

# The Leaflet



THE LETTUCE WORK FOUNDATION, INC.

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## *It's All About Passion — Jennifer Okezie-Watts*



We are pleased to announce that Jennifer Okezie - Watts has been elected to the Lettuce Work Board of Directors, and will serve as the Chair of the Charitable Grants Committee. Jennifer has Masters degrees from George Washington University and The Ohio State University in public education and instructional design.

Passion is contagious. I know because it recently moved me and called me to action. I learned about Lettuce Work from Doug Sharp, Executive Director.

Immediately, I felt the passion he had for individuals on the autism spectrum and the

goal to improve their quality of life.

I could identify with this because I had seen my mother build a non-profit organization from the ground-up. After five years of toil and sweat, she started seeing real success—people's lives were directly impacted for the better.

To this day, the organization is so personal to her. She demonstrates that by the time and effort she puts in on top of her "real job". This is the passion I glimpsed when Doug spoke about Lettuce Work and its mission.

Learning the staggering statistics of autism frequency, cost of care, lack of services available for adults, and high unemployment rates, opened my eyes to the undeniable needs. My inner voice spoke to me, "I want to be part of this!" and I offered to serve as a volunteer.

Lettuce Work is intriguing be-

cause it is innovative. It has a unique service model—a real business that provides an autism-friendly workplace. Unlike many programs designed for individuals with disabilities, this model fosters life-long independence versus daily dependence; continual social and skill development versus only daily living skill maintenance and task completion. It will generate revenue to accomplish the mission versus relying on private and government funding to "keep the doors open."

I see Lettuce Work's role servicing autistic adults in Central Ohio as only the beginning. Can you imagine how the implementation of this program model can revolutionize how our society approaches employment for autistic adults throughout the world?

Cost to build - millions.

Time needed for planning, fundraising and promoting - years.

Passion - priceless!

### Inside This Issue:

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## *Motorists Insurance Group Helps Build the Dream*

Our thanks to the Motorists Insurance Group Foundation for making a donation to bring Lettuce Work one step closer to building our dream. Generous capital campaign donations such as this continue to help us raise the funds

we need to build our facilities so we will be able to provide the training and employment services that so many young adults with autism need. Thank you Motorists Insurance Group!



## *Join Lettuce Work on Facebook!*

Are you a Facebook fan? Many of you probably have discovered by now how much fun it is to reconnect with old friends and share photos on Facebook. You can also follow Lettuce Work on Facebook and stay abreast of current events at Lettuce Work and autism news by joining our group.

There are two ways you can connect to Lettuce Work. First, you can find us listed as a "Cause". The Cause pages are reserved for

non-profit organizations and their members who support their mission. We also have a "Group" page. Group pages are for all types of companies and organizations. Either way, you can get connected with us, share autism news and information, and invite your friends to join us.

Look for Autism-The Lettuce Work Foundation. Hope to see you as a new member soon!



## *Health Care for Autism—Doug Krinsky*



Doug Krinsky is the Chapter Advocacy Chair and a volunteer parent advocate for Autism Speaks in Central Ohio.

We believe children on the autism spectrum deserve adequate healthcare to help them develop to their full potential.

House Bill 8 (HB 8) was introduced by Representative Ted Celeste and Representative Nancy Garland in January 2009. This bill is supported by over 20 major associations and all major Autism support groups including Autism Speaks and the Autism Society in Ohio. This bill will affect approximately 40% of all Ohioans. Those are the plans that are fully insured and not self-insured, like most

major corporations. The bill would include coverage for diagnosis and treatment of Autism including ABA.

The impact on healthcare costs for most businesses would be minimal, with estimates ranging from .25 percent to slightly under 1 percent of current rates, in terms of what the potential cost might be if this were passed. Passage of this bill does not affect the Autism Scholarship program as that is educational (IEP services) and this bill is impacting medical services.

There is a \$36,000 yearly cap in the bill that passed the Ohio House in December 2009. It sits in the Ohio Senate insurance committee right now. We are working with all Ohio State Senators to try to have hearings and convince each Senator how important this bill is and why we need it passed.

There have been 16 other states that have passed comprehensive insurance coverage like HB 8 so far. We need to pass this in Ohio by the end of this year. We need your help. If you would like to volunteer to help please contact Doug Krinsky at [yogi1125@aol.com](mailto:yogi1125@aol.com) or 614-554-0802.

## *First Annual Ride for Autism is a Success!*

The first annual Ride for Autism benefiting several autism-related non-profit organizations, including Lettuce Work, was held on July 30. Hundreds of cycle enthusiasts from all over the state participated in this worthwhile event organized by Mike Hoover, and hosted at the Quaker Stake and Lube restaurant in Columbus.

Although there was a little rain during the day, that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the riders or diminish the importance of the event. Our thanks goes out to Mike and all those who helped organize the event. Thank you for your donations toward making Lettuce Work a reality for adults with autism.



*You Can Help Us  
Build our Dream.*

*Donate online at  
[www.lettucework.org](http://www.lettucework.org)*

## *unemployment and the Developmentally Disabled—Kelsy Morrison*



Kelsy Morrison is a Senior at Oakstone Academy in Westerville, Ohio. Oakstone is a nationally-recognized private school founded on the principle of inclusion for students on the autism spectrum learning side-by-side their neuro-typical peers in the same classrooms.

Kelsy is the editor of the school newspaper; and, recently published the following article in a local newspaper.

There are at least 50 million people who live with a disability in the United States today, and barely 38% of them are employed. People with disabilities make up the largest unemployed minority group in the United States and the numbers are still rising, and as that number rises, the number of available jobs for disabled workers is dwindling.

One reason for the rise in unemployed disabled workers is the challenges that employers face when hiring. Julie Sharp who is a teacher at Oakstone elaborated on this point by saying that it is difficult to “understand that they each have different needs and abilities.” However the difficulty not only lies there, but with the employee also, Sharp later goes on to say that some of the biggest challenges that employees face are learning new job skills,

### *Seth Becker, RFC, Elected to the Lettuce Work Board of Directors*

We are pleased to announce that Seth Becker, RFC, has been elected to the Lettuce Work Board of Directors and will serve as the Planned Giving Committee Chair. Seth has over 20 years experience in the securities industry, including 12 years with Bank One, and

being in certain environments that may be different or new to them, or even being restricted by their physical limitations.

Eric Rummel, owner of Worthington, Westerville, and Clintonville Pizza Primo has a disabled worker on staff three days a week, for four hours per day. He says that at his stores, “a disabled worker is treated equally just like any other applicant during the hiring process. If we feel like they will do a good job for us then they are hired.” At Pizza Primo their disabled employees’ job responsibilities consist of box folding, making pizzas, meeting and greeting customers. Rummel continues by saying that, “our disabled employees are the hardest workers in the company.”

A further challenge for disabled employers and employees is getting appropriate job training. Sharp states that job training is essential to success and that in the long run it should pay off. Rummel says that to train his employees he takes two or three days to identify the individual’s strengths and give them their individual duties.

In addition to being a teacher at Oakstone, Julie Sharp and her husband Doug have created a non-profit company, Lettuce Work, to help disabled workers stay employed in central Ohio. Sharp said that they want to ensure that individuals like their own son Daniel, who is affected by autism, will be a productive member in today’s society.

Disabled workers make up less than one percent of the adult workforce and with a current recession to our economy and workforce those numbers could continue to decline. Programs are desperately needed to help train and place disabled workers into appropriate work environments, in order to promote a sense of self worth and the ability to contribute to society.

has managed assets in excess of \$100,000,000. Seth has served on several non-profit boards including Oakstone Academy where he served as treasurer.



“Programs are desperately needed to help train and place disabled workers into appropriate work environments.”





*Harvesting Hope for Adults with Autism*

THE LETTUCE WORK FOUNDATION, INC.

P.O. Box 217  
New Albany, Ohio 43054  
[www.lettucework.org](http://www.lettucework.org)

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You can help individuals with autism by donating online using our secure server at [www.lettucework.org](http://www.lettucework.org)

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### *Our Mission at Lettuce Work*



Julie Sharp, Program Director

Julie is the mother of a son with autism, a teacher at Oakstone Academy, and one of the co-founders of Lettuce Work.

What does Lettuce Work means to me? The immediate answer that comes to mind is a safe, productive environment in which my son, and others like him, can have meaningful employment; in short, a promising future beyond their school-age years. But, as I reflect over the past seven years since our son's autism diagnosis and the challenges our family has faced, it's overwhelming. Thinking about the information we have gathered, as well as experiences I have had as a teacher at Oakstone Academy working with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) students, most recently helping these students with social transitions throughout the school day, I realize that Lettuce Work represents so much more.

Recognizing that ASD people are unique and possess an array of both abilities and challenges means that our society, including prospective employers, should understand and embrace these differences by providing employment opportunities that reach people

across the autism spectrum. In addition, employers must refrain from making assumptions about a person's employability simply based on a diagnosis of autism.

Every day, I am amazed by the hardworking, intelligent students I work with. I see firsthand what wonderful contributions they will make in the future, provided they are given the opportunity. Lettuce Work understands the need to embrace these young individuals with ASD and act as the catalyst they need to develop employable skills, make a meaningful contribution and live more independent lives. It's not



just about developing their self-worth, or the money they earn, it's the right thing to do for so many kids that need to be given a chance. Help us build Lettuce Work, and help us give them the chance in life they deserve.