

## CITY OF TOLEDO ANNOUNCES NEW OFFICE ON DISABILITY

On February 24, 2021, Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz announced the creation of a Mayor's Office on Disability. The initiative was inspired by a letter to the Mayor signed by 13 local disability agencies requesting representation at a higher level in local government.

The Mayor was joined by Angie Goodnight, chairperson of the Toledo-Lucas County Commission on Disabilities, and Katie Hunt Thomas, Disability Rights Attorney and Director of Advocacy at The Ability Center on the virtual news conference to unveil plans for the office.

"Every municipality must have an ADA coordinator, which Toledo has had for many years, with varied effectiveness. This office establishes a Mayor's Office on Disability, which is a huge leap forward in ensuring that Toledo is the most disability-friendly city in the nation," says Kapszukiewicz.

"This goes beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act," Mayor Kapszukiewicz said.

"This sets up Toledo to send the message to all residents and visitors with a disability that we are a disability-friendly community. This is a city where you belong, you can thrive, you can live independently, and everything we have is open and available to you."

The new office will influence every area of city operations and go above and beyond legal compliance. Staff within the office will lead innovative projects, act as a liaison to people with disabilities, and be the expert in best practices for community inclusion for a municipality.

*"We believe this is the first office of its kind in the State of Ohio."*

**Mayor  
Kapszukiewicz**

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## **BUILDING GREATER INDEPENDENCE WITH EVERY RAMP**

*Letter was submitted by Raymond Nagy of Defiance, OH*

*I would like to thank the Home Accessibility Program staff for providing and installing the accessibility ramp at my residence. It will prevent an accidental fall when ascending or descending the front porch steps by myself or others.*

*Having had both hips replaced and other medical hardware implanted in my back, a fall from the steps could have an unpleasant outcome. Having the ramp in place prevents such an occurrence and provides wheelchair accessibility.*

*A City of Defiance Code Enforcement officer stopped by the house one day after completion of the project to inspect and assure its' safety. His inspection not only confirmed the safety, it affirmed the workmanship quality by your two-man crew.*

*Your continued assistance to those in the community who can benefit from your services goes largely unnoticed and perhaps undervalued simply because unless a disability affects them personally, most people are unconcerned until the need arises. **Your services meet that need.***

*In my case, your assistance has made my home safer, as well as making other handicap issues less burdensome. For that, I am very grateful.*

*An additional benefit is that the turnaround platform, which faces west, is a great spot for watching sunsets and using my telescope. Being elevated due to the slope of the landscape, I feel like the captain of a ship at sea. With the wind in my face, it's an amazing feeling. It's an underlying and unforeseen long term benefit I will cherish for many years.*

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We appreciate and welcome your story of how we've been able impact your life through the services we provide. If you are interested in sharing your story, submit your story online at [www.abilitycenter.org/submityourstory](http://www.abilitycenter.org/submityourstory) or call our Public Relations Manager at 419.885.5733.



(Marcia Sorge, Peggy Amey & Auxiliary President, Arlene Whelan)

## AUXILIARY UPDATE

Our Auxiliary kept membership active and engaged in fundraising during the past year. We thank board members for their enthusiasm and leadership.

- President - Arlene Whelan
- Vice President - Jan Merki
- Secretary - Jan Zimmerman
- Corresponding Secretary - Joan Tobias
- Treasurer - Nancy Goettner
- Membership - Candy Vogel

### SAVE THE DATE:

Annual Style Show  
October 6, 2021  
*The Pinnacle*

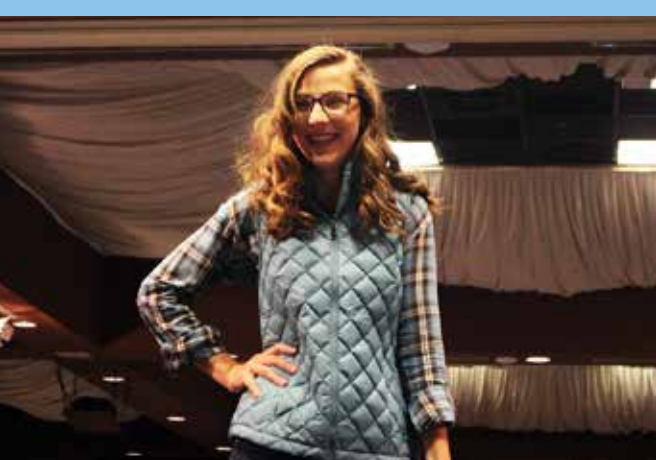
### LUNCHEONS:

May 19, 2021  
*Belmont Country Club*

September 15, 2021  
*Highland Meadows Golf Club*

## INTERESTED IN JOINING?

Guests are encouraged at our luncheons! Bring friends and learn about how members raise money for individuals with disabilities. Call our Auxiliary Liaison at 419.885.5733.



(Ability Center Consumer, Kylea Masell at Auxiliary Style Show)



## MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP

The Toledo Museum of Art (TMA), a world-renowned art institution, is collaborating with The Ability Center to support a multi-year strategic partnership. TMA has made a firm commitment to join in our efforts to become the most disability-friendly community in the country. To bring this vision to life, the establishment of the Manager of Access Initiatives position will audit Museum policies, procedures, practices, and physical plans, making recommendations to incorporate aspects of inclusive design and enhance accessibility. The Manager of Access Initiatives will eventually transition to begin work with other local organizations in a similar strategic partnership.

*"Seeking the expertise of The Ability Center as a guide, the Toledo Museum of Art is prioritizing its vision to become the model among art museums for its culture of belonging."*

**Adam Levine, Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey  
President, Director, and CEO at  
Toledo Museum of Art**

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## LOCAL SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY PROJECTS

*Accessible spaces throughout the area lead to involvement and enjoyment for kids and adults of all abilities.*

### Wood County Plays

The Ability Center donated funds to support the building of a state-of-the-art inclusive playground for children and families. The playground is expected to be completed in July.

*Location:*

Inclusive Playground  
26350 Fort Meigs Rd  
Perrysburg, OH 43551

### Miracle League

Miracle League of Northwest Ohio is building a new fully accessible concession facility. The organization supports kids of all abilities to come together over the love of baseball. Board members consulted with our staff on accessibility and ease of use. Funds were also provided by The Ability Center to support the project.

*Location:*

Miracle League of Northwest Ohio  
2200 Tracy Rd  
Northwood, OH 43619

## YOUTH SUCCESS STORY

### Jimmy Reardon

Jimmy's journey with The Ability Center began in 2017. Cooking/nutrition, financial management, sex education, and personal safety are just a few of the Youth and Transition classes Jimmy has mastered. Throughout these classes, he socialized with many peers, leading to lasting friendships.

In 2018, Jimmy enrolled in the Next Steps Summer Program, a unique summer experience where students stay on the campus of The University of Toledo while working during the day.

"I remember how shy I was when I was in the room with new Ability Center consumers, but I eventually became so motivated to answer every question," Jimmy said. "During school, I never liked to raise my hand unless the teachers asked me a question, but I felt so comfortable during this program."

After completing the program, Jimmy decided it was time for him to learn how to live independently on his own. With the help of Lucas Board of Development Disabilities, he was approved for his own apartment. "Once I got approved to live in my apartment, I felt amazing and happy," Jimmy said. "I am not fully independent yet but that's okay. I'm still learning."

The Ability Center connected him with resources to furnish his apartment and offered resources to learn skills like meal preparation, budgeting, and time management to make sure he continued to take care of himself. "I thought I would live with my parents for the rest of my life," Jimmy said. "But one night I realized I wanted to become more responsible and more independent. You never know what you will achieve in your life. I never thought this would be my life and I'm truly happy about it."





**The Gretchen Zyndorf  
Consumer and Volunteer Center**

*"On behalf of Gretchen and myself, we are so pleased that we can leave a legacy gift to The Ability Center for the Assistance Dogs Program. Animals and less fortunate people were always very important to Gretchen throughout her life, so this gift accomplishes both training the dogs and helping people being able to obtain animals to help them throughout their life." - Mark Zyndorf*

Early on, Gretchen desired to help those with challenges, both people and animals. Gretchen loved history and the arts, which led to an insatiable reading of historic and spiritual literature. Well-read and well-traveled, her many worldwide adventures always included museums and historical points of interest.

While she received great happiness through helping those in need, her greatest joy came from being surrounded by her family and very close friends. Her Sunday night and holiday dinners were legendary, with guests always being welcomed to her dinner table with the most gorgeous smile. For those of you who never had the opportunity or pleasure of meeting Gretchen, a more beautiful spirit has never existed. Gretchen passed away on December 7, 2019 at the age of 70 and is finally at peace after a long and courageous battle.

**BUILDING DEDICATIONS**

**The Payne Family  
Canine Training Center**

*"Marilyn would be deeply grateful to see how her family's generous donation was so wisely used by your organization. The Canine Center was thoughtfully conceived and is an exceptional space for achieving an important goal; service dogs with "pedigreed" training. I don't think she knew how far this one-time gift could go to help individuals achieve independence. She would be humbled by the expressions of gratitude." - Linda Deubner*

Marilyn Payne graduated from DeVilbiss High School in 1949 and attended Michigan State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 1953 and later a Masters of Education from The University of Toledo. An avid golfer and tennis player, Marilyn taught high school and coached both sports. She was a long-standing member of the Sylvania Country Club and carried her love for entertaining and socializing with her for a lifetime. Though she never married, she had a lifetime of friendships and fun traveling and being the "straw that stirs" everywhere she went. Marilyn died at age 86 on April 4, 2017.





# WELCOME GRADS!

## **Maria & Glenn**

Maria is receiving her successor assistance dog, Glenn (service dog), a black Labrador retriever. Bronson, Maria's first dog, spent eleven years by her side. Glenn will pick up dropped items for Maria as she works in her office including her remote, books, and her favorite shawl that she wears every day.

Having Glenn perform daily tasks will increase her independence at home and at work. Maria has a large and loving family who is very excited for Maria's new adventure!



Maria & Matt were classmates 11 years ago when they received their first assistance dogs!

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Assistance Dogs Graduation

# JULY 15, 2021

*Parkway Place*

We've missed celebrating!

Join us for a memorable event for graduates and the fosters of the graduating dogs. The "passing of the leash" ceremony will honor April graduates and School Therapy Dog graduates, who will go through class in July. 2020 graduates will also be recognized.

## **Matt & Brighton**

Matt is receiving his successor assistance dog, Brighton (service dog), a yellow Labrador retriever. Matt, a driven and goal-oriented attorney, is a quadriplegic, which makes picking up dropped items, pulling open doors, and pushing access buttons challenging. Brighton will always be there to aid Matt wherever they go together.

Matt explains, "I had my first dog for eleven wonderful years, and I know the joy and independence that a dog adds to my life. I can give a dog a loving home, a supportive work environment, and plenty of exercise and attention."



### **Adeline & Rider**

Adeline is receiving Rider (therapy dog), a black Labrador retriever. A smart and energetic 7-year-old, Adeline is full of life despite developmental challenges. She dances, swims, and does gymnastics, which keeps her grandparents plenty busy!

All her life, Adeline has been affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. "Adeline has difficulty regulating her emotions. She experiences anxiety and can be easily overwhelmed in new situations," shares her grandparents. It was love at first sight when Adeline first came to Assistance Dogs for a visit. Staff were entertained while she requested several cues from the dogs, with little help from our trainers.

Rider will be spending lots of time outside by the pool in the summer, providing gentle pressure in times of stress, assisting with daily transitions, and most of all, being a constant companion for Adeline. **Rider was sponsored by our Auxiliary.**



### **Katie & Danno**

Katie is receiving Danno (therapy dog), half lab, half golden retriever. An active mother to teenaged twin boys, Katie lives with postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS) and Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. Katie can experience lightheadedness, fainting, and rapid heartbeat. Tasks like picking up items, going up and down stairs, or shutting the dishwasher could potentially trigger her conditions.

A true dog lover, Katie has lived with dogs all her life, so she knew that an assistance dog would offer companionship and peace of mind she desired. No longer home alone during the day, Danno will support Katie do daily chores so she can save energy to do more of what she loves.





# The Ability Center

5605 MONROE STREET  
SYLVANIA, OH 43560

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ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TOLEDO, OH  
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abilitycenter.org

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## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Tami Williams  
Renee Wood

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Tim Harrington

**#DidYouKnow:** We accept durable medical equipment that is then sanitized by staff and gifted to individuals with disabilities who need them.

We are teaming up with the City of Toledo to accept equipment at their **Drop Off Refuse and Reuse Recycling Events** this summer.

### EVENT DATE:

6/19 | Scott High School | 2400 Collingwood Blvd, Toledo, OH 43620 | 9:00 a.m.

