

### Cold Weather Was No Match for TI Staff

#### **Our Mission:**

*The mission of Toward Independence, Inc. is to assist people with developmental disabilities to live the fullest life possible by providing individualized services in a variety of community settings.*

#### **Our Vision:**

*Individuals with disabilities moving toward independence as they live their lives to the fullest.*



**Christina Mehalic of the Jamestown Home making cookies at the home of a TI staff member.**

April 15. No doubt, this winter was an especially harsh one with frequent snow and ice, and arctic temperatures becoming the rule instead of the

We at Toward Independence (TI) are certain that by the end of February this year, you were likely having the same thought we were: "Will this winter weather ever end?" Just last month, we had yet another snowfall on

exception. Traveling and even simply being outside was much more difficult.

However, we believe something good can always result from what may seem like rather miserable circumstances. In the case of this past winter, the "good" was the hard work, love, and care shown by our TI employees to the men and women we assist, despite the rather nasty weather. To enable our individuals to live the fullest lives possible and maintain active lifestyles, our Direct Support Professionals (DSP) worked through cold temperatures while transporting individuals to workshop or day programs, social events or recreational outings, errands, and more. Taking care of yourself

*(see Cold Weather, page 7)*

### Reflections on 2013 and Goals for 2014

#### *From the Desk of Mark Schlater, Executive Director*



**Mark Schlater**

Since my arrival as the new Executive Director for Toward Independence (TI) on September 3, 2013, my primary focus has been to assess the current systems and processes in place at TI and to become familiar with each of the locations we serve. During my first four months with TI, I made it a priority to tour our homes within Greene, Hamilton, and Montgomery Counties. As a result, I spent time meeting with staff members to assess their roles and responsibilities in implementing our mission. I also met with key stakeholders at each of the County Boards of DD and with

John Martin, the Director of the Ohio

Department of Developmental Disabilities. In addition, it was important for me to review current rules, regulations and funding sources related to TI, including our policies and procedures. Finally, I familiarized myself with as many of the consumers as I could, as their health, welfare and happiness is the key to TI's overall success as an agency.

event where I witnessed the genuine connection our staff members have with each of our consumers. It is this connection that I firmly believe sets TI apart from any other agency. It has become very evident to me through my tours of the homes and my involvement in the picnic, holiday show, and other agency events, that the men and women in our care are pleased with the services and activities they are offered, and have deep trust in those that attend to their needs.

Clearly, 2013 was a "transitional" year at TI with the changeover in Executive Directors. I am pleased that retired Executive Director Bob Archer was able to mentor me and offer guidance in learning and understanding the many different processes at TI. As I reflect on my short time with TI, I know that we are a financially-stable agency, and we now need to be prepared to move forward and take advantage of the many opportunities presented to us in 2014 and beyond. To do this, I am focusing on the accomplishment of a few crucial goals that will lay a strong foundation for the future:

1. *Expanding and developing our workforce.* We need to make sure that our workforce is sufficient in number and highly skilled to perform the many requirements of the job. To make certain that this goal is met, I plan to provide regular

*(see page 2, Reflections on 2013 and Goals for 2014)*

On September 26, 2013, I attended the annual TI agency picnic at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Museum in Dayton. It was at this

# Reflections on 2013 and Goals for 2014

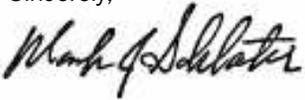
(continued from page 1)

opportunities for professional development, both internally and externally, empowering our employees to be proficient and technically skilled to perform to the best of their abilities.

2. *Technology-driven efficiencies.* I am currently in the process of procuring internal computer network systems that are reliable and durable in order to implement specialized software and other information technologies efficiently and effectively. Accomplishment of this goal will enable the “business function” of our agency to continue without interruption. It will also allow us to document the delivery of services and submission of records/claims to our funding sources quickly and accurately. In this technology-driven world, we must stay competitive in the ability to interface electronically with county, state, and federal funding sources, as doing so benefits both our employees and the consumers who depend on us.
3. *Long-term planning for capital improvements.* Above all else, we need to make certain that the homes we own and operate are safe and meet the needs of our consumers not just today, but in the future. Therefore, the development of a capital-improvement process to invest in the future of our programs is paramount. This process will guarantee that we are able to take the necessary steps to maintain and update our homes and offices as needed. We also want to ensure that all of our vehicles that are on the road each day transporting consumers and staff are always well maintained and safe. We will seek opportunities for grants, donations and other funding sources to stretch dollars and more easily enable the needed capital improvements.

In short, we need to embrace opportunities for growth and positive change, as this will be the norm in the future in the field of developmental disabilities. Staying competitive, innovative, and consistently focused on the quality of services we deliver is key. TI is a great agency with a long-standing tradition of quality services, and we need to continue to celebrate our successes as we build toward the future. I am confident that with our board of directors’ quality leadership skills, our management team’s dedication, and our direct care staff’s commitment to the individuals we assist, our agency will continue to meet the challenges as well as the opportunities in front of us.

Sincerely,



Mark J. Schlater  
Executive Director

## TI Board of Directors

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**Mr. Mark Schlater**  
TI Executive Director

## Caught on Camera!

Check out the Creative Community Connections (CCC) crew below, pictured at the annual CCC variety and talent show at Faith Community United Methodist Church in Xenia, Ohio. This picture was taken as they prepared to perform “Time Warp” from the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The variety show, held in April, was well attended by consumers, staff, CCC participant family members, and the local community.

TI gives special recognition to the CCC staff members for their hard work in both preparing for AND participating in the show. It is obvious that they love their jobs and the individuals who are in their care daily through CCC. In addition, a special “thank you” to Faith Community United Methodist Church, as the church and its members have shown great enthusiasm for our cause and kindness to our consumers over the years!



# Long-Time Montgomery County Program Director Retiring, Replacement Announced



Amelia Shaub

Amelia Shaub, Montgomery County Program Director for Toward Independence (TI), recently announced her intent to retire at the end of May.

Amelia, who graduated from Goshen College in 1965 with a Bachelors Degree in Social Work, has been with TI since 1991. She started as a Direct Support Professional and it was not long before her talents, drive, and passion were recognized by management staff within the agency. After

only a couple of months, she

became a Caseworker at TI's Jamestown Home. Again, proving herself valuable, she was promoted to the position of QMRP after just one year and she carried on the duties of that position for seven years.

During her time as QMRP at the Jamestown Home, Ms. Shaub developed an interest in art therapy. "It was an exciting time, because society was just beginning to realize that people with disabilities are able to produce beautiful works of art. I arranged numerous small art shows at local malls, museums, and libraries. TI received a lot of recognition from this aspect of our programming."

In 1999, she was chosen for the position of Program Director of Montgomery and Greene Counties. At the time, there were just two waiver homes in Montgomery County and one in Greene County, as well as various locations for drop-in services.

With her shift to Program Director, in 2001, Amelia also expanded the art program. She was a key player in the creation of TI's Inner I Gallery, which was the first permanent art gallery in the state of Ohio specifically focused on displaying the works of individuals with developmental disabilities. She even helped start the Inner I's gift shop, which sold t-shirts, note cards, and other products featuring works of art created by TI's consumers.

However, around 2001 as well, a decade of great growth began in which seven new waiver homes were opened in Montgomery County. Soon, Amelia was assigned to Montgomery County only and the Inner I Gallery responsibilities were shifted to other agency staff members.

"The I/O waiver program was new when I became Montgomery County Program Director," said Shaub. "I felt a big sense of accomplishment in building a team of supervisors and direct care staff that opened homes and created a sense of family within each setting. There was a certain feeling of freedom in focusing on the individuals and assisting them in creating new, independent lives for themselves."

When asked to reflect on her career with TI, Amelia shared the following sentiments: "When I first started working at TI, it felt like

I had come home. I knew from working in other places of employment that this was an outstanding, consumer-focused agency. I have given much of myself to TI, but have also been given much in return. I was given a chance to grow, take risks, accept challenges, and especially to learn while doing. I dearly love the people that we assist, and will miss them and my co-workers and staff members greatly. I have made many friends. However, I am ready for a quieter life, one that allows me to sit in the sun and not depend on my watch and calendar to define my day. I am looking forward to the next phase."

Amelia will be missed by TI. "To celebrate the retirement of an employee that has dedicated their life to serving people with developmental disabilities is an immeasurable treasure to TI and our field in general," said Mark Schlater, TI Executive Director.

"Amelia Shaub has given 24 years of her life to our agency, ensuring that high quality and comprehensive services are provided to the individuals in our care," continued Mr. Schlater. "During the short time that I have worked directly with Amelia, I have been tremendously impressed with her efforts to make certain that individualized attention is given to each and every consumer who resides within the homes and supported living settings for which she is responsible. Amelia's hard work and dedication to this agency is very much appreciated, as she has touched the lives of countless men, women, and children during her time at TI. She has set the foundation for the quality of services for which we are known, and consistently leads by example. She will truly be missed. We wish her the absolute best in her retirement years. Thank you Amelia!"

Ms. Shaub's position will be filled by Polly Angel, a highly-qualified internal candidate. Amelia will transition to a temporary part-time mentoring and training position in June, as Polly begins her new job. Polly has been with TI since 1995, and has worked in various positions.

Polly started as the I/O Waiver Supervisor for Greene County, and moved to the position of QMRP for TI's Jamestown Home in the late 1990s. Eventually, she was promoted to Program Manager of all five of the agency's Greene County Intermediate Care Facilities. Polly holds a Bachelors Degree in Education from Urbana University.

"I am excited to take on a new challenge at TI," said Ms. Angel when asked for her thoughts about taking on the title of Montgomery County Program Director. "I genuinely care for the individuals we assist, and plan to continue the tradition of providing stellar, personalized services on their behalf."

Congratulations to Amelia on her retirement, and Polly on her promotion!



Polly Angel

## The Trip of a Lifetime



**Cody (left) enjoying the warm waters of Grand Turk with his family.**

Cody Williams, resident of the Pueblo Home, recently experienced the trip of a lifetime, thanks to some assistance from the Toward Independence (TI) Development Fund. When Cody's family invited him to go on an eight-day western Caribbean cruise with them, Cody was over the moon with excitement! Though his family helped with some of the

expenses and Cody saved personal funds as well, he still did not have enough money to cover the full amount required by the cruise line. Due to Cody's diligence and persistence in making his dream become a reality, the Development Fund agreed to assist him with the remaining moderate travel expenses.

According to Dianne Myers, Cody's mother, the vacation was one that Cody will never forget. Ms. Myers shared the following sentiments:

*"Cody was so happy and excited to be able to go with our family. He was captivated from the very moment we left. He had never been on an airplane before, much less a cruise ship. The flight to New York, our port, was great! Cody*



**Cody beaming with excitement about his first-ever flight.**

*just beamed as he intently stared out the plane window. Once in New York, he was thrilled to see so many sights for the very first time.*

*The next day we got up and headed to the port to get on the cruise ship. The size of the ship amazed Cody. He was in awe of how far he had to look up, just to see the top of the ship! Once settled in, I thought my son might eat himself to death 😊. He loved the all-you-could-eat, whenever-you-wanted-to-eat-it varieties of food. In addition to the food, he also 'ate up' all the attention showered upon him by the cabin stewards and waiters. He couldn't believe how well they all remembered his name and what he liked. One of Cody's favorite things to do on the ship was dance the nights away! When we arrived at each of the islands (Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Grand Turk), Cody was so flabbergasted by everything he saw. The surroundings were so new and different to him! Interestingly, he loved the ocean, which was a surprise to me as he normally doesn't like getting into water.*

*Thank you to Toward Independence for helping make this trip possible for Cody!"*

TI is thrilled for Cody, and his family, at having had the opportunity to make so many wonderful memories together!



**Cody in his cabin on the cruise ship, enjoying the little details like the daily towel sculptures.**

## Forging Ahead with Technology

We are excited to share that Toward Independence (TI) has begun using electronic Medication Administration Records (MARs)! We started using electronic MARs in Hamilton County on March 1, Greene County on April 1, and Montgomery County on May 1. The transition from physical to electronic MARs should be complete by the end of July, and will add great efficiency and accuracy to our medication administration process.

QuickMAR, the software program which TI is utilizing, allows our staff to manage the entire medication cycle including: new order entry by the pharmacy; delivery of medication; updating the MAR with changes; recording medication passes; medication destruction and returns; completing scheduled cycle fills; managing inventory; tracking controlled drugs; and communicating regularly with the pharmacy.

Electronic MARs work through a streamlined process. Bar-coded packages are scanned by TI staff members, ensuring that the right medications are administered to a consumer. After each medication pass, the staff member records the results, including exceptions, with just a few simple on-screen mouse clicks. The time required for a large medication pass is reduced by as much as 50%, providing our direct care staff more time to focus on what's really important-caring for our residents.

Special features of QuickMAR include alarms to prevent potential medication errors, pop-up reminders of medications due, and off-site monitoring by supervisors.

TI staff love the new software. Feedback from team members has included comments such as...

*"QuickMAR is more effective time-wise and easier to use."  
"It is not as hard as I thought it would be to use and it makes us more accountable."  
"Wow...love it! So easy it will not let me make a mistake!"*

Electronic MARs are just one way that technology is impacting TI. "We are forging ahead in ensuring that we have quality computers available in our homes for programmatic use by staff members, including email access for supervisors; updating our phone system; developing electronic, fillable documentation forms; formulating plans for our first-ever intranet; and much more," shared TI Executive Director Mark Schlater. "In the end, our agency will be more efficient and effective in delivering services, which can only bring additional benefits to those in our care!"



## CCC's First Formal Dance and Dinner a Big Hit!



CCC staff member Lamena Stone pictured with gentleman Joe Ramsey.

Toward Independence's Creative Community Connections (CCC) program held its first formal dinner and dance on Saturday, February 15, 2014 in celebration of Valentine's Day. This dance and all of the activities surrounding it made it one of the most special, memorable CCC events to-date.

When the formal was first announced, CCC solicited for and began receiving donations of formal dresses. Most of the dresses were donated by program staff members, who have vibrant passion for the jobs they hold and the individuals

they assist daily. The CCC administrative office was transformed into a formal dress shop, where every lady planning to attend the dance enjoyed trying on different styles of dresses until each one found her favorite.

Due to the generosity of the dress donors, the only cost to the ladies for their "dress purchase" was a \$5.00 cleaning fee. Dress

shopping spanned four weeks, including a Saturday spent on fittings and alterations. It was a true "princess-style" experience for the women of CCC, and one that no doubt made them feel good about themselves. No worries – the men who attended the dance weren't left out. Fast Fashions on Main Street in Xenia gave all of the gentlemen great discounts on their tuxedos, in which they looked dashing!

The dance was originally supposed to be held on Friday, February 14. On that Friday, CCC staff members spent the entire day on fancy hairdos, make-up, and manicures for the "belles of the ball." The party food was cooking, all the decorations and balloons were finished, and everyone was gearing up for a great night. Unfortunately, winter took a nasty turn, and just two hours before the dance was to begin, a large snow storm hit and dumped several inches of snow in just one hour. The dance had to be postponed until the next day.

Needless to say, there was a lot of disappointment. Nancy Justice, CCC Program Coordinator, commented "I was so disappointed, I felt like I was postponing my own wedding." However, the disappointment soon lifted with the rescheduling of the dance for Saturday evening, where attendees danced together in high fashion!

A big thank you to the staff of CCC, both for their time spent planning this event, as well as their generous donations that made many a dream true through the program's first-ever formal dance!

## Upcoming Transition in TI's Development Department

Jodi Hill, Development Officer for Toward Independence (TI) since 2002, recently announced that she will be leaving the agency at the end of May to concentrate on the role of "mommy" for a few years.

"This decision was an incredibly difficult one to make," said Ms. Hill. "It has been such a pleasure to work at TI. The agency has been a wonderful employer and I am so grateful for my 11 years here [Hill took a brief hiatus from her job in 2005 to finish her Master's Degree in Education]. I could not have asked for a more

rewarding position and such terrific co-workers. I am sad to leave, and will miss many things about my work, especially the genuine nature of the men and women we assist. Yet, I am confident that at this time, this is the right decision for my family."

Jodi was hired more than a decade ago to start the agency's first fundraising program. She was practically a fresh college graduate, and yet found the position a natural fit for her personality and desire to work for the good of others rather than for company profit.

She built solid, annual events and initiatives at TI from the ground up, including the holiday campaign, Art & Soul Exhibit, the Walk for Independence, the employee campaign, and others. She wrote grants that helped start the Creative Community Connections habilitation program, rehab the administrative office, purchase accessible vehicles, and take care of consumer-specific needs like sensory equipment, specialized mattresses and wheelchairs, and much more.

In addition to fundraising, Jodi also managed marketing and public relations for the agency, helped with technology and training, wrote the agency newsletter, and managed the Inner I Gallery.

"Someday, I hope to re-enter the field of developmental disabilities, as the people that I have spent the last 11 years



Jodi Hill making it a "family affair" at the 2013 Walk, pictured with her husband and two children.

(see *Upcoming Development Transition*, page 6)

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# Upcoming Development Transition

(continued from page 5)



Jodi selling children's carnival games tickets at the 2012 Xenia Community Festival.

helping have touched my heart in ways that I will never forget," said Ms. Hill.

"Jodi has done a tremendous job of connecting TI to community members and drawing in their support through fundraising and private donations. She has been a wonderful ambassador for the

agency and through her efforts, many new and exciting opportunities for our consumers have been provided," stated agency Executive Director Mark Schlater. "There is no doubt that

she will be greatly missed by TI. Though I have only worked with Jodi for nine months, she has an incredibly hard work ethic and a strong sense of integrity and honesty. She gets the job done right, on time, and every time. I have truly enjoyed working with her. We are losing a valuable asset. Great job, Jodi!"

Development will continue on at TI, despite Ms. Hill's resignation. TI is in the process of hiring her replacement, and intends to continue all current development initiatives, as well as expand the scope of the position to work on new projects.

"I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of our donors, a group that is made up of community members, consumer family members, TI employees, businesses and corporations, foundations, and more. Your generosity and support of TI initiatives, and as a result, of my position, has been amazing. Thank you for all that you have done, and will continue to do on behalf of those we assist!" said Ms. Hill.

## Walk for Independence 2014 a Big Success!



### A Special Thank-You to Our Generous Sponsors!

Primary Level: Greene County Board of DD, InkMob, Kroger, McGohan Brabender, The Open Door of Xenia, Sam's Club, and Walmart. Foundation Level: Beeber Pharmacies, ComDoc, Home Care Pharmacy, Key Chrysler Jeep Dodge, McAfee Heating & Air Conditioning, Montgomery Insurance & Investments, and Sebert Guckian CPA.

## Cold Weather

(continued from page 1)



Residents and staff of TI's Jamestown Home enjoying a home-cooked meal at Supervisor Jennelle Bertke's house during a winter weather emergency.

under such weather conditions is challenging enough, and taking care of other people too can be just plain daunting and difficult. However, our DSPs did it, and well!

We especially want to commend the staff at our Jamestown Home for their efforts to ensure our consumers were safe, warm and cared for when a home emergency occurred this winter. The home's water line froze, causing the furnace and sprinkler system to stop working. Through subzero temperatures, Jennelle Bertke, Home Administrator, and the rest of the Jamestown team banded together, supported by maintenance and administrative staff, to assist the consumers in being relocated to a local hotel in Xenia for three days.

Not only that, but Jennelle wanted the individuals to feel at ease, and invited them to her house for dinner. Thanks to Jennelle, the DSPs, and all of the other involved TI team members, the residents of the Jamestown Home were soon safe and snug under their own roof, no worse for the wear! The Jamestown staff, along with the administrative support team, received special statewide recognition for their outstanding efforts.

Please join us in applauding our programmatic staff for the wonderful care that they provided this winter (and continue to provide every season!) at TI.

## Art & Soul Brings Recognition and Income to Artists with Disabilities

On Friday, April 4, 2014, the Town & Country Fine Art Center in Town & Country Shopping Center of Kettering, Ohio hosted an awards reception and celebration for Art & Soul, a unique, juried art exhibit featuring 40 works by artists with developmental disabilities (i.e. autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, etc.) who reside in the Miami Valley. Toward Independence (TI) and Partners For Community Living (PCL - an agency similar to TI in scope) were excited to be the coordinating entities for Art & Soul. In its seventh year, the exhibit received nearly 240 entries from a 22-county region for consideration. Thanks to funding from the Butler County Board of DD, Greene County Board of DD, Hamilton County DD Services, Montgomery County Board of DD Services, Warren County Board of DD, and 3F Coaching, the entry fee was a minimal \$5 per piece, and the artwork chosen for exhibit received free professional framing from Sketches Framing Shop of Beavercreek.



Tom Weaver of Partners for Community Living awards an artist from Our Town Studios eighth place for a collaborative entry.

The April 4 awards reception and celebration took place from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., and was open to the public. The Town & Country Fine Art Center was packed with patrons, who enjoyed appetizers, wine, and professionally framed, beautiful artwork by

individuals who create from their souls (*hence, the name of the exhibit*). All entries were for sale, with 100% of the net profits going directly to the artists themselves.

An impressive 17 pieces were sold during the two-week exhibit. In addition, during the reception event, top artists were presented with awards of recognition and monetary prizes totaling \$1,000. Award winners were: Matt Marsh (1<sup>st</sup> place, *Moon Over Cincinnati*), Jerrod Rangel (2<sup>nd</sup> place, *Octagon*), Alicia Jones (3<sup>rd</sup> place, *At the Salon*), Jaymie Calhoun (4<sup>th</sup> place, *Glass in Stand*), Kathleen Brannigan (5<sup>th</sup> place, *Space Shuttle*), David Werner (6<sup>th</sup> place, *WEBN Summer Explosion*), Ashley Ellington (7<sup>th</sup> place, *Camera Dimension*), Our Town Studio Artists (8<sup>th</sup> place, *Rose Rainbow*), Bonnie Sprinkle (9<sup>th</sup> place, *Earth, Mind, Body*), Bobby Jo Robinson (10<sup>th</sup> place, *Sunrise*), Paul Laage (I Want to Walk There Award, *The Bridge*), Scott Borden (Most Expressive, *MJ's Army*), David Smyth (Art & Soul Planning Committee Award, *Rainbow*), and Ryann Lieurance (Directors Award, *The Symphony*).

Congrats from TI and PCL to all of the Art & Soul artists on their recent accomplishments! We look forward to next year's event at Town & Country Fine Art Center in April 2015!



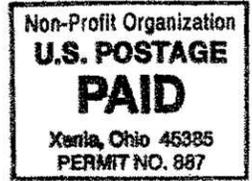
TI Executive Director Mark Schliater awards our very own Kathy Brannigan, resident at the James Bower Home in Cincinnati, fifth place.

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## Mailing Address

# INSIGHT

A publication of Toward  
Independence, Inc.

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## CCC Spring/Summer Schedule

### Putt-Putt Golf League

Tuesdays, May 20 through June 24, 5:00 or 5:30 p.m., Young's Jersey Dairy

### Art Museum Tour and Lunch

Saturday, May 24, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Cincinnati Museum of Art

### Dayton Dragons Game

Monday, June 2, 7:00 p.m., Fifth Third Field in Dayton

### Art Classes in the Park

Wednesdays, June 4 through June 25, 5:00 - 6:00 p.m., Location TBA

### Columbus Zoo Trip

Saturday, June 7, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Columbus Zoo

### Bruce Springsteen Tribute Concert

Saturday, June 14, 8:00 p.m., Springfield Arts Festival

### Weekend Getaway to Indianapolis

June 20-22, 12:00 p.m. Friday - 8:00 p.m. Sunday, Indianapolis, IN

### Art Museum Tour and Lunch

Saturday, June 28, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Cincinnati Museum of Art

For more information or to register for any of the events/activities listed above, contact Nancy Justice, CCC Program Coordinator, at (937) 376-3996 or [nancy-justice@ti-inc.org](mailto:nancy-justice@ti-inc.org).