



# Cheryl Ann Programs News Review

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## Heckler Award Honors Arc Volunteers

### Schmitmeyers Oversaw Arc Homes For Many Years

When Greg Schmitmeyer was getting near the end of his school years, he started thinking about what would come next in his life—just as most teens do.

Yet it caught his parents, Pat and Cathy Schmitmeyer of Montezuma, by surprise. They already had an image of what Greg's future would look like. "We thought we were going to all live together happily ever after," Cathy said.

But that wasn't what Greg wanted. The middle of the Schmitmeyers' seven children, he'd seen his older siblings grow up and move on. Since Greg had been born with Down Syndrome, though, his parents weren't sure how that would work for Greg. They couldn't picture him functioning well on his own. And he couldn't picture himself staying on the family farm. They were at an impasse, and it hurt.

"We couldn't satisfy him; nothing was right," Pat said. "Everybody tried to help him through it. Nick (Greg's older brother) and his friends were especially good about including him as much as they could, but eventually they graduated and moved on. Greg struggled with depression and that

was a tough time for us."

Finally, though the family had always managed on its own to find the best path for Greg up until that point, they turned to Cheryl Ann Programs. "We knew that Greg needed some independence, so Cheryl Ann stepped in. They told us about Arc housing, and we thought, 'What do we have to lose?'" Pat said.

The Arc of Mercer County provides residential options for adults with developmental disabilities. Residents in the Arc homes pay rent and utilities, while the Arc maintains the homes. Cheryl Ann helps coordinate other services the residents may need.

In 2005, Greg moved into an Arc house in Celina with two other young men. His parents thought he'd move back home in a couple of weeks. Instead, Greg took to his new life immediately—and it changed his family's life for the better. Greg is now 33 and still living happily in an Arc house in



Pat and Cathy Schmitmeyer hold the Albert Heckler Award on the front porch of their farmhouse.

"We were glad to be able to help with something that was so close to our heart." *Cathy Schmitmeyer*

Coldwater. He has a job, a lot of friends and a fulfilling life.

Through Greg's experience, the Schmitmeyers got involved with Arc housing in Mercer County. Pat oversaw the housing program for 13 years while Cathy kept the books, tracking rental payments, maintenance and other expenses. As a result of their unparalleled dedication to Arc housing for all those years, they have been named the recipients of Cheryl Ann's Albert Heckler Award for 2019.

The award, given each year by  
*(Continued on page three)*

## Professionals Who Show Up Motivated Every Day

# Loyal, Dedicated Employees Help Our Mission

The Mercer County Board of DD recently thanked all of its staff members for their many years of service. As I reflect on that evening, I can't help but to feel lucky. Lucky to have dependable and dedicated staff. Lucky to be surrounded by professionals who show up motivated every day. Lucky to



**Cheryl Ann  
Superintendent  
Shawn Thieman**

oversee a group of unselfish individuals who have a passion to serve others. Lucky to avoid the pitfalls of constant employee turnover.

The two staff members who have the longest tenure at Cheryl Ann have been working side by side within our Early Intervention Department for many years: Chris Schulte and Lynn Rupert. Chris and Lynn are accountable for more than 60 combined years



**Lynn Rupert, left, and Chris Schulte, center, who with Jennifer Wenning, right, are our longest-serving staff members.**

of service to families in Mercer County. They have created numerous relationships with many people and are able to connect some of the children whom we currently serve to their families of past generations. Their knowledge of a child's developmental expectations is incredible and they have passed much of their knowledge on to everyone who works here.

Nearly half of our workforce have been employed at Cheryl Ann Programs between 15–25 years. We live in a time where many employees are accused of thinking of themselves first and not being loyal to the organizations that employ them. That is not the case at Cheryl Ann Programs, where so many have served for such a long time.

I am very pleased to report that we are going to be adding a staff member in the very near future. We recently created a Peer Support/Special Olympics Coordinator position that will begin building upon the current offerings in Mercer County. We have heard from many individuals and family members in recent years that they would like to have more events and activities in which they could participate. I look forward to introducing this individual to all of you in the next newsletter.

## Employees Recognized at Banquet

1–4 years of service, top photo; 5–15 years, bottom photo



*There are more smiling CA faces on page four!*

Front row, L-R, Jenna Braun, Ann Marie Burke, Erica Lange, Austin Monroe. Back row, L-R, Sandy Dorsten, Dannielle Kelly, Karen Leugers, Tonya Clark, Jessica Wenning, Tarra Muhlenkamp.



L-R, Claire Loughrige, Nikki Schwartz, Mindy Muhlenkamp, Beth Gehret, Amanda Monds, Shawn Thieman.

# Heckler Award Honors Arc Volunteers

*(Continued from page one)*

Cheryl Ann Programs to an outstanding parent volunteer/advocate, was presented during Cheryl Ann's annual awards banquet in April. The Schmitmeyers' children, including Greg, and grandchildren were on hand for the presentation.

At the banquet, Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman said that Pat always picked up the phone when Cheryl Ann called with questions or needs involving Arc housing. "I don't think any of us will ever know how much you two gave to the program," he said. "You never once complained about it, and you did it all for free. I can't begin to guess how many hours you donated, how many nights the cows had to wait, the combining had to wait, because we had called upon you for help."

The Schmitmeyers' involvement with Arc started slowly. They had taken part in some Arc activities, including Special Olympics, but had not been deeply involved. Then at an Arc meeting one night, it was announced that Arc needed a housing manager, and an Arc member asked Pat to consider taking it on. "We went home that night and said, 'We sure hope they find somebody to help them,'" Cathy said.

They had found somebody. Pat said yes, not knowing exactly what he was getting into. Arc owned five houses at that time, including Greg's home. Pat did a lot of the work on the houses himself, calling in professionals when there was a maintenance issue he couldn't handle. His other children would pick up the slack on the farm when Pat was working on an Arc house, or they would also pitch in with an Arc house project. "We'd always manage to get things done, but sometimes it was a little hectic," Cathy said in what was

probably an understatement.

Arc continued to acquire houses. Pat inspected the homes regularly; he fixed roofs and updated bathrooms. Cathy paid the bills, collected rent checks and dispatched Pat when problems arose. The Schmitmeyers also oversaw the financing of the houses, consolidating loans when it was advantageous and keeping funds back for big projects that they knew were coming up.

"We were glad to be able to help with something that was so close to our heart," Cathy said. Through the Arc homes, they grew close to other parents who were facing some of the same issues they had faced.

There came a time when the Schmitmeyers started to think about how much longer they could keep it all up. "It can be an intense job, and we were worried that there might not be anybody to take it over," Pat said.

The Mercer County Board of Developmental Disabilities solved that problem, assigning an employee, Gregg Rutledge, to manage the Arc homes. The Board remains grateful to the Schmitmeyers for the many years they volunteered with Arc.

And the Schmitmeyers remain grateful to Cheryl Ann and Arc for the opportunities they helped Greg find. Greg enjoys his work at Taco Bell in Celina, We Can Too, and GBS, and his many friends. "When we're with him out in the community, people are always saying, 'Hi, Greg!' We're



**Cheryl Ann Superintendent Shawn Thieman presents the Heckler Award to the Schmitmeyers, above. Below, the extended family (Greg is to the left of Cathy near the center).**

Greg's brothers and sisters helped with Arc home projects or took on extra chores at home so that Pat could concentrate on the Arc homes.

amazed at how many people he knows," Cathy said. "He has his own life now. And if he'd kept on living with us, maybe he wouldn't have that."

So Arc helped the Schmitmeyer family, and the Schmitmeyers helped Arc—and a lot of other people in the process. "That's what we all want for our kids: just to be happy," Pat said. "Arc housing is the greatest thing that's ever happened for us—and I think a lot of other families would say the same thing."

# *Thanks to our Cheryl Ann Programs Staff!*



Our staff members are “a group of unselfish individuals who have a passion to serve others.”  
(See page two.)



Staff members with 16–25 years of service: front row, L-R, Marisa Waterman, Rajean Hedrick, Patti Green, Melissa Kaup, Joan Steinbrunner Back row, L-R, Stacey Leffler, Laura Yoder, Tawnya Uhlenhake, Deb Mescher, Chris Sauer, Gregg Rutledge, Jessica Heck-Stelzer, Kelli Thomas.

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