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## SOCOG Passes Torch for Tech Ambassadors Grant



In 2020, as part of a grant to promote adaptive technology use among Ohioans with disabilities, the Southern Ohio Council of Governments began a search for adults who gained independence through supportive or adaptive technology.

In January 2021, the Ohio Tech Ambassador Network launched with five Ohioans using Supportive Technology in their own lives serving as role models through virtual peer-to-peer mentoring events. Post-pandemic, the Tech Ambassadors began hosting in-person events monthly throughout Ohio and the team grew to nine Tech Ambassadors.

Today in 2023, the tremendous success of the program has led to it outgrowing the resources of SOCOG. The Ohio Department of DD requested bids for the grant which was recently awarded in September to We Thrive Together.

Tech Ambassador Director George Myers



Top: Tech Ambassadors answers audience questions at the June Meet the Tech Ambassadors event in June.

Left: George Myers accepts a photo signed by all the Tech Ambassadors while being recognized at the September meeting of the SOCOG Board of Directors.

Photos: SOCOG

wanted to mark the end of the program with SOCOG with a big event. And so, the ambassadors and their core team headed to Columbus for their last event with SOCOG. The event took place June 15 at the Statehouse. All but one of the Tech Ambassadors were able to attend and each of them shared their story, answered audience questions, and later hosted guests at their individual tables to share technology they use daily.

COMMUNITY

# Summer Fun

## Keeping it Cool Inside the Pool

Pickaway County DD alongside the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio hosted their second iCan Swim Camp July 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> at the Pickaway County Family YMCA. The camp was a huge success with 30 participants who learned the basics of water safety and valuable swimming lessons from iCan Swim Instructors. The Pickaway County board sends a big thank you to the volunteers and local sponsors who made this possible! Sponsors included The Savings Bank, Forjack Industrial, LLC., Circleville Sunrise Rotary, Circleville Fraternal Order of Eagles and Katie Logan-Hedges.



Photos provided by Pickaway County Board of DD



## A Fair Time for All

Breaking Boundaries, the first ever inclusive swine show for 4H participants with special needs, was held at the Ohio State Fair on July 28th. 4-H participants were paired with swine project participants to show pigs during a showmanship competition. Ohio is now one of many state fairs to hold inclusive events.

Photos provided by Gallia County Board of DD

# Hi-ho ... It's Off to Camp We Go!



Gallia County Board of DD hosted a summer camp for their K-12 students. The camp focused on life skills, including meal prep, during our summer program.

Water was wonderful sensory activity. They enjoyed a trip to the Point Pleasant Splash Pad.

Summer school also includes “school” activities. They focused on

learning about emotions and how to regulate them. They utilized Scribble Spot Curriculum which teaches about emotions with cute spot characters in a variety of colors to help children connect how they are feeling to the characters.

During summer camp, some of their older students were able to work on their shopping skills. They learned about finding items you need, things you like, budgeting and selecting correct sizes. Overall, it was a great learning experience for this group of young men.

Bowling looked like all fun and games, but they were able to practice some great skills during this outing—taking shoes on and off, turn taking, remaining in safe and designated areas, patience and table manners just to name a few.

Summer camp ended with a family picnic/water fun day. Everyone had a wonderful time and they are already planning next summer’s adventures!



This summer, RCBDD hosted five camps for children with disabilities in Ross County including Camp Explore, Inclusive Sports Camp, Pony Camp, Art Camp and iCan Swim Camp. Most of these camps focus on inclusion in the community and involve many partners from local school districts, youth organizations and 4-H clubs. The board was also proud to celebrate Disability Pride Month in July with a Pool Party and Food Truck Friday events.



Photos provided by Ross County Board of DD

# Welcome to Our SOCOG Family

This summer several new faces have joined the SOCOG family. We are proud to welcome all of them to the team.

## Robbie Householder Investigative Agent



Robbie Householder joined our Investigative Agent team in April. Householder comes to us from Brown County where she worked as an SSA/MUI Coordinator. Her experience working with the DD board and in a classroom have prepared her for her current role.

## Kindal Reader Investigative Agent/MUI Corrdinator



Kindal Reader comes to us with degree in Psychology and Sociology/ Criminology from Ohio University and Wright State University. She was hired in June as an Investigative Agent and quickly assumed the additional role of MUI Coordinator.

## Abby Sams Representative Payee



Abby Sams is a new yet familiar face to SOCOG. Abby worked in our Payee department as contract staff for several years. When a regular part-time position opened in August, we were happy to see Abby return. Abby is one of two Representative Payees serving the 190 payee clients served by SOCOG.

Last Spring, Ross County requested SOCOG's assistance in hiring two SSA Assistants. Our search ended with the hiring of

## Stephanie Wheeler SSA Assistant



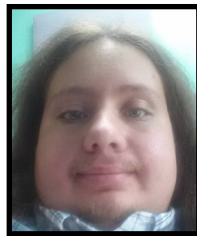
Stephanie Wheeler and Konner Kersey. Wheeler was found right in our own back year at the Pioneer Center working as a permanent substitute instructor.

## Konner Kersey SSA Assistant

Kersey worked as a program assistant at the local Breath program before joining SOCOG. He received his bachelor's degree on his first week of work with the Ross County Board.



## New Advocates for Ross County



Brice Coey



Austin Speakman



Konnor McMahon



Anthon Mustard



Noah Hiles

When the Ross County board saw a need for more advocacy in their area, they didn't stop short. They instructed SOCOG to hire not one, but FIVE new Self-Advocates. The advocates began work in August and their first job was representing the RCBDD at the county fair.

## Amy Patrick Early Intervention Developments Specialist



When Jackson and Scioto Counties told us they needed Early Intervention services and were looking to share a specialist, the search was on. That search led us to Amy Patrick, an experienced teacher. Amy has eagerly jumped into this new role. She began work in early September.



Photos provided by Brown County Board of DD

# Lessons for Life



Project Life is a transition-to-work program Southern Hills Career and Technical Center that combines classroom and life skills education with authentic work experiences to prepare students with disabilities for increased adult independence and integrated em-

ployment in the community. The Brown County Board of DD finances all of the staffing for this program (1 Intervention Specialist and 2 job coaches). The program is making a difference in the lives of many students.



# ADVOCACY



Photo provided by SOCOG

## SOAG Elects New Officers

The Southern Ohio Advocacy Group (SOAG) held its first election of officers since the Covid pandemic stopped in-person SOAG meetings in 2020. Bill Adams of Scioto County will now fill the role of president with Faith Bowman of Jackson County as vice-president.

SOAG is a committee of the Southern Ohio Council of Governments that promotes advocacy efforts and encourages people with disabilities to speak up for themselves. The members are made up of people with disabilities, family members, private providers and natural supports.

The group resumed in-person meetings in June of 2022. They have hosted several off-site special events such as Holiday Party in December and more recently a Picnic in the Park in June.



Adams



Bowman

Meetings vary in size from 10 to 50 people. Many participants travel from area counties to attend. Counties represented in the group include Adams, Athens, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.

“Our meeting are a opportunity for people to share their experiences and receive suggestions and help to resolve issues,” said SOAG Coordinator Travis Dresbach. He added that the issues discussed at

meetings often cover lack of accessibility or discrimination, however, the group provides a forum for all issues of those with disabilities.

SOAG welcomes everyone to attend their upcoming meetings. Meetings take place at 11:00 am on the third Tuesday of each month at the SOCOG office, 167 W Main Street in Chillicothe.

*For more information on SOAG, please contact group coordinators Nate Horsley (nhorsley@socogo.org) and Travis Dresbach (tdresbach@pickawaydd.org).*

### SOAG Meeting Dates

**October 17**

**November 21**

**December (TBD)**

# Funds Raised for Wyman Park

## Champions of Rights hold Third Annual Walk



Champions of Rights presented a total donation of \$1,265.00 to Wyman Park Board Member, Michelle Royster on June 22 at Wyman Park Photo and story provided by Vinton County Board of DD

Champions of Rights Advocacy group hosted their third annual Walkathon to benefit Wyman Park on May 12th. All proceeds from this event go to the Wyman Park Board for inclusive equipment and accessibility at the park.

The Vinton County Board of DD wants to give a huge thank you to Austin Powder, the OSU Extension office, Active Day, Vinton Industries, and Buckeye Community Ser-

vices for participating in this year's event. They also want to recognize Vinton County Treasurer, Vickie Maxwell, Austin Powder, Campbell's Market, and Booth Insurance for your generous donations.

The weather was great for the Walkathon and fun was had by everyone. Champions of Rights provided healthy snacks and water to all participants.

Josh Mathers from Active Day completed the most laps with an amazing 20 laps. Austin Powder was recognized for the most donations.

Champions of Rights presented a total donation of \$1,265.00 to Wyman Park Board Member, Michelle Royster on June 22 at Wyman Park (photo above). The Vinton County board hopes to see everyone at next year's walk.

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We're on the web at [www.socog.org](http://www.socog.org)

### SOCOG Mission Statement

- Do things together we can't do effectively and efficiently alone
- Offer members a trusted source of external expertise and feedback