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LOCAL SANDUSKY COUNTY BOARD OF DD BILLBOARDS CELEBRATE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

Local billboards to raise awareness and ‘Celebrate CommUNITY’ for the month of March in recognition of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

All across the State of Ohio, organizations devoted to serving individuals with developmental disabilities are embracing this year’s theme, ‘Celebrate CommUNITY’ as they plan their events celebrating the month of March, which is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. The Sandusky County Board of DD (SCBDD) is hosting several programs to commemorate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and will also feature local individuals and inclusive messaging on billboards across Sandusky County.

“Because we serve for a lifetime, we felt it was important to feature individuals across the life spectrum on the billboards, from infant to adulthood,” said James Dickman, SCBDD Public Relations Coordinator. *“It was a great experience for me personally to go out into the community and capture pictures for the billboards where our individuals live, work, and play. Young parents invited me into their home so I could photo baby Jessa. Clyde High School opened their doors so I could capture a picture of Joe and his high school friends. Taco Bell on Route 53 practically gave me the run of the place as I photographed Sandy working in the dining area, back in the kitchen, and at the washing station. The love and support that Sandy receives from her coworkers was positively evident – they even stopped what they were doing to pose for a picture with her,”* said Dickman.

In addition to five local billboards, SCBDD will also host several special events over the month of March to raise awareness. On Wednesday, March 7, self-advocates in the community and SCBDD staff will travel to the Ohio Statehouse for DD Awareness and Advocacy Day. The Fremont Kiwanis will sponsor the Spring Dance at the SCBDD on Friday, March 16. On Wednesday, March 21, self-advocacy leaders of Sandusky County will speak regarding the impact of 40 new waivers, access to employment opportunities, and how local tax dollars provide for individuals, and more. And on Monday, March 26, the SCBDD will host an awards ceremony for local employers and care-providers at the Provider Recognition Dinner.

“There have been so many changes in the State of Ohio over the past two years due to rule changes by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It has been a challenge, but our mission hasn’t changed. We are here to connect individuals with disabilities to supports that empower them to define and



contribute to their own success and fully integrate into our community,” said Sarah Zimmerman, Superintendent of the Sandusky County Board of DD.

“We have really emphasized our commitment to self-advocacy; the ability of the individual to understand their rights and speak up for their rights so they can enjoy being self-actualized individuals, just like everyone else,” she said.

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