



# STARLIGHT

AUGUST  
2021

## NOTES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

# The Future of Delivering Supports is Going to Look Different



I have a lot of ground to cover this month, so saddle up!

We have all heard about the workforce shortage. Turn on the television news or pick up a newspaper and you'll see stories about restaurants, retailers and a host of other businesses that have been unable to find enough workers.

Unfortunately, provider agencies in Hancock County are not insulated from the same workforce shortage. Among our providers, a shortage of Direct Support Professionals (DSP) is not a new topic of discussion.

While it is a rewarding job, it is not an easy one. It takes a special person to be a DSP, one with compassion and patience.

I was talking to a couple of DSPs, and I was taken aback by their love for their jobs. I asked them what they liked. Rachel Cameron said, "I love my job. It is so rewarding to watch our people learn and grow." Sarah Greeno said, "Any job can give you a paycheck, but with this job, at the end of the day, you know you are making a real difference in someone's life."

In spite of that, providers are constantly searching for those special people who can take on that challenge.

For that reason, I'm writing about it in this column. I want to make sure that we stay ahead of the game. As a community, we need to address this issue in order to ensure the health and safety of the individuals we support. That is our number one priority.

The DSP shortage began before the pandemic and recent labor shortage. Providers continue to be creative and resourceful, providing the level of care needed by individuals.

As we move forward, we must continue to be both creative and informative. In recent months, we have:

- Held DSP Info sessions;
- Launched advertising for hiring provider agencies; and
- Been assisting providers with certifications and additional technical assistance needed to expedite the process. BVC offers free CPR/First Aid training and free background checks for agencies and independent providers in Hancock County.

We also will seek alternative solutions to this program. One way of addressing this issue is increasing natural

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## DATES TO REMEMBER | VISIT [WWW.BLANCHARDVALLEY.ORG](http://WWW.BLANCHARDVALLEY.ORG) FOR MORE DETAILS

August 10 – 6 p.m.  
**Special Olympics Softball vs. Lucas Co. at The Cube in Findlay**

August 17 – 6 p.m.  
**S.O. Competitive Cheer Info Meeting at BVC Training Center**

August 18 – 10 a.m. - noon  
**Provider Council TC Training Center**

August 23 – 5:30 p.m.  
**Board Meeting**

August 25  
**First Day of School for School Age**

August 26 – 6 p.m.  
**Special Olympics Softball vs. Marion Co. (Traditional Team Only) at The Cube in Findlay**

August 30  
**First Day of School for Preschoolers**

## CONTINUED "SUPERINTENDENT MESSAGE"

supports, such as relying more on family members and friends.

Technology is increasingly proving to be one of the best options available.

We recently held a successful Dinner & Dialogue that focused on transitional youth individuals and families. A transitional youth is between the ages of 14-22. They are considered transitional as this is the age when an individual begins the process of transitioning to the workforce.

Two important aspects of the Dinner & Dialogue included conversations on:

- What does independence look like with technology supports? This was presented by Safe In Home.
- What future employment can look like, which was presented by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities.

The pandemic caused a lot of distress, but it did open our eyes to creative avenues to provide supports. For example, when transportation or health risks are prevalent, we've been able to utilize Zoom as a method to have meetings and perform monitoring of supports. It's important to stay connected, especially through times when social distancing and other restrictions are set. Zoom has served a role in allowing our SSAs to be accessible in a way we never considered.

These are challenging times. Our world is continually changing. It is up to all of us to answer these challenges and continue to provide quality supports to those to depend on us.



Kelli Grisham, Superintendent

## Matthew LaFontaine and Molly Dible Selected to be Statewide Project STIR Trainers

Matthew LaFontaine and Molly Dible were recently chosen to lead advocates around the state of Ohio in Project STIR training.

They are the first individuals from Hancock County to qualify as trainers.

Project STIR is Steps Toward Independence and Responsibility. It is a training program for self-advocates designed to provide individuals with advocacy tools for themselves, mobilize others in advocacy, and gain leadership experience.

Matthew is a 2020 graduate of Project STIR. He is currently the vice president of the Hancock County Aktion Club and eager to take on the responsibilities of being president next year. He also is involved in the Speaks Out advocacy group, STIR Masters, and Sunrise Toastmasters of Findlay. Matthew's goal is to be on the Developmental Disabilities Council.

Matthew wanted to be a statewide Project STIR trainer to help others advocate for themselves and their peers. He learned to speak up in front of others when he was in his training and wants to help others do the same.

He is involved with Special Olympics Basketball, participates in Miracle League baseball and Gliding Stars Ice skating. Matthew works in the community at Kroger and attends Soaring Arts Studio, where he learns new ways to express himself through art and graphic design.

Matthew's ultimate goal is to open his own print shop in Findlay.

Molly graduated from Project STIR in 2014. She has been an active advocate since 2012 and is involved in Aktion Club, where she is the treasurer, and the Speaks Out advocacy group. She is the secretary of the OSDA's northwest region and a We Thrive Together Advocate.

Molly wanted to become a statewide trainer to help other advocates speak out.

Her future goal is to be member of the Developmental Disabilities Council.

We are very proud of the advocates in Hancock County and look forward to their continuous efforts. They are setting the bar for others in our county but also in the state of Ohio

Congratulations, Matthew and Molly.



Matthew LaFontaine



Molly Dible

IN HER OWN WORDS

**Rose Morrison Discusses Working with DSPs**

I'm very happy to share my story about working with the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) that have supported my son, Scott.

We have three DSPs that are absolutely committed to working with Scott. Sue Johnson has been with Scott for three years, Brenda Howard has worked with him for two years, and Amanda Webb has been with us for the past year.

Scott lived in an Intermediate Care Facility for several years. During that time, he had many behaviors and was non-verbal. Since then, I was able to purchase a home for my son and the DSP team has been able to work with Scott and his verbal skills. They have improved dramatically. He now communicates better than ever before.

I am very impressed with the DSPs in Scott's life and the effort they have put into helping Scott be more involved in his community. He is constantly out and about in Findlay.

The relationship that Scott and I enjoy with our DSPs is more like a family bond than simply a professional relationship. We are very fortunate to have such caring and empathetic people in Scott's life. They have given Scott a quality of life that is nothing short of miraculous.

I will be the first to admit that we had a difficult time finding people who wanted to work with Scott in the past. However, with the right people, Scott has become a different person and people enjoy working with him now.

I am so very proud of Scott and his accomplishments, but I am equally thankful for the relationships we have built with the DSPs who work daily to ensure that Scott is living his best life.



**Becky Greeno Joins Blanchard Valley Board**



Becky Greeno is our newest board member. She has been appointed by the Hancock County Probate Court Judge Kristin Johnson. Welcome aboard, Becky.

**FANS Network**

The FANS Network is a group of people committed to enhancing the lives of people with DD in a variety of ways. For more information or to sign up and help when needed, email [info@blanchardvalley.org](mailto:info@blanchardvalley.org).

BVC provides resources and supports that empower people with DD to live lives with meaning and purpose.



**Blanchard Valley Center**  
Hancock County Board of Developmental Disabilities

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Emergency Number**  
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