



"We provide and support inclusive, life-enriching options through person-centered programs and advocacy."

What's New at UDS?

October 2024 | Issue 31

Go on a Literary Journey with the BraVo! Book Club



Reading is such a joy for our friends in **BraVo!** who have been staying busy diving into literary treasures thanks to their weekly book club. Originally a pilot initiative

started in 2017 between the Goodyear branch of the **Akron-Summit County Public Library** and BraVo!, the book club got its start after BraVd team members made a series of trips to the branch for a variety of activities.

Composed of two different teams, Branch Manager and Adult Services Librarian Tonya Gardella leads the Goodyear branch, whereas Adult Services Librarian Greg Trask leads the Northwest library team.

Typically meeting for an hour once a week—either at UDS or another location—groups read a portion of their book aloud and then discuss the themes and topics of the selection. "It is an opportunity for individuals to gather socially and it offers people a chance to engage intellectually," Trask says.

Along with questions and discussions, BraVd also engages in culminating events related to the selected book. For example, when a team finished *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg, which follows the story of two children running away from home to live in an art museum, the team visited the **Akron Art Museum** as a tie into the book theme (pictured above).

"We're all different in different ways," says Gardella, "but it doesn't have to be the focus of every story. You want to be able to see other aspects of yourself."

If you would like to read some of the books BraVd has enjoyed, suggestions include *Pax* by Sara Pennypacker, *The City of Ember (Book One)* by Jeanne DuPrau and *Island of the Blue Dolphin* by Scott O'Dell.

Celebrating Community Living Services



Our part-time Community Living Services staff members mean the world to us. However since their work is usually done outside the walls of UDS, they often miss out on what's happening at the agency. As a way of including everyone during our

week of celebration and appreciation for our employees last month, **Kelly Maze** of Community Living Services and **Lana Stryker** of Adult Services hosted a dinner party to honor the team!

President/CEO **Brian Thomas** greeted the group and thanked them for their service. They also participated in trivia games and were presented with a variety of thank-you gifts given throughout our celebration week. Thank you for all you do to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

Prevocational Services and CHAMPS Know How to Celebrate



The UDS Prevocational Services and CHAMPS programs know how to work hard but they also know how to play hard. The annual party was held at Guy's Party Center and a good time was had by all!

Everyone came with their dancing shoes ready to go as they danced the day away thanks to our very own CEO **Brian Thomas** and Buckeye State Entertainment providing some great tunes.

Everyone had so much fun and we can't wait until next year!

Welcome to the Team!



UDS would like to welcome full-time Driver **JoAnn McKenzie** to the Transportation team! Recently, McKenzie worked in customer service and spent some time as a delivery driver. She resides in Akron and is married with three children and seven grandchildren. In her free time, she enjoys gardening.

Glad to have you at UDS!

Fall 2024 Issue of *Aspire!* Now Available

The latest issue of our *Aspire!* newsletter is now available. Catch up on the latest happenings at UDS and learn more about our agency.

Find the Fall issue of *Aspire!* [here](#).



Still Shining Bright: UDS Celebrates 75 Years

October 26 marks the official 75th anniversary of UDS! We're looking forward to another 75 years of life-enriching options and person-centered advocacy. Thank you to all of our supporters through this incredible journey!

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