

Each year Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration's (FCBHA) Advisory Board acknowledges an outstanding Fayette County resident and community leader who has made a difference in the lives of people in recovery, children and adults with mental health needs, individuals with intellectual disabilities and/or on the Autism Spectrum by presenting the Community Recognition Award (CRA). This award honors an individual or organization associated with significant positive outcomes in the lives of Fayette County residents and/or community systems of care.



*Pictured from left to right: Commissioners Dave Lohr and Scott Dunn, FCBHA Advisory Board member and CRA nominator-Andrew Boni, Sen. Richard A. Kasunic, Rep. Pat Stefano, Commissioner Vince A. Vicites and County Controller Scott Abraham.*

Recognizing the need to serve vulnerable populations and equip community organizations to provide and improve programs and services to help individuals lead meaningful and satisfying lives is a shared commitment within our county. This commitment sometimes requires vision and outward thinking.

Senator Richard A. Kasunic, having that vision, was able to acquire seed monies to bring the Regional Center for Autism to Highlands Hospital in affiliation with Cleveland Clinic. The Highlands Hospital Center for Autism has been successful in educating children with spectrum disorders once they have been diagnosed. Fayette County has one of the highest rates of autism in Pennsylvania. Highlands Hospital is only one of five hospitals to mirror Cleveland Clinic's autism program. The center which serves people ages 5 to 21, opened with four students and is now able to accommodate close to 70 students. The center was established to offer state-of-the-art educational and behavioral treatment to individuals with autism in Southwestern Pennsylvania. It adheres to the principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) in a center-based, year-round educational treatment program to provide children on the spectrum with the highest likelihood of success. The evidence-based, data-driven methodology of ABA has been proven effective through extensive research, showing great benefit to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

The development of The Highlands Hospital Center for Autism is made possible by the hard work and dedication of Senator Kasunic and many others who have compassion and feel a personal obligation to make life better for others.

The Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration Advisory Board is proud to honor Senator Richard A. Kasunic with the 2019 Community Recognition Award which was presented at the February 18, 2021 Fayette County Board of Commissioners' Meeting pictured above.