‘Best career imaginable’ comes to an end

Sometimes it takes just one person or one event to know you’ve found the right career path.

For Liz Prather, that happened 35 years ago as she was beginning her tenure with Richland Newhope and her work in the developmental disabilities field. There was one individual who she was responsible for training to do a job at Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. who made a lasting impression.

“She was tolerating my training attempts with good humor, but I could tell the concept of adding or subtracting parts in a box on a scale to arrive at a balance wasn’t translating well,” notes Liz. “I still remember the look on her face when she realized what I was trying to get across. After that moment she never made another error, and I knew I loved my job!”
Overcoming challenges

When you first meet Maxson Brown, you can’t help but be captivated by his smile.

It belies the many challenges the 19-month-old has had to face during his short life and the many more still to come.

Maxson was born premature at just 28 weeks. He weighed only two pounds.

His mother, Meganne DeWitt, says troubles with the pregnancy started around 15 weeks when she experienced some bleeding. At 21 weeks, an ultrasound discovered her son had an echoic bowel that doctors believed was caused by ingesting blood, although they couldn’t find the source of the bleeding.

That was followed by a more in-depth ultrasound at Akron Children’s Hospital, where the baby measured very small.

“They diagnosed him as an IUGR (intrauterine growth restriction) baby,” says Meganne. “Basically, from that point on, I had ultrasounds starting every week. With IUGR, their survival rate is really low.”

What you should know about special needs trusts

Providing for the many needs of someone with a disability can be difficult, especially if that person receives government assistance like Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

One way to save money without jeopardizing those benefits is through Ohio’s STABLE account. However, it has a maximum annual contribution limit of $15,000.

Another option is a special needs trust (SNT). There are two potential types: First Party SNT where the assets are owned by the beneficiary with a disability and Third Party SNT, which has assets owned by someone other than the beneficiary.
A first party trust requires any money left in the trust after the beneficiary dies be paid to Medicaid in an amount equal to the amount of the Medicaid benefit the individual received. This payback is not required with a third party trust.

Fond farewell

The Richland County Board of Developmental Disabilities said goodbye in December to two long-time members.

Margaret Davis and Virginia Harmon finished their third consecutive four-year term – the maximum allowed for board members. The Mansfield residents both have children who receive supports from Richland Newhope.

“It’s been amazing,” said Davis. “I’ve learned a lot. I couldn’t ask to have been on a better board. It was more than a board; it was a family. I’m going to miss it.”

“It has been a nice experience,” said Harmon. “Having a child, an adult with developmental disabilities, it has kept me informed on all of the policies and things that are changing in the DD world. It was a pleasure to serve on the board, and I look forward to working with it in other capacities in the future.” During her tenure, Harmon served as board president, vice-president, and secretary. She also was a member of the board of trustees of the Ohio Association of County Boards of DD.

Offering Hope

(Editor’s Note: The following is part of a series of stories about the provider partners that work with Richland Newhope who offer services for people with developmental disabilities in Richland County.)
Two long-time local nurses have embarked on a new career supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.

Melody Pitts and Donna Goddard have more than 55 years of combined nursing experience.

The pair decided to retire from their jobs at two local home health care agencies and, in 2015, they started planning for a new agency that would serve individuals with developmental disabilities. On March 1, 2017, they launched The Hope (Helping Other People Excel) Homes.

“We worked together for like 15 years and we said, why not – we’re not too old to do this,” says Pitts. “I think we both really have a tender heart toward the individuals.”