



SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

## HIGHLIGHTS



Campers and Staff at RTA

### Summer Youth Boot Camp “Building Soft Skills for Employment”

The Greene and Montgomery County Boards of Developmental Disabilities partnered this summer to hold a Boot Camp for youth with disabilities. Montgomery County has held the Boot Camp for the past four years and this is the first year the two counties partnered to serve a larger segment of the disability population.

Evidence has shown that individuals with disabilities struggle to enter the workforce compared to their non-disabled peers, so the focus of the camp was to expose youth to a variety of topics related to employment and to build the soft skills needed to succeed.

The Boot Camp ran for eight weeks, from June 6<sup>th</sup> through July 29<sup>th</sup>, and youth ages 14-22 participated. The camp was held at the Miami Valley Regional Center. The campers experienced a variety of tours and guest speakers that helped them form an idea of what type of job they would like to pursue when they enter the workforce. In addition to tours and speakers, the campers also volunteered at 4 Paws for Ability in Xenia, Wayne High School in Huber Heights, the Foodbank in Dayton, and the Habitat for Humanity ReStore.

Jordan Haiges, a camper from Vandalia, said, “Boot Camp taught me to be brave. It was great! When we went to the puppy house (4 Paws), I was able to give the puppies something to chew on, so they wouldn’t chew on me.” Debra Williamson, a Greene County parent, stated, “The Job Boot Camp jump-started the transition to work process for my son, Alex. The job coaches’ positive communication, and the skill building experiences at 4 Paws and the Dayton Foodbank provided structured work environments, and allowed participants to enhance their soft skill development. Further, the camp made navigating the real work world a fun and exciting experience, one that built in success and opportunities for growth. The choices given to participants always reached toward independence, whether that was learning to get on and off the RTA busses, suiting up for work in the produce section at Kroger, or deciding how to spend lunch money at work. All these experiences provided a rich environment that helped my son embrace going to work, and gave him strong initiative to make that transition.”

Kathy Kleiser, the transition coordinator for the Greene County Board of Developmental Disabilities said, “We could not have pulled off this Boot Camp without the all the businesses and individuals within our communities that volunteered their time and opened their doors to our Campers.” These businesses include Greene CATS, RTA, Kroger in Xenia, the Xenia Highway Patrol Outpost, Strong Tower Media, Xenia Shoe and Leather, Blue Jacket Books, One Bistro, Jamie’s Tire Service, Xenia Police Department, Xenia Post Office, Greene County Ohio Means Jobs, Clothes that Work, Young’s Dairy, Jim Arquilla, Robyn Carter,

the Dayton Fire Department Station 14, Goodwill, MONCO Booth at Webster Street Market, and Miami Valley Hospital South.

Andrea Harker, School to Work employment specialist with Montgomery County Board of Developmental Disabilities has been involved with this camp for three years. Andrea said, “I am so pleased with how this camp has evolved over the years, and how successful the outcomes have been for our campers. I have seen campers come back for two or three summers, and am amazed at the growth I see.” She also felt that collaborating with Greene County Developmental Disabilities this summer made the camp even richer. “We can’t wait for next year’s Boot Camp!”, she said.

Information about the 2017 Boot Camp will be shared with the schools in March of 2017. If a parents in Greene County would like more information, they can contact Kathy Kleiser at [kkleiser@co.greene.oh.us](mailto:kkleiser@co.greene.oh.us). Parents in Montgomery County can contact Andrea Harker at [aharker@mcdbdds.org](mailto:aharker@mcdbdds.org).