



## Do you see what we See? ... ABILITY

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March is Disability Awareness Month. At the Allen County Board of Developmental Disabilities, we are celebrating the many abilities of the people we serve. Our theme is "Do You See What We See? ... ABILITY."

Often we focus on what is lacking rather than what is present. By definition, the people served by our board have a disability. Webster's defines disability as a "lack of ability; inability, legal incapacity, or inability to act." Sometimes, people define the people we serve by this single term. We want you to see what we see.

We see friends. We see co-workers. We see good students. We see good neighbors. We see members of our churches. We see talented people. We see caring people. We see loving people. We see athletes. We see volunteers. We see artists. We see sports fans. We see musicians.

Here are a few of those people:

- Troy Mowery was seen as a musician at the United Way celebration. He and Angie Herzog joined with Reineke Lincoln Mercury Mazda Inc. and Lima Memorial Health Partners to sing "Give the United Way," to the tune of "Under the Boardwalk." Mowery was selected because he was the 2010 Marimor Idol. Also that night, Brittany Conley and Kylie Murphy represented students at Marimor School for their contributions to the United Way. They collected \$1,300 through a penny drive. They clearly were seen as caring people who are very generous.

- When I attend Knutty Knitters, a knitting club that meets monthly, Lynn Melching and Robin Raming teach me how to improve my knitting skills. We also share with each other what's going on in our lives. I see them as teachers and as friends.

- When I visit Marimor Industries, David Cunningham always greets me with a warm hug and tells me about his work at Taco Bell. He is very proud of the work he does there and so am I. David is a hard worker, a good friend and an all-around great guy.

- Becky Boutin is an accomplished graphic artist who designed our agency's logo. Bill Bowden is a serious artist whose work can be emotionally moving as well as captivating. Mari Lou Robnolte likes to draw houses and adds a touch of whimsy to her colorful creations. Ben Fledderjohann's art has a definite Disney influence. He is serious about his art, which is extremely detailed and meticulous. Leslie Davis works in soft pastels, but will occasionally go to the wild side with bold colors. Michael Smith's expertise is portraits. He has an incredible talent for capturing expressions. These individuals are seen as artists by the community.

- David Downard is a very hard worker who is skilled at working with his hands. If you need high-quality work done quickly, Downard is your man. Bob Mayo bleeds blue and maize just like my husband, Roy, does. When Michigan loses, it's a very sad day for both men.

- Joe Vance is our most sought after speaker in our Speakers Bureau. What is interesting about Vance is that he can only verbally say "yes" and "no" because of his disability. However, his mind is excellent and the thoughts and information he shares through his computer confounds the wise. His life experiences are amazing and his message is poignant. In addition to presenting at disability awareness events, he is also a powerful trainer when the Building Partnerships Initiative is training law enforcement personnel.

- Simone Dinnerstein, an accomplished pianist, recently recorded a CD titled "Bach: A Strange Beauty." As

she discussed her work, she referenced Sir Francis Bacon, who said that anything that is beautiful has some strangeness in its proportion. This made her think of Johann Sebastian Bach and his music. She said, "Bach on the face of it is really interested in symmetry and patterns and math, but he's constantly breaking away from those patterns and giving us unexpected harmonies or strange lengths of phrase or irregular rhythmic patterns. It's all of those moments when he does that makes the music so powerful and so beautiful."

And so it is with people who have developmental disabilities. It is their uniqueness that makes them so beautiful. It is the diversity that provides color in our life ... there is beauty in diversity. The unique contributions of people with developmental disabilities are a fundamental part of the Real American Strength of Lima and Allen County.

Esther Baldrige is superintendent of the Allen County Board of Developmental Disabilities. E-mail her at [ebaldrige@acbdd.org](mailto:ebaldrige@acbdd.org) or call 419-221-1385.

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