

THEIR VIEW

Shelby County Board of DD offers many services

I've been the Superintendent of the Shelby County Board of Developmental Disabilities for eight months. I worked for the Miami County Board of Developmental Disabilities for 14 years and as a Shelby County resident I was very excited to work in my home community. When I accepted the position, a family member who lives in Shelby County asked me, "Why would you leave your job in Miami County to come run a preschool?" That was my first indication that there might be some misconceptions out there about what we do here at the Shelby County Board of DD. My response was, "We run a great preschool, but we do so much more! Let me tell you all about it!" I was fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to write this column and I hope you find it helpful as I do my best to clear up some misconceptions that might be lingering.

Every county in the state of Ohio must have a County Board of Developmental Disabilities that provides certain mandated services to people with disabilities in their home county. Boards are made up of various community members, including family members of people eligible for services. The county commissioners

and the probate judge appoint board members. The board hires the superintendent and the superintendent is responsible for the daily operations of the organization, including hiring employees and ensuring compliance with all laws and regulations.

People interested in services at the county board must meet certain eligibility requirements. We are required to focus our services on individuals with developmental disabilities. This means that a person must have a diagnosed disability before the age of 22 and have certain challenges with daily life skills. We have trained staff available to conduct assessments to determine eligibility.

That is often where the similarities end across the state. Although we are all required to offer certain services, such as eligibility, service coordination/case management, incident investigation and administering and funding certain programs and services, county boards have evolved based on the unique needs of each county. For instance, Shelby County Board of DD offers a preschool service while almost half of all county boards in Ohio do



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not. Preschool and school age services are not required services for county boards, but like other non-mandated services, are often provided to meet a need or fill a gap in services.

County boards are mostly funded by local tax levies. We do utilize other funding streams, such as Medicaid, state and federal monies and grant funding, but we rely on the voters to continue to support us. The reason that Shelby County Board of DD can offer additional services, such as provider support, employment support, community connections and outreach, as well as preschool is because of the wonderful support of our community. Additionally, we do many things to assist with saving money in order to be financially responsible and to continue offering these services. Currently the Shelby County Board of DD shares several employees with Champaign County Board of DD to save on the costs of salary and benefits. This allows us to offer additional specialized services that we otherwise might not be able to offer due to the size of our county. It is often a balance to ensure

we are able to provide the services we are required to, while continuing to offer the services that we are known for and that the community needs.

One of the biggest misconceptions, as I initially discovered from my family member's question, is that we only run a school. We are certainly proud of our excellent preschool program and work very hard to make sure it is the best it can be, but preschool is only one piece of our service offerings. We offer services that support people from the time they are born, all throughout and until the end of their lives. From early intervention to preschool to service and support administration, we are here to support people with disabilities no matter where they are in life's journey.

I hope to provide you with more information on these services in the upcoming months. In the meantime, if you have additional questions about what we do here at the Shelby County Board of DD, please call 937-497-8155, or check out our website at www.shelbydd.org. Also, don't forget to follow us on Facebook for updates on what's happening on the hill!

Wenning is the superintendent of the Shelby County Board of Developmental Disabilities.