

Board Members Bring Community Voice

Members Guide and Advise on New Initiatives, Challenges

Board members are special people. They agree to an initial four-year term, and then can be appointed for two more terms. They do this for no pay, out of love for our organization.

They take a seat at the Board not knowing what will come up during their term. There will be good times and triumphs, when the whole organization is taking a step forward in an almost palpable way. Congratulations all around.

There will also be hard times and struggles, sometimes with the budget, sometimes with personnel, sometimes with state or federal mandates, sometimes with public perception—and sometimes these come more than one at a time. Sometimes it is an ambush.

Yet the Board says yes. Yes to the challenges, yes to the joys, yes to studying the minutes, yes to having their brains picked. Yes to getting to know the organization and its people. Yes to caring about all of them.

Mercer DD
Welcomes Two
New Board Members
Meet them on page 2.

Through-out its history, Mercer County DD has been built on the foundation of a strong Board of dedicated people. “In my years here, I’ve been so impressed by the commitment of our Board members,” said Superintendent Shawn Thieman. “They read through all the documents I send them every month, and they come to the meetings ready to discuss what is on the agenda and anything else that comes up. They don’t back away from offering opinions yet they work together well. We really are blessed by our Board.”

Mercer DD tries to have a balance on its Board. “We try to have at least one member from each school district in the county—we want to get the entire county on our Board,” Thieman said. Often but not always, they are family members of a person with developmental disabilities, so they bring real-life experiences to the discussion.



Board members bring their expertise and viewpoints to valuable discussions each month. Shown here in Mercer DD’s new lobby are, seated, L-R, Mona Berning, Beth Guggenbiller and Karla Butler. Standing, L-R, are Mike Linton, Teri Spoltman (president), Jim Maurer and John Werling.

At its April 26 meeting, the Board welcomed two new members, John Werling of St. Henry and Karla Butler of Rockford. (More about them on page two.) Board President Teri Spoltman of Maria Stein called the meeting to order and the Board worked its way through a busy agenda.

They heard a happy report about the many Special Olympics events on the spring and summer calendar. Thieman walked them through an upcoming building-and-grounds project, which will renovate the classrooms in the
(Continued on page three)

Volunteers Essential for Community—And Us

For over 55 years, the Mercer County Board of Developmental Disabilities has been governed by seven volunteer Board members. Five of those volunteers are appointed by the County Commissioners and two by the Probate Judge. We try to find individuals who have diverse perspectives and represent each of the six school districts in Mercer County.

As a public sector leader for many years, I have witnessed the tremendous impact that volunteerism has on many organizations. Volunteering bonds people across similar (or maybe even diverse) communities to accomplish a common cause.

One of many great examples in our area that is dear to our heart here at Mercer DD is the Park 4 All Abilities located within Coldwater's Memorial Park. Volunteers worked with the village and its parks board to install a play area accessible to all. Around our area, there are sports complexes and athletic buildings that have been built by Booster Clubs. Our local fire and EMS departments are dependent upon volunteers to work shifts and to raise money for the lifesaving equipment that they need.

I recently enjoyed a delicious meal at the Do Good Restaurant in Osgood. This restaurant was built with donations and depends upon volunteers to operate and



Mercer DD Superintendent Shawn Thieman

accomplish its mission of raising funds for local citizens in need. Several Mercer County families that have children with disabilities have been the recipient of Do Good donations

to assist them with expenses. The wait staff could not have been nicer and the food could not have tasted better—and when it was time to dig in for a tip—I couldn't help but to feel more generous than ever. I could not believe the positive energy and smiles that were emitted from every worker and patron.

I think volunteerism is a requirement of any healthy society in which people are more likely to focus on what unites us than what divides us. This past year has been tough on many of us and it is easy

to find negativity. We are entering the summer season where many of our local communities will be hosting festivals, picnics and concerts. I encourage everyone to attend, but more importantly — find a way to get involved and volunteer.

Thanks to all of our volunteers: Arc members, Special Olympics coaches, non-profit agency Board members, and especially to our past and present Mercer County Board of DD members.

Volunteerism helps people focus more on what unites us than what divides us.

THANKS TO ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Two Welcomed to the Board



New Board members John Werling of St. Henry and Karla Baker of Rockford, pictured in Mercer DD's new lobby.

Joining the Mercer County Board of DD at its April meeting were Karla Butler of Rockford and John Werling of St. Henry.

Both said they have seen firsthand the good that is done at Mercer DD and wanted to be a part of bringing services to others.

“My son has received services since 1987 and I am happy to give back by being a Mercer DD Board member,” said Karla. “I hope I can use my 30 years' experience as a public school teacher and as the mother of a consumer of DD services to serve on the Mercer DD Board productively.”

The services that Mercer DD provides “make a difference in the lives of so many,” John said. “I hope to help the Board continue its mission to support the growth and development of the clients and help them maximize their independence.”

Former Board President Steady at the Helm

Phil Fullenkamp of St. Henry was honored recently by Mercer DD for his years of service on the Board.

Phil was a member of the Board for eight years, serving as Board president for the past five years.



Phil Fullenkamp

His service to Mercer DD was invaluable, said Superintendent Shawn Thieman. “Phil is a great facilitator and mediator. He understands people’s perspectives and can bring them along in any discussion,” Thieman said. “He would eval-

uate any issue in an extremely professional way. I always appreciated how he handled any process.”

Phil’s sister, Mary Lou Fullenkamp, used the organization’s services and Phil undoubtedly learned something about the field from his family’s experience. But his expertise went far beyond, Thieman added.

“Phil is a great guy, a community service guy,” he said. “He sees the big picture. He and his wife Peg are leaders within their St. Henry community.”

Mercer DD had to tackle some big issues during Phil’s time on the Board, including a salary-and-benefit redesign and the

Phil Fullenkamp was a steady, candid but compassionate force on the Mercer DD Board, and as a Board member and its president was the consummate professional.

hiring of a new superintendent.

“He has a business mind, and I leaned on him for a lot of direction and leadership. He was always a steady, candid but compassionate force on the Board—the consummate professional,” Thieman said.

Mercer DD is grateful for Phil’s years of service on the Board and as its president, and wishes all the best for him and Peg in the years ahead.

Three Staffers Honored



Mercer DD recently recognized three members of its staff for their years of service. Jennifer Wenning, right, has been a part of the organization for 30 years. Jennifer, an Administrative Professional who greets visitors with warmth and style, will retire in 2021. Honored for 25 years of service were Patti Green (center) and Rajean Hedrick (not pictured), both Administrative Professionals. At left is Austin Monroe, completing his fifth year of service as a Building Custodian. Thanks to them and to all our staff members for their professionalism and dedication!

Board Members

(Continued from page three)

45-year-old facility on Mud Pike outside of Celina. They discussed hiring a new staff member, and a proposed reorganization of duties among a couple of departments.

They talked at length about an ongoing problem for Mercer DD—recruiting the Direct Service Providers that are so desperately needed by many area agencies that provide services to people with disabilities. Where can we find more reliable and compassionate DSPs? Board members suggested talking to several different groups in the community while Mercer DD staffers scribbled notes. Board members bring ears and eyes to every discussion and increase the organization’s reach.

It was a meeting that covered a lot of ground in 90 minutes, and next month they will meet again. “I can always count on our Board members,” Thieman said. “We literally could not do what we do without them.”



Come on in!

We're happy as can be with the newly completed front entrance of our facility on Mud Pike west of Celina. The new energy-efficient doors open into a bright and welcoming lobby (our Board members are pictured in it

on page one). We hope the new entrance will give everyone a lift when they come to see us.

Thanks to Baumer Construction of Minster for completing the work on time and on budget!

Mercer DD
4980 Mud Pike
Celina OH 45822