

News Release

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Contact: Billie Jo David, Director of Communications
County of Summit Developmental Disabilities Board
216-509-4005 or bdavid@summitdd.org

Summit DD Grant Supports Local Disability Professionals Through Crisis

(Tallmadge, Ohio) – In an effort to support direct support professionals and front-line supervisors amid the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, Summit DD created a grant opportunity in April to help local disability agencies in Summit County.

A total of \$100,000 was shared by nearly 50 local providers serving people with developmental disabilities. Providers ranged from small organizations with less than ten employees, to larger ones employing more than 250 people, with individual grant awards ranging from \$75 to \$10,000. Grant money was required to be used to support or incentivize direct support professionals and front-line supervisors who have continued to support people in their homes throughout this crisis.

“These two positions are critical to the success of people we serve,” commented Summit DD’s Director of Community Supports and Development, Drew Williams. “We wanted to encourage innovative ways for providers to make their staff feel appreciated. We believe it is important to support organizations with their efforts now more than ever.”

Hattie Larlham was one of the many organizations who applied for and received grant money.

“We feel lucky to be a part of Summit County,” remarked Kim Bartell, Vice President of Community Services for Hattie Larlham. “I know I can call [Summit DD] and I’ll have what I need.” Bartell went on to share that the provider partnerships in Summit County and with Summit DD make it a great system to keep people safe and help them continue to live full lives, even in challenging times like these.

Hattie Larlham used the Summit DD grant to provide a number of small pick-me-ups for staff who for months now continue to work 8,10, and 12 hour shifts caring for people all while tending to personal needs of their own, such as child care and their families. Hattie Larlham supervisors arranged for ways to show their gratitude to staff such as donuts and coffee, Jimmy Johns deliveries, Girl Scout cookie and sundae bars, Bob Evens meals and even Hattie’s Hero shirts for staff to name a few. “These are good, people,” Bartell said of their team. “Employees are going above and beyond and we are really thankful.”

Other innovative ways that providers used grant money to support their staff include:

- Purchasing reusable masks for staff
- Sending food deliveries and treat bags to surprise staff

- Providing gas and grocery gift cards to reward and incentivize staff
- Purchasing gaming systems to encourage exercise, movement and fun for staff and people they serve during stay-at-home orders
- Helping staff and those they serve who have personally been affected by COVID-19
- Purchasing tickets for upcoming events and local attractions to reward staff

“We are grateful for the dedication of these front-line professionals,” expressed Summit DD Superintendent, John Trunk. “Without their continual commitment, Summit County’s provider community would not be the great asset that it is.”

Summit DD is the community resource that makes meaningful connections for more than 5,000 adults and children with developmental disabilities and their families. It is the Agency’s mission to help people of all abilities reach their full potential, one person at a time. More information regarding the Agency is available online at SummitDD.org.

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