

## At the touch of a button .... new service brings more independence

There's a reason that Choices is known across Ohio as one of the most innovative service providers. Our latest addition to our array of services showcases just how that commitment to innovation adds to the quality of life for the individuals we serve. While this new service will be fully implemented in 2023, as with all change and innovation, our Remote Monitoring Service has been in the dreaming and then planning stages for years, including research and modeling on a small scale to determine first and foremost the impact such a service could provide for clients.

Beginning slowly a few years ago with a few individuals who were living independently or semi-independently, we installed remote monitoring systems with an expectation of two outcomes: individuals would be more independent and less reliant on staff being with them at night; and we as an organization, would be able to address at some level the ongoing crisis at the national, state and local level of not having enough staff to provide on-site support during the time periods when individuals are at home and not at work or in other community settings during the day ... a focus on service effectiveness and cost efficiencies.

Our administrative office on Needmore Road in Dayton now serves as the hub for our Remote Monitoring Service. In a room filled with a bank of computers that includes linkage to all the participating locations, our Remote Support Team has immediate access to all client health and service records, access to on-call staff, and more. This Team stands ready each night from 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. to monitor any and all activity in each location now in operation, which includes making early morning wake-up calls to get individuals started on their morning activities.

According to Facilities Director, Dan Cochran, the system can detect any activity taking place in that time period, with the Remote Support Team able to immediately access and respond to any change in a home, able to directly communicate with an individual, whether it's for something as simple as getting up for a bathroom break during the night or more serious concerns with falls, illness, and other needs. "If someone just needs reassurance, we are here to do that as well. Sometimes just having someone to talk to for a minute or two can be calming in a storm or if there is a need to be connected.

It is a two-way system, meaning that it allows staff to monitor what is happening in a home and, with the touch of a button, allows individuals to directly call and speak to someone on

the Team. There is also an on-call team of managers and/or direct support professionals who can be called to get to a home quickly if they are needed. With the commitment to the safety and well-being of clients, the service is linked with generators so that monitoring will not be disrupted due to power outages from storms or other emergencies."

The service is now operational in the range of home settings we provide, from those who live in their own homes or apartments, to those who live in group settings. The work that lies ahead in 2023 is not only maintaining and enhancing the service at where it is today, but getting the service set up and functioning in all designated homes, resulting in more independence for those on the receiving end of our ongoing commitment to innovation on their behalf.

### A life of giving – the legacy of Carolyn Grindle

A true giving spirit, Carolyn was 74 years old when she passed away in February in her Clark County apartment where she had enjoyed her independence. She joined our extended Choices family in 2002. Clark County Program Director Kesha Tuttle remembers her as a woman who both gave love and who was loved.



One of the most enduring loves of her life in her later years had but one simple name – Pumpkin. As a stray kitten, Pumpkin had the good fortune to be found by our caring Carolyn. The depth of the bond between the two was evident in Carolyn's deep grieving when Pumpkin's life ended last year. She spoke frequently of how the two of them would be united one day in Heaven.

Carolyn is remembered for how much she enjoyed helping others in her apartment building. She lived a full and active life. She was an avid Special Olympics bowler. Eating out was one of her favorite things to do, with Lee's Chicken and Wendy's at the top of her 'eating out' list. She enjoyed the people and the activities in her Adult Day Services programs, including Ability Builders and Choices. Hers was a life well-lived, a life where she was respected, honored, and supported, just as she gave all those things back in equal measure to those who were most special and loved by her as her extended Choices family, her friends, and one most fortunate stray calico cat named Pumpkin.

## Seasons of change *from Trent Grooms, Chief Executive Officer*

As we now move through the Spring of 2023 and prepare for what will definitely be a very busy Summer, we are filled with gratitude once again for the blooming of trees and flowers. We all get excited and renewed with the change of the seasons. We get excited and renewed as all of us at Choices continue to change. Our staff and our clients are equally excited to have put winter behind us as we prepare for warmer days, with new and changing challenges and opportunities. We're working hard to plan for and provide adventures and community participation, to, as we did for Steven Davis, make wishes come true.

Some of our clients have recently attended and participated in workshops and conferences throughout Ohio, advocating and making their voices heard. There have been trips to Florida and Las Vegas for some, accompanied by staff. There was the 2023 *Art & Soul* juried statewide art exhibit hosted at the Dayton Metro Library in Dayton. Plans for this Summer and into the Fall include a festival on the grounds of our Martin Center to be hosted by our Choices Champions program, as well as the growing excitement as we announce that our long-standing tradition of a Choices Talent Show will be returning, under the enthusiastic direction of our HR Clerical team member Shelley Harman and an equally enthusiastic planning team.

Our development team and management staff, in addition to their daily duties, have conducted and are in the process of planning fundraisers so that there will be funds to support individuals in their many summer activities. Hats off to the always creative Clark County team for their work with their latest two fundraisers with Little Caesars and Charleston Wrap.

We celebrate the seasons of hard work, patience, perseverance and skills from our Board, administrative

team, from staff like Facilities Director Dan Cochran and our maintenance team in finishing the renovation of our Martin Center, even as they continue their commitment for new changes and opportunities for the Center and the grounds around it. We celebrate that we are always open to change and to growth, including our recent expansion of our service area to include Clermont and Hamilton counties. Another exciting aspect of our expansion is our Remote Monitoring service, where we are again leaders in innovating new ways to promote and support the independence of those we serve. This new service allows us to use technology to ensure the safety and well-being of our clients in their homes without the necessity of on-site staff.

Change can be difficult as well, as it was with the recent resignation of Chief Program Officer David Roustio as he left us after many years of remarkable service to explore new opportunities and adventures for himself. As we wish him well in his new choices, we will now take some time to review our current operational structure to focus on increasing efficiency and effectiveness, which is a continual goal. There are the most difficult of changes ... moving forward following the loss of people like Bill Kramer, grateful for the many years of expertise he shared as a member of our Board.

Through each season and into each new season, we struggle to find just the right words, to be able to say the two most important words often enough – THANK YOU! Thank you to Bill, to David, to those who plan fundraisers, to those who are always forward-planning, to those who donate and give, to those who get on a plane and fly with someone so there can be that trip of a lifetime, to those who volunteer, to all of us together as this remarkable Choices family. What we do together is the highest measure of what it means to be family.

## Shining like a Star



What will professionalism, dedication, caring and very hard work get you these days? Ask Star Banks and she will tell you what it got her, a big change in her career with Choices, moving from the important day-to-day on-site work of managing our Burman home program to becoming one of our seven program directors, now overseeing nine programs in Montgomery County. In her three years with Choices, she has proven herself to be just

the kind of person who could step into a position with more responsibilities, challenges, and with more opportunities.

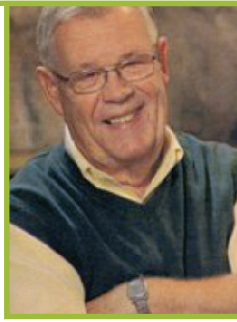
"I like my responsibilities," she says of her new role. "I love staying busy, and you do stay very busy! Becoming a director has given me a different outlook when it comes to the responsibilities we have to those we serve." Her progression from her first position into her new role as program director is one of the things that makes Choices such a good place to work for her. "Choices has given me the opportunity to grow and to shine like the STAR I was meant to be," she says with pure enthusiasm. "I love my profession. I love to sing and to read and I enjoy being around people. I'm passionate about learning and about teaching. I can do all that here!"

There is a sense of something beyond herself in her important role as a program director. "I would like to express my

*(continued on page 3)*

## A life of service – in gratitude to Bill Kramer

After his family, including Pamela, his wife of 64 years, his children and grandchildren, Bill Kramer's passion in life was his community. He lived that passion in service to community organizations that are all the continuing beneficiaries of his leadership and support, including Choices In Community Living. He was a long-time member of our Board of Directors, serving, as do all our Board members, as a volunteer. His professional and career expertise was finances, and he brought all that knowledge to our Board, serving as long-time treasurer. "Bill's attention to our financial direction and solvency was what always impressed me most about his service," reflects Chief Executive Officer Trent Grooms.



A lifelong Dayton resident, Bill, at the age of 86, remained active in guiding Choices as a member of our Board until his death, providing invaluable leadership as we continued to grow and expand, supportive of new services and programs, including the extensive work involved in the purchase and renovation of the Martin Center, always mindful of both the financial challenges and client opportunities of leading Choices into the future as we maintain the quality, efficiency and feasibility of current services. His involvement with Choices capped a lifetime of public service. Prior to joining our Board, he served as a Board member with the Montgomery County Board of Developmental Disabilities Services. He was also involved with the Dayton Historical Society, Land Use, and the Dayton Dragons.

His professional career included many years in finance, retiring from Liberty Savings Bank as its Chief Operating Officer. Trent shared the gratitude of all at Choices, saying "his never-ending focus on our future and his persistence on focusing on our financial responsibilities was significant. He is missed."

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### Shining like a Star *continued from page 2*

sincere thanks for the opportunity to serve as the first Black woman director at Choices," she shares. "This is a historic moment for me and for Choices and I am so deeply grateful to be part of it.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the trailblazing women and men who came before me and whose contributions have made this possible for me. I am committed to working tirelessly to ensure that I represent Choices with the highest level of excellence and integrity. Thank you again for this incredible opportunity. It's great to see progress being made in diversity in the workplace!"

## One strong voice for herself and others – Latisha's story



Latisha Martin has a strong and determined voice and over the years she has become a champion of self-advocacy locally, regionally and at the state level.

A graduate of Meadowdale High School, she has faced and overcome many obstacles with accessibility, accommodations and other issues that might have stopped someone with less determination.

While learning to speak clearly and consistently for her own needs and interests, she developed a passion for using her voice for others as well. She is well-known as one of the most forceful self-advocates in Montgomery County. She has been involved with Best Buddies for over ten years now, serving as an ambassador for that program at the University of Dayton. She is a member of the Ohio Provider Resource Association Advocacy Committee, and volunteers as a Certified Ohio State Ombudsman Associate.

While lending her voice on behalf of others with developmental disabilities, she is equally passionate for those who serve, for the staff who have been by her side. She serves on the Olmsted Task Force Direct Care Work Group, giving her input and insights as a service recipient in support of better wages for Direct Support Professionals, speaking from her own experiences of what it means to lose a vital support in her life because a staff person can no longer afford to stay on the job.

She recently made a presentation at the statewide leadership conference for self-advocates, focusing on Black History Month and what it means to her as a black woman and as a woman with developmental disabilities. When asked how this dual identity has shaped her life, she explained how people often see her in her wheelchair and see her as someone with a disability, and then see her for her skin color. "I have faced many obstacles," she shares, "including the lack of educational opportunities and housing discrimination. I wish people would ask me questions to get to know me before making assumptions about me. I would like for people to stop staring, stop using language that is offensive, stop thinking that I may be less than them because of my disability and my color."

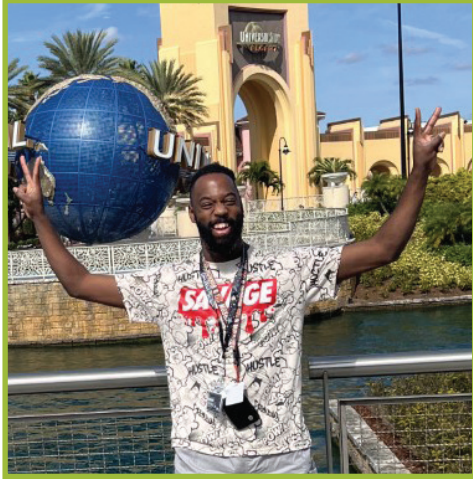
She was honored to speak as part of Black History Month. "I appreciate Black History Month because it celebrates the progress and the contributions made by so many people before me. However, more progress still needs to be made!"

There can be no doubt that progress will continue to be made because Latisha has no plans to silence her strong, persistent, and passionate voice any time soon.

## Oh, the places I have been

Traveling is one of Steven Davis's favorite things. Steven, who lives with his roommate in our Village Green home, is very independent. That independence includes being active in his community, where he loves to bowl and is also on a basketball team. He recently joined a dance team. He also enjoys wrestling and playing video games on the PS5 he received for Christmas.

He really enjoys traveling. One of his big dreams, one so big that he included it as one of his goals in his Individual Service Plan (ISP), was to take a trip of a lifetime to Universal Studios in Florida, and to take this one big trip in **style**.

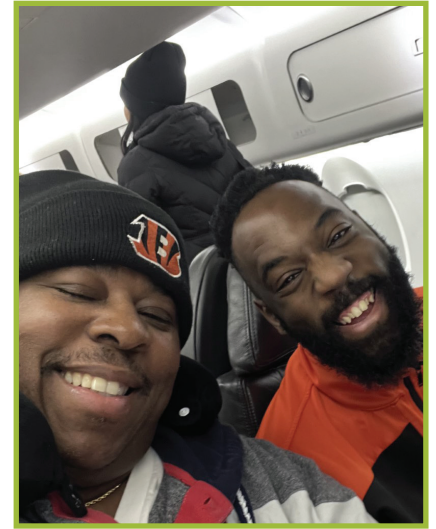


*One big wish for a vacation at Universal Studios ... check that off the 'to do' list for Steven Davis. In addition to this vacation, his love of travel has taken him to Philadelphia, Disney World in Florida, and Dollywood. Now onward to Disneyland in California!*

That's just what he did on his most recent vacation, go in style, as he and Program Director Marvin Lewis boarded a plane to fly first class to spend a week at Universal Studio Resorts, where the two spent time at all three theme parks. One of Steven's favorite things was the moonlight bowling and free boat rides in all the parks. They stayed at the Hard Rock Hotel with its presidential-like accommodations.

Highlights included Volcano Bay for the best water rides, Cabana Bay, where he immersed himself in bowling, and an array of virtual reality rides at the Island of Adventure, which included virtual adventures with Spiderman, the Simpsons, the Minions ... even Jimmy Fallon racing through space in New York.

Steven had dreamed of this one big vacation for a long time, and he knew he had to plan for it, which included making it one of his ISP goals, then saving money from his job at Neco for more than a year. "There was nothing but humongous smiles on his face the entire vacation," sums up Marvin. "From the time we got on the plane and into our first-class seats until the time we got back on a plane to return home with all his souvenirs (no weight restrictions on luggage being one of the first-class perks), it was just what a dream should be. It was totally awesome!"



*One guarantee that a vacation will be an adventure ... have Program Director Marvin Lewis by your side.*



What's better than a night out bowling with a friend? Our answer to that – a night out with 100 friends! Carmen Hawkins (I) and Destiny Boyer joined other clients and staff to share a great time with great pizza and a glass of pop at Poelking Woodman Lanes in March. Not even torrential rain could dampen all the excitement and energy. So happy to be together again!

As with so many of our activities, members of our staff stepped away from their regular responsibilities and made plans and arrangements to make

sure everything was in place for a great night of bowling, including our bowling coordinators for the event, Program Director Danette Addison, and Program Manager Amy Jewsikow. Danette gives a nod of gratitude to everyone at Poelking Lanes. "Poelking was very welcoming to our bowlers and so helpful in working with us."



Teresa Blythe was truly 'on a roll' at our bowling event, rolling three strikes in a roll for a Turkey and then another strike in the same game. She joined Devontae Woods as one of our best bowlers of the night, with Devontae finishing out the last four frames of his game with four strikes.

## Double your support with your matching gift

Just like families everywhere, we wish we could give those we serve everything they need and want. Just like families everywhere, there are times when we have to say no, when our limited resources must be prioritized, just like they are for your family. That's where you can make a difference. With a tax-deductible donation to Choices, you can provide some of the most basic things to those we serve when we have no other funding available ... things like medical equipment, eyeglasses, clothing, shoes, holiday, and birthday gifts, going out to eat or to a movie, maybe even take a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

Among the many ways to help is a matching gift. Do you know that matching gifts can double the impact of your gift? **If your employer offers a matching gifts program as a part of their corporate giving, you could double or even triple the impact of your contribution that then can come to Choices.** Some of the businesses that have gift programs in our area include Speedway, AK Steel, Lexis-Nexis, Home Depot, Carmax, State Farm Insurance, General Electric and many more.

To see if your company has a matching gift program, call your HR department to check out its website for details on corporate giving. The average minimum donation to qualify for a matching gift is just \$25. To participate, get a matching gift form from your employer, complete the form and mail it with your gift to us at Choices In Community Living, 1651 Needmore Road, Dayton, Ohio 45414. We will do the rest. *(For more information, please contact Vel Hux at [vhux@ciclob.com](mailto:vhux@ciclob.com).)*



**Strikes, spares and pie, oh my!** A picture is indeed worth a thousand words or perhaps even more. This picture of Larry Hunter taking time out from bowling at our March event to enjoy a slice of pizza pie says what we can't say with all our words. With a good slice of pizza, some good bowling, with friends and supporters right there by your side, this is a picture of happiness and living fully in the moment.

## Generous hearts give here. Thank you to our caring donors.

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## Be part of their future

By including a gift in any amount in your will and/or trust, you will join our ongoing efforts to assure a legacy for individuals with developmental disabilities. Including a gift to Choices will help us improve the quality of our services, innovate to provide new services, and develop and expand to enhance and support quality-of-life services for those we serve.

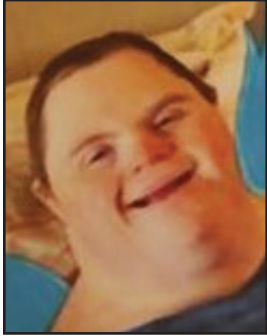
Please contact Vel Hux at [vhux@cicloh.com](mailto:vhux@cicloh.com) for more information or to speak with us about including Choices in your will or trust.



*Diane Hayslip (r), Clark County Adult Day Services Program Coordinator, supports Jan Ewers in showcasing a quilt created at the new Clark County Day program.*

## Saying farewell

The most difficult part of 2022, as it is every year, was saying farewell to those we lost. As difficult as it always is, our commitment to providing person-centered lifelong services means that we are there for those we have served through the many journeys of their lives, including being by their sides through illness and at the time of death, as we were for the four remarkable people we stood beside as their journeys ended.



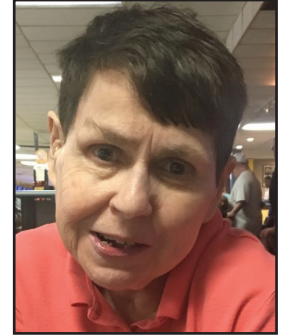
Michael Blanton was only 41 years old when he lost his life due to COVID. Not only was he a member of our Choices family, but he was also the beloved brother of Kay Bowman, who is a dedicated member of our Semi-Independent Living team. He was known affectionately as ‘Mikey B’. He loved professional wrestling, swimming, bowling, dancing, playing ball, and joking around. Most of all, he loved his sisters and family, including his family of choice at Choices.



Shawn Engle had to be Choices’ number one sports fan. He held that honor for the 22 years he was a member of our extended family. He died in his home (*Madison County*) at the age of 49. He was the biggest fan of anything Ohio State University. He was fanatic about the Cincinnati Bengals, a passion he shared with his brothers. He was also an active sports participant, competing in Special Olympics basketball, softball and track and field at the local, state and national level.



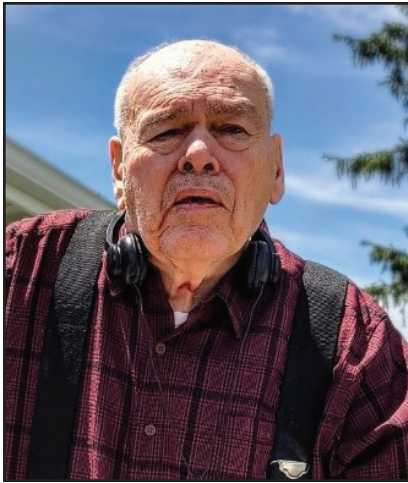
“Hey, Buddy.” Hearing that familiar greeting is what we miss most about Dwayne Smith, who lost his battle with COVID at the age of 61. He had the distinction of being one of the original clients to be served when Choices began in 1985, living in the Olive Road home, one of the three original homes. In addition to being one of our first clients, he was part of one of the first community-based work enclaves of MONCO Enterprises. He was a founding member of MONCO Jaycees, the first such chapter in the U.S. He was an avid bike enthusiast, which included not only riding but repairing as well.



It’s her whisper-soft voice and her small wave that we remember about Gisela Senf. She was 68 years old at the time of her death. She had been a part of our Choices family since 2011. She attended the Jergens Road Adult Services Center and Nemo’s Reef, but home was always where her heart was, where she will always be remembered sitting in her living room quietly and serenely crocheting, doing cross-stitch or some other sewing activity. It is those whose voices are the quietest who speak so loudly in our memories.



**We are the champions!** It was a celebration as Choices Board members, administrators, and guests came together in October at our Martin Center to formally open Choices Champions, our first stand alone, facility-based adult day services program, joining our community-based FunFit adult day services program. Open to Choices clients and community participants, Choices Champions provides a range of activities at the Center, including cooking classes in the new kitchen that was part of the completed renovation of the Martin Center in 2022. Participants also enjoy a range of community activities and events.



*We honor our most senior client, Joe Holland (Madison County), who is 84 years old.*

Choices In Community Living was founded in 1985 with the spin-off of residential services of the Montgomery County Board of Developmental Disabilities, beginning with three homes in Montgomery County. Our mission is to serve people with intellectual/developmental disabilities to have access to build safe, healthy, and meaningful lives in the community. We provide community-based, person-centered, lifelong services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Working in collaboration and partnership with county boards of developmental disabilities, we are licensed and certified by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and a member of the Ohio Provider Resource Association and statewide CREST Network.

We are governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees representing clients, families, business, and the community. Our 2022 Board of Trustees included: Deborah Dulaney, Chair; Myron Rheame, Vice-Chair; Bill Kramer, Treasurer; Susan Seitz, Secretary; Clinton Brown; Sharon Hairston; Larry Hansgen; Steve McHugh; Trent Grooms, Chief Executive Officer.

## Families live here

During 2022, CICL provided a continuum of residential options for 271 individuals, including around the clock support in group settings (245); Semi-Independent Living (13); Shared Living (5); Emergency Shelter (8.)

Our Adult Day Services served 150 individuals in our community-based Fun-Fit Adult Day Services program and Choices Champions Adult Day Services program in Montgomery County, as well as Day Services in Butler, Clark, and Warren counties.

Our Non-Medical Transportation service supported ongoing accessible door-to-door transportation for work, day services, recreation, field trips, medical, shopping and more integrated community access opportunities for 153 individuals, with a fleet of 75 accessible vans.

Other services include Advocacy, including the Voices of Greene County; Remote Monitoring Service that began at the end of 2022; as well as respite services.

Our service area includes the counties of Butler, Clark, Clermont, Greene, Hamilton, Madison, Montgomery, Preble, and Warren.



*Tom Barnes (Montgomery County) has been a part of our Choices family longer than any other client, having joined us as one of our first clients when Choices was founded. He has been part of many changes at Choices, as well as many changes in his life, from work to retirement, from living in a shared home with others, to owning his own home.*

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## About our staff

There were 314 staff serving in 2022, with 155 of those new hires. Of that number, 234 provide direct care services as DSPs and drivers. Eighty (80) dedicated team members serve as administrators, directors, managers, coordinators, and office support. We are proud of our staff for donating 130 pounds of food to the Dayton FoodBank.

The average tenure of our staff is 5.3 years, with several recognized for years of service during 2022, including:

30 years +: Kay Bowman; Renee Mills

25 years+: Rebecca Toomey

20 years+: Amy Jewsikow; Katherine Knox-Fitzwater; Kenneth Loggins

15 years+: Sandra Clairborne; Shelley Gromosiak; Robin Moore; Stephanie Rohrback; Carol Quinn

10 years+: Kemisola Ajomo; Leah Byrd; Greg Gromosiak; Kristen Park



*We welcomed Chris Hadley in his new role as Human Resources Director.*



*Program Director Danette Addison has the longest tenure, with 36 years of service.*



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*Please contact Vel Hux at (937) 898-2220 to update your mailing and/or email address, to receive Choices Voices online, or to remove your name from our mailing list.*  
*Judy Leasure, Editor*



**Expanding choices**

Choices is not only the first word in our name as a person-centered, value-based organization, it's our commitment to each individual we serve ... to always be looking at ways to provide new services and to expand and enhance current choices. With the support of the dedicated Clark County staff, we have expanded our Adult Day Services program in the county to a new community-based location where we can serve more individuals and provide them with more choices.

Our new location at the Springfield Life Center includes an activity room with plenty of space to paint, do crafts, play games, log on to tablets, sew, watch movies and more as chosen by participants. There is also a gym for basketball, cornhole, miniature golf, badminton, and more exercise. There is a stage for some of the most creative and popular activities ... dancing and karaoke. A full kitchen is available to learn basic cooking skills with assistance from staff.

We were limited to how many people we could serve prior to the move, and also limited in the type and amount of activities we could have available. In our previous location we could serve two to three individuals two times a week. With the move, we have expanded to five days a week with nine individuals, and we are growing! We're sharing many good times together as a group now, including holiday parties, birthday parties and bake sales. We look forward to many more activities, including talent shows, cooking and sewing classes with volunteers and more to be determined by the interests and choices of our participants.

*(Editor's Note: Thank you to Diane Hayslip for sharing news from Clark County.)*



*Meet the participants in Choices' newest Adult Day Services (Day Hab) program at the Life Center in Springfield: (l-r) Diane Hayslip (staff), Liz Deyo, Glenn Gerlaugh, Ron Blue, Margie Little, Jan Ewers, and Sue Ann Hall.*