



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cuyahoga Valley
National Park

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Cuyahoga Valley National Park News Release

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United Disability Services' BraVo! Assists with Polar Express™ *Volunteers String over 31,000 bells*

Brecksville, Ohio – Over 31,000 bells were strung to create magic in the Cuyahoga Valley for the young and old alike. This magic could not have been done without the work of the United Disability Services' BraVo! team. BraVo! – Building Relationship and Volunteer Opportunities – program began in August of 2007 with four participants and in one short year has grown to serve 24 individuals with disabilities. The BraVo! team has logged more than 5,000 hours of volunteer service with more than 20 community organizations during the past year.

Each child riding The Polar Express™ train receives a single bell on a string from Santa Claus. If you hear the ringing of the bell, you still believe in the magic of Christmas, according to the story of *The Polar Express*, written by Chris Van Allsburg. This popular program is presented by National Park Service and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad every holiday season. This was the first year the organizations collaborated with BraVo!

BraVo! educates the public by creating a greater awareness of the skills and abilities of people with disabilities and how people with disabilities are able to contribute in the community in a much needed and meaningful way. “While some of these people may not be able to work in a traditional employment setting,” said Gary Knuth, UDS executive director, “this unique program shows that with the right support, individuals with disabilities can contribute in amazing ways.”

Images of BraVo! volunteers are available online at www.nps.gov/cuva/parknews/newsreleases.htm.

For more information on how to schedule BraVo! volunteers for your organization contact Carrie Herman, United Disability Services' director of business development, by calling (330) 762-9755 or visit www.udsakron.org.

CVNP encompasses 33,000 acres along the Cuyahoga River between Cleveland and Akron. Managed by the National Park Service, CVNP combines cultural, historical, recreational, and natural activities in one setting. For more information about the park, visit www.nps.gov/cuva/ or www.dayinthevalley.com/ or call (216) 524-1497 or (800) 445-9667.

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