

HATTIE



LARLHAM

Empowering All Abilities

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# FOCUS

a Hattie Larlham publication | 2023

This edition of FOCUS highlights the important work that happens daily at Hattie Larlham and the incredible team of employees who go above and beyond in service of people with disabilities- just as our founder envisioned. We continue Mrs. Larlham's 60+ year legacy through our commitment to creating meaningful opportunities to thrive. From nursing and direct care to adult day support and employment services, our employees make an immeasurable impact every day, and we couldn't do it without your support.



*We are* **HATTIE LARLHAM**

# CENTERING family

Whether born or made, family is the cornerstone of a happy, fulfilled life and there's no shortage of that joy at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities.

Located in Mantua, OH, on the same property that our founder, Hattie Gadd Larlham, first began caring for infants in-need in her family farmhouse, the Hattie Larlham Center is a beacon of hope and a haven of comfort for 124 residents and their loved ones. With a committed focus on holistic care, more than 200 employees at the Center work together to provide the very best medical care in harmony with educational and enrichment programming, occupational, physical, massage, and speech therapy services, personal care and that extra something special that makes us more like family than anything else.



**"We have the best nurses; they truly have the heart of Hattie."**

Melanie Smith, RN Nurse Manager

"The care is not just healthcare. It's holistic. It's the whole body, top to bottom. I don't ever want to focus on just one thing, I want to take care of the whole being," explained Nurse Manager Melanie Smith. "The people we work with deserve care just like you or I

do," she continued. "We have the best nurses. They go above and beyond. They truly have the heart of Hattie. We talk a lot about that here. She had a passion for people with disabilities and seeing that lived out on the floor is something I think everyone should witness because it's beautiful."

As an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), Hattie Larlham is honored to serve our most medically fragile residents at the Center. Our focus has always been creating the best opportunities to help each individual thrive in whatever ways are most impactful for them. **With tailored programming and individualized case management, families are comforted to know that our staff treats their loved ones with the same care we would give to our own families.**

In addition to our medical care team, Hattie Larlham relies on the compassion of Direct Support Professionals to deliver the daily living care and support that each resident needs. Beyond the routines of meal times and hygienic care, DSPs pride themselves on the close bonds they establish with the people in their care. It takes that special kind of devotion to truly learn someone's likes and dislikes, how they act when they're perfectly content and what they might do if they aren't feeling quite right.

Having only joined the Hattie Larlham team this past summer, Blake Winters may be new to the Center, but she has quickly become attached to her role and the proud feeling of



Rebecca Toman shares a moment with daughter Sephora as she recounts their experiences at Hattie Larlham.

making a difference. **"I think the best part of my job is learning everyone's emotions and how they communicate. I know their favorite things and what makes them laugh. I love building those bonds,"** she shared. "It's so great every day getting up and WANTING to go to work. Even though I'm so new- fresh out of training- everyone makes me feel needed and valuable. It's just great and I can't wait to grow and evolve here."



**"I know their favorite things and what makes them laugh."**

Blake Winters, DSP

Blake shares her passion for service with her fellow DSPs, whose sole focus is ensuring the best quality of life for residents and acting as advocates and caregivers when their own loved ones aren't there.

When asked how her family came to the decision to make a home at the Center for her daughter Sephora nearly 25 years ago, Rebecca Toman replied easily, "Even though I'm a nurse myself, I was basically running an intensive care unit out of my home. **The more that we learned about Hattie Larlham, the more we felt that it would be the best fit for me to be the best mom for all four of my children.** And it has certainly proved to be."

Rebecca explained that it is that family-like care that reinforces her decision every day. As a nurse, she knows excellent medical care when she sees it, but the "extras" are what separate the Center as home rather than a hospital. **"It was Hattie's mission for these kids to live a life of play and of joy. It truly comes to life here.** One of my favorite things is Sephora getting on her bike. That's her playfulness, her joy. I love that she has that."

Rebecca went on to share that she and her family are very frequent visitors at the Center and are always made to feel welcome. "I know all the staff and I know that they're my eyes and my ears and my arms when I'm not there. I never ever have to worry."



**“One of my favorite things is Sephora getting on her bike. That’s her playfulness, her joy. I love that she has that.”**



Rebecca Toman recounts her gratitude for the Hattie Larlham Center being the perfect home for daughter Sephora, pictured.



**“This is my first part-time job and I would love to keep doing it, keep working with Hattie Larlham.”**

# WORKING *together*

Kurtis Holcomb pauses to share a smile as he assembles shipping boxes during his shift at Essendant.

As a main tenet of our mission, Hattie Larlham places great value in creating opportunities to achieve for people with disabilities. Many of the people we serve find that sense of achievement through our Employment Services programs and take great pride in reaching their goals and claiming their part in the workforce.

**“The work training programs provide fulfilment for a lot of the individuals we serve,”** explained Matt Mino, the Assistant Director of Employment Services at Hattie Larlham. “We all like feeling like we’re part of something bigger. Here, they get to be part of a team.”

Understanding that each person’s journey to employment is different, Hattie Larlham meets everyone where they are with an individualized plan designed to establish and build skills, boost confidence, and encourage independence. From 1:1 services that directly connect job-seekers with disabilities to community employment, to youth-based career exploration programs and enterprise and integrated line work training programs, Hattie Larlham offers something for everyone looking to take that first- or next- step on their journey.

In his position, Matt oversees all of the services and programs dedicated to employment and work training. Included within those is Hattie’s Doggie Day Care & Boarding, an enterprise work training program that functions as a fully operational, public-facing business, but also serves as a work training program for adults with disabilities. Supervised and aided by a team of job coaches and management staff, the trainees at Doggie Day Care are taught transferable job skills with a progressive load of responsibilities and work tasks. Once

they’re ready, trainees graduate the training program and are able to work with a Hattie Larlham Employment Specialist to seek community employment.

Kurtis Holcomb has been a trainee in the integrated line program at Essendant for five years and is a shining example of the personal and professional skill development that this program fosters.

In addition to these services, the integrated line work training programs are a cornerstone in the employment program offerings. Functioning through a partnership with local companies, these programs bridge the gap between provider-based programming and community employment.

“The work training program is amazing! It helps me do my work, helps me work with people. It helps me communicate with other people. It helped me go to other places; I’ve never done that before. I’ve become more independent and managing my money!”

**“We all like feeling like we’re a part of something bigger.”**

With two integrated line partnerships currently in operation, Hattie Larlham is focused on building and expanding the program to bring more companies into the fold to share in the reward of creating an inclusive workforce where people are encouraged to achieve.

Kurtis said with his trademark infectious enthusiasm. “Without Hattie Larlham, I don’t think I would go out, like every week. I wouldn’t work on my social skills; I’d just stay home every day. Like I said, it’s so amazing. I recommend it to everyone!”

## Strength in Partnerships

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are now common buzzwords in the employment landscape discourse but, for Hattie Larlham and our dedicated partners at Essendant, the phrase carries significant weight.

More than six years ago, the Hattie Larlham work training program embarked on a partnership with Essendant that, over the years, has become the gold standard of successful DEI practices and the universal benefit they yield.

Garrett Rosiek, Essendant Regional Continuous Improvement Manager, said, "This partnership has evolved. It really drives us to have a workplace for ALL associates to feel welcomed and engaged so that they're a true member of the team."

Frankie Klaus is an excellent example of the success of this program and the benefits of believing in people and having

a *yes* mindset. Frankie began his time at Essendant in the work training program at Hattie Larlham. He was a fast learner and soon became a top performer among the trainees. As his comfort level grew, he became a mentor in his own right, always the first to welcome new trainees and provide thorough facility tours and careful, hands-on demonstrations of safe on-the-job practices.

Frankie's talents and commitment to his work didn't go unnoticed. This summer, Frankie was offered part-time employment as a member of the custodial staff at Essendant. Now, Frankie's safety stats are some of the highest among his colleagues and he's established himself as a reliable and capable member of the team.

## Honor in Commitment

This fall, Essendant was honored with the Brighter Futures award at Hattie Larlham's annual Bright & Blue Gala. Frankie and his family were welcomed to the event as

**"They help disability people on the job so that they can go on, like I did, to be a real employee."**



Frankie proudly drives his Taylor-Dunn through warehouse, showing off the custom paint job his co-workers did in honor of his hiring.

guests of honor and Frankie's acceptance speech on behalf of Essendant garnered a well-deserved ovation from the audience that evening.

"As leaders, we have to be able to tap into people and to see what allows them to reach their full potential. So it's not just patience and empathy, but learning how to motivate people," Garrett expanded on his perspective on Essendant's partnership with Hattie Larlham and the bigger picture that it completes, outside of the function of work training. **"It may have started with the way we approached Frankie's situation, but now it's a core piece of how we handle all associates, disability or not."**

Garret went on to share that for him, and for the leadership at Essendant, it isn't enough to just talk the talk when it comes to inclusion practices. "I think for us, if our values are saying it, we now have to walk the walk. Our attitude is 'We commit to you and we're going to give you shot.' We're living our mission and our guiding principles. When you do this inclusion work, you have to have everyone aligned. It's

not just one function. It's your operations. It's your HR and your marketing, your talent acquisition, we all play a role. It's us as a business, being open to working with a nonprofit who does great work in the community, but also all the work they do in support of us."

For Garret and his colleagues at Essendant, "giving you a shot," means providing the tools and opportunities necessary to create an equitable experience for everyone. Beyond the support that Frankie received from his Hattie Larlham job coach as a trainee, he established what are known as natural supports, Natural supports are organic but intentional workplace relationships that create a safe space for someone to ask questions and seek guidance outside of the hierarchy of management while on the job.

## The Future of Work

Garret concluded by sharing his pitch for other organizations considering a similar partnership. "Companies need to understand that this is a value add that you can't quantify, but it pays dividends, not just with Frankie's performance, but for the people who are natural supports who are now saying 'hey, we want more associates like Frankie in the workplace.' I think, initially, there's this fear, this assumption that people with disabilities *can't*. At the end of the day, that's just untrue. There's no cost, you're giving back to the community, and you're giving someone a shot. **When you create that opportunity and you realize that they are capable, your unconscious bias is shattered. Then there's opportunity for growth. This is the future of work."**

Giving a wave from the Essendant warehouse, from left: Matt (trainee), Emily Garner (HL), Matt Mino (HL), Frankie Klaus (Essendant), John Houston (Essendant), Garret Rosiek (Essendant), Dan Elko (Essendant), Maggie Wooten (HL), Kurtis Holcomb (trainee), Angela Norvell (HL)



Stark  
Summit  
Cuyahoga  
Medina  
Portage  
Franklin



# THRIVING *at home*

To meet the needs of the adults with disabilities we serve, Hattie Larlham is proud to offer a wide array of community-based group living homes throughout Ohio. From the five Intermediate Care Facility homes in Summit and Cuyahoga counties that offer a high level of medical and daily care to each home's eight residents, to the Supported Living, Licensed, and Waiver-Funded homes throughout Ohio that offer daily staff support in a more



independent setting, the residential offerings at Hattie Larlham are designed to meet a variety of needs.

## Choice Matters

"Everyone that lives in one of our homes has the opportunity to choose their roommates. Some of them are very picky- as I probably would be, too- and they go through meet and greets, overnights, and weekend visits to really establish common interests and evaluate compatibility," explains Jennifer Sleeper, Vice President of Residential Services in Central Ohio. "Choice is important for everyone. We've had people who have come from really restrictive living environments to (coming here) and

"My favorite thing to do is coming to the homes and just talking with people. And it's nice to see them getting out into the community and having all these opportunities that I know they didn't have even five or ten years ago."

**Jennifer Sleeper**  
Vice President, Central Ohio Residential Services



But I hope I'll be able to go out into the community more often. One person to recognize is Sleeper (Jen) and Schubert (Jen). They're the ones who cheer me on." David F. added that one of his favorite parts about Addventures is the relationships he's built. "It's an adventure where you get up in the morning and you go out into the world and you accomplish something. Meeting new people. It's where you build family relationships."

having a nice home, getting jobs, and living more independently. It totally changes their lives." David Toops and David Folds are proof positive that the element of choice can make a world of difference. Roommates since 2017, the Davids thrive together at home and in the community. Their senses of humor and love of music complement their dynamic and laid the foundation for what has become a friendship that more closely resembles a familial bond.

## Support Matters

When asked what he enjoys doing during his time spent at Hattie Larlham's Adult Day program, Addventures, David T. quickly replied, "Bowling! Because I want to beat people," which earned a hearty laugh from David F. and Direct Support Professional Gifty Sarfo, who was nominated as an Employee of the Year in 2021. David T. went on to say that he's recently had some health issues that have limited his ability to go out as much as he would like but that he's very appreciative of the encouragement he receives from his staff. "After the injury on my foot, people like Melissa and Maureen got me through it," he said. "I haven't been able to go out as much as I would like.

## Connection Matters

Of a like mind in more ways than one, David S. was also quick to point out the family-like environment at home. He spoke at length about how much he values the care each staff person puts into their work and how they treat him and his roommate with respect and genuine compassion. "It goes back to family, The camaraderie, and the relationships we've built. I can remember when Gifty first started. And I loved Gifty from the very beginning. He said that the atmosphere in the home is comforting and that he feels a deep connection not only with David, but with everyone who works with them. "You walk in (and) you're amongst family and friends. There's really no other way to say it."

# EXPLORING *together*

During the day, David and Willie attend Hattie Larlham's adult day program, **Constant Companions**, where they look forward to trips to their favorite local spots. On weekdays, they'll board the van that's stationed at their group home to take the short commute to Constant Companions. After some on-site activities and lunch, they'll re-board one of Hattie Larlham's wheelchair-accessible buses to join their friends on a trip to Target or to their favorite nearby metro park. When they arrive back home in the afternoon, they might decide they need to go to the grocery store for movie night snacks or to a dentist appointment across town. And it is because our transportation department, led by Frank Cowans, works diligently behind the scenes that all of these experiences are possible.

communities while also finding satisfaction knowing that their integration serves the greater good of each community, making it stronger and more accepting for everyone.

David's and Willie's experiences are only two of the many that represent how critical transportation is to living a healthy and fulfilled life. In addition to their peers at the Bedford Heights location of Constant Companions, Hattie Larlham serves approximately 40 additional day program participants at each of the other five Constant Companions locations in Northeast Ohio, as well as another 77 at Addventures, our adult day program in the Columbus market.

**"My team's role as the transportation department is part of the greater picture in allowing people with disabilities to be fully integrated in the community,"** Frank explained, going on to share that he feels that his role has double the benefit, allowing him to help the people Hattie Larlham serves remain involved in their



**"Our goal is always to provide safe, reliable, and available transportation."**

FRANK COWANS  
Transportation Manager



Cuyahoga  
Franklin  
Summit

A Constant Companions participant arrives for a day of activities and an outing to the local park for some reading time.

Hattie Larlham connects people with disabilities to their communities and our transportation fleet makes it possible.



Roommates and best friends David and Willie are always excited to take a community trip with the friends from Constant Companions.

**"Community integration is a huge part of Hattie Larlham, and it's also a huge part of the day programs,"** shared Nicole Long, LPN. Nicole is currently the program manager of the Constant Companions location in Stow but has held several different roles within our residential programming as well through her 20-year career at Hattie Larlham.

Nicole went on to say that her program participants enjoy giving back to their communities in big and small ways. "Doing things that help our community truly view us as members has been a focus for the past ten years and I feel like we've really made a difference there." Whether it's hosting a canned food drive and delivering to the local food bank or baking holiday treats for first responders for an afternoon trip to the firehouse or police station, these activities not only create an opportunity to connect and explore within

the community, but also allow participants to give back and make an impact for the greater good.

In addition to the high volume of trips taken by adult day programs, Hattie Larlham serves residents of 70+ group homes throughout the state and 124 residents at the Center. **All combined, the result is an extensive population of children and adults who rely on Hattie Larlham for leisure and recreation programming, residential and medical care, and a host of wraparound services that are delivered with the support of reliable transportation.** Hattie Larlham takes great care to eliminate the transportation barrier for the people we serve, ensuring access to all of life's exciting- and mundane- activities that might otherwise be unavailable to them.



# Miles of Impact

Support from corporate and community partners helped create countless opportunities to thrive at Hattie Larlham in 2023.



**120+** Sponsors

**250+** In-Kind Gifts

**650+** Donations  
doubled by partner matches **2x** the impact!

**\$510,000+** raised  
Signature Events & Five Dollar Friday



Watch us go the distance *together!*

**1,600+** individuals served statewide

## Residential Support

- 5** Intermediate Care Facility homes
- 11** counties served
- 22** Shared Living households
- 70+** Supported Living & Licensed Homes
- 300+** residents *supported*



## Center for Children

**124** residents *thriving* in Portage County



## Adult Day Support & Recreation

- 3** counties served
- 7** day program locations
- 600+** adventurers *exploring*



## Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center

**100+** students *learning* in Franklin County



## Employment Services

- 6** counties served
- 70+** Doggie Day Care and integrated line trainees empowered
- 360+** Job seekers *achieving*



# A little good goes a long way on **FIVE DOLLAR FRIDAY!**

Join us on the last Friday of every month as we rally our communities to make an exceptional impact on **#FiveDollarFriday!**



No donation is too big or too small and our donors, community partners, and corporate sponsors have proven it! In 2023, our Five Dollar Friday campaign raised over \$51,000 and we can't wait to shine even **BRIGHTER TOGETHER** in 2024.

[hattielarlham.org/FiveDollarFriday](https://hattielarlham.org/FiveDollarFriday)

**Make an even BIGGER impact & join the fun as a #FiveDollarFriday corporate partner!**

Whether it's through a donation match challenge, fun giveaways, or exciting prize raffles, corporate and community partners make an even bigger impact on Five Dollar Friday. These partnerships not only help raise critical funds for Hattie Larlham, but also allow us the opportunity to promote the companies and individuals in our communities who go that extra step in support of our mission.

Contact Mary Horoszko, Chief Development Officer, to get started: [Mary.Horoszko@hattielarlham.org](mailto:Mary.Horoszko@hattielarlham.org)

## *Special thanks* to our 2023 partners!

Kinetico • Cleveland Monsters • Peace, Love & Little Donuts • Cleveland 20/30 Club • Bonefish Grill • Tito's the Hattie Larlham Boards of Directors • Kendra Scott • Miller's • Akron Rubber Ducks • Starbucks • Meyer Fund RG Barber Consultants • Stan and Ellen Majkrzak • Dickinson & Associates Insurance • Lakeside Sand & Gravel

**ABOUT THE AGENCY:** Hattie Larlham is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities, advancing the community and influencing change for 1,600 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Your contributions allow Hattie Larlham to provide medical, recreational, work training and residential services to children and adults with developmental disabilities in Northeast and Central Ohio.

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