

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **Richland Newhope holds 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Awareness Day**

(Mansfield, OH) – Twenty people representing businesses, schools, and agencies in Richland County Thursday got to experience first-hand what it means to have a disability as Richland Newhope sponsored its 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Awareness Day. The event is one of several activities being held to mark Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

The purpose of Community Awareness Day is to increase knowledge and understanding of how a disability can impact someone's life. An even more important goal is to focus attention on a person's ability and to show that people with developmental disabilities can be valuable members of our community.

"People with developmental disabilities are just like you," said Jane Imbody, Director of Community Relations. "They work, go to school, attend church, volunteer, play sports – all things that people without disabilities do. When you focus on a person's abilities, you can see many possibilities."

During Community Awareness Day, participants are paired with individuals served by Newhope, along with a staff member, and they are given a simulated "disability." Some participants are required to use a wheelchair, walker, brace, or goggles that impair vision.

The simulated disability activity lasted about two hours and took place in several locations, including Richland Newhope Industries, 150 E. 4th St; Raintree, 721 Scholl Rd., the Early Childhood Center, 255 Hedges St, Richland Newhope Industries' Longview Ave. location, 985 W. Longview Ave., and Element of Art Studio/Gallery, 96 N. Main St.

Community Awareness Day event ended with a luncheon where the participants described their experience.

This year's participants are members of the Mansfield-Richland Area Chamber of Commerce's 2009-2010 Leadership Unlimited class. They are: Steve Claiborne, 179<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing; Mariann Craig, CenturyLink; Steve Cummins, Mansfield Assemblies; Jon Hill, Mechanics Savings Bank; Dena Kirby, Pioneer Career & Technology Center; Tony Newman, First Merit Bank; Shari Petersen, OSU-Mansfield; Randy Pore, Village of Lexington; Bev Rosich, Area Agency on Aging; Doug Rothhaar, Therm-O-Disc; Becky Smith, Richland County Foundation; Brandon Smith, Renaissance Performing Arts; Amanda South, Richland Newhope; Erin Stucky, Visiting Nurses Association; Jean Taddie, North End Community Improvement Collaborative(NECIC); Scott Them, Sutton Bank; Becky Toomey, Richland Bank; Deb Veley, Mansfield Memorial Homes; Lynn Voyik, Shelby Foundation; and Aaron Wiegand, GP Wiegand Construction.

Richland Newhope (Richland County Board of Developmental Disabilities) currently supports nearly 1,500 individuals through early intervention, preschool, adult, residential, therapy, transportation and other family support programs.

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