



news from the  
**alexandria**  
community services board

Department of Mental Health,  
Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse

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## Alley Cats

Members of the CSB's West End Clubhouse Program, a day support program for persons living with mental illness, formed a group called the *Alley Cats*. The group works to give to the community through volunteerism. They started when the CSB was working to secure a location for its Safe Haven Program. Clubhouse members began cleaning up the alleyway of the future Safe Haven site. Since then, the Alley Cats have volunteered to spend time with residents of the Woodbine Nursing Home. Clarence, a member, and a bell ringer for the Salvation Army, said "I like doing these things because I've been homeless and without a meal before. I want to give back what was given to me. Anyone could be in a bad situation someday and need support."



*Ninfa and Clarence  
working in the kitchen  
at the Clubhouse.*

The Alley Cats have supported organizations in the set-up of events such as the Fannie Mae Foundation Parade, the Multiple Myeloma Foundation Walk and a fair at George Washington Middle School. Ninfa, also a member of the Alley Cats said, "I like to volunteer because it helps others and it also helps me to keep myself busy." For more information or to request assistance with a community volunteer opportunity, please call 703-838-4706.

### Exercise Equipment

Do you have exercise equipment sitting in your home that goes unused? Residents of the CSB's group homes will put it to good use. To donate exercise equipment to a group home, please call Juliette Milushev at 703-838-5011. Only equipment in good condition, please.

## The Term "Mental Retardation"

The CSB's Board of Directors has substituted the term "mental retardation" in all language, both written and spoken, with the term "intellectual disability." Mike Gilmore, Executive Director of the CSB explained. "The rationale is that consumers and family members of persons with intellectual disabilities do not like the word 'retarded' because it is demeaning. They wish to be described as a person first and someone with a disability second." Hence, the CSB has begun using the new term to refer to persons with intellectual disabilities and to describe the programs that serve them.

Dr. Gilmore pointed out that this change leads to an immediate question: Are we going to change the name of the Department? Presently, no. However, the City Manager has formed a committee that has been tasked with evaluating the names of various departments to determine if they can be made more user friendly. It is likely that a change will be made in the future.

## Seeking SHA Board Members

Sheltered Homes of Alexandria (SHA) is seeking new board members. The SHA purchases and renovates properties, then leases them to the City for use in mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse treatment programs. Properties include group homes and supported living residences. These programs provide shelter and care for approximately 200 persons with disabilities each year. The Board meets one evening each quarter at 7 pm. For more information, call 703.838.4455, x161.

## When to be Concerned: Red Flags for Developmental Delays

The Infant and Toddler Connection of Alexandria, an interagency group of professionals who work with children aged 0 - 5, sponsored a Red Flag Workshop at First Baptist Church in Alexandria. The program educated parents, caregivers and child-serving professionals about the common indicators that a child needs to be referred for assessment and early intervention services.

### Infants (0-2 years):

- Little interest in surroundings and caregivers
- Lack of responsiveness to sound
- Absence of or minimal eye-contact or smiling
- Absence of babbling by end of first year
- Failure to walk by 15 months
- Failure to use hands to manipulate/explore objects



### Toddlers (2-3 years):

- Little interest in other children
- Limited use of words/gestures to communicate needs
- Repetitive non-communicative or parrot-like speech
- Repetitive, non-purposeful play (focuses only on parts of objects such as wheels, knobs)

### Pre-school (3-5 years):

- Speech that is very difficult to understand
- Little or no pretend or imaginary play
- Little interest in social interaction
- Difficulties with balance, running
- Difficulty using crayons or scissors

Nearly 200 people attended the event as well as 35 children who received free child care. Opening remarks were made by Mayor William D. Euille. Keynote speakers were Dr. Martha Welman, M.D., and Carrie Coggins-Stoltz M.S., CCC-SLP. Dinner was provided by Bear Rock Café. Guests browsed resource tables and received free books from Right to Read and developmental wheels from the Virginia Department of Education.

Robin Crawley, the CSB's Parent Infant Education Coordinator, said that "evidence of the success of the seminar was seen in the number of referrals made to PIE as a direct result of the event." Evaluations from participants indicated that they left with increased awareness of early intervention resources and with information that they could use immediately. For more information about assessment and early intervention services, call PIE at 703-838-5067.

(L ▶ R)

*Robin Crawley,  
PIE Coordinator,  
and Patricia  
Eitemiller, Infant  
Development  
Specialist with the  
CSB's Parent  
Infant Education.*



## Consumer Satisfaction Outcomes for Substance Use Treatment

Each year the State conducts a survey of consumer satisfaction in all 40 CSBs. Last year's results showed that for consumers who reported receiving services only for substance use disorders, Alexandria CSB ranked at the top (ranked 1 of 40 CSBs) in general satisfaction with 95% of Alexandria consumers being satisfied with services.

Questions asked in the **General Satisfaction Domain** include items such as: I like the services I receive. If I had other choices, I would still receive services from this agency. Other domains included:

**Appropriateness-** Staff believe I can grow, change, recover. Staff are sensitive to my cultural background. I feel free to complain. I'm told what medication side effects to watch for. **Access-** The locations and times

of services are convenient. Staff return my calls. **Outcomes-** I do better at work or school. I am better able to deal with a crisis. I get along better with my family. My symptoms are not bothering me as much.

**Functioning -**I do things that are more meaningful to me. I am better able to take care of my needs.

The Alexandria CSB ranked within the top three in all domains. Substance Abuse Services recently received several letters from consumers. One consumer said, "I am so grateful for this program! Everyone there has helped me so much... In just this short period of time I feel 95% better due to the Methadone maintenance, individual counseling and support groups. My life does not have to feel meaningless anymore. I have something to look forward to. Thank you."



## Accuracy You Can Count On, Information You Can Trust

**H**ealth Information Management (HIM). People's eyes glaze over when they hear these words according to Vernon Stansbury, a CSB health information manager. Yet, the duties involved in maintaining the integrity, confidentiality and organization of the consumer records are quite complex and directly impact the quality of service that consumers receive.

These duties go beyond archiving, explained Juanita Morris, a health information manager. "There are strict regulations to follow about how to release records and to whom, be it staff or third parties such as insurance companies or attorneys." Audrey Jones, HIM Team Leader, said "both hand-written and computerized records contain sacred stories that must be protected on behalf of the persons served."



*Vernon Stansbury describes the medical records system during a staff tour.*

Fortunately the days of thick paper files are gone. The new thin file keeps the necessary forms while the remainder of information is stored electronically. Health information manager Kay Lennet said this "saves money, time, trees and our sanity as we search for charts."

In order to educate the CSB about the roles of the Health Information Management Team, the staff celebrated HIM Week in November. They organized tours of the records

facility complete with goody bags for the participants, distributed an educational brochure, played an on-line quiz game for staff and brought in a cake to close out the week.

The work of HIM professionals is more than filing and retrieving charts. Stansbury says it is "a complex system designed to accurately manage large quantities of confidential information in a timely manner." What would happen if staff were left to manage their own paperwork? For Vernon, the word "chaos" comes to mind.

## Too Young To Die: Teen Suicide

Nearly 100 people attended the Teen Suicide presentation held in Alexandria on December 12. The event was organized by the CSB's System of Care, a program that works in collaboration with the schools and other public agencies to support recovery in adolescents and families that are experiencing mental health and behavioral problems.

Mayor William E. Euille and Dr. Mike Gilmore, CSB Executive Director, made opening remarks. Panelist Kathy Harkey shared the story of her 25 year-old son Joshua's suicide. "We cannot fix what we cannot see, so we must learn the signs," implored the mother. Joshua suffered from a treatable medical condition: major depression. Harkey explained that Joshua died due to a Virginia law that prohibits medical treatment against a person's will unless that person is an eminent danger to himself or others. Often times, persons with a brain disease refuse treatment. Out of desperation, the mother lied and said that her son threatened to kill her. He was admitted to the psychiatric unit, released due to a shortage of beds, then "died by his own hand" six weeks later. Counselor and author Duane Bowers, LPC, described the grieving process for survivors of suicide and emphasized the importance of taking care of one's self while supporting a suicide survivor.

Mary Azoy, LPC, Executive Director of CrisisLink, described the warning signs of suicide. She said that "85% of suicides come from depression. In teens, 15% of suicides result from impulsive acts with little forethought due to the adolescent brain not being fully developed and lack of life experience to know that their problems will improve."

CSB psychologist Nichole Roher, Psy. D, shared national statistics about suicide risks for youth and compared those statistics to Alexandria. Millie Osborne, MD, Medical Director for Arlington CSB and author of *The Inner World of a Suicidal Youth*, provided closing remarks emphasizing that "it is hard for people to articulate pain in the brain, unlike other body parts. Prevention is the key."



*(Front L►R) Kathy Harkey, Nichole Rohrer, Psy.D and Millie Osborne, MD. (Back) Mary Azoy, LPC; Duane Bowers, LPC.*

## Center for Alexandria's Children

**T**he Center for Alexandria's Children (CAC) held a grand opening celebration that was attended by over 100 people including Mayor William D. Euille, members of the City Council, Representative James Moran and former Governor, Mark Warner.



**Deborah Warren, Director of the CSB Child, Family & Prevention Division, and Carol Freeman, Executive Director of Healthy Families.**

The CAC coordinates the investigation, prosecution, treatment and prevention of child abuse in a safe, child-friendly facility. Children receive treatment along with non-offender family members. The CAC is a public-private partnership led by the Alexandria Community Trust. Partners include the CSB, the Department of Human Services, Alexandria Police, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Office on Women, Office of Sheriff, SCAN, Northern Virginia Family Service and other individuals and nonprofit organizations.

To learn more about the CAC, visit [www.centerforalexandriaschildren.org](http://www.centerforalexandriaschildren.org).

## Clubhouse Thanksgiving



Above, Clubhouse members prepare and serve a feast for 100 Club members and guests. Prior to the meal, a group of members met and gave thanks for the program. Judy Carter, Associate Director of Extended Care Services, said, "I am thankful for the privilege of knowing every member. The courage and bravery they exhibit each and every day living with a mental illness is truly inspirational."



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