

**A brief history
of the Hocking
County Board of
Developmental
Disabilities**



If Emerson was right and “An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man,” then the organization known as the Hocking Board of Developmental Disabilities must be the lengthened shadow of six Hocking County families.

They were the Panettis, Silers, Hinermans, Bails, Cronins and Rectenwaldts, who met in 1969, shortly after the passage of a state law which recognized the education of children and adults suffering from mental retardation as a problem needing special consideration.

A start-up teaching effort was needed, and the six families went door-to-door to raise funds which were matched by the state.

They established the Rainbow School and the first class was held in the basement of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, followed shortly thereafter by the first P.T.A. meeting at Blosser’s Restaurant located at Main and Market Streets.

It wasn’t long until the Rainbow School moved to the second floor of the Rockbridge elementary school, only to move again in a major expansion to Gibisonville where the Logan-Hocking school board

leased the school building to Rainbow for a dollar per year. Three classrooms were put into operation and a home trainer was added to the staff to serve adults and children who did not attend the school. Speech and physical therapy lessons were added to the curriculum.

Those who recognized the need for services for disabled citizens made their voices known and HCDD moved farther into the country. Satellite classrooms were set up in Laurelville, Union Furnace and two in Logan, at the First Baptist Church and Jehovah’s Witness’ building.

A sheltered workshop was set up on Zanesville Avenue, near the site of the Olde Towne Pizza Shoppe and 13 disadvantaged individuals labored for the first time in their lives, doing tasks which fell within their capabilities, and under trained supervision. It was a thrilling moment for everyone when each of them

held their first paycheck.

More clamored to join in the program and the workshop moved to the first floor of 498 W. Hunter St., which also housed the offices of the Hocking County Board of Mental Retardation and developmental Disabilities (MRDD) on the second floor. As



St. Matthew Lutheran Church



Rainbow School, Gibisonville



Zanesville Avenue



498 W. Hunter St.



830 W. Hunter St.

the days and weeks flew by, demand for services kept expanding and another move was undertaken, with the workshop jumping a block east to 830 W. Hunter St.



Former Smead Building

With more expansion in mind, the Board managed to purchase the former Marion Riggs automobile dealership building on E. Front St. Considerable remodeling was needed to turn the facility into second floor offices and a first floor workshop. While that work was being done, the sheltered workshop continued to function in the former Smead building on Walhonding Avenue in South Logan.

It is important to note that a major change came about in 1982, when the state legislature passed a bill establishing "Rules for the Education of Handicapped Children," placing the responsibility on local school systems. Thereafter, the education of disabled and otherwise handicapped children became the duty of

local school districts. The Logan Hocking School District and the MRDD Board began to incorporate Rainbow School classes into the program at Union Furnace in the early 1990's and MRDD's responsibility for such education ended as far as school age children were concerned.

At the same time, a new position was created, that of Intervention Specialist; someone who works on individual education plan goals in the classroom with those children who have been identified as eligible for individual services under the new law. This evolved into a Behavior Support Specialist in 2000. This person spends half their time with the Developmental Disabilities program and half with workshop staff and classroom teachers, resolving behavioral issues.



1369 E Front St.

Until children are ready for school, babies and toddlers up to the age of three are the concern of HCDD Early Intervention Services. This long-term effort is now housed in the space formerly used by the sheltered workshop in the old automobile building on E. Front St. Six months before a child's third birthday, a transition plan is developed to determine what will happen when the child is ready to enter elementary school. Preschool services of Logan-Hocking School District as well as Head Start and other therapy efforts are all involved at this point in the child's life.

The old auto dealership now houses, in addition to Help Me Grow and Early Intervention Services, the Hocking Valley Cleaning Service, an extension of the sheltered workshop, and offices for those who work with individuals in the various programs, and the executive offices of the Board of Hocking County Developmental Disabilities.

Recently, the state legislature and the governor directed that the various county entities rename themselves, expunging any reference to the term "mental retardation" or "mentally retarded." In early 2010, The Hocking County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD) became the Hocking County Board of Developmental Disabilities (HCDD).

Late in the winter of 2009, the sheltered workshop that now encompassed 63 men and women moved its entire operation to the old Green elementary school building at the intersection of U.S. 33 and east Front Street. Sharing the quarters with Can Do Creations and Then Employment Connection, both part of HCDD.



It would take a brave and particularly insightful individual to state the moving has come to an end. What started out as a school with 13 students now encompasses hundreds. In 2008, there were 254 individuals in various programs. In December of 2009, that number was well over 300 and will continue to rise. In a county as small in population as Hocking, HCDD makes a significant impact on the quality of life for many families.

.....John Fraim



Board of
Developmental Disabilities

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