

Thank You, Mercer County!

Voters approved our levy renewal by a large margin, and we are very grateful for your trust and support.

We are so grateful for and gratified by the response of Mercer County voters on November 7, who approved the renewal of our five-year, 1.94-mill operating levy. An overwhelming majority of 77.69 percent of voters approved our levy renewal.

Passage of the levy ensures that the Mercer County Board of DD can maintain our current local funding and will allow us to offer services without interruption. The resounding “yes” vote on the levy renewal demonstrates that local voters value our place in the community, and our efforts of more than 60 years to support citizens with developmental disabilities, help them to a fulfilling life, and support and guide them and their families.

We are all so fortunate to live in a place where the people truly step up and take care of people who need their help—their friends and neighbors as well as people they may never meet.

We respect and appreciate the generosity and farsightedness of Mercer County voters. We are all so fortunate to live in a place where the people truly step up and take care of people who need their help—their friends and neighbors as well as people they may never meet.

Through their support of our levy, the people have placed their trust in us. Our board and our entire staff take very seriously the responsibility to earn that trust and re-earn it every day.

We are committed to proving to the taxpayers that they did the right thing when approving our levy renewal. We consider it an issue of public trust, on which we place a very high priority.

This, we hope, is reflected in our services to adults, including helping them find employment that brings meaning to their lives, specialized care through direct service providers and programs, and housing that suits their needs. It is also reflected in our services to children through our Early Intervention Program, which this year will see over 200 children aged newborn to three. We also serve an additional 125 school-aged children. (More children are receiving services due to improved awareness on the part of doctors and other caregivers who can refer children with disabilities to our programs.)

We serve approximately 200 adults in the county, especially as medical advances have extended the lives of individuals with disabilities, and we are grateful for that.

And of course, we serve the families and friends of people with disabilities of all ages. It is heartening to see the solid emotional, financial and many other kinds of support that good-hearted people give so freely.

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From “Nameless News” to Instant Updates

Follow along with news from Mercer DD on Facebook, YouTube

Mercer DD published its first newsletter over 17 years ago. The first edition was appropriately titled “The Nameless News,” and a competition ensued to develop the official title. Ted Thobe submitted the winning proposal and Cheryl Ann Programs issued its first “News Review” in December 2006. Jean Giesige was the developer, author and editor of the original newsletter, and every subsequent newsletter. By my estimate—

we are currently publishing the 80th and final edition of what is now called the Mercer DD

Newsletter.

Jean attended, photographed and celebrated countless events and people over the years. She has written many fun-loving stories about



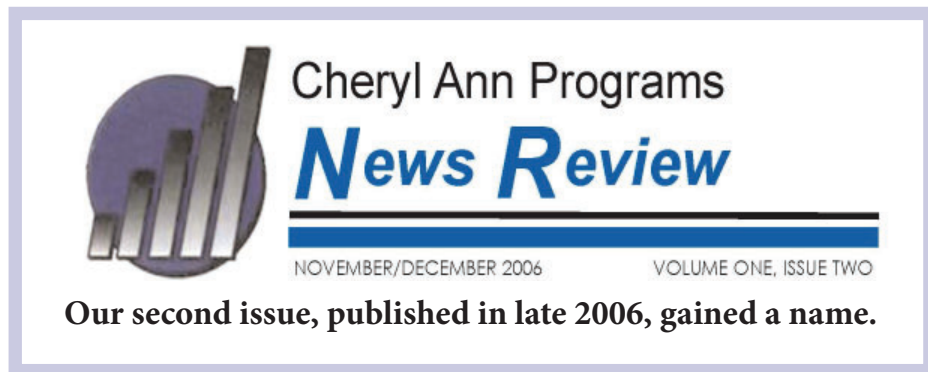
**Mercer DD
Superintendent
Shawn Thieman**

Thank You

(Continued from page one)

The levy renewal will generate about \$1.38 million per year to serve Mercer County residents. There are a million different reasons people may seek out our services. There are a million reasons why our dedicated staff has chosen this profession. And voters had a million different motivations for saying yes to our request.

For all that we say, thanks a million!



the successes of individuals served by Mercer DD. She has been great at promoting the triumphs of our clients and making sure that everyone in Mercer County knows of their potential.

Jean also understood that all good organizations and systems need great employees. She regularly recognized the work and accomplishments of all staff—those at Mercer DD as well as those who worked at provider agencies.

Jean’s work has been much more than just writing and chronicling the happenings of Mercer DD. She has the unique gift of seeing the world from multiple perspectives and using that knowledge to appropriately inform people. Mike Overman and I both had the privilege of working closely with Jean. I am certain that he would agree with me—through her efforts, this newsletter provided an essential function within our organization.

This organization has gone through many changes in the past 17 years, and Jean was the sounding board for every obstacle that Mike and I faced. Jean sat down with me over 36 times to plan a newsletter and discuss Mercer DD. She would help me put into words what our families and community members wanted and needed to know. She did it behind the curtain with no recognition or expectation for recognition.

Thanks so much, Jean.

We are dedicated to keeping everyone up to date regarding Mercer DD. As the world has become more immersed into instant information, we have found our digital footprint on social media—Facebook and YouTube in particular. Over the past year, we have developed our social media presence and much of our information comes out on our Facebook page, in real time. We have produced over 20 videos that can be accessed on our Facebook page or YouTube channel. During this time, we have also shared numerous stories and posts of our people, staff and community.

With that being said, we will no longer produce a physical newsletter each quarter. We will continue to update you regularly via our social media outlets. In addition, we will be producing a monthly “At A Glance” that will focus on our monthly board happenings. This will be published on our Facebook page and website, www.mercerdd.org.

If you do not currently subscribe to or follow our social media channels, we encourage you to follow us by visiting us at:

- www.mercerdd.org
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MercerCountyBDD/>
- YouTube: search Mercer DD.

Patti Green Has Never Been Bored

Patti Brought her Best to her many Tasks at Mercer DD

In her nearly 29 years of working for the Mercer County Board of DD, Patti Green performed a lot of tasks. A LOT. Enough to fill a page, single-spaced. And all would acknowledge that was just the tip of the iceberg of everything she brought to the organization, her co-workers and most of all the families she served.

In all those years, when asked, Patti Green said yes.

Including during her job interview all those years ago. She had been supporting herself and her kids working several part-time jobs. Patti was ready for steady, full-time work when her friend, Carol Tonkin, suggested she apply for a secretarial opening at what was then Cheryl Ann Programs.

At that interview, one of the questions then-Superintendent Mike Overman asked was, “How do you answer the phone?”

“I thought, what does he mean?” Patti said. “He told me, ‘If you are hired here, I want you always to smile when you answer the phone, because smiling changes the tone of your voice.’ And I have done that ever since.”

So families calling the Early Intervention (EI) program, where Patti now works as an administrative assistant, hear that smile. Patti’s voice puts them at ease. Then she follows up with professional and prompt service.

Patti has been happy to introduce them to Mercer DD and its EI program, which helps children age newborn to three years old.

“Some people call in asking about our services and they ask,

‘How much is this going to cost?’ Some are not aware that our services are offered through the County, and they don’t have to pay for it,” she said.

She is proud of the help that EI can provide, proud of the work that Mercer DD offers to the community. Its constantly evolving protocols to remain on the cutting edge of its field have kept her on her toes. “I call myself a revisionist because I’m constantly revising something!” she said. “It keeps you from getting bored.”

She has never been bored at Mercer DD, not in her early years working alongside Carol Tonkin in the main office—“It was amazing how things grew and grew,” she said—and not since 2000, when she moved to EI. She was especially happy when the county’s Help Me Grow program moved to Mercer DD, and Patti performed the central intake.

“That was my favorite part of the job,” she said. “I would get to work and hit the ground running—the days went by so fast.”

Days speed by in EI. “We’ve helped a lot of kids this year—we’re going to break the record,” Patti said. By mid December, EI staff had seen 278 children in 2023 and performed 133 evaluations.

As Patti prepares for her retirement in February, she has passed off some of her responsibilities to Paige Clark. Patti doesn’t work with families as much anymore, and she misses that, but she is happy to know they are in good hands. “Paige is awesome. It makes me feel good knowing I’m turning things over to someone who is so good at her job,” she said.

Patti is so positive, so cre-



Patti Green, whose smile can be heard through the line when people call EI.

atively competent, that she has been called the glue that holds the EI together. Melissa Kaup, Early Childhood Services Director, said it’s hard to list all the ways that Patti is essential.

“Patti is always willing to find a way to help the team, to make life easier so they can focus on supporting families rather than paperwork,” Melissa said. “Her understanding of rule requirements and data entry into various systems has helped me to make sure files are in order. She’s created spreadsheets to ensure the team meets various timelines, maintained reminders for when certain projects or reports are due, and prepared files for accreditation or other reviews by the state. And we can always count on Patti if we want a piece of gum . . . she keeps it stocked for us in the office!”

It will be hard to say goodbye, Patti acknowledges, though she looks forward to spending more time with her family, and traveling. “It will be saying goodbye to my family, my other family,” she said. “We get along very well. That will be the part I will miss the most.”

Our People Make Mercer DD Go and Grow

Staff members with milestone anniversaries were honored at our annual banquet.



Each year, the Mercer County Board of DD hosts an employee appreciation banquet, at which it is happy to honor all staff, especially those marking a milestone anniversary.

Honored at the 2023 banquet in November were (pictured from left) Melissa Kaup, Early Childhood Services Director, 15 years; Jessica Wenning, SSA, five years; Dannielle Kelly, Help Me Grow Program Supervisor, five years; Shawn Thieman, Superintendent, 15 years; Deb Mescher, SSA, 25 years; and Erica Lange, Quality Service Manager/SSA, five years. Not pictured is Nicole Schwartz, SSA, 15 years.

Thanks for sharing your talents and commitment with the people we serve!

Mercer DD
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