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Introducing the 2022 Ohio Tech Ambassadors



Renee Wood — renee@ohiotechambassadors.org

Renee has been involved in the disability community all her adult life, beginning at age 18 with volunteering as a camp counselor with Camp Easter Seals and culminating in late 60's serving as chair of Ohio Developmental Disability for three years, and currently chairs the Ohio Olmstead Task Force, a member of the Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council, Ability Center Board of Trustees, and sits on the Ohio Advocacy Taskforce. Renee graduated from the University of Toledo with an Associate's Degree in computer programming, and a combined Bachelor's degree in Disabilities Studies and Creative Writing.

Throughout the years Renee has engaged in various advocacy efforts, which has earned her prestigious awards such as, the seldom given Synergy Award, after a final presentation (<https://youtu.be/qQtgUVmFmEA>) she earned the Soaring Phoenix Award. Renee has also received Northwest Ohio Trail Blazer Award, The National Council for Independent Living gave her the Region V Advocacy Award, and recently she has been inducted into The Ability Center's Hall of Fame (<https://www.abilitycenter.org/ability-center-centennial/>). One of Renee's hobbies is writing her blog Renee's Ramblings (<https://reneewood2.com/>). She does digital art and really enjoys creating paintings of nature scenes.

Renee recalls assistive technology being part of her life from a very young age — usually just simple things like a key guard on her typewriter so she wouldn't press multiple keys at a time, or a book holder in 5th grade to make it easier to read. Renee is a problem solver — in the 80's, before microwave ovens, to get the flimsy aluminum foil TV dinners in/out of the hot oven, she accomplished this by putting the TV dinner in a cake pan, which she bent one side of, so she could slide it onto the table. She also developed silverware to help feed herself. Renee had her first computer in 1998 and taught herself Word, Excel, Access, Powerpoint, HTML, and web design. Renee now uses Amazon Alexa to control her environment and increase her independence (<https://youtu.be/Z7VxEhwibtI>). Renee believes technology is the future for people with disabilities living more independent and autonomous lives.



Jen Schlegel —
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Jen Schlegel wears a lot of hats. She is a recent Ohio State University Alumna and President's Prize Fellow, a Biomedical Engineer with patents pending, a Camelback Ventures fellow, and a certified Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator. She owns an accessibility technology startup company, Beenabled, that has two active projects under development: Handicom and 119. Handicom is a software/mobile application that facilitates the connection between ideas and written work. Its finger-tap interface helps individuals with limited manual dexterity to import homework, images, diagrams, equations and more. 119 is a subscription-based service for smartwatches or smartphones that helps the chronic illness community reduce the number of 911 calls made on their behalf.

Jen has also contributed to efforts being made by DriveOhio, an initiative within the Ohio Department of Transportation, that aims to organize and accelerate smart vehicle and connected vehicle projects in the State of Ohio. In her spare time, Jen enjoys learning and creating new things – a peer has called her The Idea Fountain! On a typical day, you can find her surrounded by whiteboards and 3D printers. Her life is made more interesting everyday by disability and chronic illness starring cerebral palsy and dysautonomia with a dozen other guest stars that require tubes, wheels, and machines.



Brad Whitmoyer —
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William, "Brad", Whitmoyer was born in 1983 in Columbus, Ohio with a diagnosis of cerebral palsy. When he was four years old, he moved to the country in Delaware county and grew up there with three brothers. From a young age, Brad and his brothers regularly had to develop solutions in order to keep him involved with what his family was doing. Whether that was a backyard football game, or making his equipment work better, he and his brothers worked together to figure out how to get things done.

This type of ingenuity has followed him throughout his life. After graduating high school, it became very clear to Brad that obtaining employment from a company would be very difficult and as such, he decided to create his own employment opportunity by starting his own company building websites. Brad's company has grown to encompass multiple computer-related services and is now a viable source he uses to provide for himself.

About the Ohio Tech Ambassador Network.

Today, 26.9% of Ohioans live with a disability. Ohio has long been a leader in promoting technology for its citizens with disabilities. Funded by "a statewide grant provided by the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities and administered by The Southern Ohio Council of Governments, the Ohio Tech Ambassador Network program will host almost twenty events through June 2023, some virtual and some in-person, to help others learn how adaptive technology use enhances lives and independence for people with developmental disabilities. To learn more about the Ohio Tech Ambassador Network or to learn about upcoming events, visit ohiotechambassadors.org.

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