

THE TALEBEARER

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A LETTER FROM THE CEO

I love walking into our locations and seeing the individuals we serve having smiles on their faces. Some like to tell you jokes or tease you, some love telling you all the exciting places they have been to visit and fun activities they have been participating in. I have seen how proud the individuals are when they meet their own personal goals.

None of this would be occurring if we did not have dedicated Direct Support Professional staff (DSPs) and supervisors.

Staff continually work hard on ensuring the individuals we serve receive high quality care. Daily, staff are helping individuals meet their personal goals. Some of our individuals have goals to learn how to print, read, cook a meal, attend a concert, participate in a marathon, attend sporting events, do volunteer work, make new friends, etc. Last fall we had individuals who participated in a Chili Cook Off and they brought home a winning prize!

Again, none of this would be occurring if we did not have positive, caring staff.

Direct Support Professional staff and supervisors also are required to complete other tasks that are extremely important. Staff assist in taking individuals to doctor appointments and help individuals understand what the doctor is telling them. They encourage individuals to follow doctor orders/doctor recommendations and they are trained to assist with medication administration. Staff can be seen cleaning constantly to ensure the individuals have a clean and safe environment. There are many other tasks that the staff do day to day that sometimes are taken for granted. Staff do the grocery shopping & house hold shopping for the homes. Staff complete as much maintenance as possible before having to submit work orders. Extra cleaning is done due to snow being tracked into the homes / day program sites in the winter, etc. The list goes on and on of what DSPs and supervisors are asked to do on a daily basis and this is all in addition to meeting the individual's personal goals.

I know it can be overwhelming and frustrating with all the documentation requirements that must be done to satisfy the State Department. I know staff would prefer to spend more personal time with individual's verses cleaning or being pulled in 2-3 different directions at 1 time. Staff must be able to be flexible and be able to multitask all day long.

It's easy to overlook all the good things that are occurring every day, especially when employees are asked to put in additional hours knowing there is a national staffing crisis situation. Our staff continue to show their dedication to the individuals we serve.

I would like to thank all of our staff at MRSI for continuing to be a part of our great team!

- Janelle Wehrman, CEO

Van Wert Supported Living

Gay St. Activities

- Kathy celebrated her birthday on February 4th.
- Sharon had a big surprise while visiting the Van Wert Historical Museum. She found her dad's military uniform on display and was very excited to have her picture taken with it!
- The surprises kept coming during Sharon's visit. She also found the gown her aunt wore when she was the Queen Jubilee IV in 1935.
- Sharon was also excited to stand next to a picture she found of her brother.



Linden Dr.

Linden Drive has been out in the local community. With the warmer weather they are starting to go out and do more. Jackie went to a Crestview Knights baseball game and looks forward to going to more. They spent Valentine's Day decorating and cutting out homemade cookies.

Park St. Activities

The ladies of Park St have enjoyed going to a local church once a month for a community dinner. They usually see people they know to visit with and are becoming known to the regular church members who typically help with dinner. In March they also decided to go out to the cinema one evening to see a movie. Luckily they were able to decide on a movie that everyone liked!

Now that spring has arrived and the weather is milder we have been able venture further from home and on April 10th the ladies played hooky from their usual weekday activities to travel to Dayton and Fairfield where they shopped at The Christmas Tree Shop and Jungle Jim's International Grocery. The live fish and lobster tanks were a surprise to see in a grocery store and the produce section was a favorite mainly because of all the strange and exotic fruits. All returned home tired and happy.



Introductions

MEET DEBORAH MENCHE, OUR HOUSING DIRECTOR AND OFFICE ASSISTANT

I grew up in Hamilton, Ohio and later moved to Oxford Ohio, home of Miami University. I was raised in a military family. After the military, my parents owned several businesses and properties (including rental homes). I worked in several of their businesses, but chose to work in the financial industry after graduating. In 2010, I married the most perfect man whom I had dated in high school. We moved to Florida in 2011 and spent 4 years there until he passed away. I went back to Oxford to be with children, friends, and family, and went back to work in the financial field in the Cincinnati area. Having friends in Celina telling me what a great place it is to live and at a much slower pace than Cincinnati, I decided to make the move. So in February of 2018 I moved into my home and started working part time at a bank in Minster and a grocery store in Coldwater. Working two jobs was not my idea of a slower paced life. I applied for the position with Mercer Residential Services. I had helped my parents with their businesses and rentals and thought this would be a nice change. After the first interview, I was so excited and hopeful. I wanted a job I could look back on in 5 years and say “I am so glad I took this position”. I truly believe I have found that job. There is never a dull moment, and I truly enjoy the people I work with. And, as I become more comfortable with Celina and the neighboring areas, I feel more “at home”.

MEET JIM SWEIGART, OUR NEW MAINTENANCE STAFF

Hello! My name is Jim Sweigart and I was hired at MRSI in March 2019 as part time maintenance. After graduating from Celina Sr. High I joined the Navy and served from 1986-1990 onboard a fast attack submarine USS Shark SSN-591. After serving in the Navy I returned to Celina and worked at various HVAC companies. In 2004, I followed my calling into the ministry where I was ordained as Sr. Pastor at Calvary Christian Fellowship in St. Marys where I still serve. I'm blessed to be married to my wife Jane for 27 years and we live in Celina. We have three children and two grandchildren.

Van Wert ADS

At MRSI, we empower adults with disabilities. As part of our Healthy Fit Club initiative at Van Wert ADS, we have developed fitness programs catered to all ability levels. We like to work hard and make it look easy! The Healthy Fit Club aims to help those with limited mobility find ways to participate. Not only does it promote wellness, motor skills, and balance, it also builds confidence. That is our goal, for our ADS members to shine; continuing to exceed expectations. The Healthy Fit Club offers exercise five days a week, and we're so proud of our individuals for being committed to working on their health and fitness, even through the winter.

Van Wert ADS, in cooperation with Voluntary Services at the VA Hospital, has been volunteering with veteran patients a couple times a month throughout the winter. We participated in National Salute Week and handed out valentine treat bags to veterans and their families to thank them for their service and remind them they are loved. We have had a couple veterans contact us directly and thank us for our work at the VA. It means so much to all of us to have the opportunity to serve others in this way. ADS members have taken on extra volunteering responsibilities for the humane society and the pet store. We continue to volunteer at the nursing home, preschool, food pantry, and a local church. ADS members also work on various volunteer projects to give back to their community.

ADS members Pam, Michelle, and Jackie attended the Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse on March 5. Van Wert ADS Open House was held on that same evening, and it was very successful! ADS members, friends, family, SSAs, and individuals interested in joining ADS were all in attendance. The Healthy Fit Club did demonstrations of cardio drumming routines, dances, and shared a song in sign language. Corrine, Michelle, Jackie, David, and JP were all dance leaders. We had a great visit with everyone and raised money for special outings. ADS small group outings are going well, and we've had the chance to learn about Mexican culture, go out to eat, cook at Vantage, go on a chocolate tour, have a pajama party, work on money management in our shopping trips, go bowling, to the library, to coffee shops, art museum, arcades, creameries, have all kinds of new cooking adventures, and make new crafts for open house and the fundraiser supper.

Van Wert ADS celebrated Super Jake super hero day as our beloved Uncle Jake retired. We will miss him so much! Jake Delgado (known at ADS as Uncle Jake) has been serving individuals at Van Wert ADS since 2015. He began as a non-medical transportation driver but quickly became irreplaceable at ADS. Each day, Jake would greet individuals and get to know them better. He has built such strong relationships with ADS members that they started singing the Jake song every time he arrived. It's hard to note all the little things Jake did to make everyone feel special — from teaching individuals Spanish, to helping us make wood projects and crafts for open house, playing games, going to the YMCA and on outings to help out, to laughing and singing and dancing with us. He always took care of our vehicles and our buildings, repairing and cleaning and upgrading. No matter what obstacles we faced, Jake was there to help us. At the end of March 2019, Jake retired. We had a SuperJake super hero party to celebrate our super hero Jake. It was a wonderful time to honor the man we had all come to depend on so much. We are thankful to Jake for the blessing he has been to all of us at Van Wert ADS and MRSI. We will miss him terribly and wish Jake and his family all the best!

ADS has recently welcomed our new staff member Shree. She has quickly become a valuable part of the team, and we're so thankful to have her!

Thank you all so much for your support of Van Wert ADS and the Healthy Fit Club! We could not do what we do without you!

Francie Carmain
MRSI Van Wert ADS Coordinator



ADS

On March 5th, Van Wert ADS held their annual Open House. During the Open House, staff and clients showed current and potential families some of the fun activities they participate in while in attendance. Clients showed off their pictures, had a craft and bake sale and even showed the crowd some dances they do as part of their Healthy Fit Club. VW ADS raffled off a hand-made autism blanket that was made by an employee's parent and a gift certificate for a personalized item made by the ADS Director, Maureen Hughes.

On March 19th, Mercer ADS held their annual Open House. During the Open House, staff and clients mingled and talked about different activities that have been going on. Clients also showed their family members our new wall collage as well as the new framed pictures that were recently hung. Mercer ADS raffled off a gardening basket as well as a farmhouse-style kitchen basket to help raise money for special outings and activities that the individuals want to do.

On March 5th, ADS Director, Maureen Hughes and Mercer ADS Coordinator, Jennifer Bishop, participated in a provider fair that was sponsored by the Mercer County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The provider fair was a great way to market MRSI as an agency as well as talk to individuals and families about the services we provide.

On March 5th, individuals from both Mercer and Van Wert ADS attended the Developmental Disabilities Awareness and Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse. Individuals and staff had the opportunity to listen to multiple speakers as well as advocate for themselves for the services they deserve. The individuals also had the chance to walk around the statehouse and see what types of things were happening while they were there.



Award Nominations

In the last newsletter we highlighted the award winner of the Mike Trace award. In this newsletter we want to highlight a few of our amazing employees that were nominated for this award.

Alexis Kirk

Alexis Kirk has been a Direct Support Professional for Van Wert ADS for three years. She has weathered a lot of changes at day services. We have worked many shifts together under difficult circumstances, and I have seen Alexis consistently maintain a positive attitude. Through it all, she has remained committed to serving clients and this company with excellence. She has continuously worked extra shifts when needed. She treats everyone with courtesy and respect. She has a keen ability to notice an individual's strengths and needs and supports him/her accordingly. Alexis is willing to do any task to support clients, coworkers, and supervisors. She helps others while maintaining their dignity. She uses verbal communication, sign language, gestures, technology, and verbal cues to effectively communicate with clients. She regards all clients with kindness and encourages them in their goals and increasing community involvement. Her caring attitude encourages a positive environment at ADS and in the community. For these reasons, I would like to nominate Alexis Kirk for the Mike Trace Award.

Francie Carmain

I would like to nominate Francie Carmain for this honor. Francie is a great supervisor. She's always working no matter if it's early before our shift starts or after hours. She is wonderful with our residents and staff. She's always working above and beyond to help us all every day. The clients think the world of her. Francie is funny, loving and generous to everyone. It's a privilege to be a part of her great team.

I nominate Francie Carmain for the Mike Trace Award. Her selfless dedication to the Van Wert ADS and to our staff and clients is a testimony to what we mean to her. Though she doesn't like "hugs" she constantly gives of herself by doing all of the choreography for the exercise dance routines as well as researching new songs for the cardio drumming routines. Words cannot express what Francie means to our office in Van Wert and the overall organization. For these reasons I nominate Francie Carmain.

Alexis Ramsey

It's with great pleasure that I nominate Alexis for the Mike trace award. On a daily basis Alexis Ramsey exemplifies MRSI core values. She is selfless and without hesitation puts the needs of others first, treating them as the most important priority to address. Alexis has worked outside her normal hours to help ensure that the residents at the Wayne Street group home are able to go on special outings. Alexis always has a smile on her face and a positive attitude. The residents at the home are truly blessed to have a wonderful person like Alexis in their lives. She truly enriches the lives of the individuals we serve.

Jennifer Bishop

Jennifer maintains a positive attitude and encourages positivity in others. She is consistently hard-working and dependable. She is goal-oriented and eagerly wants to continue to learn and apply new knowledge and skills to her job. She is a reliable and dedicated member of the company, which she has served for 5 years, as a DSP at the Wayne Street Home and Mercer and Van Wert ADS locations, and now as the ADS Coordinator for Mercer ADS. She has done this while consistently working scheduled shifts, picking up additional shifts, and volunteering her time to promote client interests. Her dedication has built trust and strong relationships with clients, co-workers, and supervisors alike. She performs a variety of duties, while working in harmony with others, treating them with dignity and respect. She remains calm in stressful situations. Jennifer shows pride in her job and operates with integrity and adaptability. She is dedicated to serving individuals and helping them achieve/exceed their goals. She is a creative thinker in developing new ideas and is committed to excellence in serving others. She shows a sincere interest in the health and wellness of clients, demonstrated by developing programs to include fitness, dance, and cardio drumming classes, tailored to everybody's ability levels. She encourages clients to volunteer and supports them in maintaining a meaningful place in their community. She has introduced Mercer ADS to a volunteer program at the humane society. She promotes continual, purposeful community involvement. She believes in and works toward the success of all clients.

MRSI's Community Corner

A few individuals celebrated some big birthdays during the first quarter of 2019!

- In January, Breann Dougal celebrated her 21st birthday
- In February, Anissa Houseworth celebrated the big 4-0



Employee Corner

MRSI would like to welcome our new Direct Support Professionals that joined the team between January and March 2019!

- Robin Garrett was hired for Thomas Edison Group Home in January
- Rachel Wilkinson was hired for Thomas Edison Group home in February
- Tiffany Neal was hired for our Wayne Street Group home in March
- Shree Clouser was hired for our Van Wert ADS in March

MRSI also welcomed Jessica Grunden as the new Program Director over our Van Wert region!

We are so excited for all of you to have joined our team!

MERCER RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

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