

# ACCESSABILITY

Spring 2013

# Siffrin

Empowering PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## FROM THE DIRECTOR: ACHIEVE HAPPINESS, SERVE OTHERS

I recently had the opportunity to speak to a group of students from two local high schools. They were receiving recognition for their outstanding scholastic and athletic achievements. During my speech, I referenced *Five Great Ways to Achieve Happiness Through Serving Others*, by Stephan Smith. These ideas are as appropriate for outstanding students as they are for teachers or care givers or persons with intellectual disabilities.

Achieving personal happiness through serving others and making others happy is another example of why we are all just one people. Happiness has no distinctions. We, at Siffrin, find that in our Random Act of Kindness projects or the many “giving back” opportunities The Bridge day service program offers to its participants.

Too many times we categorize life opportunities for people with disabilities. We try and put life in an Individual Service Plan (ISP), or conduct a structured, systematic management of their behavior and then try to fit that into life. When in fact, life teaches us what is important and what should be placed in a plan. Some points for serving others and obtaining your own happiness are:

1. **SHOW RESPECT AND COURTESY.** This seems a rather small idea, but in our busy lives we have a tendency to forget that a kind word, a helping hand, or just a smile and a “thank you” can create a bright spot in another person’s life. And then, two people are happy.

2. **LISTEN MORE THAN YOU SPEAK.** Sometimes people just want to vent about their day or about a situation. They may not be interested in a solution or a tactful way to solve a

problem they just need a sympathetic ear. Listen to what a person wants to say and you will be helping them.

3. **GIVE GENUINE PRAISE.** Recognizing the contributions of others is a great act of service. This is an investment in others that does not cost a thing and the returns are incredible. Remember, “Praise in public. Punish in private”.

4. **KEEP YOUR PROMISES.** You can build an atmosphere of service just by doing what you say you will do. Dependability and punctuality are the characteristics of a service-oriented person. When people know they can trust you, it creates a happy environment.

5. **PRACTICE FORGIVENESS.** Pointless hard feelings are the source of much unhappiness in the world. Holding a grudge against another is a blemish on your soul. Forgiving is a great service; for there are times when a person may not even know they hurt you. You can even forgive those who do not want to be forgiven. It will bring you happiness.

Serving others with no stipulations or self-serving motives is a great lesson for all of us.

# Three named board of directors

Siffrin has recently named three people to the Board of Directors. Linda Dahl, Brett Kush and Janet Wilson are now serving Siffrin and are eager to become more involved and supportive in making a difference in our community as it relates to people with disabilities.



**LINDA DAHL**

**Employer/Title:** Linda is the Public Information Manager for the Stark County District Library. She works at the main library branch in downtown Canton and manages the public relations and marketing efforts for the county's library system.

"After completing Leadership Stark County in 2012, I was looking for ways in which I might offer support for my community. Siffrin contacted me and I felt that it was a great way to serve," said Linda.

**Other community involvement:** Linda co-chairs a professional group.

**Linda's goals for Siffrin:** "I feel that the services that Siffrin provides are valuable and if I can help by extending my professional expertise to the board and staff, I will."

**BRETT KUSH**

**Employer/Title:** Brett is employed at The J.M. Smucker Company as a Senior Manager of Business Process Development



"I am passionate about advocating

and supporting those with developmental disabilities," said Brett. "This is underscored due to the fact that I am a parent of a 3-year old daughter with Down Syndrome. As a Siffrin Board member, I am able to help be a part of a great organization to provide support for individuals in our communities."

**Other community involvement:** Brett co-leads the North Canton Buddy Walk, which is an annual event designed to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals with Down Syndrome and helps promote acceptance and inclusion of all people with disabilities.

**Brett's goals for Siffrin:** "I've really only been on the board a very short period of time. However, it has been very evident how talented and dedicated the Siffrin team members are at leading a great organization. My goal is to be able to make a difference and provide help in whatever capacity is needed."

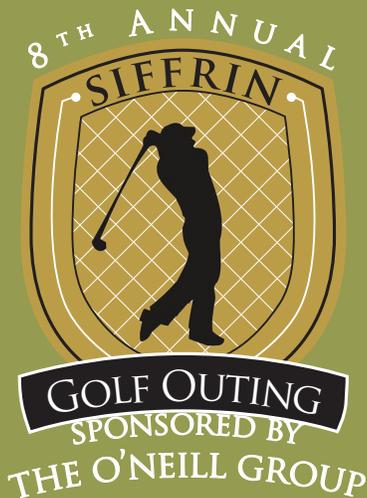
**JANET WILSON**

**Employer/Title:** Janet is employed through Stark County Educational Service Center as an Intervention Specialist and teaches 6-8 grades at Lake Middle School



A long-time friend, Melissa Smith, who is also a Siffrin board member asked Janet to consider joining the Siffrin Board of Directors. "She (Melissa) knows that I am a huge advocate for people with disabilities and very involved in that community. My students, their families and their future are my passion."

See "Welcome" on page 7



SEPTEMBER 23, 2013  
*Brookside Country Club*

reserve your spot | [melaniewhite@siffrin.org](mailto:melaniewhite@siffrin.org)

# Siffrin health focus gets people active

For more than a year, the Siffrin administration and management team has been emphasizing the importance of healthy living to people served with disabilities and staff. Several different projects have been created to educate and help foster healthy decision-making. The Motivation to Move club, or M2M, is the most recent development in helping people served become more active and motivated to exercise.



Keeping motivation to continue exercising is a challenge for many people. Siffrin's M2M club was created to provide a support system to people and offer encouragement throughout the process.

There are approximately 20 people served by Siffrin participating in the M2M club. As part of the program, the participants record exercises and monitor their weight each month. Siffrin Quality Assurance Coordinator Margaret Harrity helps provide motivation to each person through encouraging phone calls and cards.

The Siffrin activities committee is also involved through planning fun events for people Siffrin serves that encourages some

form of exercise. An event is being organized for this summer to allow people to go to an Akron Aeros game and run the bases before the game.

Other projects that have been developed and implemented to educate and influence healthy decisions have been the creation of a community garden, in which people served help plant and tend to the fruits and vegetables grown; a nutrition and basics in cooking training for staff; and the "Living Healthy" book, which contains low-calorie recipes, exercises, cooking, and dining out techniques and tips.

## THE BRIDGE MOVES

The Bridge adult day service program in Mahoning County recently moved into a new space at 132 Westchester Drive in Austintown. The new location is much more spacious, giving ample room for more than 40 people attending the program.



"It's been a smooth transition from the previous location to this building," said Tina VanSuch Manager of The Bridge. "We have so much more room to spread out and everyone seems to really enjoy being here."



*Artwork made by two participants at The Bridge*

The Bridge program focuses on providing people with disabilities practical learning experiences that can be applied to their daily life so as to enhance their active participation and independence.

**Live united** 

Identify & erase barriers for people with disabilities.

There are many different types of barriers that interfere with everyday life for people with developmental disabilities. Working together to identify and eliminate these barriers is the only way to be successful.

Barrier Category: **FINANCIAL**

Deficient funds is often a barrier for people with and without disabilities to access necessary services or amenities. Siffrin recently identified a home's wooden wheelchair ramp that needed to be repaired or replaced. After years of use, the ramp was no longer sturdy and showing signs of wear. After some research, Siffrin was able to utilize funds from the person's Medicaid Waiver to replace the worn out ramp. A new aluminum ramp, which will not warp, break or rot like wooden structures tend to do, is now installed. Fortunately, the Medicaid Waiver offers these types of expenditures to provide safe, accessible accommodations to people's homes.

# Expansion into Geauga County

## Siffrin now provides employment services in Geauga

For many people, a job search in a difficult job market can be a challenging task. Finding employment is often a stressful, anxious and exhausting endeavor. For the Siffrin employment support services department, it's a way of life.

"Once you job develop, it's a part of your life," said Jan Dougherty Director of Employment Support Services (ESS). "You never stop thinking about employment. You're out somewhere and see a sign that someone's hiring and immediately you start thinking about who you're working with that may be a good candidate."

Jan Dougherty has had a lot of experience in finding work for other people. She has been an integral team member at Siffrin in the development of the Siffrin employment program, creating new programs such as Project SEARCH and expanding into different locations.

Last October, with Jan's help, Siffrin was awarded a \$100,000 grant by the Geauga County Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD) in order to develop the employment support services in that area. Three staff members have been hired in the Geauga County office, and are currently working diligently with 24 people to put them to work in the community.

LAURA FIELDS Manager of ESS & Job Coach, JUDY NOVAK-HRDY ESS Specialist and TOM COMPISI Manager of Employment Development & Implementation make up the team that has already found jobs for three people in the Geauga community and has much more in the works.



*Left to Right: Judy Novak-Hrdy, Tom Compisi & Laura Fields*

"This job can be frustrating, but is also very exciting," said Judy. "The first time I took someone to a job interview, I was so nervous. I sat in the lobby with my stomach in knots. After about the fourth interview, the nerves were gone and I just try to prepare each person the best I can so they can be successful."



One of those successes is a young man named Joe Bina (pictured left). Joe worked for a landscaping business for 25 years. After being laid off, Joe was referred to Siffrin by the Geauga County Board of DD for employment services. After a few months of searching for a job, Joe was hired at Walden Country Club in Aurora as a dish washer in the kitchen.

See "Gaugua" on page 5

# Everything EMPLOYMENT

Employment Conference for People with Disabilities

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- People with disabilities currently searching or preparing to search for employment
- Parents & family members
- Educators
- Other support team members

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

8:30AM - 2:30PM

### R.G. DRAGE CAREER TECHNICAL CENTER

2800 Richville Drive SE, Massillon 44646

more info [www.siffrin.org](http://www.siffrin.org) or (330) 478.0263

# R.A.K. Pack serves community

## "Random Acts of Kindness"

The Bridge Adult Day Services program focuses a lot of attention on "giving back" to the community through various service projects. Those people who regularly participate in those community projects have recently formed a club of sorts, the Random Acts of Kindness, a.k.a. the R.A.K. Pack.

The R.A.K. Pack's purpose is to provide assistance and service to others in the community in any way possible. They have done everything from painting park equipment, cleaning up litter and bagging donated produce for families in need. At whatever level the R.A.K. Pack can be of service, is what they strive to accomplish.

"There isn't a person we support that can't do something for others," said Manager of Day Services Matt White. "We develop a job for each person who would like to be involved, and that feeling of giving back and 'doing for others' makes all the difference."



*Bill, Jeff, Lorenzo,  
Betty, Kenny, John,  
Amber, Donna and  
Tammie*

## "Geauga", continued from page 4

"I really like my job," said Joe. "I work with nice people." One of Tom's primary initiatives is the development of Mow-Time, LLC, a lawn care business. A job coach and one individual with disabilities have been hired to begin work this spring.

"We're starting with six large one-to-two acre properties located in two nearby communities," said Tom. "We have also already quoted two more prospective jobs and the word is spreading fast."

Laura, Judy and Tom never know which interview is going to be the one for someone. Each day is a new hopeful opportunity when they arrive at the office to check the voice mail. Their hard work and determination in finding jobs for other people can and has changed lives.

"We have a great team and keep pushing for good things to happen," said Tom.

## *In remembrance*

Regrettably, two Siffrin friends and family members, Brian Smith and Mary Ann Hamrock, passed away recently. Brian was a fun loving, energetic young man who loved Harley Davidson's, horses, and watching movies. He had a movie collection of over 1,000 DVD's and VHS tapes. He enjoyed traveling the world and going on cruise's with his parents when he was younger and with staff after he lived in a Siffrin home.



*Brian and Jon on vacation,  
Stingray City, Cayman Island*



Mary Ann always brought a smile to everyone's face, especially when she laughed for sang. She will be truly missed by all who knew her. A memory wreath hangs at the home she lived, in her honor.

# SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF: Margaret Harrity

Margaret Harrity has been witness to many changes within the developmental disabilities (DD) field. For more than 30 years she has been working with people with DD, and is now employed with Siffrin as our first Quality Assurance Coordinator, Advocate and Family Liaison. Throughout her career, Margaret has worked in almost every capacity. She has helped transition services from institutional setting to the community and has helped countless people live better, fuller lives.

From an early age, Margaret has been advocating and protecting the rights of the people around her. Born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, she remembers defending her friend and cousin who had Cerebral Palsy.

"I can remember getting so upset with people when they would ask me why she was in a wheelchair," said Margaret. With her hands on her hips, she'd say, 'Why are you asking me? She can talk'. "I was such a brat," she said laughing.

Margaret's protective and supportive nature has served her well throughout her life and her career. From raising three children to caring for her mother with Alzheimer's Disease to working in direct care, Margaret has always kept the focus on doing what's best for those in her care.

After graduating from high school, Margaret moved to Washington D.C. as an employee of AuPair Care, a company still operating today that recruits young women to move to the US to work as child caregivers. Margaret lived in D.C. for several years, working for families with young children. It was there that she met her husband of 42 years while working as a waitress in an Irish pub.

As newly weds, Margaret and Francis moved to Canton in the fall of 1971 with their newborn son, Craig. They later had two more children, Andrea and Erin and are now the very proud grandparents of Elliott, two-and-a-half years old.

"Moving to Canton was such a culture shock for me," said Margaret. "I had always lived in big cities. I cried for two years straight before I accepted Canton as a suitable place to raise a family."

In 1981, Margaret began working for Molly Stark, an institutional setting that treated terminally ill patients and housed

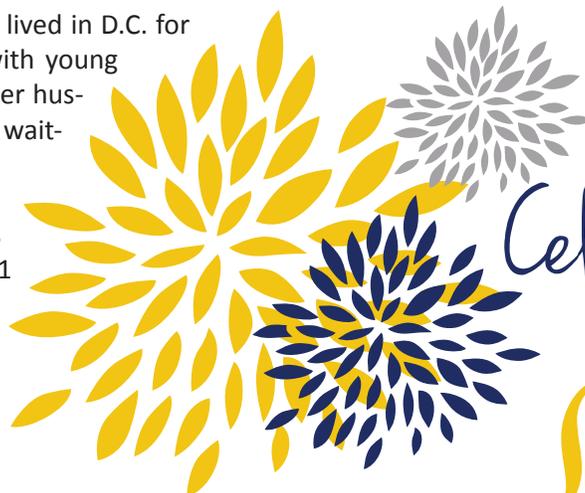


Margaret & her two daughters, Andrea (left) and Erin.

people with DD. Throughout the 15 years she worked at Molly Stark, Margaret was promoted many times, but always preferred to work on the DD unit. She was one of the facility's last employees before Molly Stark closed in 1994.

"When it was decided to close Molly Stark and move people into the community, I was so excited for those people," said Margaret. That decision and Margaret's opinion was not a popular position. As the Assistant Director of Molly Stark Margaret and the Director of the facility worked a lot of shifts, providing direct care because so many of the staff quit before it closed.

See "Spotlight" on page 7



Celebrate with us.  
Siffrin Employee Luncheon

July 11  
11:00 AM  
The Quarry Golf Club  
5650 Quarry Lake Dr. · Canton 44730

Formal invitation will be mailed soon

## “Spotlight”, continued from page 6

After the closing of Molly Stark, Margaret was hired at The Arc of Stark County, first as a part-time staff and then full-time. For the past 15 years, Margaret has been surveying residential settings in Stark County to assure they are quality places for persons with disabilities to live. This program was provided through an Ohio Department of DD (DODD) grant and was one of, if not the first, external reviews of providers.

“In those early years, I saw just about everything,” said Margaret. “I really believe those inspections benefited a lot of people. I enjoyed my work with The Arc and the relationships with people I worked with.”

Towards the end of her employment with The Arc, Margaret assisted with the annual inspection of homes that housed over 700 people. It was with The Arc that Margaret’s reputation for being a remarkable advocate for people with disabilities really began to show. It only took a short time for people to take notice that she made her notes during inspections, and returned to make sure those issues were corrected.

In 2012 the contract between DODD and The Arc was not renewed. Because Siffrin knew Margaret so well from working with her over the years and respected her expertise and effective advocacy, she was asked to begin working at Siffrin in March of this year and has already made a huge impact on

## “Welcome”, continued from page 2

Other community involvement: Volunteerism is a family value that is strong in Janet’s family. Her daughters and she make it a priority to volunteer when they can with Tiqvah Hands of Hope in Canton, which is an after-school program for students in the Canton City School District providing homework help, food and activities. “If everyone gave a small amount of their time to helping others we would live in a much kinder society.”

Janet’s goals for Siffrin: “As a board member I hope I can advocate strongly for all persons with developmental disabilities. I hope that I can help strengthen the relationship Siffrin has with the school districts they surround and help make more families aware of the services Siffrin has to offer.”

services and in the lives of people Siffrin supports.

Executive Director Brad Vincent states, “Margaret is a gift and a blessing to everyone here at Siffrin.”

At Siffrin, Margaret works part-time to coordinate quality assurance reviews of each Siffrin home. She assists in addressing and resolving complaints and problems faced by individuals and families, and assists the Siffrin management team by providing insight and recommendations on behalf of those served by Siffrin. She is also continuing her community involvement with other agencies and committees to access information and support when needed.

“Throughout the years I’ve worked with people and in all the situations I’ve been involved, I have always kept the focus of the person served, and have asked myself, ‘How do I want to be treated?’ That’s how everyone wants to be and should be treated.”

## Celebrating service

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
Carol Fortney

FIFTEEN YEARS  
Brenda Henderson  
Donna Reiss  
Susan Bowling  
Dawn Smith

TEN YEARS  
Mark Biedenbach  
Letra Holcomb  
Shirley Gerhard

FIVE YEARS  
Jill Steffy  
Mary Moncrief  
Charlett Lamanna  
Phyllis Wallace  
Candy Eakins  
Betty Porter

THREE YEARS  
Tara MacLean  
Ryan Cavanaugh  
Michelle Ondrey  
Marianne Provance  
Sarah Deckman  
Rebecca Lloyd  
Amy Chesnes  
Frances Nichols  
Ebonii Clark  
Melissa Owens

## board of directors

**Matthew Ritzert**

Board President

**Kurt Goodenberger**

Board Vice-President

**Stephan Wright**

Board Secretary

**Melissa Smith, CPA**

Board Treasurer

Linda Dahl

Mary Douglas

Kim Frankeberger

David Kaufman

Aron Kitzmiller

Brett Kush

Larry Linn

Mark Rosneck

Janet Wilson

Bradley L. Vincent

Executive Director

## mission statement

Siffrin is a not for profit service organization whose mission focuses on supporting people with disabilities to achieve full community access leading to a meaningful and productive life, by encouraging and assisting personal choice and goals of each individual.

## suggestions

**Melanie White**

Director of Marketing & Public Relations

Ideas, Comments, & Suggestions:

Please send to Melanie White at

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Canton, Ohio 44708

or email them to

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