

# WEEKLY FOCUS

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

## OOD Completes Fantastic FFY 2014!

This week marked the end of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) which runs from October through September. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of OOD staff, and our partners across the state, the Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR/BSVI) program finished the year strong and completed a fantastic FFY 2014. We set aggressive goals for increased program performance and, once again, our staff delivered.

I wanted to share with you some of the highlights:

- We exceeded our goals in eligibilities achieved, plans written, and successful rehabilitations
- We lowered the average time to determine eligibility by 17 days; a 28.5% decrease
- We served an additional 1,934 individuals with disabilities; a 7.6% increase
- We increased the number of new plans written by 1,064 (Individual Plan for Employment or IPE); a 9.7% increase
- We successfully rehabilitated 4,573 individuals; a 23% increase
- We decreased the time from application to rehabilitation by 2.2 months; an 8% improvement

All of this occurred while we eliminated the waiting list for individuals with significant disabilities, implemented new business engagement strategies, and rolled out new self-employment and transition procedures. While final figures will not be available until the end-of-the-year close out, we are projecting a very respectable decrease in our cost per case.

We have also held a job fair (with more to come), participated in field safety training, upgraded AWARE several times, aligned with new RSA reporting requirements, and updated our fee schedule. When you think about all of the changes we have made in our program this year, our improvements in program performance are even more remarkable.

I want to congratulate staff, and our partners and service providers, on achieving these impressive results. You rejected the status quo, embraced the challenges you faced and worked hard to meet the aggressive goals we set for the agency. And, these results are more than numbers. Meeting our goals and improving our performance has a real impact on real individuals with disabilities in Ohio and on their families and communities. Over twenty-seven thousand lives were touched by our work and forty-five hundred individuals achieved competitive integrated employment as a result of our programs. I sincerely appreciate all you do every day to make that happen.

We have made great progress in the last twelve months. I am confident that we have even greater success ahead.

### Workforce Integration Task Force to Meet October 8

The Workforce Integration Task Force, co-chaired by myself and Director Cynthia Dungey (ODJFS), will hold its second public meeting on Wednesday, October 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at OOD's Central Office. They will be focusing on outlining and categorizing potential recommendations for the final report due January 1, 2015.

## **Expect. Employ. Empower. - October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**

This month marks the start of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Held each October, NDEAM is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The theme for 2014 is "Expect. Employ. Empower."

According to the US Department of Labor, NDEAM's roots go back to 1945, when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month." Upon its establishment in 2001, the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) assumed responsibility for NDEAM and has worked to expand its reach and scope ever since.

This year OOD is marking NDEAM in a variety of ways. First, if you aren't already, connect with OOD on social media as we will be sharing news, insights and information highlighting NDEAM throughout October. We will also be offering updates throughout the month of October in the *Weekly Focus*.

We will also be hosting job fairs in the Cleveland and Toledo areas. The Cleveland area job fair will take place on Monday, October 27 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Independence. As with the Columbus event, there will also be an educational session in the morning for employers who would like to participate in assistive technology and Windmills training. These training sessions will allow employers to review the most up-to-date tools available to individuals with disabilities in the workplace and explore the fears, biases, and myths that create barriers in the hiring process for those with disabilities. The training will also cover legal requirements and necessary accommodations.

The Stranahan Theater Great Hall will serve as host for the Toledo area event on Thursday, October 30. It will also feature employer training in the morning session and a job fair in the afternoon. A special veteran focused job fair will also be held at the Scioto County Welcome Center in Portsmouth on Wednesday, November 12 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

These October job fairs will look to build on the success of the initial 2014 "DisAbility Job Fair" held last month at the Aladdin Shrine Center in Columbus. The kickoff event was a huge success with 35 businesses participating and more than 200 job seekers in attendance. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive from both employers and job seekers.

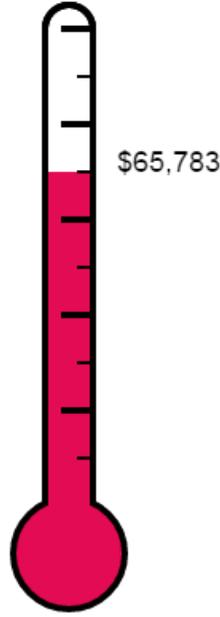
Lastly, we will also be introducing our first annual recognition program for businesses and organizations that have contributed to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Ohio this month. Stay tuned for more details in upcoming issues.



## CCC Update

As of yesterday, OOD has raised a total of \$65,783 for the Combined Charitable Campaign (CCC). OOD's goal is to raise \$93,750 so we are more than 2/3's of the way there! On Tuesday, OOD held its first "Why We Give" event for CCC. Representatives from the Komen Foundation, Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio, and Neighborhood Services, Inc. came in and talked to staff regarding how their donations help people in their communities. Our own staff members, Amy Coverdale and John Seaver, contributed their stories as to why they give.

Target: \$93,750



Our annual book fair, also held on Tuesday was a huge success! We were able to raise almost \$300 directly for CCC just from this event alone!

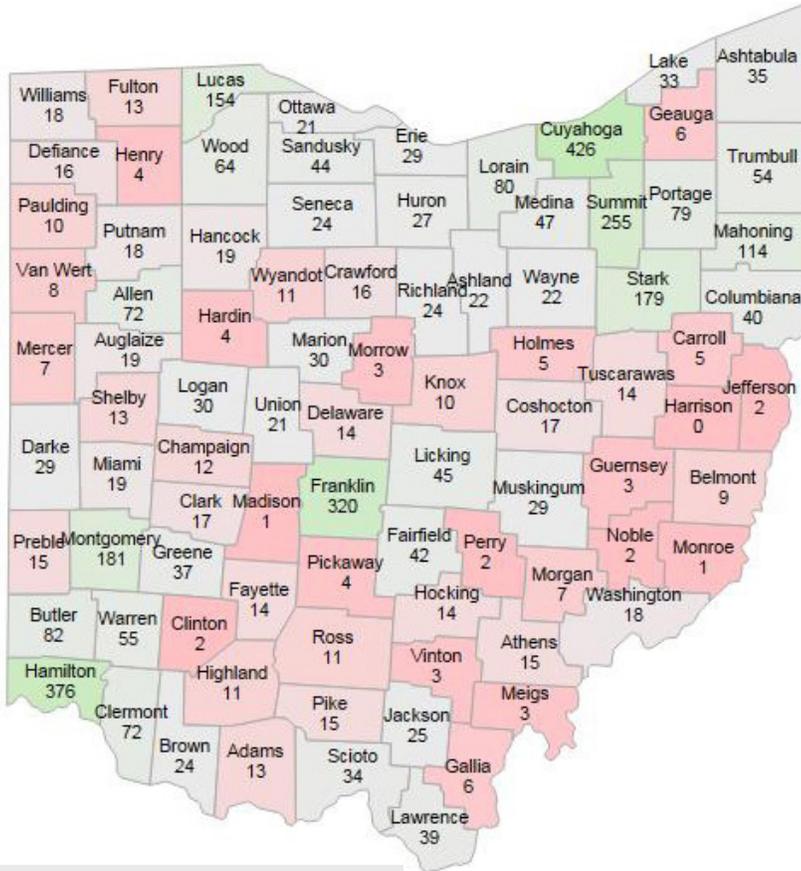
If you have yet to complete an ePledge form, please visit [www.ohio.gov/ohioccc](http://www.ohio.gov/ohioccc) to access the online donation portal or contact CCC Co-Chairs, Andrew Meador (614.438.1237) or Brad Reynolds (614.438.1499) for a paper pledge form. They are available to answer any questions you may have or help you with the donation process. Just as a reminder, there are still two weeks to get your pledges in. If you donate \$5 or more per pledge period, you can obtain a pass that entitles you to wear t-shirts, sports apparel, sweatshirts, and hoodies from now until August of 2015.

Thank you to all OOD staff who have volunteered, donated, contributed and organized events. Great job, everyone! Remember this is your CCC!



*John Seaver, IT Enterprise Applications Manager, speaks about his experiences with Habitat for Humanity at the "Why We Give" CCC event.*

## Individuals in Job Ready Status by County



## Total Statewide:

# 3,787

\* Job Ready Status Individuals have received Vocational Rehabilitation services and are ready and seeking employment.

For more information or questions on stories in this publication, please call the Office of Communications at 614.438.1476.

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