

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & EVENTS

Health and Human Services

Alexandria Agency on Aging. The Commission on Aging completed a three-year study of senior centers and forwarded its report to City Council. A committee of citizens and City staff are developing a long-range plan for senior recreation in the City. In concert with City Council's Human Services Committee, Agency on Aging staff worked with the Commission to study possible efficiencies at the Alexandria Residential Care Home (the ARCH), an assisted living home for ten low-income frail elderly. After a five-month study and a public hearing, the Commission on Aging decided to work to keep the ARCH open. City Council will take up this issue in the fall. (See [Major Issue: Housing and Human Services](#), page 9.) The Agency on Aging has begun exploring possible efficiencies in the Senior Transportation Program, which transports senior citizens between their homes and the Agency's two senior centers.

HIV/AIDS. Fifty-five new cases of AIDS and 46 new cases of HIV infection were reported in Alexandria in 1995. HIV infection continues to rise faster among women, African-Americans, and those who risk infection by sharing needles used for injecting drugs or through sexual contact with an infected person who shared needles. Since 1982, there have been 529 reported AIDS cases in the City and 332 AIDS-related deaths reported through 1995. During FY 1996, various City agencies provided services to those with HIV infection and AIDS:

- ❖ The Alexandria Health Department continued to test for HIV infection, offer and conduct partner notification services for persons diagnosed with HIV infection, and provide case management and dental and medical care for those living with HIV infection.

- ❖ The Alexandria Mental Health HIV/AIDS Project provided mental health services to 142 individuals with HIV/AIDS and their families, an 84% increase over last year. Additionally, an estimated 738 individuals in the Latino community received HIV education and



City Resident Ella Lewis is in the first class of seniors to enroll in a computer course taught by Ralph Thompson. Sponsored by Ripening to Vintage, a seniors group, the Agency on Aging and the Recreation Department, the classes will be held this fall at the Patrick Henry and Charles Houston Recreation Centers.

Cancer Early Detection Programs. Breast and cervical cancers affect many women and both are curable if detected early. Activities to promote early detection were held throughout the City last year. The First Annual Walk to Fight Breast Cancer, sponsored by the City Manager's Breast Cancer Awareness Committee and coordinated by the Office on Women, raised over \$15,000 to provide free screening mammograms to uninsured or underinsured City residents through the Alexandria Hospital Foundation.

Alexandria Children's Comprehensive and Enhanced Service System (ACCESS). The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse implemented this federally funded five-year model demonstration project in FY 1996. One of only 22 such programs in the nation, ACCESS provides a comprehensive array of services for seriously emotionally disturbed children and their families. In FY 1996, these services included in-home and intensive case management services and outreach to the Latino community. Coordinated with two other City agencies and the courts, ACCESS services enable youth to stay with their families instead of being sent to residential schools, juvenile detention centers, or psychiatric hospitals. A total of 179 children and their families were served in the first 10 months of operation.

prevention information. A \$56,000 federal grant enabled the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse to provide HIV testing and counseling services to 48 substance abusing individuals in FY 1996.

❖ Health Department staff coordinated a City staff work group that responded to the 1995 AIDS Task Force report, "Issues Facing the Community, HIV/AIDS in Alexandria." City Council in June approved a part-time position within the Health Department to coordinate HIV/AIDS services and an implementation team that will oversee activities recommended in the group's report.

Medical Services for Children and Pregnant Women.

The Health Department's pediatric clinics handled 4,593 patient visits for infants and children from low-income families during FY 1996. Continued Virginia Department of Health grant funding of afternoon clinics for sick children helped to reduce the need for hospital emergency room visits. The grant also partially funded a weekly clinic for two-week-old infants and clinic services for early discharged infants and new mothers. The Casey Pediatric Allergy Clinic handled over 1,030 visits by children with asthma, chronic ear infections, and other allergy-related conditions, thereby reducing school absenteeism, hearing loss, and the need for emergency care. The City provided \$37,800 to support obstetric services to pregnant women, which reduced average waiting time for a first appointment from four weeks to one week or less. In FY 1996, 614 women registered for obstetric care in Health Department clinics.

Infant Mortality. The 1994 Alexandria infant mortality rate (latest data available) was 10.6 per 1,000 live births, an increase over the rate of 5.4 in 1993. In 1995, a regional task force reviewed area hospital records and found that the majority of infant deaths were due to extremely low birth weight and congenital problems.

Immunization Services for Children. The Alexandria Health Department and Alexandria Hospital are in the second year of a three-year partnership aimed at improving the immunization rates of infants and toddlers. A public awareness campaign has begun, and through hospital fundraising, immunization hours at the City's clinic sites have been expanded to improve access for Alexandria families.

Mental Health Services to Ex-offenders. Mental health and substance abuse services were provided to Alexandria residents following their release from State prisons through a \$65,000, one-year grant from the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. A total of 30 individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse problems were served in FY 1996. These services are designed to assist ex-offenders return to a productive life in the community.

Supported Housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded \$1.85 million to the Alexandria Community Services Board to begin a program that will help individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse problems avoid homelessness. The supported housing program fosters self sufficiency and will serve 24 individuals at any one time over a period of three years.

Drug Treatment Services. A total of 805 persons, including 170 juveniles, received outpatient substance abuse services and another 128 persons (two juveniles) received residential treatment in FY 1996. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services awarded a \$57,668, one-year grant to the Community Services Board that made it possible to provide substance abuse education and treatment services to 89 youth who have been involved with the court system.

Mental Retardation Services. Eighty-one children and adults with mental retardation received vocational and/or residential services funded by Medicaid, a 14% increase over FY 1995, including two persons who were previously unserved. The Parent-Infant Education Program for developmentally delayed children continued to serve 152 children.

Public Assistance Programs. City residents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) continued to decrease in FY 1996. The average monthly AFDC caseload decreased to 1,466 households, an 11% decrease from FY 1995. The average monthly Food Stamp caseload increased slightly to 2,991, a 5% increase from FY 1995. The average monthly Medicaid caseload grew to 3,970, an 12% increase over FY 1995. In September 1995, City staff began implementing welfare reform. (See [Major Issue: Housing and Human Services](#), page 9.)

Arlandria Health Center. The four-year, \$1 million federal grant that supports this popular neighborhood health center will end on September 30. Matching grants provided by the City, the state, and private sources will enable the clinic to continue serving an average caseload of 1,400 women, infants, and children in the Arlandria community. The center handles nearly 5,000 patient visits a year.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention. The Interagency Consortium on Adolescent Pregnancy (ICAP), a 12-member body of public and private youth-serving agencies, supports the Health Department's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program funded by the General Assembly. Together they have provided Alexandria teens with more than 2,000 hours of education, counseling, and structured activities. Virginia Health Department statistics for 1994 (latest data available) show 322 teen pregnancies in Alexandria, an increase from 306 in 1993.