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## ***Ohio Valley Residential Services***

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### **Moving Forward Together...**

**By Kate Stark**

The term "board president" conjures a lot of images. A smiling, relaxed, but quick-witted woman with a kind and graceful air about her usually isn't one of them. Carey Kruer has been president of the OVRS Board for three years, but a board member and Finance Committee member since 2001.

"A lot of my day-to-day job involves pushing paper, so it is nice to have the opportunity to do something that makes a real difference in people's lives. No one on the Board gets accolades or public recognition. We don't want it. Knowing that you're just doing something substantive to help, speaking for myself and probably for the rest of the Board, is what we derive satisfaction from."

Kruer serendipitously joined the Board in 2001. At the time, she was a new CFA at Fifth Third and had just inherited the OVRS account because a coworker needed to lighten their case load. When at-the-time OVRS Executive Director Michael DeFrancesco called her up to arrange a meeting, she assumed it was to get acquainted with their new account manager. Instead, he offered her a seat on the Board. What he didn't know at the time was that Kruer was flattered and eager to accept because of a personal tie to OVRS' mission.

Carey's mother, who lives in Michigan, started fostering a 2-year-old boy with developmental disabilities when Carey was in college, and Carey spent a lot of time with him during those years. Despite their age difference the two quickly grew close as he became part of the family. Recently, when Carey's mother moved into a nursing home, they began navigating the transition to a supported living environment for her brother. He is very excited to begin the next chapter of his life.



**Carey Kruer - Board President**

"He was ready (to move out) far before she was ready, so she knew that's what he wanted. I think it was a tough call for her as far as what she wants every day, but she made the decision knowing that that's what he wants."



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Carey says the knowledge she's gained working with OVRS has helped her know what kind of services to engage for her own family.

"People in social services want to help, and they want to help you through the process, but you have to even know they're there to begin with. My experience with OVRS allowed me to understand what options are available and to speak the language in helping to find those services. I know how overwhelming it can be for families."

A lot of families come through the doors of OVRS in the course of a year. In 2015 alone, more than 150 people received services through OVRS. They all rely on the skill and compassion of the caregivers, the dedication of the employees, and the grunt work of the Board and office staff.

Kruer is excited to share that in 2016, she will get to have a little more face-to-face interaction with OVRS residents and employees alike. "It's important to have that connection with the people that you're serving. Balancing the demands of my day-to-day and Board work can be overwhelming, especially with me being on the Finance Committee, but you don't want to drift too far away from the mission and having that connection."

That mission is centered around finding ways for people with developmental disabilities to have meaningful and important connections with their community. Everyone has a role to play in this mission, including you and Carey. Connect with her and say hello if you see her or the other Board Members.

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Christmas in Disney!



OVRS's New Program Director

Ever consider serving as a Board member? OVRS is always looking for dedicated professionals who would like to be part of shaping our future. If interested, contact Jamie Steele at 513-281-6800 ext. 102

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