Superintendent Update

I don’t think any of us could have predicted how drastically our lives both at work and home have changed over the past couple of weeks. For me at least it has felt more like months not weeks since the schools have all closed, recreational and sporting events have been postponed, churches are gathering virtually, restaurants are limited to take out only, zoom meetings and working from home have become a new norm, and we are self-quarantining as a nation.

Throughout this crisis the great team of employees throughout Richland Newhope have stepped in a big way to try to minimize the impact on the over 1,600 individuals we support. I can’t say enough about how proud I am of this entire team on how they have reacted throughout this very challenging situation.

Community Shout-outs!
Thank you to the following people/businesses that have stepped up to help us fill the needs of the providers throughout the county!

- Bethany Cetinich, Salon Sorellina – gloves, masks, and cleaning supplies
- Codi Jiscel Fisher, Salon Sorellina – gloves
- Richland Newhope Industries – gloves and disposable wipes
- Heidi Gerster Matney – homemade masks
- Iron Vault Distillery, LLC – hand sanitizer
- Riley Kemerling – cleaning supplies
- Galion Medical Supplies - gloves

We are truly #InThisTogether!

**Bowling event raises awareness**

Richland Newhope held their inaugural bowling event at Lex Lanes on March 4th to celebrate National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Every March, Newhope puts on different awareness activities throughout Richland County.

The focus for the event was 8th-grade students and Richland County elected officials. The students involved were students with a disability and students that were considered leaders of their class. Newhope mixed the students with a public official to create unified teams. Newhope gave out first-place awards and Gionino’s catered lunch.

When asked about the event, Commissioner Marilyn John stated, "We were very blessed to be included and it was an opportunity for us to see these students shine and to get to celebrate their abilities."

"We had a great turnout for the event to kick off Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Everyone had a great time and had the opportunity to bowl and interact with people that they might not have otherwise had a chance to connect with," said Superintendent Michele Giess.

**Increasing awareness in our community**

Twenty-four people representing businesses, schools, and agencies in Richland County on March 12 participated in the 19th Annual Community Awareness Day.
The purpose of Community Awareness Day is to increase knowledge and understanding of how people with developmental disabilities are supported in Richland County. More importantly, it serves an opportunity to highlight a person’s abilities and to show that people with disabilities can be valuable members of the community when given the opportunity.

During Community Awareness Day, participants first had an opportunity to learn how adaptive equipment can assist people with disabilities in the challenges they face daily. Then they were paired with hosts and taken to provider agencies, and into the community where individuals who receive county board supports are working or attend school.

Displays raise awareness
Richland Newhope had two displays in the community for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. There was an information table on the second floor of the main branch of the Mansfield-Richland County Public Library. There was various brochures and handouts related to supports for people with developmental disabilities. At the Richland Mall, we had a window display.

Also, we had five billboards throughout Richland County.

2019 Employee of the Year named
Richland Newhope’s 2019 Employee of the Year is described as being a wonderful mentor, steadfast, reliable, dedicated, and trustworthy.
Congratulations to Supervisor of Food Services Joyce Briggs! She has been employed at Raintree for the past nine years.

Director of Residential Jess Winans said Joyce knows how to get a quality job done. “She is always willing to do what it takes to accomplish the best service. She is the best cook and leads her team to make amazing meals for the men and women at Raintree.”

Jess also pointed out how much she appreciates Joyce. “We’ve had restructure changes and Joyce has taken it in stride, even though there have been several difficulties. She has an attitude of gratitude and she is thankful and positive.” Joyce says her job has been so rewarding and has taught her a lot of values.

“It makes me very proud to know and care for the individuals. I really love my job.”

Joyce’s advice for others in her profession is to be the best you can and love what you do.

---

**February Employee of the Month**

**Name:** Drew Johnson  
**Position:** Community Contracting Support Specialist  
**Employed since:** July 23, 2009  
**Nominators Comments:** He goes above and beyond his job duties regularly. He is a great team player and works well with IC’s, providers, and individuals and their families to ensure that those on his caseload get the services they need.  

**Employee of the Month Comments:** There are two things I like most about my job, my co-workers, and still being a team member for individuals after leaving direct care. I have been very fortunate in my time here to work closely with some great people, and that has really made it an enjoyable ten years.

---

**March Employee of the Month**
Name: Lesa Dumas
Position: Administrative Assistant
Employed Since: August 20, 2009
Nominators Comments: She consistently exemplifies being a dedicated employee. She is dedicated to the agency and if often volunteering at events. She enjoys supporting staff and those we serve. She believes in the mission of the agency and knows the benefits of the programs provided.

Employee of the Month Comments: I am very humbled and honored to be chosen as Employee of the Month again. There are just so many outstanding employees employed by Richland Newhope. I am happy if I am making an impact on someone’s life that they took the time to recognize me.

April Employee of the Month

Name: Geneva Amstutz
Position: Direct Support Professional
Employed Since: October 25, 2012
Nominators Comments: I enjoy it when I have the opportunity to work with her because she definitely has the teamwork philosophy. She makes herself available to help with outings for the individuals and probably has as much fun as the individuals. You see, she understands our individuals because she grew up in a household with special needs. That’s why she is such a fantastic example of a DSP.

Employee of the Month Comments: It means the world to me being selected as Employee of the Month. I work with amazing people, and knowing that they appreciate me and what I do makes it that much better. The best part of my job is being a part of the individuals’ lives.