

## Meet the Candidates for BOD Officers

### **Adam Guinther – Executive Director, Residential Home Association of Marion (RHAM) Nominated for Board Chair**



For the past 10 years I have been the Executive Director of RHAM, Residential Home Association of Marion, Inc. RHAM is primarily a Residential Waiver Provider serving the North Central Ohio area. Prior to that I served as the Business Director for RHAM for three years and my first two years in the field were spent as a Direct Support Professional. My experience with RHAM has prepared me in many ways to advocate on a larger scale for system change.

My greatest passion in life is working with people. As a young person playing sports, time spent in the Marine Corps, or working in the field of I/DD, there is one theme they all have in common; working with people to achieve a goal! This sounds quite basic, but isn't that what life is about?

My motivation to serve as Board Chair is quite simple; I feel as though it is time to step up and contribute on a larger scale. Over the next two years our field will face challenges like nothing we have seen before. In order to successfully overcome these challenges, all system stakeholders must come together with a united front. It is my intent to assist OPRA staff to lead the charge, bringing OPRA, OACB, DODD, and all other system stakeholders together in a meaningful way to achieve positive change. In recent years, Pete Moore has listened to membership, empathized with their thoughts and concerns and turned that energy into a meaningful vision. If I am elected as Board Chair, part of my responsibility will be to help support Pete in putting this vision into actionable steps.

When there is a difficult situation presented, I feel that I am prepared to assist and I work exceptionally well under pressure. As a leader I find it extremely important to seek to understand before trying to be understood. As much as I love to talk, I enjoy listening even more. I am asking for your consideration and would greatly appreciate your vote in the coming election.

### **Roger Fortener, Ph.D. – Executive Director, Anne Grady Services Nominated for Board Vice President**



Roger has worked in the field of developmental disabilities for over 38 years. He is currently the Executive Director for Anne Grady Services in Holland, Ohio. He is currently a Board member on the OPRA Board of Directors. He has been on the Board of Directors and worked with OADSP and the DSP-PATHS. He is a Psychologist and works with numerous agencies in Northwest Ohio completing psychological evaluations for people with developmental disabilities. Roger lives with his wife Jane in Whitehouse, Ohio.

#### **EDUCATION:**

Doctorate of Philosophy, University of Toledo  
Master of Education, University of Toledo  
Master of Public Administration, Bowling Green State University  
Bachelor of Arts, Ohio University

My reason for pursuing the Board Vice President role is clear. I have been in this field for just shy of 40 years. I have seen a lot of changes and been through many challenges. Our agency provides numerous services including Supported Living (Residential Waiver settings in both licensed and non-licensed settings), ICF Residential Services (we operate a

base facility with 53 people downsized from 96 and we serve 50 people in smaller ICF community settings), we have two Day Programs, we have a fleet of 30 vehicles and operate a transportation department, we historically have done respite care but that is on hold right now, and we operate an outpatient therapy program focusing on serving people with disabilities who may have a difficult time finding these services). I can bring a well-rounded perspective.

All services are important but I also want to make certain there is an officer on the Board who can represent all services, including ICF services. And I hope to make a positive difference during this trying time.

**Melissa K. Morelli – Regional Director, Active Day, Inc.  
Nominated for Board Vice President**



I believe that success is built on collaboration, teamwork and partnership. My educational background includes a Master's of Science Management from Indiana University in Richmond, Indiana and a Bachelor of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Education from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Having refined and grown my professional experience in a range of positions from direct care through general management in both residential (including ICF, Waiver and Supported Living) and adult day settings. I have had the opportunity to develop and implement strategies to streamline business and have contributed to profitable business growth by negotiating rates, implementing marketing/public relations strategies, and minimizing overtime costs. I currently work for Active Day as the Regional Director for our adult day service operations in southern Ohio. My team and I were instrumental in privatizing our centers from Hamilton County Board of DD to Active Day in May, 2017.

As a life-long advocate of the health and human services industry, I volunteered for 20 years as an emergency medical technician and I am currently an instructor for Red Cross First Aid/CPR. I have had the pleasure of serving on the Ohio Association of Adult Services Board (OAAS) and member of Provider Support Group.

My compassion and commitment to advocating for a service system that supports and enhances the quality of life for all individuals with developmental disabilities would make me the right choice for OPRA Board Vice Chair. The impact I could make would be to ensure that all aspects of services are represented, and all levels of disabilities.

**Liz Owens – Chief Executive Officer, The Alpha Group of Delaware Inc.  
Nominated for Board Treasurer**



It has been my privilege to represent District 6 for the past 3 years. While serving on the Board, I have been actively involved in the Governance Committee and represent OPRA on the State Blueprint Committee. My graduate degree in Organizational Development and Business Administration paired with my 26 years combined experience as the CEO of The Alpha Group for the last 8 years as well as previous roles provides a solid background to serve in the role of Board Treasurer. Under my direction, The Alpha Group has diversified our services to increase our revenue by creating new or expanding services. I believe that success is built through partnership, teamwork, and collaboration so I am active in my community by serving as the Foundation Chair and Past President of the Delaware Rotary Club, a Board Member for the Delaware Chamber of Commerce and on the steering committee for Delaware United Way Housing Alliance.

I pride myself on being a goal-driven, result-oriented, innovative thinker to create new opportunities or expand services for individuals with disabilities. With the developmental disability field's continuous state of transition, I like to think of the OPRA board as one of my teams. I believe as leaders; we create a vision for tomorrow that will help those with ABILITIES to succeed. I am truly appreciative for the nomination I received for the OPRA Board Treasurer, and it would be my honor to serve in the role as we continue to face some of the most challenging and exciting times in our system.

**Laura S. LaGodney – Chief Executive Officer, Ability Works, Inc.**  
**Nominated for Board Secretary**



As the CEO of Ability Works, Inc., I have served in various roles of management in Adult Services for over 15 years. Ability Works Day services program privatized in August of 2007, and I served as one of the founding members of PSG. I also served as an at-large member of the OAAS Board, and then as Vice President in 2018. I also served as co-chair for the DODD NMT workgroup. I completed the Executive Development Program through the Ohio Association of County Boards and have a master's in business administration. I was elected to OPRA District 7 in 2019. Ability Works, Inc. provides services to over 325 people annually in Day Habilitation, Supported Employment, Transportation, and Homemaker Personal Care in 6 counties in North Central Ohio.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt every aspect of life as we know it, the Board should play a supportive internal role. The expectations for Board oversight have increased as new risks continue to evolve rapidly and unpredictably. The reason why I would like to serve as Board Secretary for OPRA is to continue to provide support strategies and protect vulnerable stakeholders, while continuing to ensure organizational sustainability and resilience. Thank you for your consideration.