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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **OCHN Celebrates the Stars of Disability During Ability Awareness Event**

**OAKLAND COUNTY, MI (March 12, 2025)** – Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN) hosted its annual Abilities Awareness Event on Tuesday, March 5, 2025. The well attended event celebrated the abilities of people living with an intellectual or developmental disabilities in honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness month, which is observed in March.

Established in 1987 by President Ronald Reagan Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month was purposed to increase public awareness to the unique needs and great potential of Americans with developmental disabilities. The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)'s theme for 2025 "We're Here All Year", encapsulates the ideals surrounding full inclusion in everyday life for people with developmental disabilities. From going to work, going to school, or volunteering these individuals add richness to our communities.

OCHN's Abilities Awareness event championed this year's theme by highlighting the numerous accomplishments of their "Abilities Champions", which were individuals recognized for their outstanding achievements. Fox 2 Detroit news anchor Josh Landon kicked off the event sharing his story of perseverance and then served as Master of ceremonies announcing and congratulating awardees throughout the program.

Community partners Easterseals MORC and Community Living Services (CLS) each selected Abilities Champions to receive awards. Lori Linstrom from CLS, awarded Perry (PJ) DeCuir and Lindsay Calcaterra from Easterseals MORC awarded Lisa Barger. Alex Kimmel, a national motivational speaker and individual living with Autism was the keynote speaker who inspired the audience with his values on self-determination. Additionally, numerous microenterprise vendors were present to showcase their talents and sell their items to event attendees.

"Celebrating the individuals we serve is not just about recognition, it's about fostering a more inclusive community where every person is valued for their unique strengths and contributions. When we uplift these individuals, we open the door for understanding, respect, and equal opportunity for all." states Dana Lasenby, OCHN's Executive Director and CEO.



Pictured (left to right): PJ DeCuir, Community Living Services; Josh Landon, Fox 2 News Detroit; Lisa Barger, Easterseals MORC; Alex Kimmel; Malkia Newman, OCHN Board Vice Chairperson

To learn more about OCHN, visit [www.oaklandchn.org](http://www.oaklandchn.org). Non-emergency Access services can be reached at (248) 464-6363. If you or someone you know needs immediate assistance, call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988.

### **About OCHN**

OCHN is contracted by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to lead a provider service network and manage care for approximately 30,000 Oakland County residents at more than 400 service sites across the county. People who receive public behavioral health services through OCHN's provider network include those who have an intellectual or developmental disability, mental health concerns, or substance use disorder. Most of these individuals have Medicaid insurance coverage.

OCHN's goal is to ensure these individuals are aware of and have access to services and supports that will improve their health and quality of life, as well as ensure their engagement in full community participation. Its mission to "inspire hope, empower people, and strengthen communities" reflects an unyielding belief in a "Valuable System for Valued People." Programs and supports provided by OCHN's service network are available at [www.oaklandchn.org](http://www.oaklandchn.org).

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