

HOPE HAPPENINGS

DECEMBER 2025 EDITION

Seeing Potential - Inspiring Opportunities



**THANK
you**



**HAPPY
Retirement!**

After 40 years of dedicated service, The Henry County Abilities Resource Council sadly announces the retirement of the ONE, the ONLY, Randy Barnes from the HARC REC Coordinator position. Randy is and has been the HEART of HARC REC since the organization began many, many years ago.

This job wasn't really a "job" for Randy, this was his passion. He truly loves his work, so much so, that I think we will see him around here and there, so don't worry you haven't seen the last of him!

Over the past 40 years his leadership, commitment, and passion for working with us has left a lasting impact on our individuals and their families, caregivers from across the lands, and the whole community.

His passion and dedication have shaped HARC REC into the organization it is today.

Please join the HARC board in extending heartfelt gratitude for his years of dedicated service and wish him all the best in retirement. His presence will be greatly missed, but his influence will remain a lasting part of the HARC organization.



HARC REC Program Coordinator Position

While we will never be able to replace Randy, it is essential to find someone that can step into the role of our part time Rec Coordinator. This position will be crucial in continuing the excellent work and maintaining the standards set by him. A link that describes the key elements and qualifications for this job is on HARC's Facebook page.

If you or someone you know might be interested, please send a letter of interest along with a resume to harc43545@gmail.com. Please feel free to share!

No Board Meeting in December.
The next Board Meeting will be held
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 4pm
HOPE Services Activity Center

Holiday Office Closures

Wednesday, December 24th

Thursday December 25th

Wednesday December 31st

Thursday January 1st



Special Olympics Ohio - Henry County November Recap

🏈 Flag Football Season Wrap-Up

Our Cougars closed out an incredible season at the State Tournament, bringing home Silver to Henry County after a hard-fought battle against a six-time state champion team. Their determination and teamwork were nothing short of inspiring, and we couldn't be prouder!

🎯 Cornhole Success

Our short cornhole season was a huge hit, with nearly 40 athletes participating—making it our third most popular sport behind bowling and basketball. Keep an eye out next fall Special Olympics Ohio sport!

🏀 Basketball Season Begins

The energy is high as basketball season tips off! We have three adult teams and one school-age team ready to compete. Last week, Team Black scored a big win against the Fulton County Jaguars, while our school-age team battled to a close 44-41 loss. The season is just getting started, and we can't wait to see what's next!

🎮 Esports Adventure at Def Com

Our esports team had the amazing opportunity to visit Def Com, sponsored by the Defiance Public Library. They had a blast exploring both new and classic video games and even showed off their creativity with cosplay costumes, several of our athletes dressed up and looked fantastic!

🌟 Leadership & Recognition

Beyond the games, our leaders and volunteers represented Henry County at the 2025 Night of Champions and the Coordinators Educational Conference in Columbus.

- Cheer coach Amanda Seiler was nominated for Volunteer of the Year!
- State Athlete Leader Anthony Delgado and Athlete Leader & Special Olympics Ohio Board Member Krysta Delgado emceed both events and gave a beautiful opening for the conference.
- State ALC member Lydia Knepper helped ensure the event was a success.
- On Saturday, Krysta presented her final project for the Diana Davis Spencer grant on Building a Diverse Workplace – Workplace Inclusion for All.

🎮 Upcoming Winter Activities

- Competition Cheer begins December 8 with practices on Mondays from 5–6 pm at HOPE Services. If you haven't received a schedule, please contact Zach or Renita.
- Swim Season starts December 4, and schedules have been sent to those registered. Spots are still open—reach out to Zach or Renita if you'd like to join!
- Young Athletes Winter Sessions will be held December 6, 13, and 20 from 10–11 am at HOPE Services (135 E. Maumee Ave., Napoleon). This free program is open to all Henry County children ages 2–7.

📱 Stay Connected

Our Facebook page is now named Special Olympics Ohio – Henry County. If you followed the previous page, no action is needed. Make sure to Like and Follow to stay updated on Cougar activities and volunteer opportunities!

💡 Questions or Interested in Volunteering

Contact Zach Meister (zmeister@henrydd.org) or Renita Kuehner (rkuehner@henrydd.org) to learn how you can support our athletes. Wishing you a wonderful winter holiday season with your family and friends!

Coach Zach and Coach Renita





What Is Voices of HOPE?

Voices of HOPE is our self-advocacy group made up of individuals who are passionate about speaking up for themselves and others. The group focuses on building confidence, developing leadership skills, and creating opportunities for members to make their voices heard in the community. Through meetings, activities, and special events, Voices of HOPE encourages independence, inclusion, and positive change for people of all abilities.



Introducing the 2026 Elected Officers of Voices of HOPE

We are thrilled to announce the newly elected officers of Voices of HOPE for the year 2026. Starting in January, these dedicated individuals will lead our group with passion and commitment, driving our mission forward and fostering positive change.

Congrats!

- o Christina Clark, President
- o Chris Scarberry, Vice President
- o Shannon Allen, Secretary
- o Heather Stoner, Treasurer

November Meeting Recap

On November 7th, our Voices of HOPE self-advocacy group gathered for a special leadership dinner and an evening dedicated to growth, empowerment, and community connection! Members enjoyed great food, meaningful conversations, and opportunities to learn more about using their voices to make a difference. As part of the night, the group watched two impactful videos – one on how to ask for assistance when voting and another highlighting the importance of advocacy and inclusion.

🗳️ Be the Change – <https://youtu.be/cEhfcOBPVMU>

A big thank you to everyone who attended and participated, and to Dan Bischoff, HOPE Services - Henry County Board of DD Board President, for joining us and supporting the incredible work of our self-advocates!



Join Us!
in
DECEMBER

Voices of HOPE Holiday Event & Dinner

December 18, 2025

5:00PM - 7:00PM

HOPE Services Activity Center

★ Special Guest Speaker

Local author Brooke Ward will share her inspiring story and talk about her new book, "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It."

🍴 Dinner Provided

🎁 Gift Exchange

Bring a wrapped \$10 gift to join the fun!

Men - Bring a gift for the men

Ladies - Bring a gift for the women

🎲 Plus

Games • Prizes • A special gift for everyone who attends!

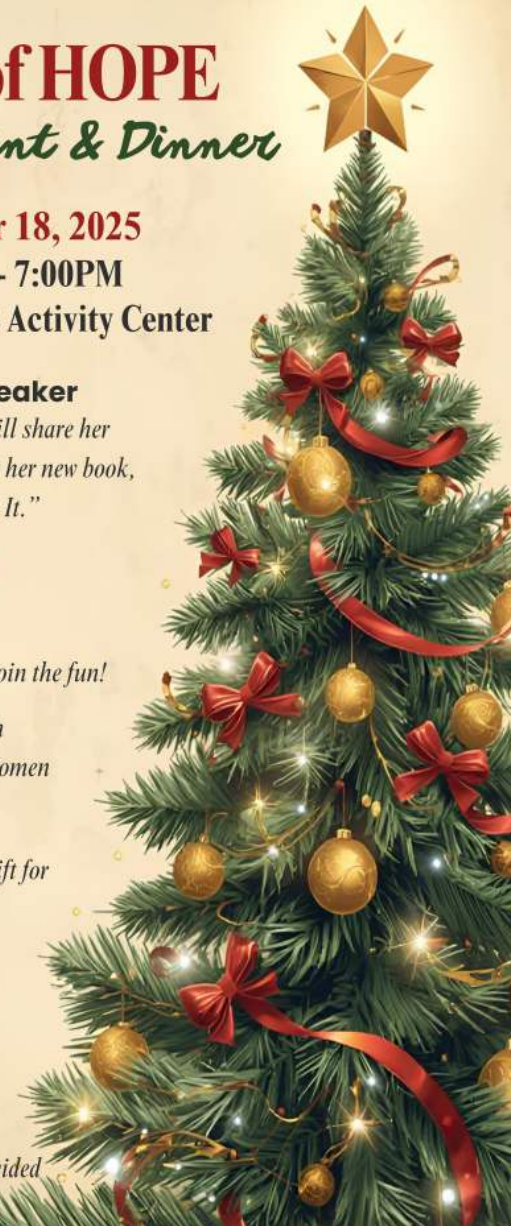
📅 RSVP by Friday, December 12th!

Call or email Keri Bunke at:

📞 419-599-2892

✉ kbunke@henrydd.org

or sign up using the link provided



EARLY INTERVENTION

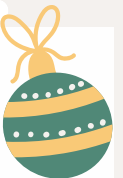
Gift Ideas for Infants and Toddlers

The holidays are right around the corner! Here are some gift ideas that can help with different areas of your child's development. These items encourage imaginative play, understanding of words, using sounds and words, the use of big and little muscles, and problem-solving skills. We recommend that you purchase toys with bright and contrasting colors. These are easier for babies to see and track. We also recommend that you purchase toys that do not make noise. This encourages children to produce their own sounds and words while playing. Make sure to check the recommended age range for each of these items.

Submitted by Caryn Lulfs, Developmental Specialist.

Ideas

- Inflatable tummy time mat
- Rattles
- Balls
- Stacking rings
- Board books
- Busy board
- Play food
- Little people
- Magna tiles
- Play animals
- Baby dolls
- Toy cars, trucks, trains, and farm equipment
- Shape sorters
- Wooden blocks
- Bristle blocks
- Squigz
- Sit 'N Scoot
- Rody inflatable bounce horse
- Mini trampoline with handle
- Wooden puzzles
- Refrigerator magnets



CHRISTMAS PLAYGROUP!

Join us on Wednesday, December 10th
at 5:30pm until 7pm for a special
EI Christmas Playgroup!

Come hungry and leave smiling!

AT HOPE SERVICES
135 E. MAUMEE AVE.
NAPOLEON

RSVP by 12/2/2025



FOUR COUNTY CAREER CENTER'S WORK TRANSITION CLASSROOM GAINS REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE AT THE CHRISTMAS EXCHANGE STORE

Students in the Work Transition Classroom had a valuable opportunity this month as they partnered with COREe individuals to assist at the annual Christmas Exchange Store. This hands-on experience allowed students to practice real retail job skills while supporting a meaningful community program.

Throughout their time at the store, students worked side-by-side with COREe participants to learn and apply a variety of workplace skills. They helped with sorting donations, stocking shelves, organizing displays, bagging items, and providing friendly customer service to shoppers. The experience offered a real look at the pace and teamwork required in a retail environment.

Not only did the students gain confidence and practical skills, but they also enjoyed making connections and contributing to a project that brings joy to families during the holiday season. The partnership was a great success and an excellent example of community collaboration supporting growth, independence, and job readiness.



Let's Get COOKING



Cook Night sponsored by HARC Inc.

Cook Night

This month's Cook Night was a wonderful blend of teamwork, skill-building, and great food! Attendees rolled up their sleeves and worked together to prepare a full homemade meal from start to finish. On the menu: oven-baked chicken breasts, perfectly seasoned and cooked to tenderness; baked potatoes with everyone choosing their favorite toppings; and green beans prepared for a simple, nutritious side.

The highlight of the evening was dessert – a creamy and rich peanut butter pie that participants helped mix, assemble, and enjoy together. Throughout the night, everyone had the chance to practice kitchen safety, follow recipes, learn new techniques, and share in the accomplishment of creating a complete, delicious meal.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed to the warm, fun atmosphere. We look forward to our next Cook Night and another opportunity to learn and enjoy good food as a group!





Halloween Dance Party

On October 29th the spirit world descended on The Filling Home Gym. Over 200 ghosts, goblins, zombie's, Blues Clues Characters, hippies, cowboys and other various costumed beings, showed up for the 2025 Halloween Dance Party, co-hosted by the Filling Homes and HARC.

It was an apparition beyond description, as all these life forms danced the night away to the music of Loco Sounds. All of these Entities, let loose all inhibitions and became totally animated in the surroundings, and let their existence, at least for a couple hours, be ruled by the essence of the moment. It was great fun and a big Thank you to Sarah and Filling Homes staff for helping HARC pull this off.



2025



BRET'S STORY

WRITTEN BY PHIL ETOLL, SSA

Here in Henry County, we have the luxury of working with many great providers who work with our individuals day in and out. Sometimes individuals work well with a provider and sometimes they do not. Lots of times it is finding the right fit.

Bret Light found the right fit for himself. His previous SSA Kelly Verbeke let me know that when Bret was in school, he really enjoyed his art class. This is what led me to talking with him and his family about Soaring Arts. In October of 2024, Bret started working with Filling Home Soaring Arts. In July of 2025, Soaring Arts reached out and wanted Bret to have a showcase and make some money for all his artwork. Bret was able to have his first art showcase on November 5th, 2025.

Bret is a man of few words but when I was able to see him at his showcase, the smile on his face said it all. He is very proud of himself! I was able to speak with one of the DSPs from Soaring Arts and she talked about his growth as an artist and as a young man. Bret continues to learn about his artistic abilities and Soaring Arts continues to learn about Bret.

OACB CONFERENCE



Our team had an inspiring experience at the Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) Annual Conference, held November 19th-21st.

We came together with leaders from across the state to learn how to be the “spark” for positive change in the lives of individuals with Developmental Disabilities.

We explored innovative strategies to better serve our community, including ways to maintain fiscal sustainability while continuing to provide high quality supports. These insights will help us strengthen services and create opportunities for those we support every day. Thank you to OACB for hosting such a valuable event.



Pictured are Jessica Harmon, EI Director; Caleb Wiseman, SSA; Amber Weaver, SSA; Kelly Rieke, Superintendent and Dan Bischoff, Board President

Contact Us

HOPE Services Office	419-599-2892
Special Olympics	419-260-2176
HARC Recreation	419-591-6798

Find Event Calendars on our website.

www.henrydd.org/events

**Scan Code to sign up
for the newsletter!**



Seeing Potential – Inspiring Opportunities

Our Mission

HOPE Services is committed to creatively working in partnership with eligible individuals and their families to discover, pursue and achieve what is important to them.

HOPE Services does not discriminate in provision of services or employment because of disability, race, color, creed, national origin, sex or age.

