

ASPIRE!

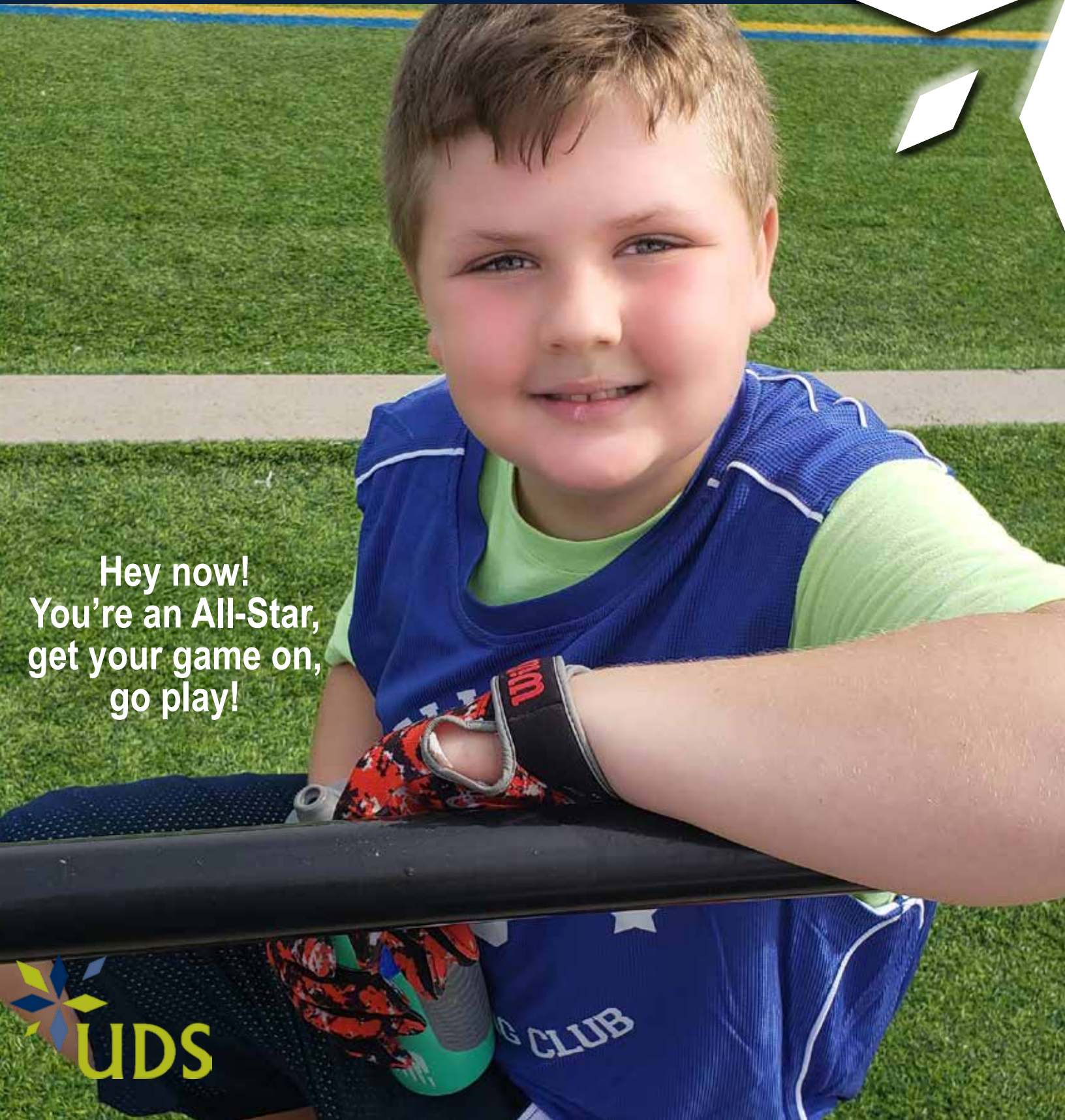
"Labels can only confine. Aspire to be undefinable."

- Colin Wright

A publication of United Disability Services

SUMMER 2022

Hey now!
You're an All-Star,
get your game on,
go play!





Summer Fun at UDS

A Message from Brian Thomas, President/CEO

Get ready to rock and bowl!

After a two-year hiatus,

All-Stars at the Alley is back. We can't wait to see everyone at the alley again to celebrate together in person. Please join us in filling the lanes to benefit the UDS

All-Star Training Club inclusive sports program on July 30. Your participation in this fun, family-friendly fundraiser will help ensure sports opportunities for people of all abilities.

None of this would be possible without the support of our premier sponsor, Huntington, and all our new and returning sponsors listed in this issue of *Aspire!*. We are also excited to welcome Akron/Canton Special Needs Living as this year's media sponsor. The generosity of all our business and corporate partners allows us to continue to grow as we expand opportunities for hundreds of

athletes who want to participate in competitive sports but may not otherwise have the chance.

In this issue you will learn more about how All-Star Training Club is making a difference in the lives of everyone who participates including athletes, families and our volunteers. You'll meet Jack, the youngest athlete in the Club's history to compete on the Special Olympics flag football team and learn about the friendships he has formed as a member of the team.

We invite you to get involved.

Whether you attend the fundraiser to support a great cause or are thinking about becoming an athlete or a volunteer, the many rewards of participating in All-Star Training Club just may surprise you.

In other news, now that many of the pandemic restrictions have lifted, our programs are once again returning to activities in the community. Our BraVo! volun-

teers are back to feeding the purple martins, gardening for local organizations and serving others though the Salvation Army. We are celebrating summer with ballgames at Canal Park, trips to the Akron Zoo, rides on the Cuyahoga Scenic Railroad, and visits to the McKinley Museum, all thanks to the generosity of the Marsey family.

Through funding provided by the Master Gardeners (Ohio State University Extension), planting a sensory garden on the patio at UDS is also well underway. Participants and staff members have worked together to plan and care for this garden specially designed to appeal to all the senses. It's great to see all this learning and growing going on at UDS.

We hope that you and your families enjoy these summer months as much as we plan to and don't forget, we'll see you at the alley! Visit us at UDSAIStars.org to register today.

Brian

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Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro's Department of Job and Family Services

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SPECIAL NEEDS LIVING

PRESENTED BY:



Saturday

**July 30, 2022
6-9 p.m.**

**Spins Bowl Akron
2911 E. Waterloo Rd., Akron**

Register
by Friday,
July 15

\$60 Per Bowler/4 Bowlers Per Team

Event Registration Includes:

- 2 hours of bowling
- shoe rental
- appetizers/pizza/soft drinks

Go to UDSAIStars.org to register or donate!

All proceeds benefit UDS All-Star Training Club

Small but Mighty

Youngest All-Star Training Club Athlete Makes a Big Impact

Two-and-a-half years ago, Jack learned about UDS All-Star Training Club's cross country team, wanted to join immediately and has been an all-star athlete ever since. The program's supervisor, Dan Lancianese, coached cross country and encouraged Jack to try soccer as well. He played the following spring and when soccer ended last year, he tried flag football for the first time. According to his mom, Katie, "He loved it! Jack was the youngest player on the team at age ten, but that didn't stop him. The other players were great with him, treating him like a little brother. When the flag football team went to Canton for Special Olympics this past fall, Jack held his own with the adults he was playing with and even scored a touchdown!"

Making History

All-Star Training Club Recreational Coordinator Jeff Campano says, "Jack was the youngest athlete in the Club's history to compete on the Special Olympics flag football team last year. Earlier this month he joined us at Special Olympics in Columbus to compete on our soccer team where he became our youngest Special Olympics soccer player." The versatile, young athlete says he enjoys All-Star Training Club because "I get to play different sports with adults and kids, and I like learning new sports."

Ridiculously Smart

Jack was adopted and has been with parents, Bill and Katie, since he was two days old. Mom describes him as, "sweet, caring, funny and ridiculously smart! He is an only child but does have a 'fur brother' named Jake (a golden retriever/Irish setter mix). He prefers nonfiction to fiction and remembers *everything* he reads and learns." By participating in various All-Star Training Club sports she adds that he has learned his teammates

"have different abilities than he does. He has made so many great friends, both his age and older, and looks forward to playing sports throughout the year."



Jack is pictured here with Myles Garrett after being recognized as a Special Olympics athlete. Jack was impressed by how nice Myles is—and how tall!

Chosen

Jack was chosen by Special Olympics and Jeff Campano to attend Myles Garrett's Youth Football ProCamp earlier this month. The highlight of the weekend for Jack was when Myles Garrett recognized him in front of everyone, sharing that he was sponsored by Special Olympics. He had a great time learning new drills and it reinforced his interest in tackle football. His parents are planning to move this summer so he can attend a school that will accommodate his special needs and then, depending on where they end up, they will enroll him in a

city recreation tackle football league. If that doesn't work out, Mom says he has already been "recruited" to play for a coach in Macedonia since he is much bigger than the average ten year old.

Playing tackle football doesn't mean he will abandon his flag football teammates though. He still plans to participate in flag football and compete at Special Olympics with his All-Star Training Club team! When he's not playing sports, Jack enjoys riding his bike, skateboarding and flying his drone.

Join the Club

Are you interested in learning more about All-Star Training Club and upcoming sports? Children (ages five and older) and adults, with and without disabilities, are invited to participate in competitive sports that will help build self-esteem, promote sportsmanship, encourage healthy living/physical fitness and develop long-lasting friendships. Contact **Jeff Campano** at 330-762-9755, ext. 233, or jcampano@udsakron.org for more information or to volunteer.



Students Connecting with the Community

For three days in June, five students from Archbishop Hoban High School came to UDS and embraced the chance to get to know individuals in our programs by talking, playing and working side-by-side with them doing various activities. JAM (Justice Akron Ministry) is an opportunity for students to participate in a social justice service project while they build community with one another and grow in their faith. Each student genuinely seemed interested in cultivating connections with everyone they met. They divided their time between BraVo!, Firestone Park and SociAbilities, with a short time spent in our Toy & Resource Center where they had a great time checking out all the toys we have to offer, and cleaning a few of them. We are grateful to each one of these young people for the time they spent with us and the positive impact they had on the people we serve.

Ahoy! A boatload of toys has arrived!

Thanks to a generous donation from Summit DD, our Toy & Resource Center (TRC) was able to purchase some amazing toys, including the seesaw boat that you see here and everything in it! We have also been able to increase our inventory of switches, adapted devices, gross motor tools (parachute, movement scarves, scooter boards) and sensory items for our patrons. Last year Summit DD employees came to UDS to tour our Center and become familiar with the resources we can provide to their families at no charge. We are grateful to Summit DD for their continued support of our Center. We have everything from large motor toys (slide, trampoline, toddler cars) to puzzles, musical/dramatic play items, games, sensory materials and much, much more! To schedule a tour or ask about a membership contact TRC Supervisor **Audrey Sentz** at 330-762-9755, ext. 247, or asentz@udsakron.org.



UDS Supports Legislation to Curb Catalytic Converter Theft

Countless news stories have been published over the past few years reporting on the rise in catalytic converter thefts in the Akron area and the associated costs to transportation providers and individuals. Converters are often stolen for the precious metals contained within the car part that takes professionals only a matter of minutes to remove. Our transportation fleet is no exception to this surge in thefts as a total of 21 catalytic converters were claimed from UDS vehicles in 2020 and 2021. The total cost for replacement, upgraded security measures, lost revenue and service to our community amounted to more than \$77,000. In response to this wide-spread



A chain-link fence now surrounds UDS' fleet of vehicles.

issue, State Representative Bob Young has introduced House Bill 408, which seeks to crack down on catalytic converter theft by requiring proof of ownership of any seller. Recently, UDS President and CEO Brian Thomas was invited to

submit written testimony to the House Criminal Justice Committee of the Ohio legislature in support of HB 408.

Representative Young expressed his gratitude for the testimony on behalf of UDS by saying in a letter, "Your efforts are truly what will help bring this Bill into reality, and in turn, curb the pandemic of catalytic converter theft . . . I personally thank you and the state of Ohio thanks you!"

We will continue to keep you updated as the Bill makes its way through the legislature on its way to becoming a law.



Prevocational Services participants have been assembling kits that include personal care/food items, packaging garden spikes, putting together components for commercial air conditioning units, boxing wooden table legs, packing foam insulation inserts for electrical outlets and packaging various Kong dog toys, like the blue puppy Kong shown here, that Jerome has been working on with his supervisor Steve Pryce.



UDS has been a popular spot for furry friends lately. BraVo! team member Bianca asked her mom to stop by with Christy, Bianca's service dog. Cara is shown here enjoying a handshake from the beautiful pup.



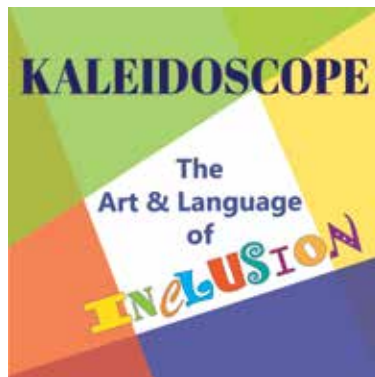
Emily participates in our SociAbilities program and is pictured here planting some seeds in recognition of Earth Day (April 22) and in anticipation of seeing them bloom in our garden.



We are grateful to Summit DD for a generous donation that will be used to help offset operating costs of our fleet of vehicles while ridership to our day programs slowly rebounds from the impacts of COVID-19. The funds will go toward ever-increasing fuel costs and maintenance of our vehicles. Our mechanic Tom Beliles is shown here working under the hood of one vehicle.

First Podcast Episode Hits the Airwaves

We've come a long way since 1979 when the first issue of *Kaleidoscope* was written and edited by adults with disabilities as part of an academic enrichment program offered by UDS. Within five years it became an international publication with people around the globe submitting their work for consideration.



We are excited that the music played at the beginning and end of each episode is the work of Matt Savage, talented jazz musician, bandleader and composer with autism, who was featured in issue 62 of the magazine.

For our first episode, you'll hear Carrie Jade Williams (with a beautiful Irish accent) reveal why her doctor felt it was important for her to write a bucket

Forty-three years later, UDS is still committed to the mission of *Kaleidoscope* and making it accessible to a greater audience. Thanks to a grant from PNC, we have launched a podcast that will lift the words from its pages and bring them to life in a meaningful and modern way to create a deeper understanding of issues of disability, diversity and inclusion. The podcast will also be an effective means of reaching individuals with visual impairments or other disabilities for whom reading can be challenging.

list as she reads an excerpt from her essay, "The Brightness of Neurology." T. L. Murphy reads his disconcerting, yet touching poem, "You Look Like Him," and shares the meaning behind the poem. Other works include poignant personal essays, poetry and a creative, lighthearted piece of fiction that is read in its entirety.

We are excited about this new venture and hope you'll tune in to hear each episode. Go to <https://KaleidoscopePodcast.podbean.com> to listen to the first episode!



Leadership on Main

Summit DD Superintendent Lisa Kamlowky and UDS President/CEO Brian Thomas were presenters at a recent Leadership on Main gathering at the Duck Club in Akron hosted by Leadership Akron. Both community leaders shared their perspectives on the current state of disability services and the outlook for the future to continue ensuring the highest quality programs and services for the individuals with disabilities in Summit County. (l. to r., Brian Thomas; Justin Hilton, president of Leadership Akron; Lisa Kamlowky)



Hitting a Home Run

Seven staff members and 33 individuals from all of our programs enjoyed an Akron RubberDucks ballgame in May thanks to the Jill Marsey Fund. We were able to purchase two season ticket packages for a total of 140 tickets. Two more games are scheduled this year—one in July and one in September!



Sensory Garden Blooming

Wonderful sights and scents are in full bloom on the UDS patio thanks to a grant from Master Gardeners. We started planting seeds in March and now our sensory garden is a beautiful space for everyone to enjoy! Participants planted vegetables, flowers, herbs and a variety of touchable, brightly-colored succulents. The space is amazing and fully accessible with raised beds and hanging baskets on pulleys that can be lowered for people to water and enjoy. Silky soft lambs ear is soothing to touch, fragrant mint relieves stress, large flower spinners and butterflies provide color and movement and a wind chime produces melodic sounds with each breeze, creating a peaceful atmosphere.

Clematis have begun climbing. Two types of lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, broccoli and cabbage are all sprouting and we look forward to enjoying these in a salad later this summer. A four-tier planter on wheels holds herbs and vegetables that we hope to continue growing year-round by bringing the planter indoors and tending to it during colder months. One of our most interesting growing experiments is laundry basket strawberries, a Pinterest find that we hope won't be a fail. So far so good, you can see one blossom pictured here! Two varieties of mint—chocolate and mojito—are growing wonderfully and we are eager to participate in a virtual class offered by the Akron-Summit County Public Library to learn more about the uses for mint.

Lastly, potatoes. In the bottom row of photos you can see participants planting the spuds, a planter with sprouts, and with our ingenious and interesting double containers you can see the potatoes growing underneath by lifting up the inner container! Our folks enjoy watering the plants daily and watching the fruits of their labor grow.



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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).

Dale Elwell, chairperson

Brian Thomas, president/CEO

Lisa Armstrong, director of communications

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



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Volunteer Feature: Jami Mino

New toys! Our volunteers, including Jami Mino, are as excited as the kids about all the new toys coming into the Toy and Resource Center (TRC), and, her enthusiasm is contagious, "I love seeing all the new toys we have. There are so many different kinds."

Jami works at Acme, but makes time to volunteer every week at UDS. For the last year and a half, the 29-year-old has been cleaning, sorting and preparing toys for borrowing. Working at the TRC gives her a great sense of satisfaction. "It makes me feel good to help!"

Being part of UDS is a family affair for the Minos. Mom, Teri,

works in administration and brother, Matt, works in Community Employment Services. They see firsthand the many ways UDS is changing lives.

In addition to working and volunteering, Jami enjoys horror movies, hanging out with friends, family and her cat, Star. She would encourage anyone to volunteer. "It's definitely important to make a difference," she says, and she proves you're never too busy to volunteer!

For more information about volunteer opportunities at UDS, visit www.udsakron.org or call **Amy Tubergen** at 330-762-9755 ext. 243.

