disabilities. Proceeds benefit ARC and the National Down Syndrome Society.
- Remembering Them.

Judith J. Cusano, a bus driver of Happy Hearts for several years, died January 12, 2007.

Duane C. Dickson. He was active in the Ashtabula County Mentally Retarded Association and served on the Transportation Committee. He died March 30, 2007.

Biddiana M. Kohowski, involved with the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Board. She died on June 26, 2007.

2008

Remember...

- Elva I. Roux, originated and was very involved in the Summer Recreation Program at MR/DD. She has served on the Ash/Craft Board for many years and was currently Vice-Chairman and served on the Ashtabula County Council for Mentally Retarded Citizens. She was also very involved in Special Olympics and worked in many other capacities for the mentally handicapped. She died on December 10, 2008.
- December 19, 2008. Ron Tate Honored for Service on MR/DD Board. Ron Tate served on the Board for 12 years, and during his tenure services to infants, children, adults with developmental disabilities and their families were maintained and improved.

2009

- April 23 2009. Ash/Craft Opens Greenhouse in New Building.
- July 1, 2009. The Ashtabula County Special Olympics Track team saved its best performance for the Ohio Special Olympics Special Games this weekend. The male relay team was running fifth of five teams after the first leg and ended up winning the race. "John Henson picked up two sports in the second leg, Ashtabula County Special Olympics track coach Casey Wludyga said. Adam Henson picked up two more places, and in the final leg, Chris McGuire overtook the leader at the end."

2010

- February 11, 2010. Nearly 90 Ashtabula County adults with developmental disabilities will celebrate Valentine's Day Friday evening at the Simak Welcome Center with a dinner and dance. The event is a project of Soldiers of Independence, a local organization that provides socialization opportunities for adults with special needs.
- July 16, 2010. The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities will seek renewal of a 1.33 mill operating levy from voters on November 2nd. The Board voted June 17 to place the renewal on the ballot. The levy expired in tax year 2009, so the final collection will be made this year.
- September 16, 2010. Inez Gaumer cut the ribbon for a new playground at Happy Hearts School after 11 years of planning and fund raising. Inez led a committee of six people who worked on the project for more than a decade.

Special Story- The Happy Hearts Playground

January 15, 2010, the ARC of Ashtabula County, a citizens group that brought the Happy Hearts School into being more than 50 years ago, has been raising money for a new playground at the school since the early 1990s. Thanks to a \$50,000 Community Development block grant, the \$123,829 playground will become a reality this summer. Commissioners on Tuesday approved a contract with Spectra Contract Flooring of Valley View, which will provide and install new playground equipment, sidewalks and fencing, as well as properly prepare the site. "We're happy to get this project underway," said Janice Switzer, program manager for the county's Department of Community Services. Switzer worked with ARC to secure funding through the 2008 CDBG grant. ARC is also drawing upon \$44,593 from the Board of Developmental Disabilities and \$29,236 of ARC's funds to pay the contractor.

The money provided by the Board came from memorials and other donations, not taxpayer support. ARC has additional funds it plans to use for picnic tables, benches and similar amenities. The playground should be completed by the time the new school year begins.

May 30,2010



Playground Committee members for Happy Hearts School hold a drawing of the new playground planned for the School. The existing playground's equipment is old and unsafe; the swings were removed years ago because they did not meet state standards. From left are Cathy Simons, Elaine Marcy, Moe Krumins, Inez

Gaumer, Patty Fields and Vicky Sylvester.

Teachers will be able to use the new equipment for physical education classes as well as other instruction involving large and even fine motor skills. There is still the matter of the \$4,000 shortfall, as well as landscaping and incidentals. Because the plans had to be pared back, the group will need to continue to raise money for the expensive equipment. Individuals or organizations interested in assisting the group with this final push should call Inez Gaumer or call the school and ask for Vicki Sylvester. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.

Playground dreams finally becoming reality Happy Hearts project more than a decade in planning, raising funds

by Carl E. Feather

More than 11 years ago, staff at Happy Hearts School and members of the Ashtabula County ARC obtained a price on new playground equipment for the school. It was \$68,000. Earlier this month, a bid opening was held for the playground project, which after cutting out a number of items, is expected to come in around \$150,000. That's still \$4,000 short of the balance in their kitty, but the group is forging ahead with its plan to remedy a situation that has existed at Happy Hearts School for decades. "I've been here for 20 years, and we've never really had a playground," said Elaine Marcy, a school nurse and member of the playground committee. "We've had equipment out there that was not safe and we had to remove it."

School Secretary Vicki Sylvester says there is very little for students to do on the playgrounds, aside from walking around and playing with balls. The swings have been removed because they didn't meet safety regulations, and a small climbing area is likewise off limits. There's no fence around the area, which renders the playground practically useless. She recently saw an enterprising teacher hiding balls in trees and shrubs as a way to stimulate students in outdoor play. The school needs two playgrounds, one for preschoolers and a second for the rest of the population. The playgrounds need to be fenced in, and the equipment is subject to all state and federal regulations, which are numerous. Because developmentally disabled youngsters use it, the requirements are more stringent than those for normal equipment and the price tags reflect that. For example, one swing designed to accommodate a child in a wheelchair costs \$10,000. The Board of Developmental Disabilities is not allowed to use its funds for playground equipment, so it was up to the staff and the ARC group, a support organization, to fund the project.



Quilt Donated

May 29, 2006. Kingsville Quilters. From left Pat Sarell; Cynthia Ingram; Ken Schmiesing, director of education services; Carol Sowry; Marion Bartone; Ginny Cosner and Glenna Rodenbaugh donated a quilt to Arc of Ashtabula County for a new playground at Happy Hearts School. The quilt was raffled and raised \$1,830. Cindy Blank of Conneaut was the winner. Also not pictured was quilter Linda Nicka. Fund raising for the playground is ongoing. Donations may

be sent to Ken Schmiesing at Happy Hearts School.

Inez Gaumer, past president of ARC, headed up the playground committee, which has been together "longer than most people have been married," she said. Its work began way back in 1998, and through the years they slowly built up the fund. Elaine Marcy said the staff held Chinese auctions of donated items, sold submarine sandwiches and popcorn, and raffled a quilt to generate money for the playground. They also sold commemorative bricks which will be at the

center of the playground. The staff is not allowed to solicit donations from or sell fund raising items to people outside the building, so all the money they raised is from within their circle.

Vicki Sylvester points out that they were also raising funds for other causes during this time, like the school prom. ARC solicited funds outside the school. Inez Gaumer says there have been many, many donations. Some of the major ones were \$25,000 from the Ashtabula Foundation, \$5,000 from Louise Raffa; \$5,000 from the East Ashtabula Club; \$4,000 from the Ohio Attorney General; and \$1,000 from First Presbyterian Church. A relative of Inez's' husband gave \$500. ARC shook every tree in search of cash, but still came up far short of the \$150,000 needed. A Community Development Block grant, obtained with assistance from Janice Switzer of the Ashtabula County Community Services Department, sealed the deal. The \$50,000 grant came through this year and allowed the project to finally go out for bids. Inez says engineers are reviewing those bids to make sure they meet all the specifications. They hope to award the project in the near future and follow that with a groundbreaking. The plan is to have the playgrounds ready for use by the time students return to school in late August.

New Playground is Dedicated

September 16, 2010

Inez Gaumer (center with scissors) cut the ribbon for a new playground at Happy Hearts School



after 11 years of planning and fund raising. Inez led a committee of six people who worked on the project for more than a decade. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.

The children stand, politely but impatiently waiting...

It took more than a decade for the adults working to turn the dream of a playground for them into reality. On Saturday afternoon more than 70 people gathered at Happy Hearts School to celebrate the completion of a playground project. "We started out gradually, then I started writing grants and making phone calls," said Inez Gaumer who helped organize the committee that also included Vicki Sylvester; Elaine Marcy; Moe Krumins; Patty Fields; and Kathy Simon. "We don't have all the bills, but we can say it will be over \$150,000," Inez said of the price tag for the park that has two distinctive areas for children to play. She thanked the Ashtabula County Commissioners for helping the Committee receive a \$50,000 Community Development Block Grant. She said the Ashtabula Foundation Investment Management Agency gave \$25,000 to the project. Five donors gave more than \$5,000, including the Edna H. Burrington Memorial; Knights of Columbus; the Robert S. Morrison Foundation; East Ashtabula Educational

Assistance Corporation; The Raymond M. Winger Memorial; US Bank; Geraldine Thomas in memory of Betsy Thomas.

Happy Hearts Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler thanked Inez for the committee's persistence in staying with the idea for such a long time. She said the group had planted a seed more than ten years ago and then nurtured it to fruition. "The children are going to love this playground. We thank all of you who were involved in this project," Zeitler said.

After a short ribbon-cutting ceremony, the children dashed into the playground area to play.