

ASPIRE!

"Labels can only confine. Aspire to be undefinable."

- Colin Wright

A publication of United Disability Services

Fall 2023



**If the Shoe Fits,
Wear It!**





Please Vote “YES” on Issue 17!

A Message from Brian Thomas, President/CEO

Summit DD is one of the most essential points of connectivity between UDS and the individuals we serve. They

provide a large share of the funding for programs that support more than 5,000 children and adults with disabilities in Summit County. They link the individuals to the programs and providers of the consumer’s choice, and Summit DD also monitors those activities to assure safe and healthy conditions and practices.

Issue 17, supporting Summit DD, will appear on ballots in Summit County in November. This is the first time in six years that voters are asked to approve a levy to renew this vital financial support for citizens with developmental disabilities.

Your “YES” vote will go toward replacing the same 4.5 “mills” that have been in place since 2005. (A mill is a fraction of a penny on every \$1,000 of property value.) This is structured into the real estate taxes paid by property owners. If the levy passes, the bottom-line increase to the taxpayer means \$3.58 more per month for every \$100,000 in property value.

As an informed voter, you may be concerned about having the same share of taxation on your property continue, when property values in Summit County will jump significantly in 2024. That is why it is very important for you to know

that the millage will apply to the current (2023) values, and it will remain at the 2023 level for the next six years.

One of the complexities of the funding is that these local monies absolutely must be available in order to access the offsetting federal Medicaid funds that are managed by the State of Ohio. Thus, in a very real sense, the access to federal, state and local funding for disability services is in the hands of voters at the ballot box.

*Please help us keep
these invaluable
services in place . . .*

If you are reading this, chances are you are well aware of the need for this funding. You may know first-hand how people’s daily lives are impacted by the funded programs.

With your “YES” vote, UDS will continue to provide day programs and transportation to well over 200 adults. We will continue to provide recreational sports to more than 400 youth and adults. We will continue to reach scores of children, from newborns on up, through our Toy Resource Center. The individuals we serve will continue to explore activities throughout the community, make friends, share experiences, and possibly volunteer or prepare for a job in the community.

Please help us keep these invaluable services in place for so many valued Summit County neighbors and friends. Vote “YES” on Issue 17!

Brian



Courtesy of Support Summit DD

Participants from the agency’s Adult Services provided the cheering section for the Summit DD levy campaign kickoff recently held at the Akron Rotary Camp.

One Step Closer to Access and Equity

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

After high school, Rachel moved from Ohio to Florida with her mom and began working at Walt Disney World's Animal Kingdom. When her mom became ill, Rachel took on the role of primary caregiver. In 2015, after her mom passed away, she returned to Ohio and joined UDS' BraVo! volunteer program where she began serving in the community and making new friends.

Service

After volunteering for a while she decided to try UDS' Prevocational Services program where she spent part of her time working on Buckeye Baskets, a gift basket business operated by the agency, and the other part of her time doing production work. She enjoyed earning a paycheck once again.

Progress

Rachel is grateful to UDS because she's been given opportunities through various programs to go into the community and see what it has to offer. Those experiences led her to a place where she felt confident enough earlier this year to pursue employment in the community. She says, "I've changed so much. If you want to work in the community, you have to step up to the plate and show them what you can do."

Bob Ewing, service coordinator for UDS Prevocational Services,



Rachel loves working and seeing the new products that are released.

has worked with Rachel for several years and says, "She had a barrier in her path and she found a way to overcome it. We are all very proud of her. Once she decided she wanted to work in the community again, I was most impressed with her insight into the type of job she wanted and the work she put into making it happen. She was laser-focused on her goal."

Aspiration

With the help of Kristen Campagnano, manager of UDS Community Employment Services, Rachel updated her résumé, worked on interviewing skills and developed a list of potential employers which led her to a great job at TJ Maxx. It is the perfect job for Rachel since she loves to work in retail

and enjoys helping customers. Campagnano says, "Rachel was wonderful to work with, always following through on tasks asked of her. She started her job search by providing me with a list of more than forty employers she wanted me to apply to on her behalf. As a result, she was offered a job within two weeks of starting her job search!"

NDEAM

Observed in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Labor has chosen "Advancing Access and Equity" as the NDEAM theme for this year in an effort to highlight the importance of inclusive employment policies and practices that benefit employers and employees.

People with disabilities have a lot to offer the American workforce and economy. If you are an employer looking for good candidates or you want to learn more about how you can receive assistance as you search for a job, contact **Kristen Campagnano**, Community Employment manager at **330-762-9755, ext. 246**.

For more information about any of our adult programs, contact **Lana Stryker**, director of Adult Day Services at **330-762-9755, ext. 278**.

Celebrating Our Vibrant History and Planning for a Bright Future

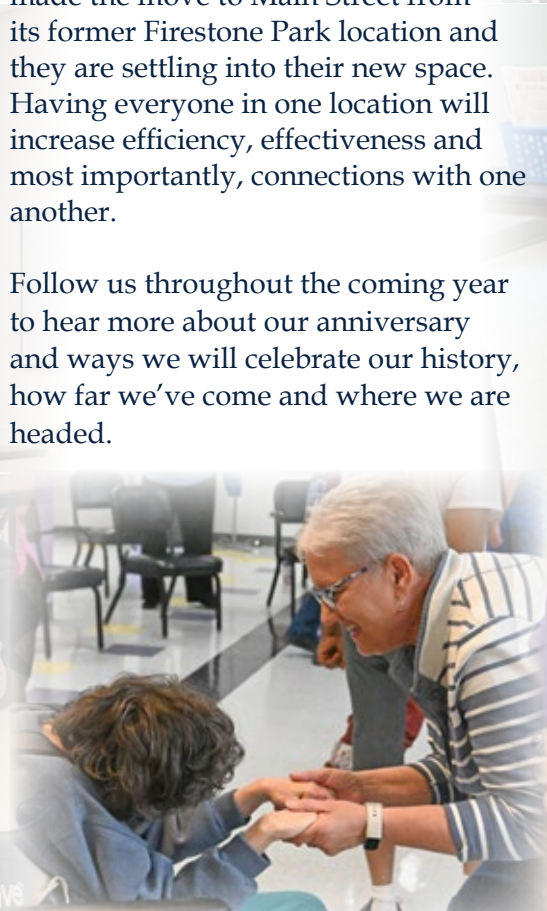


United Disability Services has a rich history of helping people with disabilities and their caregivers **explore** new opportunities, **engage** in the community and **excel** in all areas of life. We are proud to announce that next year marks our 75th anniversary!

We began providing services in 1949, when a small group of parents came together out of a desire to create an organization that would be responsive to the needs of their children who had cerebral palsy and other disabilities. Since then, the agency has grown and evolved, adapting to the needs of those we serve.

Now, for the first time in our history, we have all of our programs together under one roof. Renovations have been made at Main Street and programs have been reconfigured. In September, CHAMPS made the move to Main Street from its former Firestone Park location and they are settling into their new space. Having everyone in one location will increase efficiency, effectiveness and most importantly, connections with one another.

Follow us throughout the coming year to hear more about our anniversary and ways we will celebrate our history, how far we've come and where we are headed.



Highlights from a Spectacular Summer



Team UDS supported the Autism Society of Greater Akron's Autism Walk by staffing a booth and walking together along the designated routes in Downtown Akron.



Tire sculpture artist Bill Starcher stopped by for a visit with some of his amazing tire sculptures and nearly everyone stopped out to admire his unusual creations.



Some amazing artists from Dancing Wheels lead several groups using movement and dance.



Summer just isn't complete without baseball and we were able to enjoy three daytime, weekday games at Canal Park where playful antics pulled by the mascots included hat stealing and sponge bat jousting.



We had a cosmic time at All-Stars at the Alley where we raised nearly \$42,000 for our inclusive sports program All-Star Training Club.



The summer wrapped up as we welcomed BraVo! to a new space and CHAMPS to our building on Main Street.

United Disability Services

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The mission of UDS is to provide and support
inclusive, life-enriching options through
person-centered programs and advocacy.

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[501(c)(3)] with programs accredited by
the Commission on Accreditation of
Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Dale Elwell, chairperson
Brian Thomas, president/CEO
Lisa Armstrong, director of
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Sandy Palmer, editor



You can make a difference in the life of someone
with a disability by donating today.
To learn more visit: www.udsakron.org/donate



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Volunteer Feature: Finding the Vinny in it!

United Disability Services was honored to again participate in the Vincent William Baran Day of Service in late September. Vincent died in November 2020 due to injuries sustained in a tragic accident while riding his bicycle, leaving the community of Hudson grieving his loss. As a result, Vincent's family created an event to remember and celebrate his young life and the impact he made on others while here.

"We believe that helping others is written on the human heart," says Lindsay Baran, Vincent's mother. "Our goal is to make this easy

for people and instill a love of service early on."

This year several volunteers from Seton Catholic School in Hudson spent a beautiful fall afternoon at UDS playing games with participants in our adult day programs and helping to assemble, clean and organize toys in the Toy & Resource Center. This is the second consecutive year

that UDS has participated in this extraordinary event that brought 680 volunteers together at 31 different nonprofits located in Akron, Cleveland, Canton and Ravenna.

If you are interested in learning more about the Vincent William Baran Day of Service, visit www.MightyVincent.org to sign up to receive emails for notifications of future service weekends.

For more information about volunteering for UDS, contact **Amy Tubergen**, Community Relations administrative assistant, at atubergen@udsakron.org.

