



CENTER FOR MENTAL RETARDATION

The Arc of Cuyahoga County

# Center for Mental Retardation 2007 Legacy Luncheon



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# The Heart of the Matter

*CMR acts as a champion for those who need it*

When you love someone unconditionally, you know that sometimes even love needs a little help—especially if life turns out differently than imagined. The Center for Mental Retardation (CMR) is dedicated to guiding people with intellectual disabilities, and their families, through change and lifelong challenges.

CMR, the local chapter of The Arc of the United States, is an independent voice fighting for the basic needs, safety and rights of children and adults with mental retardation and/or developmental disabilities by helping them secure support services, financial assistance, housing, education and training, employment, health care and other services.

CMR's effectiveness is based on the organization's long history as well as the fact that it is an independent agency. "We've been doing this formally for 45 years, but our records go back to 1933 when some moms got together," said Executive Director Cindy Norwood. As the oldest independent organization of its kind, CMR was around before any other like-minded agencies. "We helped create the county board schools and the providers," explained Norwood. It's the agency's independent status that contributes to its effectiveness. The Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities currently serves about 8,000 people. CMR advocates for those individuals as well as the other 20,000 who are not served. CMR never charges a fee, so income qualifications are irrelevant.

Norwood, like so many others with whom she works, became involved with CMR because of someone she loves. Her daughter, Jessica, spent the first 18 months of her life in the hospital. "We brought her home to die, but she didn't," said Norwood. "After about six months of that, I thought 'If she lives another day or another year, I want her to be able to communicate. I want to know when she needs her bottle.'" Thankfully, they found The Arc. "They gave me the language and words to advocate for her," said Norwood. "This was my child, and I wanted the very best for her."

Today, Jessica holds an associate's degree in business administration from Cuyahoga Community College, and, like many young adults, works two jobs. "Jessica has had health issues, but clearly she's an example of who this agency supports and the possibilities that exist when given the right support," said Norwood.

Norwood admits that she gets fired up when she hears about people with disabilities who are not being treated fairly. "Imagine what a horrible thing if, the minute people see you, they perceive your IQ," said Norwood. "Why are our people so different?" she asks, describing typical circumstances that require CMR's intervention. In one case, an older adult who uses his hands to communicate was tied to a bed in the hospital because he otherwise would have required a 24-hour attendant to keep him from pulling an oxygen tube from his nose. Norwood talked to the patient ombudsman and explained that the hospital needed to make reasonable accommodation for the patient, which in this case meant that he needed someone to be present in the room. "That's it. He doesn't need to be strapped down," she explained.

Norwood says she's not nearly as fiercely protective as Ben Bonanno, who served as director of CMR for 27 years. Last year, the *Ben M. Bonanno Excellence in Advocacy Award* was named in his honor.

"He's got some big shoes, and I'll never be able to fill them," said Norwood.

CMR carries out its mission by offering programs, such as Partners in Policymaking®, a training that teaches adults with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities leadership skills and the process of developing positive partnerships with elected officials and others who make policy decisions. The agency's adult and school-age advocates help by providing individuals and families with support, information regarding resources, and referrals. CMR advises People First of Cuyahoga County, an advocacy group that empowers adults with disabilities to protect their own rights. The agency also offers year-round educational workshops, including *Making Choices and Opening Doors*, which teaches families about residential options, and *Your Blueprint for Success: Building a Positive Future*, a series of workshops designed to encourage parents, educators and other professionals and communities to work together to ensure that all children and young adults can reach their maximum potential.

CMR's programs and events are always listed on the agency's Web site at [www.cmr-cleveland.org](http://www.cmr-cleveland.org). The agency can be reached at 216.622.0755.



Mike is a pretty impressive guy. After all, he's been overcoming expectations his whole life. Mike has an intellectual disability, but it hasn't stopped him from graduating from high school, working a full-time job in the community and being happily married for 27 years. And it won't stop him from continuing to dream big dreams...and achieving them. But then, that's what being exceptional is all about.

The Center for Mental Retardation (CMR) / The Arc of Cuyahoga County is pleased to present Mike with the *Excellence in Self-Advocacy Award* at the Legacy Luncheon on October 4.

At CMR, we're fighting to provide the support and services that people with intellectual disabilities and their families need to help them live productive, independent lives.

**To find out more about what we do and how you can help, go to [www.cmr-cleveland.org](http://www.cmr-cleveland.org) or call 216.622.0755.**

## Letter from the Chair



Elizabeth Kelley, Esq.



Dear Friends,

The Center for Mental Retardation (CMR) is pleased once again to partner with *Northern Ohio Live* as a media sponsor of the **Legacy Luncheon** on October 4, 2007. This annual event celebrates Clevelanders who have improved the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities.



The **Ben M. Bonanno Excellence in Advocacy Award** is named for the Executive Director Emeritus of CMR. Ben has

long been nationally recognized for his advocacy in protecting the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. The 2007 recipient of this award is **Dick Russ**, managing editor and news anchor for WKYC-TV3, who has been reporting the news to the people of northeast

Ohio for more than 30 years. Dick's personal and professional life has been devoted to advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities.



The **Excellence in Self-Advocacy Award** recognizes an individual with an intellectual disability who has made achievements beyond expectations and serves as a positive role model for the community. This year's recipient is **Mike Rich**, a powerful example of an individual living a full and rewarding community life. Others admire Mike for achieving a successful worklife and marriage, as well as serving as a leader in community service. In addition, Mike's strong value of honesty and commitment to independence make him an exemplary self-advocate.



This year's event will be held at the InterContinental Hotel & Conference Center. Registration begins at 11:30 with lunch at noon. The Master of Ceremonies is WKYC-TV3's **Del**

**Donahoo**, who is best known for "Del's Folks" and "Del's Feasts" and currently is a senior correspondent, in partnership with MetroHealth, broadcasting weekly stories to help seniors stay healthy and vibrant.

Special thanks to the committee members who have made this year's event such a success: Ben M. Bonanno, Joseph Benny, K. Michael Benz, Paul Blumberg, Jeffrey Hastings, Esq., Christine Hlabse, Lula Holt Robertson, Bob Kasarda, Paul Orlouski, Kip Reader, Esq., Robert Tayek, Mary Verdi-Fletcher, Loree Vick and Tim White.

Reservations for the Legacy Luncheon are \$60 per person and \$600 for a table of 10. Sponsorships start at \$500. For more information or to make reservations, call 216.622.0755.

Elizabeth Kelley, Esq.  
Chair, Legacy Luncheon Committee  
Center for Mental Retardation

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Cleveland Clinic proudly supports the Center for Mental Retardation and everyone who champions for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Your commitment betters the community by ensuring equal rights and equal access for children and adults.

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National City is proud to be a corporate sponsor of the Center for Mental Retardation's Annual Legacy Luncheon.



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# WKYC-TV3's Dick Russ:

*Committed to fair reporting and **justice for all***

In the news business, reporting and delivering information fairly and accurately is of the utmost importance. When a loved one has a disability, making sure the individual is not denied his or her basic rights or independence is essential. **Dick Russ**, this year's recipient of the *Ben M. Bonanno Excellence in Advocacy Award*, is a strong supporter of both of these ideas.

A familiar face in northeast Ohio, Russ has been reporting the news for more than 30 years. Currently he serves as managing editor and news anchor for WKYC-TV3, which he joined in 1999. Prior to that, Russ spent 20 years at WJW-TV8 in Cleveland, where he hosted the Noon News. His outstanding values and professionalism have earned him membership in the Ohio Broadcasters Hall of Fame and the Silver Circle Award from the National Academy of



*Dick with his brother Russell*

Television Arts and Sciences, recognizing more than a quarter century of exemplary service to the television industry.

Russ became involved in advocacy because of his desire to help his late brother, Russell, who had an intellectual disability. "Dick always treated his brother with respect and dignity. He never talked down to him because of his disability. Russell wasn't shy about expressing his opinion on current events, and in many cases, his opinion reflected that of the general public. Dick always told me he respected his brother's views and outlook on life because it was from the heart and very pure," reflected Joe Benny, Russ' best friend of 25 years.

"[A person with disabilities is] first and foremost a person like any other, with the same inherent human dignity," said Russ. "It is very difficult for many people to move out

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**Congratulations!**

Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P. salutes WKYC TV-3's **Dick Russ** for being awarded the **Center for Mental Retardation's Ben M. Bonanno Excellence in Advocacy Award** for his work on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities.

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of their 'comfort zone' and look beyond the sometimes different exterior of a person who has a disability. What I'd like people to understand is the wonderful person they are likely to find when they make that leap and really get to know someone they would have otherwise overlooked or even avoided," he added.

Often Russ' professional life and personal life connected, as he presented stories featuring people with disabilities. In 1981, Russ and his brother appeared together in a major television series called *Pilgrimage of Hope*, which traced their travels to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in Lourdes, France. "To this day, people still talk about the inspiration and hope those stories gave them and their loved ones affected by physical and intellectual disabilities," said Benny.

According to Cindy Norwood, executive director of the Center for Mental Retardation (CMR), Dick has called attention to everything from demeaning slurs directed toward individuals with Down syndrome to the inadvertent discriminatory treatment of a man with autism by a local high school. "Dick is a wonderful journalist, news editor and reporter, but first and foremost, he looked out for his brother—his best buddy and friend," said Norwood. In order to honor his brother, Russ created his stage name by using an abbreviation of his own first name (Richard) and his brother's first name (Russell).

While Russ believes "there is a much greater awareness of the inherent dignity of people with disabilities" and that "advocacy groups and individuals have done a remarkable job of beginning to put people with disabilities on a more equal footing in terms of access to education, employment, health care, and so on," there is more work to be done. "There are still so many of our people who remain outside the system of supports, and information, and services," Russ explained.

"When I think about the incredible richness that my brother, Russell, has brought to my life and to those of so many around him, I want others to experience these kinds of extraordinarily rewarding relationships. Just one person forming a relationship with someone who has a disability greatly enriches both in ways not always possible between two people who do not have such challenges. It reaffirms the dignity and worth of the person with the disability, provides a basis of understanding that can

lead to action and advocacy, and most importantly, forms a human bond that can be transformational. It's not an exaggeration. I've been there. I know," said Russ.

"I believe the struggles and the triumphs that Dick and his mother and father faced in the 1950s to give Russell a 'normal' and happy home life at a time when people with disabilities were shoved into a corner or placed into an institution and forgotten about speaks volumes about Dick. He is a true advocate for people with disabilities," said Benny.

While Russ plays an active role in many community organizations, his commitment to helping those with disabilities is evident. In addition to CMR, Russ is an active volunteer for North Coast Community Homes, Dancing Wheels, the Jewish Family Service Association and Catholic Charities, among others.

Russ will be presented with the *Ben M. Bonanno Excellence in Advocacy Award* at the Legacy Luncheon on Oct. 4.

## Thanks for the great difference you make.



Dick Russ, Managing Editor

We salute the Center for Mental Retardation,  
The Arc of Cuyahoga County and  
Channel 3's Dick Russ for their long-time  
dedication to the advocacy of those  
with disabilities in Northeast Ohio.



# Working Together Toward a Common Goal



Angela Mathews and her husband

The adage that anything is possible when people work together couldn't be more true — and at the Center for Mental Retardation (CMR), examples of positive outcomes abound.

Angela Mathews, who has a son with autism, learned about CMR through her pediatrician nearly seven years ago when she knew that her son was having difficulties in school. She and CMR Executive Director Cindy Norwood “had done a lot of talking about different [education-related] strategies,” she said. While Mathews was proactive and began lining things up for her son early, she eventually had to change doctors because she needed a diagnosis. “You try to stay away from [that], but you need it to get help,” she explained.

As a volunteer, Mathews became involved with several organizations and began advocating on behalf of people with disabilities. She collaborated with CMR to present a workshop on special education, which was facilitated by Janet L. Lowder of Hickman & Lowder Co., L.P.A. Lowder is an attorney who focuses on defining, promoting and protecting the legal rights of people with disabilities.

Norwood suggested that Mathews enroll in Partners in Policymaking®, an internationally recognized training series that is designed to provide adults with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities the knowledge they need to become more effective in influencing policy development at all levels. “From there, things just kind of exploded,” said Mathews. “I saw there was so much more beyond school issues—history [related] to what I was doing,” she added. After graduating from Partners in Policymaking, Mathews was ready to share what she had learned with others.

Mathews' son, who is now 13, is progressing through school and doing well. “It has been a long, hard journey,” said Mathews. That's why CMR is so important. “CMR is a great support system for the community—it's a force to be reckoned with [with regard] to support for individuals with disabilities,” explained Mathews. She especially appreciated how CMR advocates observed her son in the classroom. “The CMR advocate can bring insight to the team and to parents that they had not seen before,” she said.

Mathews has been interviewed for potential appointment to the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council (ODDC), and she is a member of the Cuyahoga Special Education Service Center's family council. She currently is studying law and society at Penn State, and her future plans include going to law school to become an attorney, focusing on special education and civil rights.

Mathews and her husband have five children and live in Bedford Heights.

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# Quick Facts

- For 45 years, the Center for Mental Retardation (CMR) / The Arc of Cuyahoga County has been the independent voice in northeastern Ohio fighting for equal rights and access for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.
- CMR helps individuals and families affected by ADHD, autism, Asperger syndrome, developmental delay, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury and other intellectual disabilities that affect learning and development prior to age 21.
- CMR can act as a resource and advocate for individuals and families, whether they are among the 8,000 served by the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities or among the estimated 20,000 who have some level of intellectual disability but do not qualify for county services.

CMR served 4,000 people in our community last year by:

- Helping families secure the support services they need to ensure a quality of life for their loved one, including financial assistance, housing, education and training, health care and other services
- Helping families navigate the sometimes confusing array of service providers
- Assisting with developing and implementing an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for school-age children who have learning disabilities
- Acting as an advocate when families have issues with service providers
- Acting as a watchdog of agencies and organizations that provide services for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

***For more information on CMR programs and events, go to [www.cmr-cleveland.org](http://www.cmr-cleveland.org) or call 216.622.0755.***

## The Up Side of Downs

*Because every kid deserves a chance!*

### *Our mission:*

To provide support, advocacy, education and resources for people with Down syndrome, their families and communities.

### *For more information:*

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[www.theupsideofdowns.org](http://www.theupsideofdowns.org)



## A Healthy Home...

Northeast Care Center provides residential and supported living services to persons with mental retardation/developmental disabilities. It strives to provide its clients with a healthy home environment where they can grow, prosper and live a happy productive life.

Northeast Care Center offers a variety of settings throughout Cuyahoga County. Every facility is well maintained and individualized. The staff of Northeast Care Center are trained to handle individuals with challenging behaviors as well as individuals with multiple medical needs. Northeast Care Center employs/contracts with nurses, occupational, physical, speech therapists, dietician, psychologist and music therapists.

Northeast Care Center focuses on developing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states of each individual it serves. Every individual has a tailored program that addresses their individual needs.

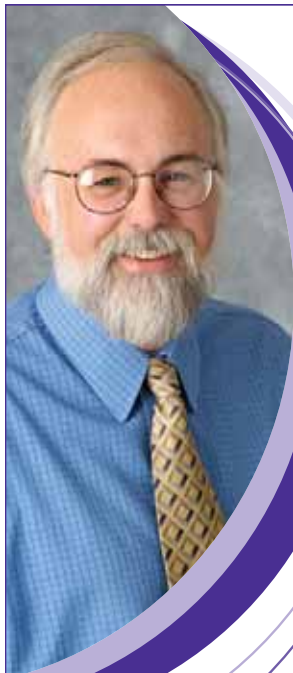
Northeast Care Center encourages you to visit with us and let us know how we can meet your needs. Call today to find out how you can become a member of the Northeast Care Center family.



**Northeast  
Care Center**

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[www.necare.org](http://www.necare.org)



## How will the future of Ohio's MR/DD system affect you?

John Martin, Director of the Ohio Department of MR/DD  
Keynote Speaker at Evant Luncheon

Thursday, September 27, 2007 – 12 Noon  
(doors open at 11:30 AM)  
Sheraton Suites, 1989 Front Street,  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

John Martin was recently appointed by Governor Ted Strickland to Director of the Ohio Department of MR/DD. This event, hosted by Evant, is for those who work in the MR/DD field, those served by the system including parents, guardians and families of loved ones – or anyone interested in the future of MR/DD and Ohio's service delivery to people with disabilities.

Tickets for the event are \$25.

All reservations must be received no later than September 15, 2007.

Register online [www.EvantInc.org/registration](http://www.EvantInc.org/registration)  
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