



news from the
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Safe Haven for Homeless Persons

After seven years of work, the CSB held a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house for the new Safe Haven. The Safe Haven is a nationally recognized model that provides permanent supportive housing and services for homeless individuals with a mental illness and sometimes co-occurring substance use disorders. The program fills a gap in Alexandria's services for homeless people.

The site of the Safe Haven is the former location of the Clubhouse program, which has provided day support to individuals with mental illness for 25 years. The three level building, re-designed by architect John Savage, contains three apartments with 3-4 bedrooms each, a rooftop patio and a lobby with staff offices. The apartments will provide 12 people with housing that promotes the highest functioning and quality of life. Visitors at the open house were awed by the warm, welcoming and functional design and furnishings.

The Safe Haven was named "Riley's Place" in honor of Mary Riley, a community volunteer and former CSB Chair who was involved in every aspect of planning and advocacy for the program. Mary became legendary in Alexandria for her devotion to making the Safe Haven a reality.

At the ceremony, Mike Gilmore, CSB Executive Director, thanked the neighbors who were "energetically opposed" to the Safe Haven location "because their objections taught us that we have a long way to go in erasing stigma, and they gave us an opportunity to better educate the community on the needs of persons with mental illness." The CSB developed a Safe Haven Neighborhood Advisory Committee to facilitate communication between the program and the neighbors. Supervision, supportive services, facility management and security will be provided at Safe Haven 24 hours a day.



*Safe Haven
115 North Patrick Street*

Winston Burse, who was once homeless with a mental illness, now has a part-time City job as custodian for the Safe Haven. "I would have really appreciated a program like this when I was homeless for five years," said Winston.

More than 150 City residents showed their support for the Safe Haven through letters to City Council (Council voted approval of Safe Haven on five occasions) and through donations to Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center, Inc. Friends, a non-profit that supports CSB clients with emergency needs, earmarked donations to be used for the Safe Haven facility and residents. Friends will purchase a painting

for the Safe Haven lobby. "The artwork will say to clients: we want to help you on your road to recovery by providing facilities that are welcoming, friendly and attractive," said Mike Gilmore.

Funding for the Safe Haven comes from the City of Alexandria, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Medicaid, the State and client fees. More information is available at alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa.



The Official Ribbon Cutting (L►R): Volunteer Mary Riley, Custodian Winston Burse, Vice Mayor Kerry Donnelly, Mayor William D. Euille, Councilmember Del Pepper, CSB Executive Director Mike Gilmore and CSB Chair Mary Ann Weber.

A Caring Community Promoting Respect, Recovery, Hope

Alexandria Recognizes Mental Health Month

Each May, the nation recognizes National Mental Health Month and Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. To increase mental health awareness in Alexandria, the CSB's System of Care Project sponsored the community event *Managing ADHD Symptoms in Children and Adolescents: Strategies for Parents and Professionals*, by Abigail Levrini, Ph.D. Over 100 people attended to learn strategies to support common issues with children such as improving school performance, increasing motivation, building social skills, managing time, enhancing planning and handling symptoms of anxiety and depression.

The CSB also worked with the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria's Anti-Stigma HOPE Campaign to sponsor a community showing of the film *Canvas*, followed by a panel discussion. Nearly 90 persons attended the event.

As the HOPE Campaign works to reduce mental health stigma, this year they are promoting the website bringchange2mind.org, featuring Glenn Close and her sister, who has bipolar disorder. Bring Change 2 Mind includes a powerful public service announcement that can be shown on a laptop at group meetings to foster understanding about mental health in the community. A DVD of the video and a folder of supporting materials are also available by calling 703-838-4400 ext. 263.



Ways to Live Your Life Well SM

Mental Health Month highlights ways to Live Your Life Well SM to better cope with stress and enhance your well-being. Stress can take a huge toll on a person's health, mood, productivity and relationships. There are 10 straightforward, scientifically proven things that everyone can do.

- **Connect with others.** Fight stress with friendship. Learn how to strengthen old bonds and build new ones.
- **Stay positive.** Changing your thinking can change your life. Check out the website to learn how to take steps to increase your optimism.
- **Get physically active.** Exercise can make you happier. Learn how to get active, stay active and more.
- **Help others.** You may feel better serving soup at a shelter than sipping martinis at Happy Hour.
- **Get enough sleep.** Being tired can hurt your health and your relationships. Check out the advice at the website on how to get a better night's sleep.
- **Create joy and satisfaction.** Feeling good is good for you, so have a laugh, find a hobby or just kick back!
- **Eat well.** The right foods can fuel your mind, boost your mood and fight disease.
- **Take care of your spirit.** Praying, meditating or just connecting with your deepest self can enrich your life.
- **Deal better with hard times.** Coping tools can help you through a rough patch. Check out the tips at the website.
- **Get professional help if you need it.** Don't hesitate to seek help. Learn about therapy, medication and more.

Seeking Volunteer Rep Payees

The Alexandria CSB is in need of volunteers to serve as *representative payees* for clients with disabilities who are unable to manage their funds in their own best interest. Representative payees open a bank account and receive automatic deposits of a client's social security checks. Payees pay the client's bills from the account. There are typically only three bills per month. After initial registration, the duties require approximately two hours a month per account. By giving a small amount of time, volunteers can meet a tremendous need in our community. For more information, call 703-746-3484.



Youth Topics

Youth Topics is a weekly email listing for youth, parents and providers of children's services. The succinct format makes it easy to view events, services, activities, grants, contests, the latest research highlights on youth substance use and mental health and links to websites featuring more information for youth. Check it out and subscribe at alexandriava.gov/mhmrmsa under "News and Announcements."



Crisis Intervention Team

Eight police officers and six deputy sheriffs became the first graduates of Alexandria's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training academy. The CSB obtained a grant to develop the CIT in partnership with the Alexandria Police Department and the Sheriff's Office.

A CIT is a group of law enforcement professionals who receive training in recognizing and responding to persons showing signs of psychiatric disorders. They learn skills including suicide intervention and verbal de-escalation techniques, and they receive training on mental health and the law and resources available to help people in crisis. In addition to classroom instruction, they participate in role playing exercises based on real-life scenarios and visit clients in mental health treatment facilities. The trained CIT officer is skilled at de-escalating crises while bringing an element of understanding and compassion.

CIT programs across the country have shown decreased arrest rates and reported injuries among those with mental illness, increased referrals into treatment and decreased rates of officer injury.

The CIT is part of a larger Jail Diversion initiative 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, see Jail Diversion at alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa.



The CIT graduates (back row) and City officials (front row): Sheriff Dana Lawhorne, Deputy City Manager Michele Evans, Asst. City Manager Debra Collins, Police Chief Earl Cook, City Manager Jim Hartmann, CSB Acute Care Director Liz Wixson and Mayor William D. Euille.

Peer Advisor Program Celebrates 25 Years of Excellence

The CSB's Peer Advisors Program celebrated 25 years of success providing after-school leadership training for at-promise City youth. Peer advisors learn peer pressure resistance, drug and alcohol information and a wide range of leadership skills. They act as role models, work with children in the City and participate in community service activities.

City employee Teddy Jones started Peer Advisors in 1985 and was joined by Chucky Moore in 1986. Both prevention therapists still work with the program. In a survey of peer advisors, 70% credited the program with helping them get into college, 95% are involved in their community, and 100% said that being a peer advisor gave them a positive outlook on life.

During an inspiring and emotional Anniversary Celebration, past and current peer advisors spoke about the positive impact of the program on their lives. "It's not where you come from that determines your future." "I learned to lift others as I climb." At the event, Teddy and Chucky were recognized for creating opportunities for young people and mentoring them with heart and conviction. Also recognized were CSB therapist Debra Smalley, who worked with the program for 11 years, and Prevention Team Leader Tricia Bassing.

Current peer advisors and T.C. Williams students Deronte Artis, Jahvon "Eric" Robinson and Olga Alvarado received scholarships to attend the Young Leaders Program of the Center for Social Leadership. The 40-hour program includes a tour of Howard University and daily leadership sessions on becoming a change agent, college preparedness and goal-setting.



Former peer advisors (background) are moved by the words of Teddy Jones (right) and Chucky Moore (left).

Spring for Alexandria

A team of Alexandria CSB employees joined the City of Alexandria for the third annual community-wide day of service, *Spring for Alexandria*. Hundreds of volunteers provided services at dozens of sites throughout the City. The CSB team worked at Carpenter's Shelter where they organized the children's and the adult libraries.

Therapist Beverly Randall displays the children's board book section.

Computer Programmer Michael Kelty and Executive Director Mike Gilmore organize adult books.



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.

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@alexandriava.gov.



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