

# COVAVIEW

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## Staff member recognized for superb work

At the staff recognition event in June, COVA staff enjoyed a celebration of their hard work, dedication and efforts over the difficult past year. But one person, known for her unconditional devotion to her clients and her ability to empower them, was given top honors.

Ann Heilbrunn, career developer, was given the 2009 Rev. Harold E. Brown Award for Outstanding Staff Performance. Ann not only met all the criteria required for consideration of the award – but exceeded them.

In her nomination of Ann, Employment Team Director Stephanie Andrian wrote that Ann is a solid, dependable influence in her clients' lives, and while she maintains her professionalism, they



**Jane Brown presents Career Developer Ann Heilbrunn with the 2009 Rev. Harold E. Brown Award for Outstanding Staff Performance at the staff recognition event in June.**

know that she is there if they need a friend.

“Ann’s participants really like her, and most of them enjoy coming to their appointments because she believes they

can achieve their goals,” Stephanie said. “She gives them hope and helps them believe in themselves.”

►Please see ‘AWARD’ on p. 2

## Partners debut new employment model

Enhanced employment services are being offered to people with severe mental illnesses through the Central Ohio Supported Employment Collaborative initiated by COVA. The project, funded jointly by the mental health boards of Franklin, Delaware and Fairfield counties and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission’s (ORSC) Pathways II program, aims to serve 320 participants annually in the three counties.



COVA is the vocational service provider in the collaboration, which includes the Franklin County ADAMH Board, the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health and Recovery Services Board and Fairfield County ADAMH Board. Eight COVA vocational specialists are embedded within existing treatment teams in each county, and the

Coordinating Center of Excellence for Supported Employment at Case Western Reserve University is providing training and technical support for the vocational model.

“All three boards have employment as a strategic goal and understand the vital role of employment in recovery, making this a natural collaboration,” said Judy Braun, COVA president.

“The county boards are interested in expanding their relationships with the ORSC, and particularly incorporating the evidence-based principles of supported employment into their existing treatment services.”

Meg Griffing, previously program director for Benefits Consulting at COVA, leads the new Pathways collaborative. The three county boards provided a total of \$200,000 in match

►Please see ‘PARTNERS’ on p. 2

*Save the Date*

**PhotoVoice: Aug. 17–28**

PhotoVoice is a photo essay project used worldwide to promote social change. In COVA's 2009 PhotoVoice exhibition, titled *Mental Health Recovery: Through Our Lens & Pen*, 10 COVA participants will share their recovery journey through photography and writing.

**Opening Aug. 17, 1:30 p.m. Rhodes State Office Tower 30 E. Broad St., Columbus**

Please join us as we take another step toward breaking down the stigma of mental illness. Ohio Department of Mental Health Director Sandy Stephenson will officially open the exhibition.

For more details on the project, stay tuned in to our Web site at [www.cova.org](http://www.cova.org).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Swirling economy spurs innovation

The only sure thing coming out of this summer's state and county budget cutting is that community providers, such as COVA, are operating in a new world of funding options, requiring us to reconfigure our service models and the mindset of our staff.

Our primary challenge as we move forward is assuring that people with mental illnesses are not left behind or left out when the dust settles after the budget wrangling. We have been aggressive in supporting the lobbying and awareness efforts of several behavioral health coalitions.

In the past year, COVA has faced continuing cuts in state and county support, but has uncovered new pockets of federal match funding, private funds, new collaborations and agency-to-agency contracting options to offer our vocational services, while reducing expenses and reducing some staffing levels. Vocational Rehabilitation stimulus funds offer community providers the opportunity to deploy one-year programs to evaluate the most efficient methods of achieving employment goals.

COVA is in contention for two stimulus-funded programs. State and county leaders wisely advised us to use this next year and possible stimulus funding to remake our organizations to be leaner, more efficient operations with innovative, evidence-based program offerings.

This summer, COVA will redesign its entire entry programming to allow us to serve more people faster and

to place those participants into more individualized programming specific to their readiness to work. The Columbus Foundation has generously provided a capacity building grant to support COVA in completing the total redesign in less than 90 days.

COVA has reduced costs by outsourcing some administrative functions, and the redesign will streamline documentation needs. Volunteers will become more fully integrated into COVA programming and COVA alumni have stepped forward to begin leading support groups.

As the economy swirls, we are seeing a much more diverse population of people encountering job loss and mental health issues for the very first time. In general, this group is ready for rapid engagement and assistance in returning to work, while those with severe and recurring mental illnesses need more extensive assessment in trial workplaces and skills training to achieve competitive employment in the very tight job market.

All of this service model change requires our staff to be nimble and ready to accept new roles within the organization. It can be a little scary, but we are approaching this period of change and challenge secure in the knowledge that we are better positioning COVA to fulfill its mission of helping participants achieve economic stability in a very unstable time.

## COVA Wish List

Would you like to make a contribution to COVA to help our participants? Below you will find a list of specific items we are in need of.

- **Linens and household items** – For our Transition Youth participants who are moving into their first apartments.
- **Computer equipment** – Accepted through our Computer Equipment Contribution Program for our participants who qualify for refurbished computers.
- **Cash donations** – All monetary contributions go toward running and improving COVA programs. Donations can be made online via PayPal; visit our Web site for details.

Questions? Contact Robin Hepler at 614-294-7117 ext. 278 or [rhepler@cova.org](mailto:rhepler@cova.org).

### Partners continued from p.1

funds to secure \$738,967 in federal dollars through ORSC.

“The evidenced-based practice of supported employment not only improves employment outcomes for individuals with severe mental illness, but it also has proven to reduce symptoms of mental illness, hospitalizations and stigma in the community about mental illness,” said Stephanie Patrick, clinical director of Franklin County ADAMH Board. “Our continued work with the [collaborators] will lay the groundwork for future initiatives that will undoubtedly improve treatment outcomes for our consumers.”

► **For more information on the integrated model, see p. 4.**

The use of vocational specialists within treatment teams is a model that has generated immediate and long-term employment results with the target population, Judy said. In addition to increasing employment, supported employment has been proven to decrease dependence upon public systems of care, symptoms of mental illnesses, hospitalizations and stigma in the community about mental illness.

During the first year of adding an employment specialist, the Ohio CCOE reports employment rates of 40 percent to 50 percent, up from under 20 percent. Based on its follow-along services, COVA's job retention rate of 90 percent far exceeds the industry results.

## COVAVIEW

Issue 1, Summer 2009

COVA View is produced by the COVA Marketing Department. Please contact us by e-mail at [covaview@cova.org](mailto:covaview@cova.org) or call 614-294-7117.

Judy Braun, *President*  
Robin Hepler, *Director of Marketing*

### Center of Vocational Alternatives

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27 W. Winter St.	
Delaware, OH 43015	

### Award continued from p.1

The award, presented annually, was established in honor of the Rev. Harold Brown, a mental health advocate and COVA supporter. He served on the COVA Board of Directors, and following his death, his wife, Jane, has continued his mission.

Ann was selected from a pool of three other nominees, all of whom were deserving of the award, said COVA President Judy Braun. The other staff members nominated included Belinda Spinosi, employment peer specialist; Beth Kishiro, career developer; and Carrie Printz, benefits specialist.

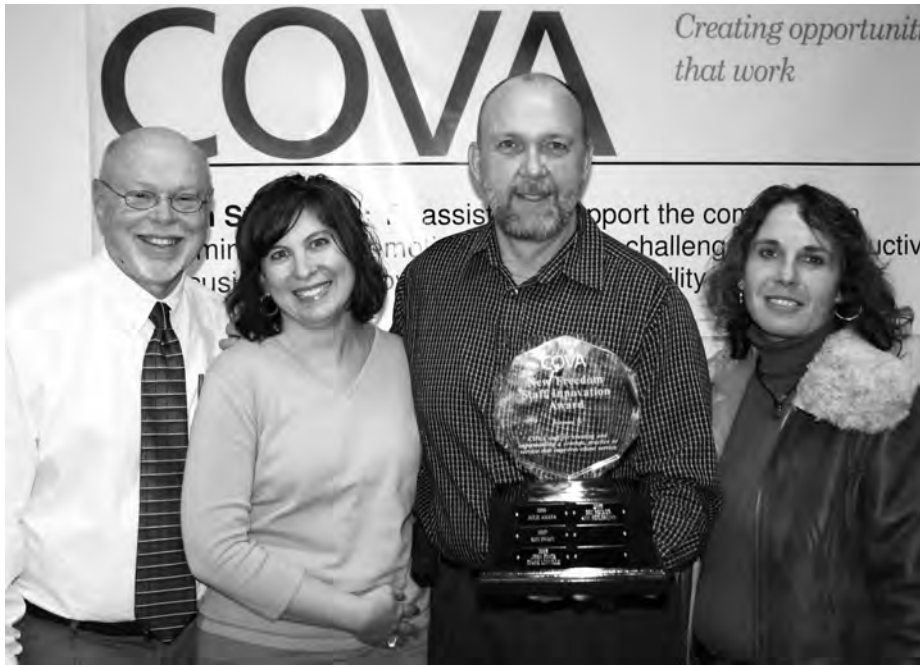
# Innovative efforts of PRI team recognized

COVA recently recognized the work of four staff members who helped establish a program to assist individuals in local correctional facilities and ex-offenders.

John Finch, Diane Linville, Doc Hecker and Ann Heilbrunn were honored in December with the New Freedom Initiative Award, given annually to individuals who implement a service that improves COVA's ability to serve its clients and promotes it as a national leader in serving persons with disabilities.

"This group of staff were involved in developing a cutting-edge approach to reducing recidivism by using peers pre-release," said Board of Directors Past Chair Katie Hamilton. "This is a new concept in this area – and in the nation."

One of the programs, the Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (PRI), prepares prisoners for release. The other, the Forensic Peer Program, builds skills and creates employment opportunities that support individuals with mental



**In recognition of their efforts in COVA's new Prisoner Re-entry Initiative, John Finch, Diane Linville, Doc Hecker and Ann Heilbrunn were honored with the New Freedom Initiative Award in December.**

illnesses who are leaving the corrections system and are at risk for recidivism.

"This is a very challenging population – a population we haven't done a lot of work with," said award recipient John Finch, Ph.D., COVA vice president of Rehabilitation and Employment.

Diane Linville, PRI program coordinator, and Ann Heilbrunn, career developer, both work directly with prisoners in the corrections system and bring a wealth of knowledge about how to interact and work with these

Doc knows it all."

While John offers enthusiastic praise for his colleague, Doc is more modest about how impactful his experience has been. He admitted that at first, he didn't think the Department of Corrections would be interested in anything he had to say.

"I thought, 'Okay, I've got a chance to give back and pave the way for somebody else,'" Doc said. "I had no idea it would develop into this."

## Three new grants spur program expansions at COVA

Thanks to three grants received in spring and summer, COVA will redesign its pre-employment and employment retention service offerings, conduct a PhotoVoice program and expand its volunteer efforts to raise funds for back-to-work expenses for program participants.

COVA received \$34,700 in capacity building funds from the Columbus Foundation to re-engineer the initial services offered to participants. COVA's existing introductory programs will be diversified into several opportunities for more participants to be served and in more individualized programs.

"This new configuration will allow us to serve more people faster – in a time of diminishing public resources,"

said Judy Braun, COVA president.

"Our existing services were based on a fixed set of services for all participants, relying strictly on state funding for the job development phase. Our new design will allow people who are ready to move through the program faster to accelerate their pace, while those who need more training or preparation will get it."

COVA will use the funds to develop the new curriculum, orientation materials and training for staff to deliver the diversified services. The plan is to roll out the new services Sept. 1.

A \$1,500 grant from the Greater Columbus Arts Council is funding the summer PhotoVoice project. Ten COVA participants are creating a photo essay

and journal of their recovery journey. The final projects will debut Aug. 17 at the Rhodes State Office Tower.

The Prudential Foundation has awarded a \$5,000 grant to COVA to initiate a volunteer service group, called RSVP (see p.5). The group will raise funds to provide extra assistance to participants who are in the interview or job placement phase and need a boost to clear any final hurdles to their employment, such as transportation, childcare or clothing.

Jack Tresoline, chair elect of the COVA Board of Directors and regional sales manager for Prudential, introduced COVA to the foundation and helped prepare the grant application.

# COVA's Pathways team adopts dual-disorder method

COVA's newly formed Pathways team, officially known as the Central Ohio Supported Employment Collaborative, has joined forces with local mental health treatment providers as part of the Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment (IDDT) model.

The IDDT model is an evidence-based method of treatment that is geared toward helping people with both a mental illness and substance abuse disorder by providing support in multiple areas of a person's life.

Because the IDDT method is carried out in the same facility by the same providers at the same time, the success rate for clients is much higher. Each IDDT team includes a team leader, nurse, case manager, substance abuse specialist, housing specialist, counselor, criminal justice specialist, physician or psychiatrist, and an employment

specialist – which is how COVA became involved in the program.

“It's an intense model of services for small caseloads in order to help people stay out of the hospital and find inclusion in their community,” explained Meg Griffing, Pathways program director. “The IDDT team collectively decides how to best support the individual. The input of each team member is valued and crucial for the ultimate success of the individual.”

COVA Vocational Specialists are part of the IDDT teams and use many of the IDDT principles while providing supported employment services. Working in conjunction with other treatment practitioners, the team targets participants with significant or multiple barriers, Griffing said.

In addition to quality care and substance abuse treatment, the expected outcomes for persons with mental illnesses who are receiving services from the IDDT teams include stable housing, fewer days in the hospital and meaningful

employment. COVA is bringing the highly proven model of Supported Employment to the teams. Gainful employment has a tremendous impact on recovery.

The IDDT team provides support for an extended period of time to help the client maintain learned skills or in the event of a relapse, ensuring that the client always has access to needed support.

## IDDT decreases:

- Duration, frequency and intensity of mental and substance use disorder symptoms
- Hospitalization
- Arrest and incarceration
- Duplication of services
- Treatment drop-out
- Utilization of high-cost services

## IDDT increases:

- Abstinence from drug and alcohol use
- Continuity of care
- Improved relationships
- Consumer quality-of-life
- Stable housing
- Independent living

—Source: Coordinating Center of Excellence at Case Western Reserve University

“The input of each team member is valued and crucial for...success.

—Meg Griffing

## COVA goes green by recycling old equipment

COVA partnered with Possitivity Green earlier this year to recycle dozens of outdated computers. Through the Possitivity E-Waste Program, COVA was able to get a jump start on spring cleaning while protecting the earth at the same time. And, even better, it didn't cost COVA a dime.

Through COVA's Computer Equipment Contribution Program, COVA received a large donation a few years ago, explained Information Technology Specialist Vince Thomas. Some of these computers replaced COVA staff computers. Since then, the collection of contributed computers has grown through several other donations.

“The original idea (for the computer contribution program) was that we were going to refurbish those and give them to our clients,” Vince said.

The first sets of computers were offered to Careers for the Future graduates and other COVA participants

who would not otherwise have home access to the technology. Thirty other computers were salvaged, and after becoming a member of the Community Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher network, COVA was able to equip these computers with a Microsoft operating system and Office software.

“That was a huge jump forward,” Vince said. “It doesn't cost anything for us to be a part of the program.”

The remaining computers, dubbed too old, were stripped for useful parts. Possitivity came to COVA and loaded up the old computers and related equipment, as well as out-of-date cell phones and chargers, printers, and fax machines. The only items they weren't able to recycle were old monitors, Vince said, because the organization doesn't have a method to recycle those yet.



- ▶ For more information on COVA's Computer Equipment Contribution Program, contact Vince Thomas at 614-294-7117 ext. 237, or [vthomas@cova.org](mailto:vthomas@cova.org).
- ▶ To learn more about Possitivity's E-Waste Recycling program, visit their Web site at [www.possitivitygreen.com](http://www.possitivitygreen.com).



**Founders Award recipient Dale Ouzts and President Judy Braun reminisce about COVA history during a quick peek at the new timeline display.**

## Ouzts accepts first Founders Award

Dale Ouzts was honored in December with the inaugural Founders Award from COVA for his extensive efforts in helping establish the organization and guide it through its early start-up years.

The award was presented as the final celebration of COVA's 25th anniversary year. Dale, retired general manager of WOSU stations, was a founding board member of COVA, which has grown to be a recognized leader in vocational rehabilitation services for people with mental illnesses and other disabilities that pose a barrier to employment.

"COVA would not be here today to serve our community if it were not for the efforts of Dale Ouzts," said COVA President Judy Braun in presenting the award. "There are many start-up struggles with launching any organization, and Dale was there to

provide business guidance and support every step of the way for COVA."

Dale later worked to secure COVA's Clintonville headquarters at 3770 N. High St. in 2002, which facilitated the expansion of services for residents of central Ohio.

"There isn't anything I wouldn't do for COVA," said Dale in accepting the award at a gathering of COVA's 60 staff members. "There were some very tough times in those early days, but we always believed that our community needed this type of innovative approach to helping people with mental illnesses return to the workforce."

COVA will now present the Founders Award annually to recognize those in the community who have been instrumental in helping COVA grow and serve individuals in the area.

## New peer training program targets start date of Jan. 1

COVA and a large stakeholder group from local government and social service agencies have set Jan. 1 as a projected start date for a new training program to prepare participants for para-professional careers as Forensic Peer Specialists.

The program, modeled after the very successful Howie T. Harp program in New York, aims to enroll 30 COVA participants in 2010 to complete six months of coursework, a three-month internship and eventual community job placement as peer counselors with

employers such as mental health courts, mental health agencies and prisoner re-entry programs. Participants will have personal experience with incarceration and mental illness.

"This is an exciting new opportunity for COVA and involves so many key organizations in the workgroups," said John Finch, COVA's vice president of Rehabilitation and Employment. "We have had incredible support from all the stakeholders in taking on tough challenges of identifying funding,



## New service group seeks members

Preparing for a new job takes more than a professional resume, compelling cover letter and persuasive interview techniques. Many COVA participants also need items that are much more basic, such as suitable work clothing or a haircut, before beginning a new job. Or, after starting, they may need assistance with transportation or childcare in the period before getting their first paycheck.

In 2009 and 2010, the new Rehabilitation Services Volunteer Program (RSVP) will help COVA participants by raising funds that will address those needs. As a result, these individuals will be better able to overcome the final barriers to successful employment while increasing their self-sufficiency.

The program, starting this summer, is founded on COVA's belief that volunteers are a valuable asset to any non-profit organization.

Volunteers are being recruited through the Board's Resource & Development Committee.

RSVP will help COVA participants, share its mission and accomplishments with the community and bring new ideas and energy to the organization.

If you have time to volunteer and have experience raising funds, contact Robin Hepler at [rhepler@cova.org](mailto:rhepler@cova.org).

## Enroll in Community Rewards, benefit COVA

COVA is now a member of Kroger's Community Rewards, a program that earns money for non-profits when shoppers register their Kroger cards with the organization of their choice.

### How to Sign Up

1. Register your Kroger Plus Card online. Go to <http://customer.kroger.com>



and click on "Sign up today!" You will be asked to set up an account, and after confirming your e-mail address, you can add your rewards card number.

If you are already enrolled on Kroger's Web site, log into your account and proceed to #2. Or, if you are unable to register online, please contact

Krysten Pyles at [kpyles@cova.org](mailto:kpyles@cova.org) or 614-294-7117 ext. 241 and request a SCANBAR letter, which you can take to the store with your Kroger card to link up with COVA's rewards account.

2. On your account home page, click on "Edit Kroger Community Rewards Information." Enter COVA's number, 83984, or type Center of Vocational Alternatives in the search box. Then select the name when it appears and click "save changes."

3. Go shopping using your Kroger card! As always, thanks again for your continued support!

### Visit COVA on Facebook!

COVA has joined one of the largest social networking sites on the Web and invites



you to join our online family!

By becoming one of our friends, you will receive quick updates about recent events and upcoming activities and read interesting notes and articles. You can join in on supporting our cause by adding the "Causes" application, recruiting other Facebook members to join, and even donating online using a credit card. Share with others your COVA stories and bring new ideas to the organization by posting on our Facebook wall. Connect with long-lost friends and co-workers, and tell them what COVA is all about.

To view our page, navigate to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for "COVA Central Ohio." Click on the "Add as Friend" icon to the right of our name, and become a member of our online community!

## Wellness Management & Recovery starts off strong

This quarter's Wellness Management & Recovery (WMR) group was joined by alumni of Careers for the Future for an entertaining lecture in January. Phil Sorentino, humor consultant, regaled the audience with humorous insights and animated conversation. The entertaining lecture was arranged by program leader Pam Buford.

In March, the group proudly accepted their program completion certificates during a graduation ceremony. Participants enjoyed cake and other snacks, and each received a congratulatory bouquet during their last WMR session.



Pam Buford (center) and Belinda Spinosi (back right) with the winter WMR class.



**Humor Consultant Phil Sorentino**

## Evening job club support group off and running

In late 2008, COVA expanded its hours of service and added a job club support group to better serve its clients' needs.

In September, evening hours were added on Wednesdays to accommodate participants' late-night work sessions. COVA's Resource Center is now open until 8 p.m. on Wednesday evenings.

The employment teams decided to make even better use of the extra hours by creating a new job club support group, dubbed Club COVA.

Club COVA began in 2008 as a 60-minute meeting open to anyone who sought a supportive environment to talk about job-related topics. Each

Wednesday, career developers choose a new topic of discussion, ranging from finance basics to overcoming a criminal background to dealing with a mental illness while returning to work.

In addition to COVA staff presentations, special guest speakers – including mental health ombudsman Neal Edgar and Kemba General Manager Gary Weaver – were invited to share their knowledge with club attendees.

The employment teams are always looking for new topic ideas, so if you have an idea you'd like to suggest, please contact Robin Hepler, marketing director, at [rhepler@cova.org](mailto:rhepler@cova.org).

## Club COVA . . . . . end-of-summer schedule

- **August 12** – Board Chair Sara Neikirk will explain how teamwork will help you succeed on the job.
- **August 19** – Managing stress with Career Developer Ann Heilbrunn.
- **August 26** – Ellen Rapkin will share what free health care resources the Columbus Health Department offers.

**COVA welcomes five new members to the Board of Directors**

Financial consultant **Patrick**



**Patrick Knott**

**Knott** has 23 years of experience within the financial community, five of which he spent consulting with companies in distress situations. Patrick looks forward to providing insight and direction in COVA's future growth, and hopes to offer his skills and background as part of the Financial, Building and Facilities, and Planning committees. "COVA is an organization that I believe provides a valuable service," he said in his membership application, "and I wish to be a part of its future."

**Sandra Cannon**, LISW, recently



**Sandra Cannon**

retired as the Chief of the Office of Forensic Services for the Ohio Department of Mental Health, where she has worked for more than 20 years. Her position at ODMH required her

to coordinate statewide forensic psychiatry programs and policies and to develop a system of care for forensic individuals across Ohio. Sandra is involved in several mental health committees, including the Supreme Court of Ohio's Advisory Committee on Mental Illness in the Courts. She is consulting now with both the state and Franklin County Children's Services.

**Leah Basobas O'Carroll**, J.D., has



**Leah Basobas O'Carroll**

10 years of experience as a social worker, seven of which she spent at COVA, first as a Vocational Program Manager and then as a Community Assessment Coordinator. In 1999, she

began attending Capital University Law School. Since graduating, Leah has worked for CASA of Franklin County, as well as in the Civil Rights and Health and Human Services sections of the Ohio Attorney General's Office. "I am so proud to

have worked at COVA and have watched it grow and develop all these years," she said. "Serving as a member of the Board would give me an opportunity to again contribute to COVA and to help fulfill its mission."

**Pat Halaiko** is president of Custom Air, a local heating and cooling contractor. COVA and Pat worked together refurbishing the HVAC system when COVA relocated to its current home in Clintonville.



**Pat Halaiko**

Pat has joined the finance committee and will also play an integral role advising the board on facilities issues.

**Karen Twinem** is executive vice president of Paul Werth Associates. She has an extensive career in public relations and journalism and currently leads the public relations practice with several national clients at Paul Werth.



**Karen Twinem**

Karen is active in the NAMI Family-to-Family program and has already assumed leadership of the Board's Resource Development Committee.

**COVA staff shares expertise at professional seminars**

• **Betsy Nofziger** has been spreading the word about COVA by attending several conferences on its behalf. Career Developer **Angel Peppers** joined Betsy at the DiversAbility Conference in the fall, where the two gave a presentation on managing psychiatric disabilities in the workplace. Betsy also attended the Riverside Hospital DiversAbility Conference with Board member **Katie Feick** to participate in a panel that discussed psychiatric disabilities and perspectives of employees and employers.

• The Benefits Consultation team hosted the Work Incentives Seminar Event (WISE) at Job Leaders in April and will be doing four more locations in 2009. Program

Director **Julie Koehler** and Senior Benefits Consultant **Ron Swain** introduced the array of work incentives available from the Social Security Administration. Ron also presented to the Franklin County ADAMH Family Advisory Council. For information on future WISE, contact Karie Urban at 614-294-7117 ext. 287 or kurban@cova.org.

• In May, the Ohio State School for the Blind invited COVA to the Technology and Resource Fair. **Ron** presented on work incentives and Social Security benefits to an audience of parents, students and teachers from across the state. Benefits Consultant **Karie Urban** staffed an information booth and answered audience questions.

• Pathways Program Director **Meg Griffing** and Benefits and Financial Consultation Program Director **Julie Koehler** were invited to Washington, D.C. by the National Service Inclusion Project, a Corporation for National and Community Service training and technical assistance provider. There, the two provided expertise on benefits impacted by the passage of the new Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act (HEART) legislation, which deals with military, taxes and jobs.

• The Social Security Administration invited **Meg Griffing** to give a presentation on promising practices in benefits consultation and community outreach. Meg covered information that would help area work incentive coordinators who work with disabled individuals returning to work and using their Ticket to Work benefits.



**Senior Benefits Consultant Ron Swain explains benefits equations at the COVA-sponsored WISE.**

# .....4th Annual COVA Ice Cream Social.....

More than 400 neighbors, participants, COVA supporters and four-legged friends attended the traditional COVA Ice Cream Social on July 9.



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- Kemba Financial Credit Union
- The Glass Thimble
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# COVA

*Creating opportunities that work*

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