

# COVAVIEW

- Supported Employment program transforms to new model
- Client motivation is key
- Students continue on Careers track
- Teen program reaches milestone

## Award puts COVA on national stage

COVA is thrilled to announce our recent receipt of the prestigious New Freedom Initiative Award recognizing excellence in furthering the employment and workplace environment for people with disabilities.

Created by the Bush administration's U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao in 2002, the New Freedom Initiative Award recognizes the efforts of non-profit organizations, small businesses, corporations and individuals creating public-private partnerships linking people with disabilities to the workplace.

COVA is the only Ohio award recipient for 2005, and shares this honor nationwide with six other deserving award winners, including pharmaceutical giant Merck and Co., Inc.

"Our receipt of the New Freedom Initiative Award is a major step forward in the recognition of the important work COVA performs in our community," says Judy Braun, COVA president and founder. "We are especially proud that the Department of Labor has chosen to recognize the importance of public-private partnerships within the mental health arena, placing us at the same level as physical and mental impairments that often dominate disability issues within the workplace."

To accept the award, bestowed in a Washington, D.C., ceremony October 27, COVA sent an executive and volunteer leadership team to share the once-in-a-lifetime experience. Culminating months of preparation, the national recognition touched the hearts of everyone in the group.

"Because we are so invested in what

we do, the reality of the award didn't fully hit us until we walked in to the ceremony," says Joseph E. Burke, chair of COVA's Board of Trustees. "I think we were all surprised at the level of emotion we experienced. Seeing COVA on the national stage meant so much not just in recognition of our past achievements, but for the promise of our future potential."

COVA will leverage its national recognition by pushing for further understanding and support of mental health issues in the workplace at the federal level while continuing to educate and expand service locally, Judy says, noting the award would not have been possible without the incredible commit-

ment of COVA staff and supporters.

"To know that out of 70 applicants across the country, the federal government distinguished COVA gives us great hope for continuing our service advances with both civic and corporate support," Judy says. "By providing a conduit to the workplace and a place in mainstream society, COVA has enriched the workforce, the lives of our clients, the diversity and understanding of employers, and the community at the local and state levels and nationwide."

▼ **COVA President Judy Braun (left to right) poses with Merck Co. CEO Richard Clark, U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and Assistant Secretary W. Roy Grizzard.**





**Judy Braun,  
President**

## Supported Employment program transforms to new model

As a loyal supporter of COVA, you'll know that we are always changing for the better! One of our latest ongoing efforts is the transformation of our Supported Employment model. Obviously, we want all of our clients to share the personal successes a career work path offers, and to that end, are transforming our Supported Employment program into a

long-envisioned model of a transitional employment solution that moves more clients into the traditional workplace.

I'm excited to announce that while COVA will continue to provide direct employment opportunities through the Supported Employment program, we will dramatically increase focus on utilizing the program to transition clients from COVA payroll to direct employment with one of our employer partners, through a combination of additional training and education.

There will always be a place for the Supported Employment model within COVA. Initiated as our original service in the 1980s providing janitorial work for clients, it provided a cutting-edge solution at the time to employment for persons with mental illness, who many thought simply could not work. In our confidence in a workplace solution, we became the employer and sold the services (the program is jointly funded by ADAMH and through industrial contracts secured by

Ohio Industries for the Handicapped). But as we continue to evolve, our hope is to utilize direct COVA employment of clients as just one among our menu of varied services, investing its revenue into expansion of programs such as benefits consultation, technological training and career development.

While Supported Employment will continue to provide long-term employment through COVA for clients best suited to this workplace model, the focus within the program will no longer be only on this important job opportunity, but expanded as a means to prepare and transition clients capable of making the shift to other work opportunities in the community. We have always believed that employment in community businesses, along with supportive rehabilitation services is best for most persons, and look forward to furthering this belief in improved mission-oriented programming!

## Study proving client motivation is key

*By John Finch, PhD  
Vice President of  
Rehabilitation and Employment*

Having long hypothesized a correlation between motivation and success in choosing, getting and keeping employment, COVA has reached preliminary conclusions in an empirical research study of our clients.

Funded by the Ohio Department of Mental Health, the study represents the culmination of several years of prior research involving COVA and strives to provide critical data to improve our employment and retention rates. We are conducting the study in conjunction with a local research firm, Decision Support Services, Inc.

Recording self-reported motivation from our clients throughout 2005, we have focused our study on our Rehabilitation Readiness pre-employment services and Employment Services that strive for job

placement. Studying 162 clients, we are measuring areas including commitment to working; favorable expectations about working; expected skill match to desired work; barriers and obstacles to working; and, a sense of urgency to obtain work.

Preliminary findings show that upon completion of Rehabilitation Readiness, clients were more positive, or had already entered the service with a high level of motivation. For clients entering Employment Services, we are finding that they were even more positive about working than clients enrolling in Rehabilitation Readiness.

Because we want to maintain high levels of motivation, COVA may use study results to fast-track identified motivated clients, and work toward streamlining the intermediate service period between Rehabilitation Readiness and Employment Services to retain motivational gains. COVA is also likely to engage in

additional programming to reach less self-directed, less motivated clients.

Our research project continues through June and we are optimistic the project can obtain an additional year of funding to study aspects of motivation and employment in more depth. Such research projects are valuable to COVA not only to advance knowledge in our field, but to develop innovative practices to better achieve our mission.

### **COVAVIEW** Winter 2006

COVA View is a quarterly publication produced by COVA Marketing. Please contact us at [covaview@cova.org](mailto:covaview@cova.org), or (614) 294-7117, ext. 278.

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## ADAMH ballot success a victory for COVA and community

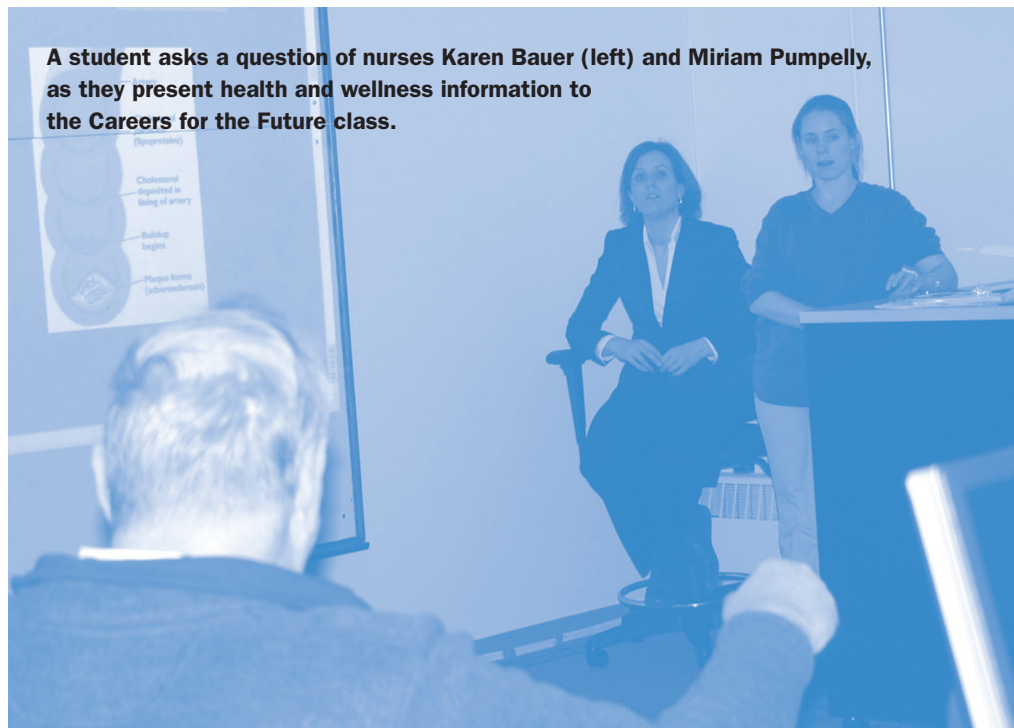
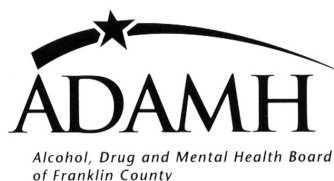
COVA is profoundly grateful for the community support of ADAMH Issue 7, the funding renewal levy that received overwhelming approval at the polls in the November election, and we extend a sincere thank you to the voters and for COVA staff support.

As a funding recipient of ADAMH, which supports mental health issues, substance abuse, and prevention services, COVA congratulated the Franklin County agency with a \$690 donation to Friends of ADAMH. COVA's staff organized a chili cook-off to raise funds for the renewal campaign that COVA matched dollar for dollar. The generosity of our staff helped enhance COVA's total contribution to the successful levy campaign.

"Some of COVA's most popular services, such as our Resource Center, providing self-directed job search assistance, are made possible through ADAMH funding," says John Finch, PhD, COVA vice president of Rehabilitation and Employment. "We are very pleased that we can continue to rely on ADAMH support to focus on the specialized needs of persons with mental health disabilities."

COVA is excited to further our connection to ADAMH as they recently have appointed Anne Marie Dujardin-DeBuck, a former COVA board member, to their Board of Trustees.

Speaking on election night, ADAMH CEO David Royer said, "This community again has said that people with mental illness matter." We at COVA couldn't agree more.



## Students continue on 'Careers' track

COVA's groundbreaking Careers for the Future recovery-based computer training program continues to make strides with our first-ever class of eager, committed students. Ten students have completed the first quarter of the computer and personal skills curriculum, which culminated in an opportunity for them to display their advances in a celebratory presentation December 15 among family members and COVA staff.

At the event, each student displayed a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation and computer-generated newsletter on the topic of their choice. "But computer skills are just one important part of classroom training that provides a pathway to improved life and work productivity," says Erin Moore, lead teacher.

"When we're discussing personal wellness, we relate everything we do back to computers, which helps our students learn about nutritious recipes and food preparation, for example, while gaining insight into online research," Erin says.

Careers for the Future launched in fall, 2005, and is funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant supporting teaching positions and a brand-new classroom. Moving into the second of four quarters, the class will begin to take advantage of customized wellness curriculum

developed by family practice graduate-level nursing students in The Ohio State University College of Nursing.

"In assessing the class, we aimed to identify five to six common health and wellness themes that the students either struggle with or want to learn more about," says Karen Bauer, a registered nurse pursuing her advance practice degree. Karen and her colleagues will be working with the class two hours a week through March.

"He comes home each night and tells us all about what he learned that day in his computer class at COVA."

– student's family member

Careers for the Future students will graduate in June, and already are making noticeable progress.

"We haven't seen him so excited or engaged about anything for a long, long time," says a student's family member. "He comes home each night and tells us all about what he learned that day in his computer class at COVA."

## COVA: Providing opportunities that work for staff, too

Because we truly value the contributions of the staff members who are responsible for all of COVA's successes, we want to ensure COVA is the "employer of choice" for all of our workers. Keeping a high level of job satisfaction and retention

**With an employee retention rate of more than 95 percent, employees view COVA as the best place to pursue their careers.**

within our workforce creates satisfied, motivated employees who maximize our ability to pursue our mission.

In a 2005 employee survey, our staff responded most favorably to the warm, friendly people and atmosphere at COVA, the flexible schedules we afford, and of course, the value of being an integral part of our mission.

Survey respondents also spoke of their

high level of independence coupled with supervisory resources, the ability to be involved in a creative, forward-thinking field and the variety of diverse, interesting work within their individual positions.

We continue at COVA to be amazed at the loyalty of our employees, nearly 20 percent of whom have been with us for 10 years or more. With an employee retention rate of more than 95 percent, we are confident our workers feel they are part of our long-term efforts, viewing work at COVA as the best place to pursue their careers.

## Seminars on workplace mental health issues continue

COVA will be continuing our series of seminars on mental health issues employees face in the workplace throughout 2006, and will be inviting community employers to attend to learn more about these important topics. In December,

we presented "Managing Mental Health and Legal Issues in the Workplace," by John Finch, PhD, of COVA, and William Nolan, esq., of Squire Sanders & Dempsey, LLP. Participants learned about:

- Common mental illnesses
- Impact of mental illness on disability costs
- ADA and FMLA laws and psychiatric disability
- How to avert or reduce the impact of a psychiatric leave of absence
- Timely recovery and transitioning back to work
- Landmark court decisions related to disability management.

In addition to our continued commitment to host educational seminars, COVA can provide customized training on workplace mental health issues directly to individual employers.

If you would like to be on a mailing list for upcoming seminars, or wish to learn more about on-site workplace education opportunities, please write to [covaview@cova.org](mailto:covaview@cova.org) or call (614) 294-7117, ext. 278.

## From those we serve

COVA staff frequently gets letters of thanks from appreciative clients who wish to express their gratitude. This note honors the work of Rachel Riley, career developer:

November 3, 2005

Dear Rachel,

*You are great at what you do, and I am so thankful to have you as my counselor. This is the first time in my life that I've had someone take me by the hand and encourage me and support me the way that you have. I did not know that there were such services out there for people. When I was diagnosed with bi-polar, I thought my life was over. I was so ashamed, but your support and direction in helping me set attainable goals has helped me in numerous ways.*

With deep appreciation,

Lisa

# Thank You!

COVA extends appreciation to the following individuals and organizations that have contributed to COVA in the last half of 2005:

### COVA Donors

AON Risk Services  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Bogenschultz  
Michael Box  
Judy Braun  
Briggs High School  
Helen Jane Brown  
Kris Devine  
John Finch  
Dennis Lloyd  
William & Alicia Nolan  
William Reiber  
Mr. & Mrs. Rick Rummel

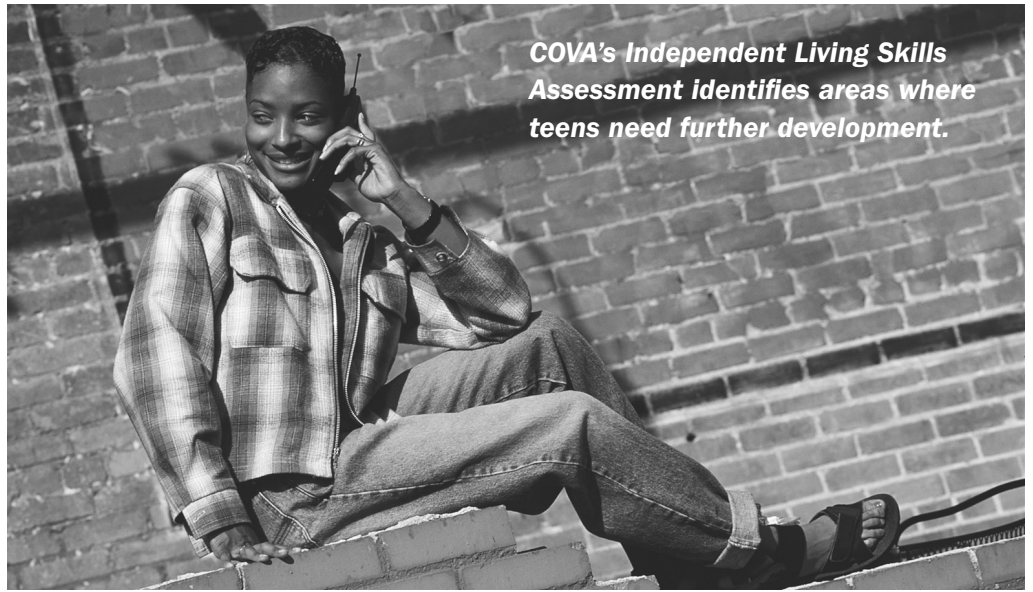
### COVA's Funding Partners

ADAMH (Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health) Board of Franklin County  
Columbus Public Schools  
Delaware-Morrow County Mental Health & Recovery Services Board  
Franklin County Children Services  
Ohio Department of Mental Health  
Ohio Industries for the Handicapped, Inc.  
Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission  
On My Own, Inc.  
Social Security Administration  
U.S. Department of Education  
Contracts with private industry

# Program reaches one-year milestone

Independent Living Skills Assessment (ILSA) is one of COVA's Transition Youth Services programs, and provides assessment services for Franklin County Children Services (FCCS). Federal law mandates that each child in foster care must have a living skills assessment near their 16th birthday, so FCCS partnered with COVA in 2004 to provide the evaluations. COVA staff professionals meet with each youth and their foster parents to appraise the teen's knowledge of housing, finance, transportation, job skills, cooking, and more. The assessment is used to develop a plan that identifies areas needing further skill development.

"At this age, there is little chance these children will be adopted, and since they will soon reach the



*COVA's Independent Living Skills Assessment identifies areas where teens need further development.*

emancipation age of 18, COVA strives through ILSA to ensure they will be able to care for themselves when they become independent young adults," says Jennifer Snyder, CRC, independent living skills evaluator. "A staff member interacts with each child monthly or quarterly until they

turn 18 to make sure they remain on track."

Since the ILSA program began in October, 2004, COVA has completed more than 120 assessments and plans. In addition to ILSA programming, Children Services also requires that each teen complete a formal life skills class.

## Speakers Bureau presentations

Last quarter, COVA staff shared the message of COVA's mission at the following conferences and community events:

- Rose Cacioppo; Ohio Rehab. Svcs. & Columbus Zoo; **Hidden Disabilities.**
- Ron Swain; What's Next MRDD

Parent's Group; **Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach.**

- John Finch, Betsy Nofziger; National Rehab. Counselor Assoc.; **The Effect of Motivation on Job Search and Work Outcomes.**
- Jill Jones; Central Ohio Special Ed. Regional Resource Ctr.; Transition Youth Summit for Special Education Students in Franklin County.

- John Finch, Betsy Nofziger, Erin Moore; Ohio Rehab. Assoc.; **A Recovery-Based Computer Training Program for Persons with Mental Illness.**
- John Finch, Sandra Zardus; Ohio SHERM Conference; **Mental Health and Legal Issues in the Workplace.**

To schedule a presentation, call (614) 294-7117, ext. 278.

## COVA Contribution Form

Please print

Your contribution will enable COVA to continue offering critically necessary services to people with serious mental illness and other barriers to employment in central Ohio. On behalf of those who benefit from COVA's services, thank you for your generosity and concern.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my donation of

\$

COVA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

Please send your check made payable to COVA and this completed form to:

COVA Fiscal Department  
3770 N. High Street  
Columbus, OH 43214

May we use your name in future announcements and publications identifying COVA contributors?

Yes  No

Would you like to be added to our mailing list?

Yes  No



*Helping individuals reach their full potential is at the core of COVA's services. We strive to instill hope in our clients by helping them face employment and other life issues with the resources necessary to make quality informed decisions. COVA's collaborative effort among employers, families and other service providers seeks to assure efficient and effective outcomes.*

*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.*

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