Hard work pays off

(Editor's note: October is Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is “Inclusion Drives Innovation.”)

There are many benefits to having a job.

Besides the obvious – earning a salary – being employed gives you self-respect and dignity. It can change a life.

Caitlin Fisher hasn’t let her developmental disability stop her from landing a job that she likes.

The 23-year-old Madison Comprehensive High School graduate started exploring career opportunities in 2013 when she enrolled in Project SEARCH – a one-year, school-to-work transition program for youth with disabilities. She was assigned to the North Central State/Ohio State-Mansfield campus.
“A developmental and now a sentimental journey “
By Carla Rumas, director of Educational Services and Therapy

Editor’s Note: As county boards of developmental disabilities celebrate 50 years, we reflect on the many changes in both programming and attitudes that have happened during that time. We asked Carla Rumas to share her personal observations.

The beginning - In 1970, I had just graduated from college and was preparing to go into physical therapy school at The Ohio State University that fall. I was looking for a job that might be related to my future career and was led to the Columbus State Institute (CSI). They had an opening for an aide in the Therapy Department. I had no clue that this was going to be an eye-opening summer and the field where I would later spend much of my career.

So I started in May 1970 as an aide helping individuals who lived at CSI (now Columbus Developmental Center or CDC) by bringing individuals across campus in their wheelchairs to therapy. On special days the therapy was in a large therapy pool. I loved working with the individuals that received therapy activities that summer. One really bright young man, who was trapped in a body with limbs contracted by the effects of cerebral palsy since birth, even asked me to marry him! I promised to keep in touch after I returned to college. I learned later that, as a result of the deinstitutionalization process, he ended up in the Toledo area where his parents were from.

‘Foster’ mom

(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.)

A few years ago Tammy Staton was working a 9-to-5 job, wishing that she could spend more time with her three grandchildren but still be able to help her household financially.

That’s when she met a woman who was working as an independent provider to three women with developmental disabilities.
“She says they go to their day hab or job or whatever during the day, which gives me some space, and then they’re home with us in the evenings, weekends, and holidays. And, I’m like – I need to learn more about this,” says Tammy.

That was November 2014. By February 2015 she was a certified independent provider. Within five months, Vicky – an individual in her early 60s who needed residential supports – moved in.

“She sat down next to me, looked up at me and said ‘can I please come live with you,” Tammy recalls.

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**Giving back to the community**

The pavilion at Liberty Park in Mansfield is all spruced up thanks to Boy Scout Troop 123.

Members of the troop cleaned and painted the lower half of the pavilion as part of a requirement for the Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge.

Assistant Scoutmaster Peter Lehman said they broke it down into two sessions on the weekend of Sept. 9 and 10. Saturday afternoon they cleaned and Sunday they painted all of the picnic tables and inside the lower half of the pavilion and they finished on Saturday, Oct. 7.

“The scouts and leadership were very tired, and it was well earned after the weekend renovations at the park,” says Peter.
Individuals and staff from Richland Newhope Industries, Inc. and Richland Newhope/Richland County Board of DD teamed up for a game of softball on Aug. 29 at Sterkel Park. The rain cut it short and they had to finish the game on Sept. 5. The annual game is a fundraiser for People First, a self-advocates group. Money raised helps cover the cost for some members to attend conferences or to bring in speakers for monthly meetings.