

OOD FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities
with Disabilities
Kevin L. Miller, Executive

November 2017

The mission of the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency is to ensure individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment, independence and disability determination outcomes.

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Ohio Business Receives a Visit from Governor and OOD Executive Director



On November 8th, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) Executive Director Kevin Miller joined Governor John Kasich on a visit to RhinoSystems, Inc. This Ohio company, run by CEO Martin Hoke, develops and markets the Naväge nasal hygiene system. OOD works with RhinoSystems in Brooklyn Heights and has assisted four individuals with disabilities get jobs. All are earning

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competitive wages and working as team assemblers, production laborers and packers.

November is Hire a Veteran Month

Helping veterans with disabilities get or retain employment is important to OOD. The agency's vocational rehabilitation counselors work with veterans who have disabilities to develop an individualized plan for employment that matches skills and interest with a career goal. OOD offers job training, vocational counseling, assistive technology, vehicle modifications and a network of community rehabilitation partners. If you are a veteran with a disability and want to work, you can apply for services at OODworks.com. Here is a link to OOD's new postcard for veterans with disabilities - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Veterans](#).

OOD and AgrAbility Work Together to Help Farmer



Farmer Steve McFalls (left) with Charlie Landis an AgrAbility rural rehabilitation coordinator.

Adapt and overcome! That's what they say in the Army. This attitude was nothing new to Charlie Landis. Before his service that included two stints in Iraq, he grew up as the seventh generation running crop and dairy farms. "Farmers always find a way to do something," he said. "It's the same in the military."

After his seven years of service, Charlie helped run his family farm in Knox County, but he needed additional work. When he heard about AgrAbility, a federally-funded program to assist farmers with any type of disability, his ears perked up. He applied to Easter Seals and was hired in 2015 as an Ohio AgrAbility rural rehabilitation coordinator.

In 2016, Charlie met Steve McFalls – an organic hay farmer in Marion County – whose mobility was greatly affected after multiple brain surgeries and spinal fusions. Charlie saw Steve's determination to continue working on his organic hay farm and made a referral to OOD. The two organizations worked with Steve to get a handrail for mounting tractors, installed a monitor and camera system in the tractor, provided a rolling table for transporting heavy objects and an

adjustable height work bench. One low-tech victory that helps Steve every day is extra-long hooks to pull his boots up by the straps. “We found ways to adapt and overcome,” said Steve.

This partnership between OOD and AgrAbility is one example of how the organizations work together to provide assistive technology to farmers with disabilities. See [AgrAbility](#) for more information, including helpful gardening and other outside work tips.

OOD Hosts Job Fairs for Individuals with Disabilities



OOD hosted job fairs around the state as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October. Listed below are the number of employers and job seekers who attended another successful series of events.

- Cincinnati – October 3rd had 53 employers and 215 job seekers
- Columbus – October 16th had 53 employers and 151 job seekers
- Toledo – October 19th had 31 employers and 108 job seekers

- Cleveland – November 2nd had 40 employers and 227 job seekers

Prior to the start of each job fair, a Windmills workshop was held to educate employers on how to work with individuals with disabilities.



Columbus Job Fair

OOD job seeker Ryan (pictured above left) completed a job application with Kimball Midwest. He is looking for a job in the communications or clerical fields. Kimball Midwest Manager Holly Scheiferstein said, "This is my second year attending an OOD job fair. The candidates came prepared and are great."



[Ohio Department of Veterans Services](#) Director Chip Tansill (pictured above left) stopped in the Columbus job fair to talk about the benefits of hiring veterans with disabilities with OOD Executive Director Kevin Miller.



Toledo Job Fair

OOD job seeker Yannick (pictured above) was pleased to see a good variety of employers. "There is a great mix of white collar and blue collar jobs available here," he said.



Thank you to State Representative Michael Sheehy (pictured above right with OOD Assistant Executive Director Bill Bishilany) for attending the job fair.



Cleveland Job Fair

Lauren (pictured above) attended her first OOD job fair and hopes to find employment in a health care setting. She said, "It's great to be here and see so many employers. I'm glad I came."

OOD thanks the employers who participated in the jobs fairs and wishes good luck to the job seekers. Photos and information about our Cincinnati job fair were featured in the [October Focus](#). Go to our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages to see posts about all of the job fairs.

Natural Essentials Receives OOD Champion of Opportunity Award



“I believe in abilities, not disabilities,” said Gary Pellegrino, President of Natural Essentials – the nation's leading suppliers of essential oils, soap making supplies, candle making supplies and specialty ingredients in Aurora, Ohio – where the company employs many individuals with disabilities.

OOD recognized Natural Essentials on November 9th as a Champion of Opportunity Award recipient for their commitment to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Under Pellegrino’s guidance the company has hired an internal job coach to assist in the successful development and sustainability of their workforce. In less than two years, they have hired 26 OOD job seekers. Natural Essentials is very open to making workplace accommodations, including teaching American Sign Language to their management staff so they can better communicate with their deaf/hard of hearing employees.

Pictured above: Natural Essentials President Gary Pellegrino, Sr. (left) and his wife Linda were presented with a Champion of Opportunity Award by OOD Assistant Executive Director Bill Bishilany (center). Aurora Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin and Streetsboro Mayor Glenn Broska also thanked the Pellegrinos for their efforts.

OOD will be awarding three more Champion of Opportunity Awards around the state in the coming weeks. Be sure to follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to see more about the awards.

OOD Hosts International Low-Vision Specialists



During their visit to OOD, Anca Irimia (left) from Romania and Krasimir Chervenkov (center) from Bulgaria met with Executive Director Kevin Miller.

OOD recently hosted two young professionals from Romania and Bulgaria who are exploring disability services in America. Anca Irimia and Krasimir Chervenkov are in the USA thanks to the US State Department-sponsored Professional Fellows Program. This is part of an effort to introduce young specialists from various countries to US culture and best practice in their chosen fields. The guests toured OOD's Division of Disability Determination to learn about the Social Security claims process and toured the vocational rehabilitation Whitehall Regional office to discuss best practices with counselors and supervisors. Additionally, they met with Executive Director Miller and other professionals at OOD's Administrative Office.

OOD Commissioners Recognize an Advocate and Service Provider

The OOD Commissioners recognized Shari Cooper of Dayton, Ohio with the Ben Bonanno Disability Advocate Award and Bridget Lynn Vogt of Bellevue, Kentucky with the Denise Joanne Weisenborn Service Award on November 1st. These two individuals were commended for their outstanding advocacy and the service they

provide on behalf of and to individuals with disabilities. For more information about these awards, visit [Commissioners' Awards](#).



Pictured above are Commissioner David Daugherty and Bridget Vogt, recipient of the 2017 Denise Joanne Weisenborn Service Award.



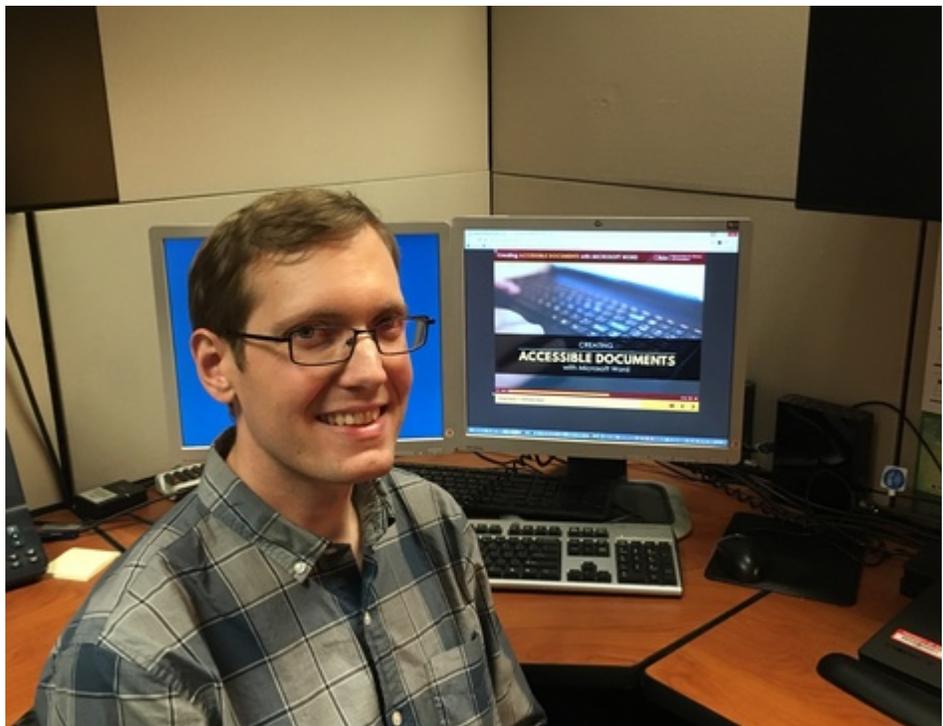
Pictured above are Shari Cooper, recipient of the 2017 Ben Bonanno Disability Advocate Award with Commission Chair Jack Licate (center) and former Commissioner Ben Bonanno.

Ohio Poll Says OOD Name Change has Positive Impact on Awareness and Services

To assess the impact of OOD's name change in 2013 from the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, the agency participated in the 2017 Ohio Poll conducted by the University of Cincinnati Institute for Policy Research (UCIPR) as a follow-up to the 2013 Ohio Poll.

UCIPR surveyed 836 randomly selected Ohio adults between June 28th and July 30th to determine Ohioans' awareness about OOD, the services provided by the agency and whether someone they know might benefit from those services. The results of the 2017 survey demonstrate that the agency name change has a positive impact on awareness of OOD and its services. To see the results, visit [Ohio Poll](#).

A Link in the Chain - Jonathan Rollings



Jonathan Rollings is a technology-based training developer in OOD's Human Resources Department. He creates online training programs for OOD employees that can be taken anytime and may include videos and interactive story-based trainings with scenarios.

One particular training he developed educates OOD employees on how to create [accessible documents](#) for individuals with disabilities. "This online training uses hands-on activities to teach staff how to craft documents that can be easily read through assistive technology for individuals with visual impairments," said Jonathan. The popular Creating Accessible Documents e-learning course is also available to the general public.

Jonathan pulls from his background in media production and instructional technology to produce interactive content, videos and graphics that provide educational experiences. He spends a lot of his time working with other departments throughout the agency and is always willing to help others in whatever ways he can. Thanks Jonathan.

Division of Disability Determination Finishes a Banner Year

OOD's Division of Disability Determination (DDD) exceeded all goals set by the Social Security Administration (SSA) this past federal fiscal year and was the highest producing state in the six-state Chicago Region. DDD served 181,288 Ohioans this year - 2,413 decisions greater than the overall SSA goal. The quality and average processing time were also impressive with a net accuracy of 98.4% and an average processing time of 72 days - three days less than last year. In addition, Ohio assisted other states in the Chicago Region by doing 3,996 medical referrals and 400 reconsideration cases. Lastly, individual adjudicator pendings are at an all-time low, allowing staff to provide high-quality and timely service.

ABLE Account Limit to Rise

The amount of money that people with disabilities can deposit in their ABLE accounts each year without jeopardizing eligibility for government benefits is about to increase. To view the article, visit [ABLE account limit](#).

Connect to OOD

Connect to OOD on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) to see items like this post about our new Business Relations videos.
#ConnectToOOD #OODWorks

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Don't forget about our educational Business Relations videos, learn some effective communication tips like the ones we share at our job fairs!

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