

COVA

Creating opportunities that work

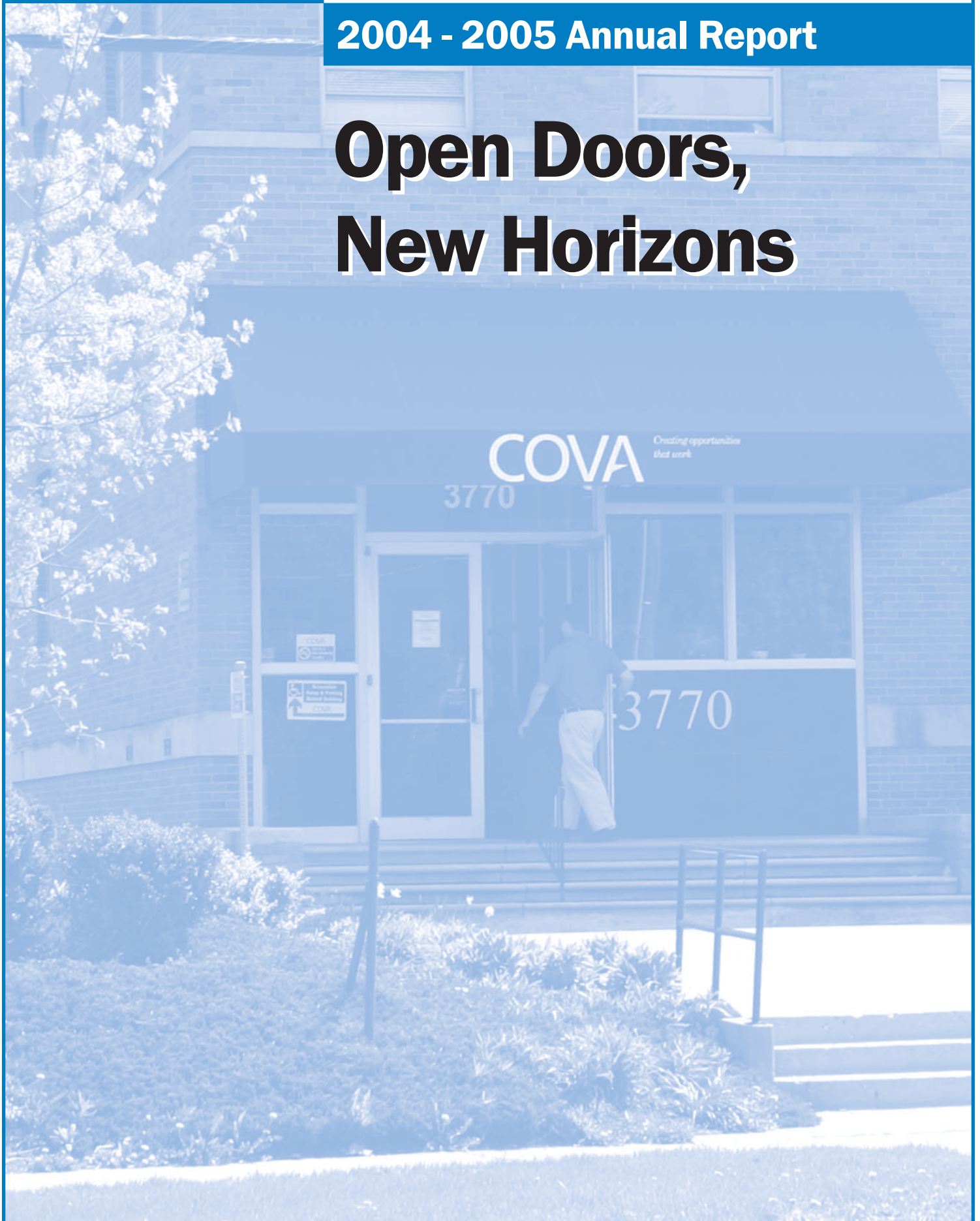
2004 - 2005 Annual Report

Open Doors, New Horizons

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Open Doors, New Horizons

Nearly 25 years ago at the inception of COVA, none of us could have predicted that the doors to opportunities for people with mental health disabilities would have opened as widely as they have today. COVA, the Center of Vocational Alternatives, has opened doors and broadened access for thousands of participants by expanding our basic services while embracing new opportunities to serve diverse communities with comprehensive programming

In 2004 and 2005 we envisioned the next stage of our mission by incorporating our long-held belief that we don't just facilitate careers for our participants, we help to create a quality lifestyle for each person with a career as the doorway.

In 2004, COVA:

- Entered new partnerships expanding our employment services to persons with mental illness in the suburban and rural communities of Delaware and Morrow counties.
- Launched a new partnership to provide coordinated housing, employment and clinical counseling to jointly serviced participants with mental health disabilities.
- Contributed to evidence-based practices by embarking on a research study to substantiate the importance of motivation as a key factor in achieving and retaining employment for workers with mental illness.
- Enhanced our mission statement and strategic objectives to encompass our broadened scope.
- Reached out to employers through exciting new seminars and targeted mass media articles.
- Laid the groundwork for our Careers for the Future in-depth technology, workplace and counseling education programming.
- Continued disproving the myth persons with mental disabilities can't work by providing benefits consultation.

In 2005, COVA:

- Enrolled the initial class of Careers for the Future Training Program, establishing on-site education for participants seeking a specially designed academic curriculum for technology and workplace skill training in a mental health recovery environment.
- Received the New Freedom Initiative Award from the U.S. Secretary of Labor in recognition of exemplary and innovative efforts to train, recruit and hire people with disabilities.
- Expanded benefits consultation services, successfully engaging more participants in the workplace in increasingly creative ways.
- Created a new corporate computer equipment donation program linking our business supporters to our participants through much-needed individual residential personal computer placements.

Looking into the future, COVA must continue to increase access for persons with mental illness, further opening the doors of opportunity into the workplace and providing entrance to a fully realized life free of stigma.

We truly remain *the* Center of Vocational Alternatives, creating opportunities that work.

Judy Braun, COVA President

Joseph E. Burke, Chair, COVA Board of Trustees



**Judy Braun,
COVA President**



**Joseph E. Burke, Chair,
COVA Board of Trustees**



COVA opened doors for:

**Nancy Kammerud
Careers for the Future
Training Program Graduate**

“I never thought I would be able to help others again. But by helping me help myself, COVA has gotten me excited about getting back into the work world to make the most of my unique talents and achieving my dream of becoming a part of the social work profession. The ENHANCE program led me to the debut class of Careers for the Future Training Program, which has provided me a technology and workplace skill education I never thought possible. Before COVA, I was isolated and unsure of myself. Now I have supportive friends and the staff at COVA to help guide me through life and into a meaningful career.”

COVA: Opening Doorways into the Workplace

COVA understands that our participants are at varying levels of readiness to prepare for and advance through careers. That’s why we not only open doors to work, but to community attitudes and education. On the other side of the door, we recognize that employers provide key access to understanding of mental health issues in the workplace, so we continue to increase our services working directly with business representatives.

Career and Skill Training Services

Career Preparation

Participants come to COVA with the full spectrum of readiness to work. Some simply need assistance getting a career, but others need counseling and assessment to get to the career search level. Our career preparation assistance includes:

- **Orientation:** held each Tuesday and Thursday at 1:30 with no registration required. becoming independent. This includes accessing housing, education and employment, as well as other needs.
- **Rehabilitation Readiness:** a structured, counselor-led class that meets twice weekly for four weeks to identify needs, barriers, skills and issues related to returning to work.
- **Independent Living Skills Assessment:** for Franklin County Children Services, to evaluate life domains for 16-year-old youths and provide a service plan.
- **Vocational Assessment:** awareness of personal strengths, learning capacity, interpersonal skills, assessment of work skills, and need for accommodation and support.
- **Benefits Application Assistance:** experts provide help completing applications for benefits, including Social Security Disability, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Medicare, Medicare Part D, Supplement Security Income, and more.
- **Adjustment to Disability:** individualized counseling service for people in the process of seeking work, are currently employed, or need assistance in better managing their disability.
- **Work Adjustment:** opportunity for a paid work experience in a job prior to making a commitment to a job or career.
- **Program Support:** for people in training or educational programming seeking to obtain skills necessary to achieve goals. This job coaching is related to activities other than direct employment.
- **Transition Employment:** employment and flexible work hours for people within a COVA-contracted work site with an ultimate goal of community employment.
- **Youth Aftercare Program:** transitional support services to youth exiting Franklin County Children Services, ages 18-21, who are leaving home care and need assistance in

- **Careers for the Future Technology Programs:**
- **Careers for the Future Training Program:** unique 12-month recovery-based health, wellness and computer training program in an accommodative learning setting with workplace internships and assistance with full-time employment placement.
- **Resource Center:** staff-facilitated, walk-in computer center with Internet access and office equipment for self-directed skills training and job search; assistance with resume preparation; access to private voice mail, videos, fax machines, copiers, shredders, scanner, directories and more.
- **Computer Equipment Contribution Program:** community and business partners donate used computers to be repaired and given to COVA participants for home use.

Career Initiation

From short-term exposure to potential jobs to a variety of work placement options, COVA works toward satisfying long-term employment suited to each individual.

- **Employment Services/COVA**

Works: assistance with developing a job search plan and work toward successful placement with a community employer consistent with the participant's interests and skills.

- **Job Shadow/Job Tryout:** on-the-job exposure develops better understanding of the scope of a specific job, and allows participants to have a vocational experience with a community employer.

- **Job Coaching:** provides personal guidance and support services both on and off the employment site with the goal of job retention.

- **Work Incentives Benefits**

Consultation: assistance for those who want to become or stay employed while maximizing their benefits from Social Security Administration (SSA), Job and Family Services, and others; includes analysis and discussion about the interplay among benefits, earned and unearned income, and strategies to get the most monthly income possible.

- **CHOICE:** high school students with emotional disturbances receive vocational development to help them make successful transitions from school to work, through career exploration activities and assistance in securing and retaining employment.

Career Advancement

To provide long-term and as-needed support to ensure the success of people with mental illness in the workplace, COVA provides resources to both workers and their employers.

- **Follow-Along:** helps people adapt to a new job and maintain their employment; can be done at the employment site or away from it. Also assists employers to maximize their employees' potential.

- **Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS):** help with completing the Social Security Administration Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS), designed to help participants reach work goals and reduce or eliminate the need for government benefits.



Isaiah St. Cin (center) with Career Developers Eddie Edwards and Julie Amaya

COVA opened doors for:

Isaiah St. Cin
Transition Youth Services Participant

“Going to Alum Crest High School, I was having problems meeting my volunteering requirements that I need to graduate. COVA’s CHOICE representative asked me if I wanted to volunteer over the summer on the pet treat program that gets students involved in making and selling treats to help animal organizations. I started out baking, but found out I’m good at selling too. Getting involved has helped me with my social skills and I even got volunteer work at a dog shelter near school. I’m getting ready to go to college and this experience will help with applications and provide references. I hope to become a counselor to help kids who have been abused.”

Services for Employers

Studies have shown that people in recovery are highly motivated employees who strive to work hard, be part of a team environment, and learn new skills. Meaningful employment has been shown to be a critical factor in successful recovery from mental illness.

We have found the key to this success is a partnership between COVA, the employer and the employee. COVA can provide employers with: qualified staffing, psychiatric disability management, linkage to tax incentives, improved employee retention, added diversity in the workplace, corporate partnership opportunities, and disability management seminars.

Creating Even More Opportunities that Work

Broadening our Mission

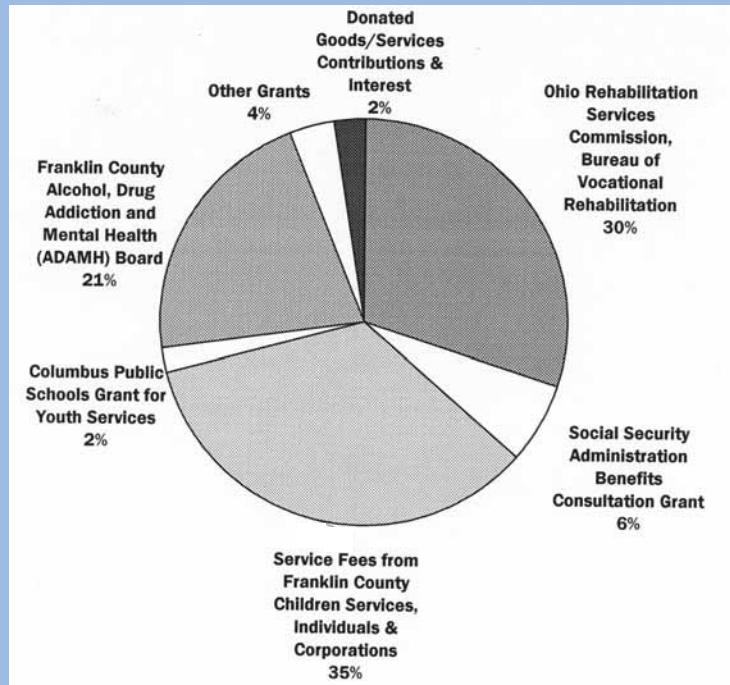
COVA has long believed that we help our participants reach their full potential not just as employees, but as people. To that end, we chose to modify our mission statement in 2004 to read:

“To assist and support the community in overcoming mental, emotional and other challenges to a productive life, focusing on employment, economic stability and life skills.”

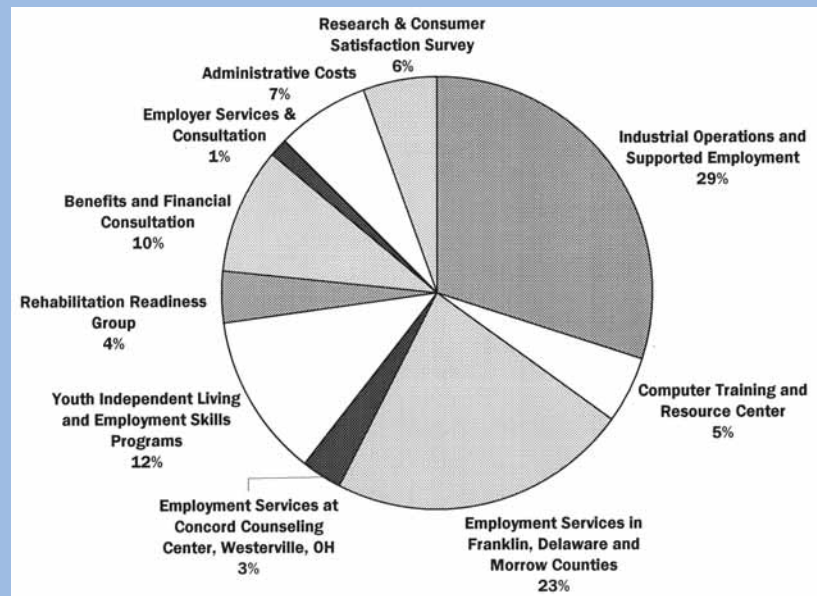
While COVA remains focused on employment, we recognize it as an important, but singular, step in overcoming the obstacles of mental illness and emotional and other challenges. Work is just one step that leads to many related successes in the lives of our participants, providing a sense of self-worth, fostering independence and helping realize potential as a “whole person.”

In expanding our mission, we also keep striving to expand our services to reflect the reality of COVA’s goals. With an enhanced focus on eliminating the stigma of mental illness, COVA has evolved to provide assistance to disadvantaged youth, translate complex regulations to balance government benefits against work earnings, and work directly with employers either in instructional or intervention settings.

2005 Operating Income Sources \$4,150,834



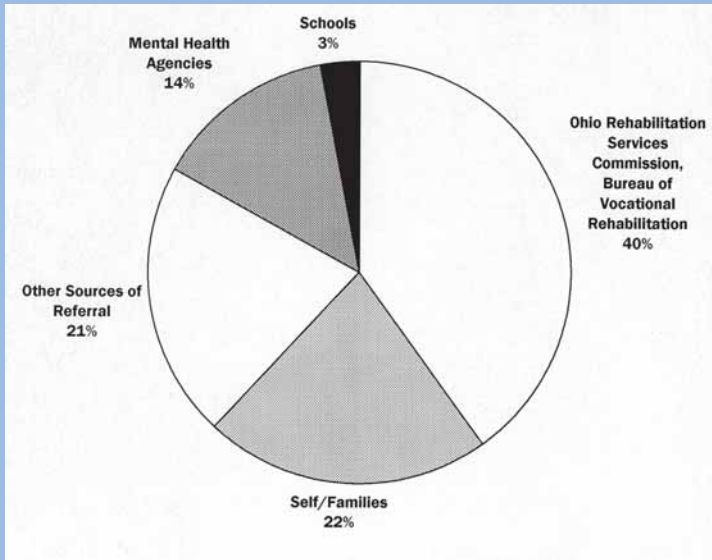
2005 Expenditures by Program \$3,443,308



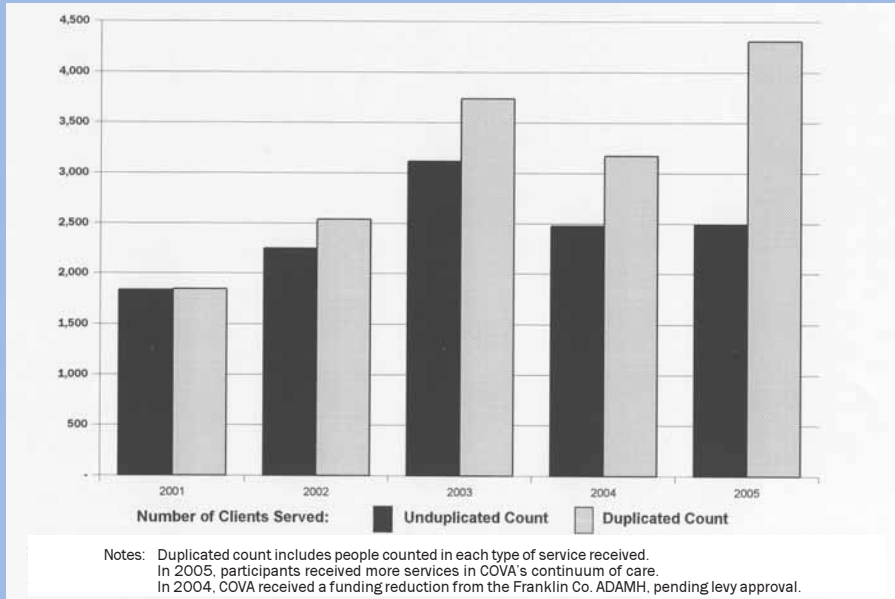
COVA opened doors for:
Linda M. Clark
COVA Participant

“I had the comfort of knowing COVA’s Resource Center would provide the necessary tools to make the most of my job search. COVA provides a one-stop hub where I could use computer programs and access electronic job databases, make online searches and applications, use the fax machine and make copies and phone calls. I am pleased COVA is providing even more intense computer skills education so more people with mental health disabilities can achieve professional-level jobs like me.”

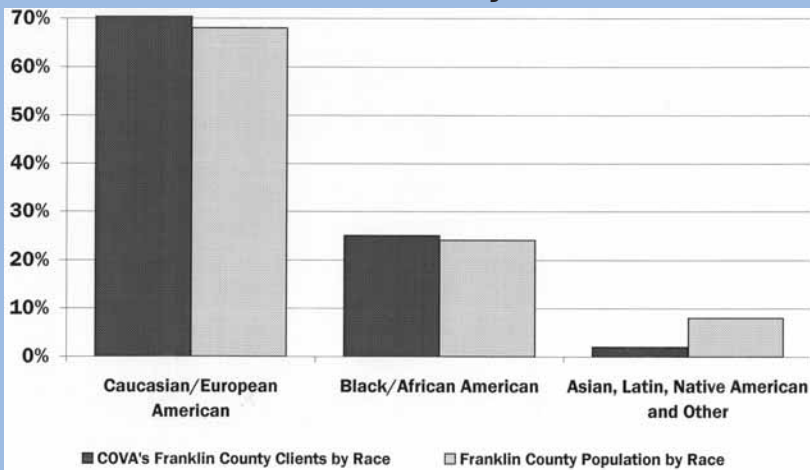
2005 Referral Sources



COVA Continues to Provide More Services



COVA Reaches Our Diverse Community



In 2005:

- COVA placed 565 people in jobs
- Average wage of placements: \$8.77
- Average hours worked weekly: 27
- Post Follow-Along job retention:
 - 6 months - 95%
 - 12 months - 91%
 - 18 months - 91%
- Number Served: 2,491
- Overall participant satisfaction: 96%
- Staff retention rate: 95%

COVA opened doors for:

William B. Reiber
 Community Employer
 Columbus PaperBox

"Employers are continually discovering COVA and increasing their understanding of how mental health disability impacts the workplace. As president of Columbus PaperBox, I've learned in working with COVA for years that, left ignored, mental illness cuts into organizational productivity and creates personal demons for the employees it affects. But accommodated throughout the workplace with individualized support, it's a win-win scenario pairing motivated workers with an educated and grateful employer. It is my sincere hope that more and more employers will allow themselves to become aware of the fine performance which workers with mental health disabilities are capable."



COVA 2005 Employer Placements

Accor
Accountemps
Allied Security
American Red Cross
AVI Food Systems
Big Lots
CallTech Communications
CCTC Inc.
Columbus Alzheimer's Care Center
Columbus Metropolitan Library
Columbus Speech and Hearing
Columbus Steel Castings
Columbus Zoo
Computers Plus
Concourse Athletic Club
Cord Camera
Courtyard By Marriott
Crittenton Community School
Dollar General
DragonFly Organic Neo V
The Drury Inn and Suites
Floral Department-Sam's Club
Giant Eagle
Goodwill
Goodwill-Licking County
Grant Medical Center
Guidance Vocational Services
Helpline of Delaware and Morrow Co.
The Home Depot
International Quality Care
JC Direct Mail, Inc.
The Kroger Co.
LifeCare Alliance
McDonald's
Michaels, The Arts & Crafts Store
Mount Carmel West
Ohio Department of Career & Family Services
Old Time Pottery
Parker Hannifin Corp.
Paw Spa
Safelite AutoGlass
Saperstein Associates Inc.
Say It With Silk
Southeast Inc.
Southwestern City Schools
Steak n Shake
Traditions Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
The Treasure Chest Child Care Center
Trilegiant
Verizon Wireless
Vocational Guidance Services
Weltman Weinberg and Reis

New Freedom Initiative Award

In 2005, COVA received a prestigious national award – the U.S. Secretary of Labor New Freedom Initiative Award. The award is given annually to only seven organizations nationwide who demonstrate exemplary and innovative efforts in furthering the employment and workplace environment for people with disabilities.



COVA received the award because of our service to help people with psychiatric disabilities develop skills, and find and maintain employment, and our work as a resource for employers to manage people with mental illnesses.



COVA opened doors for:

Diana Doherty
Participant's Parent

"COVA has literally changed my daughter Mary Catherine's life. Mary Catherine has speech and hearing disabilities, right-side movement impairment and some cognitive impairment, but is motivated to work. We have really benefited from Benefits Consultation helping Mary Catherine understand how she can balance work with disability benefits as she leaves school. With COVA's assistance, she is finishing training to become a dog groomer through a government PASS (Plan for Achieving Self Support) program and is looking forward to a successful career search."

COVA opened doors for:

John Maiden
COVA Participant

"After spending time out of the workplace to manage my mental health, it was very difficult for me to find work again. Fortunately, I received a referral to COVA's newly expanded service here in Delaware and Morrow Counties. COVA's career developer helped me succeed in getting a job. I hold a college degree and have varied professional experience, but am glad to be going to work several days a week in food service to put my mind on something other than my illness. I hope that in building back up my career, I can figure out what a 'dream career' means to me."

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John Finch
Harris & Associates
Hilb Rogal & Hobbs
John A. & Rachel M. Kuhar
Dennis Lloyd
1 Medical Distribution
National City Bank
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William Reiber
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