

# ASPIRE!

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

- Colin Wright

A publication of United Disability Services

SUMMER 2025

## Getting in the Game







# Hot Fun in the Summertime

A Message from Brian Thomas, President/CEO

**G**reetings. I hope that all of our friends and families are enjoying a safe and healthy summer. It certainly got off to a hot start!

More than 200 adults participate year-round in United Disability Services' day programs, and summertime offers an abundance of activities and venues where we spend time immersed in the greater community each day. The inclusion, enrichment and enjoyment that these trips provide are so foundational to our mission and the individuals' goals and aspirations.

Already in the summer of 2025, scores of individuals have attended Akron RubberDucks games, the Kaulig Companies Championship at Firestone Country Club, the Akron Zoo and more. Each program travels out to enjoy the natural beauty of our Metro Parks, the Towpath and the abundance of other trails and public parks throughout the region.

We've visited the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, the May 4th Memorial at Kent State and Don Drumm Studios and Gallery. We are looking forward to making the new Akron History Museum an occasional destination, as well as outdoor markets and musical performances that may pop up on weekdays in the summer and fall.

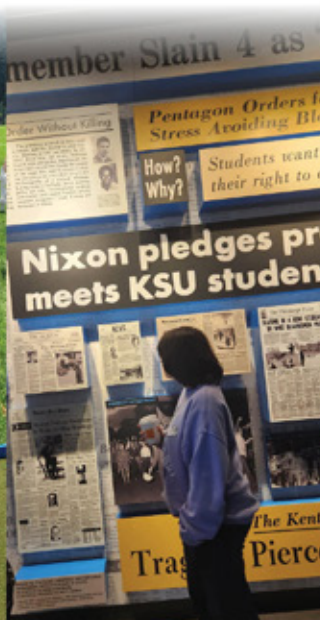
During the early heatwave that ushered in summer this June, I was confident in knowing that our adventurous participants are always accompanied and driven by well-trained direct support professionals, driving air-conditioned UDS vehicles that are kept in tip-top condition.

Unsurprisingly, all these community trips add to the expense of operating the programs, including admission fees and transportation costs. When you choose to make a charitable contribution to UDS, you are helping us to cover these enhancements and narrow the "funding gap" that impedes every nonprofit that provides human services.

Helping us specifically with community trips is the Jill Marsey Recreation Fund. This special family recreation fund was lovingly established in memory of a UDS direct support professional. We are grateful beyond words for this very impactful tribute to Jill.

So many of you generously offer financial support, whether responding to campaign appeals, taking part in fundraising events--big and small, directing memorial donations to the cause, holding third-party fundraisers or simply making a spontaneous contribution of any amount, at any time. When you see us out and about town, know that it's thanks to you!

*Brian*





# Here, There and Everywhere

## The Positive Impact of Community Inclusion

With beloved characters gliding, spinning and jumping on shimmering ice, the magical world of Disney comes to life for Rachel each year when she goes to see Disney on Ice. The spectacle is an annual must-see event for Rachel and Courtney Marks, UDS consumer outreach specialist. They usually get together twice a month and enjoy an array of activities. They have been to Majestic Meadows Alpacas & Boutique, a local cat café, Scene 75 and many other interesting locales. They also occasionally spend an evening out simply enjoying dinner and a movie.

Rachel joined UDS's Community Living Services in 2023 and Program Supervisor Kelly Maze says, "She immerses herself in as many community activities as she can and is the most creative in thinking of different places to visit. They are always going to out-of-the-ordinary, fun destinations." She also enjoys crafting at The Blick Center's College of Living.

As a longtime athlete of UDS's All-Star Training Club, Rachel enjoys participating in bowling, bocce, golf and cornhole. In June she traveled to The Ohio State University to compete in the Special Olympics Ohio summer games and took home the bronze in unified bocce. From the opening ceremonies that kicked things off to the dance at the end of the weekend of



Rachel proudly displays her bronze medal from the Special Olympics Ohio summer games last month.

spirited competition, she had a fabulous time seeing old friends and making new ones. Dan Lancianese, sports supervisor of All-Star Training Club (ATC) says, "Rachel has been with ATC for 11 years. She competes in the league and is always a member of ATC at Special Olympics. Due to her dedication to the league, she usually earns gold or silver in her sports."

Life isn't all fun and games though. Rachel works full time and has been employed by Signet Jewelers for 19 years. Most of her work is done on the computer, processing returns, but she also helps out in other

areas of the company whenever needed. She begins the workday early in the morning and is done early enough to enjoy all of the sports, crafts and activities that she is continually involved in.

In addition to traveling all over town enjoying the many things the area has to offer, Rachel enjoys spending time with her family and is the proud aunt of two young nieces.

By design, community inclusion fosters a sense of belonging and enhances an individual's well-being. Our Community Living Services program is tailored to meet the specific needs and wants of each person, both at home and in the community. Some live independently and need support while others, like Rachel, want to be actively involved as a contributing member of a vibrant community. Our goal is to help each person develop self-sufficiency while supporting them as they achieve their goals, no matter what they are.

If you are interested in learning more about Community Living Services we'd love to talk to you. Contact **Kelly Maze** at [kmaze@udsakron.org](mailto:kmaze@udsakron.org) or 330-762-9755.

We welcome children and adults to participate in All-Star Training Club's year-round sports. For more information visit [allstartrainingclub.org](http://allstartrainingclub.org).



# A Culture of Kindness

When UDS celebrated its 75th anniversary last year, employees and those we serve often said UDS is like a family. Not only do we care for those we serve, we care for each other as well and have demonstrated that over the years.

Things are now moving forward for Jaion Gordon thanks to a little help from coworker Carrie Wilson, both are employees of UDS's Prevocational Services program. Carrie has only been with the agency a short time but she's made a big impact on Jaion's life. When she learned he needed some help to obtain his driver's license, she offered her assistance. She borrowed some orange cones and began working with him on maneuverability in the UDS parking lot after work. With her support he was able to gain more experience driving around town with her after work. She also let him drive himself home each day to save some money since he had been using Uber to get to and from UDS each day. Once he was confident in his skills as a driver, he scheduled his test at the BMV, Carrie went with him and let him use her vehicle and now he is a proud licensed driver! As for the help she provided, Carrie simply says, "It doesn't cost anything to be kind."

If you would like to work with a group of wonderful employees and make a difference in the lives of others, scan the QR code or go to [udsakron.org](https://udsakron.org) and click on "Work for UDS" to find out what positions are available.



All-Star Training Club athletes competed fabulously at Special Olympics in June. They participated in bowling, track, tennis, volleyball and gymnastics, earning 17 gold, 18 silver and 4 bronze medals. Congratulations to everyone for representing UDS so well in the summer games! Thanks to the many volunteers and the following coaches who help lead the way to victory: Brooke Arbaugh, Anne Sandman, Kelly McIntyre, Kyle Cheney, Lee Eisinger and **Dan Witmer** (Transportation).



## TRC Hours:

Tuesday	2-5 p.m.
Wednesday	2-5 p.m.
Thursday	11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Stop in today, become a member and borrow some summertime fun from the UDS Toy & Resource Center!





PRESENTING SPONSOR

 **Huntington**  
Welcome.®

EVENT SPONSORS

Akron Children's  
Buckeye Corrugated, Inc.  
C. Massouh Printing Company, Inc.  
CliftonLarsonAllen  
Mutual of America Financial Group  
S.A. Comunale Co., Inc.  
Summit County Developmental  
Disabilities Board (Summit DD)  
Wings of Change Therapy, Inc.

Bober Markey Fedorovich  
Campbell Law Office  
Hobson Rasnick Fox & Kolligian, LLC  
Oswald Companies  
Sikich

A&R Tire and Auto Service  
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority  
Janco Services Inc.  
Miller's Rental and Sales, Inc.  
Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro's  
Department of Job and Family Services  
The Geopfert Company

MEDIA SPONSOR

**Uniquely  
You!**

# **ALL-STARS AT THE ALLEY**

Saturday,  
**July 26, 2025**  
6–9 p.m.

**Clutch Lanes & Sports Center**  
4190 State Rd., Cuyahoga Falls



*Sponsorships  
still available!*

**\$65 Per Bowler**  
**4 to 6 Bowlers Per Team**  
(smaller groups will be combined)

**Registration Fee Includes:**  
3 hours of bowling/shoe rental/pizza and wings/soft drinks/raffles

**Register by July 17**

For more information call **330-762-9755, ext. 243.**

To register or donate go to:  
**[www.UDSAllStars.org](http://www.UDSAllStars.org)**

All proceeds  
benefit  
All-Star  
Training Club





## United Disability Services

701 S. Main St., Akron, OH 44311  
330-762-9755



*Aspire!* is published quarterly by

United Disability Services

701 S. Main St., Akron, Ohio 44311-1019

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

UDS is a non-for-profit organization [501(c)(3)] with programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

David Hansen, chairperson  
Brian Thomas, president/CEO  
Lisa Armstrong, director of communications and external relations  
Sandy Palmer, editor  
Amy Tubergen, writer



You can make a difference in the life of someone with a disability by donating today.

To learn more visit: [www.udsakron.org/donate](http://www.udsakron.org/donate)



# UDS

EXPLORE  
ENGAGE  
EXCEL

UNITED DISABILITY SERVICES  
701 S. MAIN ST.  
AKRON, OH 44311

[www.udsakron.org](http://www.udsakron.org)



@UnitedDisabilityServices



@UDSAkron



@uds\_akron



United Disability Services

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**  
AKRON, OH  
PERMIT NO. 678

## Volunteer Feature: Dan Cuthbert

A lifelong artist and storyteller, Dan Cuthbert's career includes stints at the Ohio Historical Society and Don Drumm Studios & Gallery. In his "semi retirement," he finds himself enjoying a new gig as a UDS volunteer.

Since March, Cuthbert has collaborated weekly with the adults in UDS day programs on creative projects. Their first effort combined his love of art and story to create an illustrated tale of the **UnDefeated Squad**—a group of superheroes battling a nefarious villain.

With a love of people and a can-do spirit, he inspires everyone to join in the creative process. "The best part is watching an idea come to life!" He enjoys making connections and watching how they expand, opening into other opportunities. He hopes to share the projects created at UDS throughout the Akron community. As a UDS volunteer, Cuthbert discovered he gets more out of the experience than he gives, "When I volunteer I always have my preconceptions shattered, and I learn, like being in a college course that's never offered."

For information on how you can volunteer at UDS, contact **Amy Tubergen** at [atubergen@udsakron.org](mailto:atubergen@udsakron.org).

