



news from the
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**Department of Mental Health,
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Treatment Works Amidst Budget Cuts

When Leola began counseling at the CSB, she thought she would need treatment for the rest of her life. Living with major depression and post traumatic stress, Leola believed what her mother always told her, “You are nothing. You won’t have nothing. You won’t be nothing.” The next-to-the youngest of eight children, Leola grew up in Alexandria with alcoholic parents. “I didn’t know it then, but that hurt me. My mom was abusive, always cussing and arguing with me. My older brothers and sisters could leave, but I stayed home and took it.”

Leola left school after the eighth grade, then went on to find herself in abusive relationships with the fathers of her two children. “I believed I brought it on myself and something was wrong with *me*. I said my mama was right. Everything proved that what she told me was true and I made it true through drugs and bad guys.” Leola drank and used drugs to ease her pain. Eventually she became homeless and lost custody of her 7 and 10 year-old son and daughter. She made two attempts at suicide.

After years of participation in different substance abuse programs, in 2003 Leola began mental health counseling and anti-depressant medication.

With increases in the number of people like Leola who are seeking treatment and decreases in the budget, clinicians are taking a more active role in utilization review, a process that prioritizes who gets therapy and for how long. Each month, every therapist closes one case in order to open another for someone on the waiting list.

Krista Hummer, a therapist who worked with Leola, explained that clients plan for transition from therapy from the first day of treatment. The process can be seen in three phases. During Phase I of therapy, clients establish a treatment plan with goals.

In Phase II, clients learn skills to help them reach their goals. Leola described herself as a doormat. “I always gave and never received. It took me a long time to understand that I could say, ‘No, you can’t do this to me.’” In therapy, she developed a sense of self worth. “I looked in the mirror every morning and said ‘I am somebody today,’ until I actually believed good things could come.” Leola learned skills to assert herself with others, including her mother. She learned to confront the pain and guilt over losing her children and worked on repairing relationships that were damaged by her substance abuse.

According to Ms. Hummer, “One of the most important skills is learning to accept some symptoms of mental illness. Understanding that painful emotions are a part of living, and that there are skills that can be learned to tolerate pain rather than ways to numb it. Being able to acknowledge that the world and people will continue to be as they are can be challenging to accept; however, being able to let go of trying to change others and shifting toward changing how we respond is empowering.”

Phase III of therapy involves transitioning out of counseling and increasing natural supports. Leola extended the time between her final appointments, which gave her opportunities to recognize positive outcomes on her own and showed her she could survive negative outcomes. “I’ve never completed anything in my life. I’ve never graduated before,” she said.

Following graduation from individual therapy, Leola attended the CSB’s Women’s Support Group. She began GED classes and regained custody of her teenage son who moved from home to foster home over the years. Leola’s daughter, Kentra, was adopted. Leola continues to search for her. “She’s 22 years-old now. She can choose to see me, or not, but I want her to know I’m looking for her.”

Leola views the future with optimism. If she needs therapy again at some time in her life, she, like other graduates can come back. For now she is working on personal goals and is considering careers that involve helping others. “I can do things I never knew I could do. I like myself today.”



Leola and GED teacher, David Miller. Mr. Miller and Principal Bryant said of Leola, “She’s like a mother hen. She helps teach the class and supports the younger students. Leola is a leader.”

A Caring Community Promoting Respect, Recovery, Hope

M.O.B. Aims to Compete in the Special Olympics

Residents of the Alexandria CSB's Bellefonte Group Home and Bellefonte Supported Living Apartments formed a basketball team called the Bellefonte Wizards. After winning the Special Olympics locally, Members of Bellefonte, or the M.O.B., as they prefer, spoke with their group home counselors, Peter Mathews and Renee Galloway, about competing in the 2010 National Special Olympics.

To do so, the team would need to raise \$1,500 for uniforms and equipment. They reached half of their goal through bake sales, yard sales and with their Wicked Wizards' Brew, which won first place in a chili-cook-off. The Wizards went on to pass their fund-raising goal by \$700 following a successful November bake sale in Alexandria's Farmer's Market. The M.O.B. is grateful to the community members who donated and purchased baked goods, as well as those who made donations, including Bobi Bomar of Weichart Realtors who gave \$400 in matching funds.

Mr. Mathews and Ms. Galloway, the counselors turned coaches, completed their Special Olympics coach certifications to support the team's goals. One of their dreams is to become "mainstream" and compete with local recreation center teams. Mr. Mathews said, "I have to brag about them because they have really worked hard...I feel lucky to have them in my life." The team's activities have helped them become known in the community. "It's nice when they go to Giant or CVS and people greet them by name," said Mr. Peters. "People who used to be against having our home in their community are now our supporters."



Commissioner Reinhart Visits

James Reinhard, M.D., Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, came to the Alexandria CSB in November, where he spent the day visiting programs before speaking at a community event. The Commissioner (shown left), accompanied by Michael Gilmore, Ph.D., CSB Executive Director (right) toured Outpatient Mental Health Services, visited the site of the future Safe Haven, had lunch at the Clubhouse, attended a meeting of the Jail Diversion Program, toured a residential program as well as the CSB's Child and Adolescent Treatment Center for Healthy Kids (CATCH) and the Center for Alexandria's Children.

Following his visit at the CSB, the Commissioner joined CSB staff in making a presentation for Agenda: Alexandria about mental health care, new initiatives and State and City of Alexandria budget reductions.



Vocational Programs Accredited



The Alexandria CSB's Quality Assurance Team led the organization through another successful accreditation survey. Intellectual Disability, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Vocational Programs received their third accreditation from CARF, *The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission*.

In order to achieve this high level accreditation, the programs and CSB administration had to meet strict, international guidelines for services and program organization. CARF accreditation demonstrates a standard of excellence in services, staff and documentation, and a commitment to improving the quality of lives of the persons served. One CARF surveyor wrote:

The Alexandria Community Services Board has exceptional staff members that truly value the work that they do. They are employees because they want to make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. They take pride in being able to assist individuals in reaching their potential and fulfilling their dreams by providing challenging and realistic opportunities, services, and supports to the participants. Their commitment is demonstrated by the overall longevity of the staff from management to direct care.

CSB Staff Give Back Over the Holidays

At the Alexandria CSB's Holiday Celebration, staff made theme baskets for a silent auction to benefit Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center.

Friends is non-profit group of volunteers, that for 25 years, has supported Alexandrians with mental disabilities and their families through advocacy, education and fundraising to meet social, vocational and emergency needs.

Baskets included a Going Green Basket, an Italian Basket, a Relaxation Basket and a New Year's Eve Basket.

Michael Gilmore, Executive Director, was the winning bidder of the Death by Chocolate Basket. "I can't think of a better way to die," he said. Shown right are Ana Lince, psychiatrist, and Julie Frye,



a therapist in the jail's mental health unit, the winning co-bidders on a basket of young boy activities. More than \$700 was raised in the auction. Staff also had a caroling contest. The group of substance abuse treatment professionals seen here is performing its rendition of "Deck the Halls."

Members of the CSB's Clubhouse program held a food drive to support local families. They collected over 500 items for the ALIVE! Food Bank.

Division Directors Jane Hassell and Carol Layer coordinated staff participation in the 2009 Holiday Sharing Program, organized by the Department of Human Services. Staff fulfilled the holiday wish lists for a senior citizen and for three children in a local family. In addition to gifts, the recipient families received grocery gift cards for the holidays.

Delegate and Senator Visit a Preschool Prevention Program

Delegate David Englin and Senator Patricia Ticer visited the CSB Preschool Prevention Team's implementation of *Al's Pals: Kids Making Healthy Choices*. The program is funded by a grant from the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation.

Al and his puppet friends have helped over 1,800 Alexandria children ages 3 to 8 develop personal, social and emotional skills through 46 brief interactive lessons utilizing songs and engaging activities. *Al's Pals* teaches lessons such as expressing feelings appropriately, caring about others, using self-control, thinking independently, accepting differences, making safe and healthy choices and solving problems peacefully.

All state delegates and senators were invited to observe VTSF-funded programs. Senator Ticer visited the Hopkins House Hellen Day Preschool, while Delegate Englin visited the T.C. Williams Head Start Program. He said, "I really enjoyed my visit and I have tremendous appreciation for the amazing work you guys are doing. I'm happy to support your efforts any way I can." *Al's Pals* is offered in 34 Alexandria preschool classrooms. For more information about *Al's Pals*, visit [www.alexandriava.gov/mental health](http://www.alexandriava.gov/mental_health).



Here, Delegate Englin participates in an activity about "different and the same." The children are assembling pizza slices with their choice of toppings. Everyone likes pizza, but not the same toppings. Englin likes pineapple pizza.

Crisis Intervention Team

In partnership with the Alexandria CSB's Emergency Services, the Alexandria Police Department and Office of Sheriff developed a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). A CIT is a group of law enforcement professionals who receive training in recognizing and responding appropriately to persons showing signs of psychiatric disorders. Team members practice role playing exercises based on real-life scenarios, visit mental health and substance abuse treatment programs for one-on-one dialogue, and learn about community resources available for support.

CIT programs across the country have been shown to improve outcomes in police interactions with people with mental illness, decrease the arrest rate and reported injuries among those with mental illness, increase referrals of persons with mental illness into

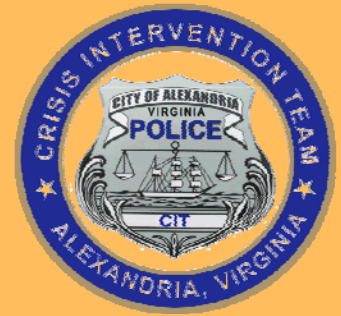
Access the City of Alexandria's pages on Twitter and Facebook. Connect today at www.alexandriava.gov/ Twitter and www.alexandriava.gov/Facebook for up-to-the minute information about City news, events and initiatives.

treatment, and decrease the rate of officer injury.

During 2010, a CIT Team of at least 20 police officers and deputies will be created. At least one CIT official will be on duty at all times.

The CIT is part of a larger Jail Diversion Program to reduce the incarceration of people with mental illness and help them to get treatment and live law-abiding lives in the community. For more information, visit Jail Diversion at www.alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa.

Visit us at alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa. To make comments, story suggestions or contributions to this newsletter, call Jennifer Cohen Cordero at 703.746-3484 or email jennifer.cohen-cordero@alexandriava.gov.



*Alexandria CIT logo.
The logo will be worn as a pin by CIT police officers.*



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