



Cheryl Ann Programs News Review

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INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS

We talked with three people who work as Independent Providers, setting their own schedules and creating the right environment for compassionate care for their clients.

“They Know Their Kids Are in Good Hands”

Becoming an Independent Provider allowed Lisa Slonecker to do something she could never do when she was working fulltime in the field of developmental disabilities: provide hands-on help to families.

Slonecker, of Wapakoneta, enjoyed her career in the field. But her job did not include working directly with families. “When I was working in an office, I never felt like I was doing enough to directly help the parents,” she

said. “All parents need a break. It’s important to me that I’m able to provide that.”

Now retired and an Independent Provider, Slonecker spends time with individuals with disabilities so that their families can step away for a few hours or a few days. “There is such a need for parents to get out, or work, or go on vacation, or whatever
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Lisa Slonecker

“I’m the Expert on Jeffrey, Bar None”

Dave Hausmann just might have the best job in the world. He spends his working days taking care of someone he knows almost better than he knows himself: his son, Jeffrey.

Jeffrey, who is 32, has cerebral palsy, which limits his language and movements. Hausmann does everything in his power to help Jeffrey express himself and live a full life. Together in the family home in Mendon, they communicate as only they can, share jokes and a love of music.

“It’s been a journey,” said Hausmann, a single dad with three sons. “Jeffrey brings me a lot of joy. When people joke around with him, he’s always joking and smiling. He takes things in stride so well. When I get down, he looks at me and smiles and it brings me up. Really, he’s
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Dave Hausmann

“He’s Become One of My Best Friends”

Kevin Gray got an unexpected benefit when he signed up to be an Independent Provider for a young man named Travis.

“He’s become one of my best friends,” Gray said.

Gray, who lives in Celina, drives Travis’ home in the Montezuma area three or more days a week to provide care and companionship for Travis. “Travis had a brain injury at an early age, and is legally blind,” Gray said. “He has a memory that is unreal—he memorizes the books I read to him. He and
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Kevin Gray

Independent Providers Can Set their own Course

This issue of the Mercer County Board of DD newsletter focuses on one primary mode of service delivery—the role of Independent Providers. Independent Providers are self-employed individuals who choose to work within the Developmental Disability system of care. There are many other examples of individuals working in this fashion—such as a babysitter who opts to work out of the home as opposed to a daycare.

I like to think of Independent Providers in the context of transportation. Fifteen years ago, if you had asked a thousand people to become taxi drivers in Columbus, you would have been laughed at. Those individuals would have said, “NO



Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman

WAY! I am not going to work night and weekend hours. I don't want to answer to a boss who will tell me when and how to do the job.” However, when Uber showed up ten years ago, a thousand people signed on to be drivers. Many of them agreed to do the work because it was something that they controlled, much like becoming an Independent Provider.

Individuals who choose to work in our system as Independent Providers can select the hours that they want to work and the individuals whom they are willing to serve. They can even select the type of services that they are most comfortable with—such as going to the grocery, fixing meals, going to athletic events, or going to medical appointments. Maybe all of them.

More important than the tasks being performed are the relationships that are being developed. Most successful Independent Providers have a core group of

individuals whom they know well. Most services will be funded by Medicaid at rates of nearly \$20 per hour. Paychecks can be received as often as weekly.

The Mercer Country Board of DD is able to be the “Uber” for people who are interested in becoming Independent Providers. We can provide the assistance that people would need to feel supported. We have professionals who are available in person or by phone to answer questions and address issues that might come up. We will assist with billing and do everything we can to minimize red tape. We currently have a policy that offers a total reimbursement of any fees that are required to gain DSP certification.

This is an exciting time for us as we are ready to grow our pool of Independent Providers. To learn more about becoming an independent provider, please contact me at 419-586-2369, ext 214.

Remembering Chris Sauer, Co-Worker and Friend

Earlier this year, Cheryl Ann Programs said goodbye to someone who had made a big impact for many years: Chris Sauer. Chris died on August 30 after a courageous battle with cancer. He was 66.

“Lots of people in the Cheryl Ann family knew Chris and loved Chris,” said Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman.

The feeling was mutual, said Chris' wife, Bonnie. At Cheryl Ann, “he found the perfect fit,” she said. “He went out of his way to make people happy.”

Chris worked for years in what was once Cheryl Ann's workshop, where the associates wholeheartedly loved him, and later served as the custodian of Cheryl Ann's Mud Pike facility.

“Chris was fun-loving but an-

alytical at the same time,” Thieman said. “He was never afraid of hard work, and could be something of a perfectionist.”

The best illustration of that was Chris' work with Cheryl Ann's keys, which were many and jumbled into one big basket. When he took over, he methodically matched each key with its lock, labeled the keys and organized them. If that sounds like a small thing, you've never had to search for the missing key to a locked door.

He also took good care of his coworkers. In snowy weather, he'd scrape ice off peoples' windshields. This continued even when he was sick and taking chemo treatments. “I'd say to him, ‘Chris, you're on chemo, you need to take care of yourself,’” Bonnie said. But in taking

care of others, he was filling his own deep need to be needed.

“Cheryl Ann was like family to him,” Bonnie said. “I tried to get him to retire, but he would not hear of it.”

Chris, it seems, found the key to life.



Chris Sauer, left, organizing a tree-planting in 2017.

Kevin Gray

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I connect because he is a classic rock-and-roll fan, and so am I. We listen to a lot of music and sing together a lot.”

He’d met Travis, who is now 38, and his family when Gray’s boys were involved with Scouts, and so was Travis and his dad. They all became friends, hunted and fished together. “We had a rapport,” he said.

But when he was asked to be an Independent Provider for Travis, “I really didn’t know if this was going to be something for me or not,” he said.

It turned out to be a great job. Gray takes Travis places where he likes to go, including to a Thursday night bowling league. “Or we might go to the Eagles and listen to live music. He gets out and about in the community—he’s very active and people know him everywhere we go,” Gray said.

Lisa Slonecker

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else they want or need to do,” she said. “I want them to feel that with me, their kids are in good hands.”

Slonecker’s work week varies. Last summer, she provided waiver services for a family where both parents are working, so Slonecker helped them out two days a week. This fall, she’s been covering for vacations, “or if a family wants to go to a Buckeyes game, or go to a wedding where they might not be able to take their child.”

Her work schedule offers her the flexibility she wanted in her retirement. “My husband and I can still travel and do the things we want to do,” said Slonecker, the mother of three grown daughters. It helps that she is organized and so are the three families for whom she works. Generally, they call her well in advance to arrange her work schedule.

“This job takes patience, flexibility and a passion for helping others,” she said. “I have a passion for wanting families to be able to get away from home without worrying about what’s happening at home. Everybody deserves that.”

Like all Independent Providers, Slonecker went through a rigorous application process, background checks and training. She said it might be a good job for retirees, like her, or for college students with flexible schedules. “I encourage people to consider becoming an Independent Provider,” she said. “If anyone is thinking about it, I’d be happy to give them a firsthand look at what it’s like, because there is a real need for providers, and it’s rewarding work. I get a lot out of it.”

To learn more about Independent Providers, contact Cheryl Ann at 419-586-2369 x214.

Gray noted that Independent Providers have to keep track of their own schedule, licensing and paperwork, including filing for payments and mileage reimbursements,



Travis with Kevin, Christmas 2018

and requesting approval when extra hours are necessary.

Gray said he has learned a lot from Travis. “You get caught up in your own life. You think, ‘I want this, I want that.’ But all Travis wants to do is go bowling, go out to eat, listen to music. The more you’re around people like that, it keeps you in check,” Gray said. Spending time with Travis has helped him and others by “teaching us what we should be.”

Dave Hausmann

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made me stronger. I don’t know if I’d be the man I am today if I didn’t have Jeffrey in my life.”

Jeffrey has received services from Cheryl Ann for over 15 years. He and his dad have such a strong and evident bond that three years ago, Kelli Thomas, Jeffrey’s SSA, came to Hausmann with an idea.

“She told me that Medicaid had started a new program where family members can get certified to be Independent Providers and that would be their job, to take care of their kids when they were home and get paid to do it. It’s a win-win situation. There’s no aide or doctor or anybody in this world who knows Jeffrey like I do. I am the expert on Jeffrey, bar none.”

Hausmann went through the training and certification. He helps Jeffrey wake up in the morning and get ready to go to Community Connections in Coldwater, where he spends five days a week.

“It’s definitely good for him to be out and socialize. It’s good for him to have a wider group of friends,” he said.

At home, Jeffrey listens to music or watches his brothers play video games. Hausmann keeps tabs on Jeffrey’s interests and reactions, always fine-tuning his care. “Recently, I’ve been making adjustments. Jeffrey’s bedroom is off our living room. Recently Jeffrey has been making the sign for goodbye, showing me that he wants some alone time. So I help him into his room and turn the music on for him so that he can have some quiet time and decompress. He’s definitely growing up and wants his own time.”

IRON WILL

Cheryl Ann has organized a power lifting club that encourages its members to put their heart into every lift.



Thanks to Coaches Debbie Wagner, Mike Wolfe, Jason Wells and Matt Shindeldecker!

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