

# Board Update

Mental Health & Recovery Services (MHRS) Board  
Serving Coshocton, Guemsey, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble & Perry Counties  
1500 Coal Run Road, Zanesville, Ohio 43701  
Phone: 740-454-8557

Regular Board Meeting  
Highlights  
April 13, 2023

## *Therapy Dogs are “Paws”itively Effective!*



Partners Workgroup Chair Randi Earnest reported to the full Board about the positive impacts of having “Blu” the therapy dog in classrooms at John McIntire Elementary School, as presented by Assistant Principal Erin Omen.

Staff and students are faced with many daily challenges, where students often experience overwhelming feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. A 2019 study published by the National

Institute of Health found that a dog’s presence in the classroom promotes a positive mood and provides significant anti-stress effects on the body for both students and teachers.

Just a few of the ways Blu helps:

**Reading Buddy:** Therapy dogs listen unconditionally, never correcting or criticizing the material being read. Therapy dogs are non-judgmental; therefore, they are non-threatening to the child and can help build confidence.

**Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support:** Blu goes into classrooms with Mrs. Omen to assist with character education. The school has a word they focus on each month – such as ‘kindness,’ ‘cooperation,’ and ‘integrity.’ Students earn McIntire Money for following school rules. They then can cash in their money to spend extra time with Blu (*i.e., during lunch – see above picture*).

**Behavior Assistance:** Students assist Mrs. Omen in taking the therapy dog for a walk before a full-blown ‘meltdown’ occurs. Students like being in control of the therapy dog and then become ‘in control’ of their own actions more quickly

**Stress Relief:** Studies show that petting a dog actually lowers blood pressure (teachers can benefit, too!). Interacting with pets may help ease depression, and students with school anxiety may benefit from time with the dog.

**Emotional Needs:** Therapy dogs sense emotional needs and, along with their handlers, model a healthy and respectful relationship between humans and animals.

As one 6<sup>th</sup> Grade student noted, “Having a dog around to play with and pet when you are down makes you happy.”

(The MHRS Board purchased Blu and paid for required training.)

**Executive Director**  
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Dan Scheerer, M.D.

Wendy Starlin

Ben Taylor

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William Johnson

**Board Vice President**

Sue Hoover

**The mission of the  
MHRS Board is to  
facilitate a Recovery-  
Oriented System of Care  
that promotes mental  
health and supports the  
recovery of each person  
who needs services for  
mental illness and/or  
addiction.**

## FinancialMatters

Under the guidance of Finance/Audit Committee Chair Dr. Dan Scheerer, board members reviewed and approved the March 2023 Reconciliation Report that shows deposits, checks written for MHRS Board operations, payments to in-network contract service providers and out-of-network community partners, and journal entries.

Below is a breakdown of March payments for the provision of treatment and support services for persons with mental illness and/or addictions:

<i>Accounts Payable</i>	<i>In-Network Providers</i>	<i>Out-of-Network Partners</i>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>March 13, 2023</b>	<b>\$260,163.56</b>	<b>\$67,483.40</b>	<b>\$327,646.96</b>
<b>March 27, 2023</b>	<b>\$223,456.22</b>	<b>\$117,956.23</b>	<b>\$341,412.45</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$483,619.78</b>	<b>\$185,439.63</b>	<b>\$669,059.41</b>

Board members also addressed:

- ▶ **Other March Financial Reports:** Members reviewed: 1) Contract Service Expenses; 2) Balance Sheet as of March 31, 2023; 3) Network Funding Reserves; 4) a ‘Year-to-Date’ Status Report for the MHRS Board’s CY 2023 Operating Budget; and 5) a Dashboard Report that provides a high-level overview of key fiscal indicators.
- ▶ **Funding Allocations to In-Network Contract Providers:** Approved tentative FY 2024 funding allocations for contract service providers – totaling **\$9,978,008**.
- ▶ **Special Allocation to Foodworks Alliance:** Approved a special allocation of **\$39,020.00** to the Foodworks Alliance to support their “Recovery with a Purpose” program that offers training to women in addiction recovery in the areas of food preparation and the management of a food operation. Food prepared by the women is then delivered to local food kitchens like Trulight Ministries, the Salvation Army, and Christ’s Table. Foodworks Director Amy Aurore notes how wonderful it is to watch the women take the necessary steps to rebuild their lives. Within the 12 weeks of the program, the women often achieve great heights – getting their licenses and cars back, obtaining independent housing, and regaining partial or full custody of their children.
- ▶ **Special Allocation to the Noble County Sheriff’s Office:** Approved a special allocation of **\$50,000.00** to the Noble County Sheriff’s Office for the replacement of a cruiser to continue their practice of transporting clients to needed State Hospital care or other higher levels of inpatient care.
- ▶ **MHRS Board Executive Director Approval of Special Allocations under \$20,000:**
  - ◆ **Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center (MVESC):** Approved the allocation of **\$5,000.00** to MVESC for the training of a therapy dog that will be based at the ALPHA School in Perry County. The ALPHA School is a results-oriented program to rehabilitate students in Perry County who are involved with Juvenile Court. The ultimate goal of the program is to help students make positive changes and adjustments in the school environment and the community.
  - ◆ **Zanesville City Schools:** Approved the allocation of **\$10,000.00** to Zanesville City Schools for the purchase and training of a therapy dog to be based at Zanesville High School.
  - ◆ **New Lexington Police Department:** Approved a special allocation of **\$4,050.00** to the New Lexington Police Department to support an equine-assisted learning program to help at-risk youth develop essential ‘life skills’ through working with horses. The funds will be used to send a criminal justice professional to a special equine-assisted learning program in Arizona. The “Horse Power Program” is under the direction of Perry County Juvenile Court. Juvenile Court Judge Luann Cooperrider notes: “*The transformation of these young kids as they work with animals is remarkable.*”



## ***First Meeting of the Coshocton County Criminal Justice Collaborative***

The newly-formed Coshocton County Criminal Justice Collaborative met on April 4, with a goal of improving communication among agencies about issues related to criminal justice, mental illness, and addictions. The meeting was attended by over 50 individuals!

Speakers included: ▪ Coshocton County Sheriff James Crawford, who talked about the new Coshocton Justice Center; ▪ the MHRS Board’s Misty Cromwell, Karl Hoop, and Jamie McGrew, who spoke about Guardianship Boards, the SCOPE Drug Prevention Outreach Grant, the Crisis Stabilization Unit for Kids, Naloxone Lock Boxes, and an Ohio State Highway Patrol pilot outreach program; ▪ Magistrate Christie Thornsley, who spoke about the Coshocton Corrections Board and the group’s goal of establishing some Re-Entry Programming to assist inmates in returning to their communities; ▪ Juvenile Court representatives Doug Schonauer, Leondra Davis, and Heather Newell, who talked about the development of a Community Family Resource Center.

Juvenile Court Director Doug Schonauer made a general observation: *“Communication is the key. There’s been so many changes in mental health and growth in the system for the past few years; it’s just ever-changing. The more forums that can be held to educate and bring everybody up to speed just improves the local process.”*

## ***Annual Legislative Day – March 29***

This year’s outreach to legislators was co-sponsored by the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation, and NAMI Ohio. Joining Misty in making the rounds of 10 legislative meetings were: Board President William Johnson, NAMI Six County Director Bonnie Burns, and MHRS Board staff members Karl Hoop and Jamie McGrew. (Pictured to the right are William Johnson and State Senator Frank Hoagland.) The advocacy meetings were very positive – with our delegation sharing information about OhioMHAS’s SFY 2024-2025 Behavioral Health Budget Priorities to: 1) ensure access to crisis hotlines; 2) build out the state’s crisis continuum; 3) increase access to person-centered care; 4) promote housing and recovery services; 5) strengthen prevention activities and services – with a focus on suicide prevention; and 6) investments in the continuum of care line item to fund local MHRS Board services/supports—with funds flowing through MHRS Boards.



## Naloxone Lock Box Deliveries



In response to last month's alert from Zanesville City Schools about student body use of vape pens contaminated with fentanyl, MHRS Board staff (led by Karl Hoop) delivered 72 Naloxone Lock Boxes to Zanesville City Schools, Philo Junior High School, Maysville Local Schools, and Foxfire School. Ongoing efforts are being made to encourage other schools to approve the installation of the boxes.

## May Is Mental Health Month

Since 1949, Mental Health America has observed 'May Is Mental Health Month' by spreading the word that mental health is something everyone should care about. It's a time to share information and resources, so the MHRS Board's network of care is sponsoring:



► **Color Waddle:** The Muskingum County Suicide Prevention Coalition, in collaboration with Drug-Free Muskingum and NAMI Six County, will host a 'Color Waddle' on May 20 – 9a at the Collegial Walking Trail on the OUZ Campus. The event will also include the sharing of local mental health and addiction recovery resources. There is a \$10 participation fee, with proceeds being split between the above three entities for programming and the continuation of community outreach. (Flyer to the left).

► **"Brew Matter" Events:** On May 10, the Guernsey/Noble Suicide Prevention Coalition will be hosting pop-up "Brew Matter" events at coffee shops in both counties. Volunteers will be writing positive

messages on coffee sleeves with the Crisis Text Line information on them.

**Billboards:** The MHRS Board will be installing in each service area county billboards with the overall message: "How Much Support Do You Need?"



## Health Equity Reflection



Isn't kindness enough? You can be kind and still uphold systems of oppression. You can be kind and still think someone lacks intelligence because of how they speak. You can be kind and pass on a qualified minority candidate because of 'culture fit.' You can be kind and pay women less money for equal work. You can be kind and still think a disabled person is less valuable because of their disability. So no, kindness is not enough. Kindness should be the bare minimum we expect from each other. If we as a society are striving for kindness, rather than equity, then we are in a sad state of affairs. We should be kind, but kindness does not move us to change the systems that present disadvantages to some people. Kindness is personally mitigated — disparities and inequities are structural issues. Be more than kind."

**Board Member Comment on Meeting Evaluation Form:** *"This 'kinder-reminder' that kindness is not enough was great to read. It makes you think and be very intentional with how you treat others."*

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### Board Member Spotlight – Wendy Starlin



Wendy has been working in the behavioral health field for 24 years. She has an Associate Degree in Human Services and Corrections, a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and Master's in Social Work. She is an LISW-S and LICDC. She currently works full-time as a Behavioral Health Consultant in a Primary Care Office with Hopewell Health Centers and part-time as an outpatient therapist at a domestic violence shelter. Wendy is an active treatment team member of the Perry County Drug Court, serves on the Suicide Prevention Coalition and Drug Prevention Coalition, is piloting a healthy steps program for children 0-3 for early intervention, and works closely with Ohio University and Hocking College doing presentations about sexual assault and intimate partner violence prevention.

Wendy grew up as an Army brat, born in another country and moving all over the world until she was 16—when she returned to Ohio. She has an appreciation for cultural diversity and the life experiences that shaped her. She is proud to be from Perry County and loves her community.

Wendy has a large extended family, as her father had 15 brothers and sisters. She has three cherished brothers and three sisters-in-law and many nieces and nephews. Wendy has been married for 25 years and has two daughters. One of her daughters is an officer in the military and is in her last semester of grad school for Social Work to become a trauma therapist for the military. The other is a senior in high school and plans to take massage therapy in college. Wendy also has dogs that she considers family—a golden retriever, a Burmese mountain dog puppy, and a miniature schnauzer. The schnauzer runs the house; she is queen.