

OUR FOUNDERS

“The Light That Shines On The Darkness”

The Licking County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

In 1951, children with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities were unable to attend public schools. The only educational option for Licking County residents at that time was the programs offered by the state in the institutions in Columbus and Mount Vernon. There were only 20 community schools in Ohio which offered education to children with mental retardation.

Parents were told that if their children were deaf, we have a school. If they were blind, we have a school. “But, for you, there is nothing”. A small group of parents decided to change that. Under the leadership of Katie Carter, they began work to see that their children received an education in their own community while living at home.

The fruit of their labor was the Licking County Council for Retarded Children. The Council incorporated in 1952. The first slate of officers was:

Mrs. Eleanor S. Weiant, President
Mrs. Katie Carter, Vice President
Mrs. Elizabeth Irwin, Secretary
Mr. Cecil Johnson, Treasurer

Other parents who were instrumental in the development of the Council were: Mrs. Mary Zerger, Mr. Phil Young, Mr. Vein Davidson, Mrs. Helen Schnaidt, and Mr. & Mrs. Paul Marsh.

By November of that year, Starlight School opened, giving parents of children with MR/DD a choice about the education of their children. Mrs. Katie Carter suggested the school by named Starlight because it signified “the light that shines in darkness”. Mrs. Southard, the first teacher, held class for 12 students in a room at Mound School.

To be eligible for state funding from the Office of Mental Hygiene, students must have been refused admission to public schools, be at least 6 years of age, toilet trained and, if they had a physical handicap, they must be able “to care for themselves so as not to require too much of the teacher’s time.” Classes could be no smaller than 8 and no larger than 12. There could be no more than a 5 year age difference among the students in each class.

The state provided only \$200 per child. It was the hard work of Eleanor Weiant, parents and the generous donations of civic organizations that made the opening and operation of Starlight possible.

The Starlight Country Day School was opened in 1954 to provide education and recreation for children who were not eligible for the state funding. Eight young men gathered at the home of Mrs. Katie Carter “to learn and have a little fun.” Because there was no government funding for this program, it relied on donations from the community and ingenuity.

The Country Day School was open only one year. By 1955, some of the children had become eligible for Starlight and others had gone to the state schools.

The second class at Starlight School began in 1955. Mrs. Pyle taught Class I with the assistance of Mrs. Johnson. Class II was taught by Mrs. Wilson.

In 1955, a parent said, “My little girl liked school last year and progressed under the program. Seeing her speech development and her appreciation of the school and the friends in the school not only gave her a better outlook, but also increased the morale and happiness of the home. Each of us has much appreciation to all who have made the program possible.”

Imagine the parents' pride. Not only were their children receiving an education, but they had made it possible!

In October of 1957, legislation was passed which allowed the local school districts to assist children with mental retardation. Up until this time, public schools were not able to provide any funds or services for Starlight students.

In 1957, community job training met with great success. It was predicted that within 5 years, many children with mental retardation would "find sheltered (working) conditions to be useful in an adult working world."

In November of 1959, a new parent group was formed. Parents and Friends of Retarded Children was "interested in promoting legislation favorable to all retarded children and in providing services to state institutions for the retarded with special attention for those residents from Licking County." Mrs. Eleanor Kobe was the first chair of this group.

The first graduate of Starlight School was David Banks, Class of 1960. Mrs. Eleanor S. Weiant, President of the Licking County Council for Retarded Children, presented David's diploma.

Because of new legislation prohibiting private corporations from receiving state funds, the Licking County Council for Retarded Children was dissolved in 1960. They retained their name and became an advisory board.

At the beginning of the 1960 school year, Starlight was holding 5 classes for 60 children. Mrs. Edward Wilson was the supervisor and also taught a class.

In November of 1960, the generous tax payers of Licking County passed Starlight's first operating levy of .3 mills.

In 1963, Mrs. Jane Marsh became the Executive Director of the Licking County Council for Retarded Children.

In 1964, Mr. Baird Krueger was selected the first Administrator of Starlight. Since that time, only 6 people have been responsible for the administration of the programs offered by the Licking County Board of MR/DD.

Mr. Baird Krueger, 1964 to 1968
Ms. Eulah Littrell, 1968 to 1971
Mr. Robert Barclay, 1971 to 1973
Mr. Charles Morris, 1973 to 1976
Mr. Larry Anderson, 1976 to 1984
Ms. Cheryl Phipps, 1984 to present

The first Home Training Consultant was hired in 1964. Mrs. Alma Schuh worked with students unable to attend Eleanor S. Weiant Starlight School for whatever reason. During her 7 year career with the school, Mrs. Schuh provided services to 145 youngsters.

Most adults take great pleasure in earning their own living. Adults with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities are no different. Recognizing that need, Starlight began a sheltered workshop in 1965. Enrollees made various craft items, then sold them to members of the community.

From Starlight's inception 11 years before, it had been moved from building to building. With the passage of a levy, funds were available in 1965 to build a school especially designed to meet the needs of children with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

Ground was broken on August 14, 1966. The building, dedicated in honor of Mrs. Eleanor S. Weiant on October 22, 1967, housed 13 classrooms, a multi-purpose room, dedicated to Mrs. Katie Carter, an apartment for prevocational education, the sheltered workshop for adults, a clinic, a speech and hearing room, and offices for the home visitor and administration.

The landmark 169 legislation was passed on October 25, 1967. This law created the County Boards of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and gave them the authority to acquire funds and provide programs for county citizens with MR/DD. The first members of the Licking County Board of MR/DD were:

Clayton Smucker, Chair	Dan Guanciale, Vice Chair
Ann McKinney, Secretary	Jack Kelley
Judge Don Hanna	Jon Spahr
Helen Schnaidt	

To date, 37 individuals have served on the Licking County Board of MR/DD. In addition to those listed above, the following people have made a contribution to the services provided today:

G. Hatfield	Judge Virginia Weiss
Homer Hill	Sam Thios
Jim Billows	Maxine Loomis
Richard Hughes	Judy Johnson
Betsy Salladay	Waneta Taggart
Frank Stare	David Wenger
Molly Ingold	Patti Burkett
Nancy Dumbauld	Herbert Koehler
Suzanne Pierce	Margaret Jeffers
Jay Green	Paul Marsh
Judge Robed Moore	David Morris
Michael Higgins	Fred O'Dell
Emerson George	Sally Bryan
Edward Allen	Velma VanDeest
Robin Reid	Cliff Neighbarger

The first community residential facility was opened in 1973 by the Licking County Council for Retarded Citizens. Mrs. Jane Marsh was the Program Director for the homes, as well as the Council's Executive Director. Eight men lived in the home at 400 Hudson Avenue. The designs for the needed renovations were donated by Glenn Abel. Parents and their children were offered an option to institutional placement. Residents of the group home were learning to care for themselves and to be members of the community.

Ohio House Bill 455 became law in 1976. This law required that local school districts work with the Licking County Board of MR/DD in the education of children with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities.

An infant development program was started in 1977. The program, serving children from birth to 2 years, assisted children with developmental delays to learn the skills necessary to attend public schools when they became old enough.

The first group home for women was opened in 1977 by the Licking County Council for Retarded Children. As with the men's home, Jane Marsh was the Program Director and Glenn Abel designed the plans for the renovations. Eight women were now offered an opportunity to live in the community.

The Licking County Board of MR/DD opened 2 group homes in 1980, one for 6 men on 21st Street and one for 6 women on Church Street.

Because of an increase in job opportunities and enrollment, the LICCO workshop moved from Eleanor S. Weiant School to its own home at 675 West Church Street in 1978. At that time, LICCO had several contracts, including those with the Newark Air Force Base, Holophane and Callander Cleaners. By 1981, LICCO had outgrown the Church Street site. Ground was broken for the current LICCO workshop on Industrial Parkway. In early 1982, LICCO moved into the new facility, and the Administrative, Case Management and Residential offices moved to LICCO's old site at 675 West Church.

Growth has continued to be part of the Licking County Board of MR/DD's tradition. The Administrative, Residential, Community Employment Services, and Case Management offices are now located at 65 West Church. The building at 675 West Church is the bus garage and offices for Transportation staff. LICCO, at 600 Industrial Parkway, was recently expanded.

The Licking County Council for Retarded Children officially changed its name to the Association for Retarded Citizens in March of 1982. At that time, Sam Thios was President, and Patricia Thomas was the secretary.

In September of 1983, the LCBMR/DD received a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Commission to begin the Community Employment Program. This program provides assistance to individuals in finding and maintaining jobs in the community. This program is now called Community Employment Services, or CES. In 1989, CES placed 49 individuals into competitive employment.

Today, the Licking County Board of MR/DD serves over 2000 individuals with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities in Licking County each year. The citizens of Licking County are grateful for the vision and hard work of our founders. Without their courage, commitment and dedication, none of our accomplishments would have been possible.

Our Founders was prepared by Kim Hale, Public Information Specialist, and Cheryl Phipps, Superintendent, for Founder's Night, September 26, 1990.

A Special Thanks to Mrs. Katie Carter, Mrs. Jane Marsh and Mrs. Charlotte Diller for providing details on our rich history.

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