

# 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.*

## DiscoverU Training Center Visit

I had the opportunity to participate in the DiscoverU Training Center ribbon cutting ceremony at the River Valley Mall in Lancaster this week. Joined by Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) Deputy Director Susan Pugh and BVR Area Manager Bob Nicholson, we witnessed firsthand the many benefits that this training center is providing to the Fairfield County community.



*Director Miller (second from left) participates in the ribbon cutting of DiscoverU along with other local/state officials and local business leaders. (2014 OACB Photo/ Adam Herman)*

DiscoverU is a training program for individuals with developmental disabilities who want to enter the workforce. Individuals in the program learn job skills in the morning hours before heading out to one of the businesses in the mall where they put their skills to work. Clients work, with associated costs provided by DiscoverU not the individual businesses, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and then return for more classroom learning prior to leaving for the day. This program is a signature initiative of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities Director John Martin was also present at the event and said that this initiative is impressive because of the collaboration between the community and Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

This program launch reinforces that Employment First is succeeding in Ohio. Together, Ohioans are recognizing the fact that everyone is valued and employment and independence are inextricably linked.



*Director Miller discusses the mission of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities with Program Administrator Kathy Dennison at DiscoverU. (2014 OACB Photo/Adam Herman)*

## MLK Day 2014

This coming Monday marks the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day across the United States. This federal holiday marks the birthday of the civil rights pioneer by honoring his life and service on the third Monday in January. Former President Ronald Reagan signed MLK Day into law in 1983 and the holiday was first observed in 1986.

Reverend King was the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the civil rights movement, which successfully highlighted racial discrimination in federal and state law. The campaign for a federal holiday in King's honor began soon after his assassination in 1968.

Dr. King, in arguably his most famous speech, spoke to more than a quarter million people gathered in the Mall in Washington, D.C. and delivered the phrase, "I have a dream." This march on Washington in 1963 is credited by many to have helped put civil rights at the top of the agenda of reformers in the United States and facilitated passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Many people have chosen to continue Dr. King's call for service. Dr. King once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" Each year, Americans across the country answer that question by coming together on the King Holiday to

serve their neighbors and communities. The MLK Day of Service is a part of United We Serve, the President's national call to service initiative. It calls for Americans from all walks of life to work together to provide solutions to our most pressing national problems.

As we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Monday, I hope that OOD employees continue to ask themselves, "What are you doing for others?"

### **DDD Staff Meet with NAIFA**

Division of Disability Determination's (DDD) Professional Relations staff traveled to Akron on January 14 to present to the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors (NAIFA).

Ray Rhone and Heidi Block, Professional Relations Officers, presented how DDD processes a claim and also explained the process of submitting records to DDD electronically. With nearly 30 people in attendance, DDD was able to provide answers to questions of those attending. Many of the attendees said the information that was presented was very useful and helpful.

The professional relations officers from DDD are involved on a regular basis with various community groups and present information related to the processing of social security disability claims. Darin McCoy is the manager of the professional relations department at DDD.

### **DDD Announces Quarterly Award Recipients**

Congratulations to the DDD's Quarterly Award recipients. These individuals are recognized for their superior performance, ability to be customer focused, innovation and creativity, and teamwork and leadership skills. Congratulations!

- Lori Alas (DCA2)
- Eva Bernard (DCA3)
- Patrick Bischoff (DCA2)
- Katie Holbrooks (DCA3)
- Karen Leite (DCA2)
- Geneva O'Dell (Clerk 3)
- Deborah Parker Shaheed (DC Supervisor)
- Efrain Perez (DCA3)
- Janice Phillips (DCA2)
- Kelly Rammell (Clerk 3)
- Rebecca Sprang (DCA2)
- Sarah Stefano (DCA3)
- James Wade (Med Clerk)
- Patrick Wander (DCA2)

### **DDD Staff Participate in Poverty Simulation**

DDD staff attended an interactive training designed to educate everyone about the day-to-day realities of life with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress. Deborah Parker Shaheed, Cheryl Faison and Cindy Flynn facilitated the interactive training for the division. During the simulation, participants role-play the lives of low-income families, from single parents trying to care for their children to senior citizens trying to maintain their self-sufficiency on Social Security. The task of each family is to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities during the simulation while interacting with various community resources staffed by volunteers. The simulation tool enables participants to view poverty from different angles. DDD staff talk daily with individuals in great need of support.

The training provides an excellent opportunity for DDD staff to consider how they may assist others or perhaps consider questions they ask while obtaining clarifying information in the course of a disability determination case.



*DDD Staff at poverty simulation training*

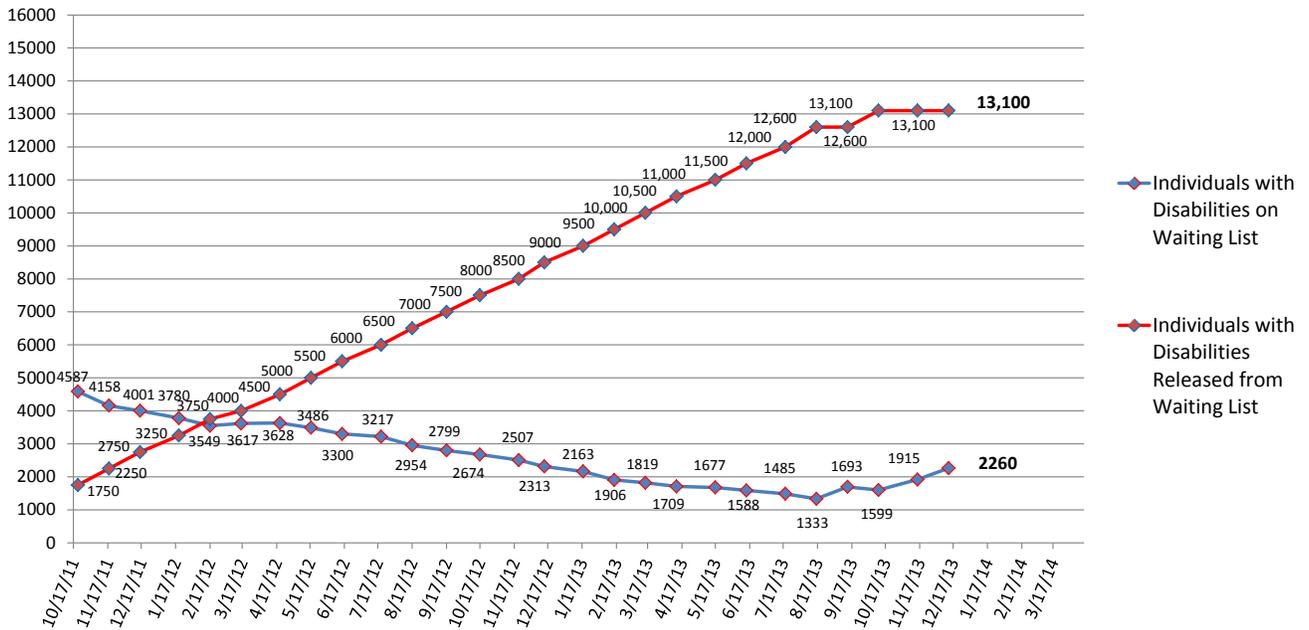
### **Business Sourcing Analysts Start at OOD**

Interacting with Ohio businesses to promote the benefits of hiring well-qualified and capable individuals who happen to have a disability is the charge to OOD's new business sourcing analysts (BSA) who started this week. The BSAs received an abundance of information during their new employee orientation. The new BSAs are:

- Stephanie Branco – Northwest
- Cynthia Crews – Southwest
- Jessica Forsythe – Northeast
- Kelly Jordan – Southeast

Working with Jon Hackathorn, OOD's Business Relations Manager, this group is going to be meeting with businesses in their respective areas to make sure that OOD is recognized as a valuable resource to business owners and hiring managers as individuals in the VR program seek out employment opportunities.

## Number of Individuals with Disabilities on Waiting List



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

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