

# WEEKLY FOCUS

Kevin L. Miller, Executive Director

*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 Draft Monitoring Report Process Continues**

In the December 13, 2013 *Weekly Focus*, OOD indicated that our technical assistance visit with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was productive. OOD remains cautiously optimistic that we have identified a path forward which will enable us to continue our valued state and local partnerships. Specifically, RSA has identified an option for OOD to consider the use of Interagency Cash Transfer Agreements (ICTAs) rather than the more restrictive Third Party Cooperative Agreements (TPCAs) that OOD currently uses as the structure to partner with local public entities.

OOD and RSA have agreed to a timeline and next steps to accomplish the restructuring of these agreements. First, OOD will draft the two new template agreements. These are due to RSA on December 20. Next, RSA will review these agreements to confirm they are in compliance and consistent with their guidance. RSA has committed to begin their review of the agreements the week of January 6. As soon as OOD receives confirmation from RSA, we will proceed to issue new agreements to our state/local partners for the October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014 contract period. OOD is hopeful we can complete the contracting process as soon as RSA feedback is received and necessary adjustments are made.

OOD will keep partners informed of our progress over the next few weeks as we submit these templates and garner feedback from RSA. Partners should also plan for discussion with OOD's contracting unit to finalize budgets and match requirements for the FFY14 ICTAs.

OOD remains grateful for the support we have received from our partners and stakeholders as we have continued to work together to help Ohioans with disabilities secure employment.

## **Southeast Area VR Office Moves**

The OOD office that was located at 899 East Broad Street in Columbus officially moved this week. Now located at 4300 East Broad Street in Whitehall, Ohio, this facility has recently been renovated and offers many new features for counselors and individuals with disabilities seeking vocational rehabilitation services. The new facility offers not only ADA compliance but also ample parking, confidential interview rooms and brings staff together in a location that can house their operations while reducing our costs per square foot. This move does not affect phone numbers nor does it change e-mail addresses.



*Counselor Amy Beavis settles in at the new OOD Whitehall office.*

"The move of the Columbus field office and Southeast (SE) regional operations were essential in order to provide optimal services to the community," stated SE Area Manager Bob Nicholson. "The new office provides many benefits to individuals with disabilities while at the same time serves as a highly functional work space for our professional staff."

## **OOD Commissioners Hold Retreat**

The OOD Commissioners held a planning retreat this week. The two day retreat allowed them to accomplish many tasks and focus on the direction of the agency heading into the new calendar year.

The Commissioners took care of several housekeeping efforts to start the first day of their retreat including approving the minutes from their October 9, 2013 and November 20, 2013 meetings. They then departed OOD for a tour of LifeCare Alliance.



*(back row, left to right) Commissioners, Chair Jacqui Romer-Sensky, Cynthia Rees, Vice-Chair Jack Licate, David Daugherty and Jermaine Brown, listen to Margaret Molli-Clark of Columbus Project SEARCH explain the work of Project SEARCH employees at LifeCare Alliance while BSVI Deputy Director Mindy Duncan looks on. And, yes, they were required to wear hair nets while touring the food prep area!*

LifeCare Alliance is a nonprofit provider of a broad spectrum of health and nutritional services for thousands of individuals allowing them to maintain their independence and dignity in their own homes. LifeCare Alliance is also the site location of a Project SEARCH program through the Columbus City Schools. Project SEARCH is a one-year internship program that was designed for students with disabilities who are in their last year of high school. The program is dedicated to workforce development that benefits the individual, community and workplace. It is targeted for students whose main goal is competitive employment.

Margaret Molli-Clark from Columbus Project SEARCH hosted the OOD Commissioners allowing them to see firsthand the many positive impacts that this program is having on youth with disabilities as they transition to the Ohio workforce.

Commissioners returned to OOD for a briefing and tour of the Division of Disability Determination. This allowed them to observe operations of this highly focused, matrix driven workforce that exemplifies the best disability determination unit in the Chicago Region.

Day two of their retreat was focused on strategic planning and receiving a briefing from staff on a variety of issues. Delving into the agency budget and business development direction consumed much of their afternoon. Overall, lots of information was shared and a consensus was reached that we, as OOD, have many challenges and opportunities ahead of us going into 2014.

## **Governor Holds End-Of-Year Press Conference**

I was pleased to join fellow Cabinet members as Governor John R. Kasich held his end-of-year press conference at the Columbus Renaissance Hotel. They took time to recognize the accomplishments and hard work that the state of Ohio has accomplished in 2013. As we know, the Administration continues their focus on making job creation Ohio's number one priority – but his initiatives touch more than simply the economy.

The Governor told those in attendance that "Ohio's going in the right direction," and that "now is the time of double down, build a strong economy, the strongest that we can. Continue to work to attract businesses and to get businesses in our state to grow, and to help, in some way, people who are entrepreneurs to create it." Governor Kasich also said, "As we are growing there, then it's just a matter of reaching across the bridge to some people who are stuck in the ditch and pull them across that bridge into a better life. I can't think of a better formula than that."



*OOD Executive Director Kevin L. Miller attended Governor John R. Kasich's Press Conference.*

## **BE Staff Retreat**

The Business Enterprise (BE) program held its inaugural "all team retreat" on December 17 and 18. The staff retreat included all administrative staff, BE specialists and the full management team, including Mindy Duncan, BSVI Deputy Director.

The second day of the retreat was full of professional development topics including time management, customer service, change management, upward mobility and proficient processes. The numerous training topics were conducted in large part by the HR Training and Organizational Development team, Kathy Boss, Abbie Frase and Gwen Edwards, including a well-received training topic on upward mobility held by Cornell Hale from Employee and Labor Relations.

The BE program has experienced transition among management staff over the past fiscal year and the retreat served as a spring board for programmatic refocusing and strategic planning for continued improvement. The retreat was considered a great success from all staff involved.



*BE Specialists (left to right) Chris Estep, Tom Miller, Bobby Yeager and Lynne Hustwick participate at the BE staff retreat.*

## GCPD Meets

The Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities (GCPD) met this week for their regularly scheduled business meeting. Chairman Matt Sauer welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order.

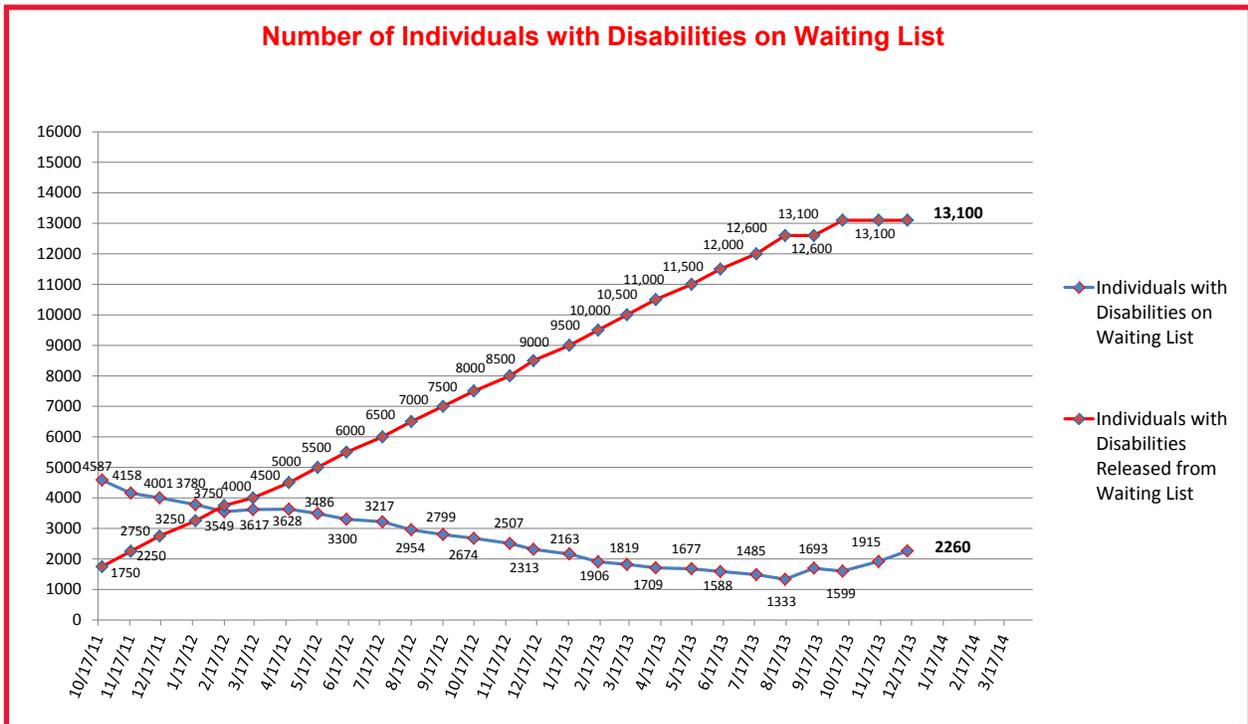
After they received an update on new members recently appointed by Governor Kasich, the members worked on their Annual Report to the Governor. Members then received updates on legislative issues and worked on a Youth Leadership Forum presentation.

The next GCPD Meeting is scheduled for January 22-23, 2014.

## Happy Holidays!

I want to wish everyone Happy Holidays! We have much to be thankful for as we close out 2013. As a reminder, for those staff members that plan to work next week, December 23 through December 27, feel free to wear jeans if you do not have meetings with consumers or outside individuals. Please adhere to all other requirements of the dress code.

I appreciate your hard work and dedication to serving individuals with disabilities this year and look forward to continuing our efforts in 2014!



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

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