

WEEKLY FOCUS

Ohio | Opportunities for Ohioans
with Disabilities

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

January 16, 2015

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.

Fifth Third Bank: Champion of Opportunity

I had the privilege of visiting Cincinnati this week to present Fifth Third Bank with the Champion of Opportunity Award for their commitment and leadership in integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce.

As I noted during the award presentation, Fifth Third is a perfect fit for the Champion of Opportunity Award which recognizes companies that go “above and beyond” in their commitment and serve as statewide examples of what it means to provide quality employment opportunities and increased independence for individuals with disabilities. The Cincinnati based bank understands that integrating their workforce is good for the community, the company and good for business. Inclusion and engagement, however, is more than just a policy on paper for Fifth Third, it is an active part of the company’s culture and management.

Fifth Third has been involved with Project SEARCH, a school-to-work internship program for students with developmental and physical disabilities, for over ten years. They operate three Project SEARCH sites and have had over 200 students participate in the program. Many of these participants go on to careers at the company.

At the ceremony, Tiona Boyle, a Project SEARCH graduate and administrative assistant, spoke about how the program prepared her to begin a successful career and how her work at Fifth Third has allowed her to gain independence and expand her experiences and skills. It was gratifying to see a talented young person starting her career and speak excitedly and gratefully about the opportunities that lie ahead.

I was also lucky enough to meet Teddy Kremer, a Fifth Third Bank Mail Operations Associate, who also happens to be the biggest Cincinnati Reds fan in the state of Ohio. Kremer, who had the opportunity to be a Reds ball boy in 2012, took time out to welcome me to Cincinnati and presented me with an All-Star pin (the MLB All Star game will be held at Great American Ball Park this July). Clearly, the folks at Fifth Third know how to make people feel welcome.



(from left to right): Leigh Prop, Fifth Third Bank Senior Vice President and Director of Talent Acquisition and Engagement; Tiona Boyle, Fifth Third Bank Administrative Assistant; Kevin L. Miller, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Executive Director; Julie Fite, Fifth Third Bank Vice President and Senior Leadership Development Program Manager; Teddy Kremer, Fifth Third Bank Mail Operations Associate; and Mitch Morgan, Fifth Third Bank Asst. Vice President and Leadership Development Program Manager

Speaking to the gracious staff at Fifth Third, to Ms. Boyle and Mr. Kremer, and to a larger group of Project SEARCH graduates in attendance, I was reminded of why OOD is committed to the work we do: it is good for people, good for business, and good for Ohio.

Fifth Third Bank is a sterling example of this fact and a very deserving recipient of the inaugural Champion of Opportunity Award. Congratulations again and thanks for all you do to create opportunity and independence for individuals with disabilities.

County Boards are Valuable Partners

This week I also had the opportunity to have coffee with Bridget Gargan, Executive Director of the Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB). As we discussed various issues and how we might better work together to serve individuals with disabilities, I was reminded of the importance of collaboration and communication.

Our partnerships with county boards, ADAMH boards, local service providers, and other state agencies are critical to effectively serving Ohioans with disabilities. It is important that we don't forget the important role they play and commit ourselves to effective communication and collaboration with these partners.

The changing landscape of workforce development with the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) at the federal level, and ongoing changes at the state level, makes it imperative that we communicate and work together towards a more unified and holistic approach.

I am sure all of us would admit that it is often easy to focus on our tasks and our priorities and not necessarily involve our partners, and to not take time to listen to the concerns and perspectives of outside groups and organizations. Even when we work closely together to deliver services and have the same larger goal of helping individuals with disabilities find quality employment and increased independence, it is easy for us to stay in our own comfort zone and not communicate.

As we continue to build momentum in this New Year, OOD remains committed to effectively collaborating and communicating with our partners under the shared goal of serving more Ohioans to the best of our abilities.

New Employee Orientation

I always make sure to welcome new employees to the agency and take a moment to get to know them. It may seem like a small thing, meeting with a dozen or so employees for a half an hour, but I think it is important to get to know a little bit about everyone who works at OOD and to offer any advice and information I can to position them for a successful career here at the agency.

On Thursday, another New Employee Orientation session was held for ten new employees joining the agency. Abbie Frase, HR Training Officer, and Gwen Edwards, HR Training Specialist, led the orientation to help new employees understand the policies, procedures and culture of OOD. I had the chance to join them and discuss the mission and vision of OOD and agency expectations. After sharing some of my personal experiences and how I came to the agency, I answered questions and we discussed how they might find their purpose and succeed here at OOD.

The orientation sessions, which are held monthly, include a True Colors Assessment, a tool that helps individuals better understand their behavioral preferences and the preferences of others; a review of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and sexual harassment policies; a benefits presentation; Agency Awareness, including overviews from the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI), the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), and the Division of Disability Determination (DDD); and a Disability Awareness presentation.

I am excited to see the progress of all our new staff and I am happy to have you on our team. Good luck in your new role!



Director Miller (center) welcomes new employees to OOD.

Division of Disability Determination Quarterly Awards

The Division of Disability Determination would like to congratulate our Quarterly Award recipients. These employees are being recognized for their superior performance, ability to be customer focused, innovation and creativity, and teamwork and leadership skills.

Congratulations to each individual for achieving this recognition:

Eva Bernard (DCA3)
 Kristin Casebolt (DPS)
 Brooke Fishman (DCA2)
 Rita Gram (DC Supervisor)
 Danielle Howe (DCA2)
 Nancy May (Clerk 3)
 Ray Myers (DCA3)
 Wade Peterson (DCA2)
 Mica Sparks (DCA2)
 Alan Witherspoon (OA3)
 Heather Wright (DCA2)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." -- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Monday is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights leader and pastor. As you enjoy your day off, I hope you will take a moment to reflect on the values Dr. King exemplified: nonviolence, equality, faith and service to others. The best way to honor his work is to continue his example of service and thereby strengthen our families, communities, state and nation.

Individuals in Job Ready Status by County



Total Statewide:
3,560

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

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