March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Hattie Larlham celebrates the unique abilities of every individual

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan made a public proclamation that the month of March should be recognized as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month to “increase public awareness of the needs and potential of Americans with developmental disabilities.”

Though Hattie Larlham’s mission to provide comfort, joy and achievement remains the same, so much has changed since 1987. While we still provide high-quality medical care to people with profound disabilities at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities (as we’ve done since 1961), our efforts today include creating opportunities for community integration – people with disabilities living, working and exploring within their own communities. Our geographic reach is greater today as well; we operate group and supported living homes throughout Northeast and Central Ohio, offer a unique integrated preschool in Columbus where children of all abilities learn and grow together, and provide training and employment services for people in Summit, Portage, Cuyahoga, Medina, and Franklin Counties.

Everything we do at Hattie Larlham helps people of all abilities create rich, meaningful lives. We recognize the caring staff at Hattie Larlham who work tirelessly to care for and support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and we celebrate the achievements of the people we serve; whether it’s learning a new skill, finding a job in the community, or simply enjoying time with friends, it’s all about celebrating ABILITY.

Throughout the month of March, we will be celebrating Developmental Disabilities Awareness by sharing stories of ABILITY, from all across Hattie Larlham. Be sure to visit our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages to read about how people with disabilities are succeeding every single day.

Shine the spotlight on ABILITY during National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and follow our #yellowforability campaign on social media!
Dear friends,

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month – a time to recognize the abilities and achievements of the people we serve, and to express our gratitude to the people who serve them. This year, Hattie Larlham is embracing the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council’s theme, “Supports Matter!” This issue of Focus highlights the ways our supports make it possible for the people we serve to get the most out of each and every day, whether they live at our Center for Children with Disabilities or one of our community homes, participate in one of our employment services programs or spend time at our Constant Companions or Addventures locations.

Hattie Larlham’s funders understand the importance of our supports. We are excited to announce that The Catherine L. and Edward A. Lozick Foundation has presented Hattie Larlham with a $100,000 Challenge Grant - a tremendous opportunity to help us replace critical equipment we use every day to support the babies, children and adults who make their home with us at the Center or our group homes. Every dollar we raise toward this “Challenge” before October 1, 2019 will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to $100,000, by the Foundation. Our appeal on the opposite page explains how you can help us get to the finish line of this exciting opportunity. We appreciate your support and are grateful to all of the Foundations and other donors who support Hattie Larlham and help us meet our mission.

Hattie Larlham is also grateful for the support we receive from our local and state leaders. Following the outstanding service of recently retired John Martin as Director of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), our new Governor Mike DeWine has appointed Jeff Davis to the post. Jeff most recently served as President of the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA). The Governor also appointed another former OPRA CEO, Maureen Corcoran, to head the Ohio Department of Medicaid. These appointments are a positive development for Ohioans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and guardians and the people who care for them.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who serve as volunteer members of the Board of Directors of Hattie Larlham and the Hattie Larlham Foundation. Thank you for your service and for sharing your time and talents with the organization. Your leadership and support of Hattie Larlham is outstanding and key to our success in meeting the needs of the people we serve. Through your contributions, volunteerism, advocacy, and engagement with us, you show every day that supports matter in the lives of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Stephen Colecchi, CEO
Michael Weinhardt, President
Board of Directors
When it comes to building abilities...  
YOUR Support Matters!

At Hattie Larlham, the supports we provide the people we serve help them to stay healthy, feel comfortable, explore their world, and achieve success in whatever they do, every day.

In this issue, you will meet some of the people who succeed with these critical supports:
- Kinte, a student at our Columbus preschool, who is making great social and academic strides
- Cheryl, a participant at our Barberton Constant Companions location, who enjoys helping her friends get the most out of their day
- Matt, a young man who worked with our Employment Services team to find the perfect job and is now the fastest re-shelver on the staff of Akron-Summit County Public Library
- Aaron, a Center resident, who has found freedom of expression through our Creative Arts program

This March, in celebration of National Disabilities Awareness Month, we have an incredible opportunity, thanks to The Catherine L. and Edward A. Lozick Foundation. For every dollar Hattie Larlham raises throughout 2019 toward the Hattie Larlham Challenge Grant, The Catherine L. and Edward A. Lozick Foundation will match those donations dollar-for-dollar up to $100,000 toward the purchase of critical equipment we use in the care of our main campus and group home residents. That means a total of $200,000 to replace worn bathing equipment, mattresses, positioning devices and other essential tools that help our most vulnerable children and adults.

Please help us celebrate abilities and supports with a gift to the Hattie Larlham Foundation. By selecting the “Challenge Accepted!” option on the enclosed gift envelope, you not only help us reach our Challenge Goal, you make it possible for funds to go even further to sustain other critical areas of our organization. Want to help even more? Ask your employer if they match charitable donations, which would effectively triple your gift!

Your donations to Hattie Larlham support abilities of all kinds, at all ages. You have the ability to make a difference today, by making a donation to Hattie Larlham in support of people with developmental disabilities. Use the envelope provided with this newsletter, make a donation online at www.hattielarlham.org, or text HATTIE to 41444. You may also contact Development Director Jennie Dawes at 330-840-6843 or jennie.dawes@hattielarlham.org.
The ability to work is something many of us take for granted – but not the youth and adults engaged with Hattie Larlham’s Employment Services programs.

In 2018, our Employment Services helped 40 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities get jobs in the community. Many of the people who come to Hattie Larlham for employment services have never worked – and now they are part of a team and earning a paycheck. Their success is another example of how supports matter.

Hattie Larlham Job Developers provide those supports, helping participants to create a resume, practice interview skills, start a search for a job that fits their skills and goals, and then submit applications. We share three of their stories here.

Hattie Larlham also helps youth to explore job opportunities through our Summer Youth Work Experience (SYWE). The SYWE is designed for high school students ages 16-22 preparing to bridge the transition from school to adult life. Each session includes one week of classroom instruction on job seeking and soft skills, and four weeks of work experience with one of our partner employers. Hattie Larlham provides job coaches at every site to assist and monitor the students as they explore real-world jobs. In 2018, several of our trainees were hired directly from their SYWE assignments.

Our Employment Services team also conducts Community-Based Assessments (CBA) for youth and adults. CBAs are similar to the SYWE, except that there is no classroom training, and the job experience is two weeks. Assessments occur year-round and include a discovery process and soft-skills training to help participants identify their strengths and interests.

People placed in jobs through Hattie Larlham’s Employment Services program in 2018 work an average of 19 hours per week and earn an average of $9.07 per hour, which is more than minimum wage. Businesses are willing to pay a higher starting wage for people with the right skills for the job, and Hattie Larlham has been able to find those people for the employers we partner with, including familiar names like Marc’s, Winking Lizard, and Aramark.

In addition to employment training, Hattie Larlham offers free benefits analysis to participants and their families who may worry that earning an income will affect their benefits. Our reports help trainees see that it always pays to work.

The State of Ohio is also taking action to help people with disabilities find jobs. Newly inaugurated Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed an executive order on January 14 issuing several new directives for state agencies to focus on identifying and eliminating barriers to employment for people with disabilities. One directive is aimed at eliminating disability-based discrimination.

Many supports are in place to help potential employees learn skills and find employment that suits their interests and abilities. Hattie Larlham is proud to provide these life-changing services to people with disabilities, and we celebrate their successes with them.

If you know someone with disabilities who could benefit from Hattie Larlham’s Employment services, please contact Laura Walker at 330.620.9341 or visit iamba.le.hattielarlham.org.
Matt worked with his job developer to look for positions that fit his strengths of being extremely organized and good with numbers. This led them to focus their search on the clerical and data entry fields. During their search, they came across an opening as a bookshelver for the Akron-Summit County Public Library’s Bookmobile. The job has turned out to be a perfect fit for Matt’s skills and abilities! He is doing extremely well and has received many positive comments from his coworkers and supervisor. He is extremely happy and loves his job.

"Matt is a good-natured, hard worker who is an asset to our department."
- Jon Hershey, Manager of Mobile Services for Akron-Summit County Public Library

Aaron W. received services through Hattie Larlham’s Vocational Training program, starting out in Hattie’s Assembly and then moving to the Vending program. Because of his enthusiasm and growth, he was promoted to become a regular employee of the program. Within a short time, Aaron completed additional training and began working full time driving the vending truck and managing his own external route. Eventually Aaron was hired as a job coach at Hattie Larlham and worked with trainees for eight months helping them gain skills to build independence. Since his time with Hattie Larlham, Aaron has worked for Rick’s Café and the University of Akron. Aaron just recently started a new position at AVI Foodsystems, Inc. as a Customer Service Attendant, stationed at GOJO Industries in Cuyahoga Falls. In this position, Aaron maintains the vending machines in the busy employee breakroom. He is so excited to be working in vending again! His supervisor states that she is so blessed to have Aaron, and she’s been impressed with his memory and excellent manners. Aaron is a perfect example of how a person with disabilities can learn, progress, and work hard to reach their full potential. Aaron was honored at Hattie Larlham’s 2018 Friendship Luncheon with the Trailblazer Award for Employment Success.

Christy M. is an example of a person who uses her innate abilities to help her grow and achieve. Christy was hired as a seasonal greeter at the Jo-Ann Fabrics location in Lakemore for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. While at Jo-Ann Fabrics, Christy always showed her positive and helpful attitude and had a great relationship with both her customers and fellow employees. Christy currently works as a processor for The Goodwill Industries of Akron, a position that she loves. She processes incoming donations, and makes sure they are in good condition to be resold at the Goodwill store. Christy loves music and books, and her passion for her interests carries over into her work and commitment to a job well done.
Stop by the Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center (DGLC) in Columbus on any weekday, and you’ll see smiles, cheers, struggles, curiosity, and laughter – things you can expect at any preschool. DGLC currently serves between 104 to 110 children per week with early intervention or preschool programming designed to help prepare students for kindergarten. DLGC welcomes children between the ages of 12 months to five years. Nearly all of the babies who enter Dahlberg Gibson were born prematurely, and many have medical challenges. Despite those rough starts, the Dahlberg Gibson staff, therapists, and parents work together to teach independence and self-regulation, which ensures that nearly all students are ready for kindergarten by age five. These children achieve success at Dahlberg Gibson because of the supports they receive along the way.

FAMILY SUPPORTS

Laura Skidmore, program director at Dahlberg Gibson for 15 years, says that when parents come to Dahlberg, the help they receive in connecting with their child goes far beyond the child’s medical needs. “Until they come here, parents are getting mostly medical information,” says Skidmore. “Here, families gain confidence in that they know what to do for their child – that they can be the best teacher.”

The youngest students start out their journey at 12 months in Mr. Doug’s classroom, two days per week. The key to success at this early age is the hour every week that Mr. Doug spends in the child’s home, with the family. He helps parents learn how to use the resources they have around them in order to enable learning through play. As children progress, in-home activities are replaced by increased classroom time. Teachers incorporate each child’s unique learning style into the classroom, and adapt lesson plans to follow student interests. Teachers also help parents to navigate available services and to become advocates for their child.
STUDENT SUPPORTS

Teachers and staff are committed to helping every child reach his or her highest level of self-regulation and independence before leaving Dahlberg Gibson. While some students will always need support, many students gradually leave supports behind as they grow and achieve. Occupational, physical, and speech therapists visit every classroom weekly to track progress and work on individual goals. When children are finally ready for school, teachers at Dahlberg prepare letters for parents to share with their child’s new classroom teacher, which include information about the child’s personality, likes and dislikes, learning style, as well as behavior challenges and successes. The new homeroom teachers frequently reach out to Dahlberg Gibson teachers for additional insight into potential strategies for helping the child succeed in his or her new learning environment.

KINTE’S STORY

Born at 25 weeks and weighing less than two pounds, Kinte demonstrates how Dahlberg Gibson’s early intervention supports can promote success. Kinte needed help in four areas of development. His family enrolled him in Dahlberg Gibson’s infant program where he mastered early learning skills despite serious health challenges. By the time he transitioned to preschool, Kinte needed help in only a single area. Today, his teachers are working with Columbus City Schools to find a preschool placement for Kinte where he can strive for even higher academic performance alongside his typical peers.

Supports matter at Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center, especially the staff’s commitment to every child’s success, a flexible teaching approach, and a supportive and nurturing focus on family strengths.
For more information about this program, visit www.hattielarlham.org or contact Laura Skidmore at (614) 447-0606.
Barberton Welcomes Constant Companions

Hattie Larlham is excited for the opportunity to serve southern Summit County at its newest Constant Companions day program site in Barberton. The new location in Barberton’s Village at Anna Dean opened its doors in November with a celebration that included participants, family, neighbors and community leaders.

Constant Companions is more than a day program that provides supports for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It’s an opportunity for participants to become engaged and inspired. At each location, people work together to identify and plan activities that range from gallery trips to exercise classes, bowling, or volunteering. Some of the groups have regular “meet ups” with local knitting circles or senior centers. Every day of the week, adults who attend Constant Companions have opportunities to try new activities, go places, and have their own impact on the community.

One support that distinguishes Constant Companions from other day programs is Hattie Larlham’s willingness and ability to provide for people with more severe disabilities and medical challenges. Barberton’s Constant Companions can serve up to 35 people per day with a variety of abilities and needs. A full-time Licensed Practical Nurse on site ensures that participants with more medical needs can still attend and enjoy the program. Like other locations, the Barberton Constant Companions is designed to help all participants get engaged with the people and community around them, regardless of their challenges. When participants are not out and about, the location provides ample space for reclining, which is especially important for people who need time out of their wheelchairs, and private areas for needed personal care. These amenities allow participants a level of comfort to help them enjoy their day.

Hattie Larlham has enjoyed getting to know Barberton and being an active part of the neighborhood. “Barberton is the ideal place for our newest location,” said Program Director Stacy Timm. “There are endless opportunities for our participants to get involved in a wide range of activities that will allow them to explore the area. Our new neighbors have been very welcoming!”

Constant Companions has eight locations throughout Northeast Ohio, serving 250 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program operates weekdays from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

For information on how Constant Companions can make a difference for someone you know, please contact Stacy Timm, Program Manager, at (330) 760-2744.

Hattie Larlham is excited for the opportunity to serve southern Summit County at its newest Constant Companions day program site in Barberton. The new location in Barberton’s Village at Anna Dean opened its doors in November with a celebration that included participants, family, neighbors and community leaders.
Sudden cardiac arrest is among the leading causes of death in the United States. In fact, more than 350,000 people will suffer a cardiac arrest this year. Many people who participate in our Constant Companions program are older, and are more susceptible to age-related heart issues. And people with disabilities, including all of our Constant Companions participants, are at even greater risk of experiencing potentially life-threatening heart issues.

On February 13 and 14, we challenged our supporters to become “Heart Heroes” to help purchase automated external defibrillators (AED’s) for our eight Constant Companions locations in Northeast Ohio.

The 48-hour campaign raised money toward the costs for purchasing one AED for each location, to potentially save the lives of the people who participate in our Constant Companions programs.

Our Heart Heroes donated more than $3,700 to help offset the costs of the needed AED’s, bringing peace of mind to not only the Constant Companions participants, but also to the nurses and program staff who now have the tools to save a life. Thanks to a group of donors, all Flash Fund donations were matched up to $2,400. We would like to thank each of the Heart Heroes listed on the right.

Thank you, Heart Heroes!

Leslie Baird, in honor of Jason Darke
Stephen Colecchi
Jennie Dawes
Jeremy Dipre, in honor of Stow Constant Companions Staff and Nikki Long
James Elliott
Paige Giannetti, in memory of Andrew Whiteman
Selina Jackson, in honor of Jonathon Lenzer
Peter James, in honor of Pete Billington
Sara Kline
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Diana Miller, in honor of Chad Swiger
Kim O’Brien, in memory of my loving father William Galbraith
Cindy Shaffer
Catherine Thompson
Stacy Timm
Joan Wallace, in memory of Shane Wallace
John Walstad, in honor of school staff
Anne Heckerman
Allisohn Hughes
Several anonymous donors

Thank you to our match partners, the Hattie Larlham Board of Directors and darko

The wonderful people at Darko, Inc. hosted some Constant Companions participants for a Valentine’s Day craft session!

If you would like to learn more about becoming involved with Hattie Larlham, contact the Development department at 330-840-6843 or visit www.hattielarlham.org.
Hattie Larlham Nurses Provide Care from the Heart

One of the best things about Hattie Larlham is the dedication of the people who deliver the programs, services and care that create opportunities for comfort, joy and achievement. Working at Hattie Larlham, you meet people like John Johnson.

John celebrates seven years at Hattie Larlham this March. As a nurse at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities, John plays a critical role on the nursing staff. Day to day, he supports the Center residents by attending to their medical needs, providing G tube and ostomy care, assessing health status, monitoring vital signs, and communicating with other caregivers to help ensure that every person who lives at the Center is receiving the best possible care.

John says that it is through providing such hands-on care that he has developed a deeply personal connection with the residents. “It’s much more than a job,” he says. “All of the staff here care so deeply about the kids that they become like family.” It was this sense of relationship building that drew John to working at Hattie Larlham. Previously, John worked part-time providing direct in-home care for individuals with developmental disabilities and he said that it came so naturally to him that he was inspired to work with this population full time. During his seven years here, John has brightened the lives of not only the residents, but also of his co-workers. You’ll rarely catch him without a big smile or witty remark and he is known as the person to call on for advice and guidance.

“Everyone enjoys working with John as he is very calm and easy going. He is also a wonderful baker and likes to bring in treats to share with staff, which we appreciate very much!” commented Director of Nursing Christine Miranda. We asked John what the most challenging part of his job is and, true to his optimistic nature, John replied that there’s always something new to learn. His desire to learn and improve his skills was evident when John decided to pursue his RN licensure while working full time at the Center. Christine shared that the administration was more than happy to allow John flexibility with his work schedule to accommodate the classes he was taking to reach his goal. The kind of encouragement and support he received while he pursued his degree kept John enthusiastic about his career at Hattie Larlham and we are proud to have him as part of our team. Congratulations, John!

JOIN OUR TEAM
Hattie Larlham is looking for special nurses like you, ready to bring great skills to the care you provide, and form lasting relationships with people who need you today! At Hattie Larlham, you’ll receive hands-on training in a unique and complex field and continued support from an excellent team. We promise you that every day you’re at work you’re with people who love and appreciate you.

Apply online today at www.hattielarlham.org or call 330-732-8292
In 1961, Hattie Gadd Larlham and her family opened their home to begin caring for babies born with disabilities. What allowed this courageous undertaking to succeed were the countless friends and community volunteers who worked around the clock to provide heartfelt care and compassion to those children. Today, volunteers are still a significant and very special part of what makes Hattie Larlham successful.

Although April is National Volunteer Month, our volunteers make a difference all year. Some volunteer groups from local organizations, companies, or schools spend a day with one of our programs to tackle a project or celebrate a special day of service. Others devote 40 or more hours per year to spend precious one-on-one time with people in our care. All of them add a dimension of friendship and social interaction that enhances the lives of the people we serve.

You can make a difference in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by volunteering with Hattie Larlham. We provide all the training you need; just bring your enthusiasm, compassion, and a smile! Our many programs mean there are lots of different ways to help, such as organizing activities to enjoy with our Constant Companions participants, helping to brighten up one of our community homes with a fresh coat of paint, or reading, singing or spending time outdoors with the children and adults at the Center.

Hattie Larlham welcomes your talents and interest in working with people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. You can even earn service hour credits to help you reach your academic and professional goals while you help others.

For more information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Lauri Molnar at (330) 840-6844 or lauri.molnar@hattielarlham.org.

SWING INTO ACTION!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

33rd annual Sugar Bush Golf Classic to benefit Hattie Larlham
May 15 at Sugar Bush Golf Club

Support Hattie Larlham and the individuals we serve by volunteering at this fun outdoor event. Many different roles available for full or half-day volunteers!

Sign-up available through April 26th!

*Golf experience NOT required!

Contact Lauri Molnar, Volunteer Coordinator, to sign up!
(330) 840-6844 lauri.molnar@hattielarlham.org

DONATE ONLINE: WWW.HATTIELARLHAM.ORG
Thank You

Thank you for supporting Hattie Larlham’s mission to create opportunities for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Throughout 2018, the following donors gave up to $249. Although these donors do not appear in the annual report, Hattie Larlham would like to recognize their important contribution.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Hattie Larlham’s Creative Arts program allows Center residents to express themselves through art. Center resident Aaron M has shown interest in words with a “ver” sound in them and has chosen to work on a project using words such as “virtuosity,” “fever,” and “vertical.” Hattie Larlham art tracker Charles records himself saying the words and then Aaron, using a switch, is able to insert them into his composition. Aaron, and anyone listening, lights up with joy whenever they hear his masterpiece!

ABOUT THE AGENCY: Hattie Larlham is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities, advancing the community and influencing change for 1,600 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Your contributions allow Hattie Larlham to provide medical, recreational, work training and residential services to children and adults with developmental disabilities.

The Focus newsletter is produced by Hattie Larlham. Photographs provided by Hattie Larlham.