

Accomplishments and Events Human Services, Housing and Health



At Alexandria's Successful Aging Expo in May, NBC weatherman Willard Scott presented awards to Linda Whitton of Elder Crafters of Alexandria, Inc.; Charles Cox, Alexandria Commission on Aging; Albertha Gray, the Excellence in Aging Award; J. Donald Edwards, Lifetime Achievement Award; Florence Price, Elder Crafters.

Welfare Reform

City's welfare reform initiative, Alexandria Works!, placed 878 participants in jobs between April 1996 and April 1998, including 118 who completed the job training program run by the Center for Employment Training (CET). Since being retained by the City in 1995 to provide skills training to Alexandria residents on welfare and to others eligible for job assistance, CET has matched its job training to the needs of private employers. To acquaint local employers with job seekers, the Alexandria Works! Employer Advisory Committee and the City's Office of Employment Training sponsored job fairs in September 1997 and in May 1998 that attracted 48 employers and 350 job seekers. Since the beginning of welfare reform in April 1996, the City's welfare caseload has decreased from 1,403 to 966 as of April 1998, a 31% decrease. In April, Alexandria's welfare clients began to face a cutoff of benefits as they approached the end of their two-year time limit. Most left assistance after securing employment and before exhausting the full 24 months of benefits. There has been no evidence that the two-year deadline for termination of benefits has resulted in a significantly increased need for emergency services from the community. As the April deadline approached, the Department of Human Services (DHS) focused its efforts on hard-to-serve clients with little or no job skills or work experience. In one such effort, DHS staff provided intensive case management services to all clients exiting welfare in May, June and July. DHS also contracted with the new ALIVE! Family Independence Program to provide mentoring services to individuals and their families.

Youth Services

City Council established the Youth Policy Commission (YPC) in June 1997. The YPC came into being following a 24-month study of youth issues and City-funded youth services. Developing a blueprint for examining youth issues and services, the 19-member YPC, which is chaired by Mayor Donley, divided itself into three subcommittees: Early Childhood (prenatal to age 5); School Age (ages 6-11); and Adolescent (ages 12-21). The YPC will issue an annual report card to inform the community on the City's progress in addressing the challenges that youths face as they prepare for adulthood.

Summer Youth Employment

The Office of Employment Training (OET) operated two summer youth employment programs during 1997: the federally funded Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and the privately funded Summer Jobs for Alexandria Youth (SJAY), a cooperative effort between the City, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and the Commission on Employment. In the summer of 1997, OET received 386 applications from youths seeking employment, and placed 141 youths in the SYEP and 114 youths in unsubsidized jobs in the private sector. The 1997 effort marked the third consecutive year that the SJAY program met or exceeded City Council's hiring goal. The program targets economically disadvantaged youths, ages 16-21.



Reginald Vincent of T&ES has his blood pressure checked during the City Employee Health and Benefits Fair in April.

Child Care

The Department of Human Services provided child care services to 844 families and 1,418 children in June. In FY 1998, reallocated state funds were used to serve an additional 159 families and 223 children on the waiting list. Two private child care centers were accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children, for a total of 14 accredited centers, or 50% of all centers serving working parents and at-risk children.

Samuel Madden Homes (Downtown)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in August awarded the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) \$6.7 million in funding for the mixed-income redevelopment of 100 units of aging public housing in North Old Town. ARHA's plans call for redevelopment of the site and the development and/or acquisition of 48 units of off-site replacement housing. The City and ARHA are committed by City Council Resolution 830 to replace all 100 public housing units. ARHA's application to HUD is based on a proposal submitted by North Village L.L.C. in response to ARHA's 1996 request for development proposals. The North Village proposal calls for the on-site construction of 198 units (145 townhouses and 53 manor house units), including 146 for-sale units and 52 public housing units. The 48 remaining public housing units not built on site would be developed and/or acquired on scattered sites throughout the City. Although ARHA has designated North Village L.L.C. as its preferred developer, ARHA must comply with a HUD requirement that it offer a resident organization the opportunity to buy the property. Two resident organizations, the Alexandria Resident Council (ARC) and the Samuel Madden Homes Tenant Cooperative (SMHTC), sought the right to receive this offer. ARHA's decision in favor of SMHTC was challenged by ARC in federal court, resulting in a ruling in favor of ARC. ARHA appealed the court's decision. In July, the Fourth Circuit of Appeals affirmed the lower court ruling that the ARC is the entity entitled to receive an offer of first refusal to purchase the property. The ARHA Board has invited the ARC to submit a proposal. ARHA will then decide between the ARC proposal and the one submitted by North Village. If the property is sold to a resident organization, it will no longer be eligible for HOPE VI funding through the current application. An 11-member work group, including Mayor Donley, Vice Mayor Euille, the City Manager and Deputy City Manager, has been meeting since April 1996 to discuss the redevelopment.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

According to the Virginia Health Department, there were 287 teen pregnancies in Alexandria in 1996, a 22% decrease from 1995. However, at a rate of 62.9 pregnancies per 1,000 females aged 10-19, Alexandria has the highest rate in Northern Virginia. To address this issue, the Interagency Consortium on Adolescent Pregnancy secured two new grants, with the Northern Virginia Urban League as the lead agency: a three-year award from the Freddie Mac Foundation (\$375,000) and a one-year award from the Arlington Health Foundation (\$105,000).

Disabilities Task Force

The City Manager established this task force in June to address accessibility issues raised by the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities. The Task Force will be looking at enhancing accessibility in public accommodations, improving transportation and transit access and expanding housing for people with disabilities. The Commission and the Traffic and Parking Board convened a joint committee to make recommendations to City Council on whether to implement a new state law allowing local governments to impose paid parking in metered spaces for persons with disabilities. The new state law was passed to curb the abuse of handicapped parking privileges. After a public hearing, the joint committee voted in June to recommend that City Council not change current City regulations on handicapped parking, but instead set aside 25 metered parking spaces in Old Town for people with disabilities and install accessible parking meters at these spaces. A final report will be made to City Council in September.

HIV/AIDS

In 1997, 66 cases of AIDS and 73 new cases of HIV infection were reported in Alexandria, along with nine AIDS-related deaths. This compares with 91 AIDS cases, 40 new HIV cases, and 43 AIDS-related deaths in 1996. Since 1982, there have been 685 reported AIDS cases in the City and 410 AIDS-related deaths. New drug therapies have slowed the disease's progression, contributing to the decline in the number of reported cases of AIDS and AIDS-related deaths in 1997. However, the number of new cases of HIV infection increased, rising faster among women, African Americans, those who inject drugs, and heterosexuals. Prevention of HIV infection has taken many forms in the City. The Health Department contracts with Hopkins House for AIDS outreach and prevention services. The Alexandria Task Force on AIDS initiated a community dialogue on needle exchange programs as a method of preventing the spread of HIV infection. Alexandria HIV Education and Advertising, a project of public and private AIDS service organizations, raised awareness of HIV at community festivals and at annual World AIDS Day activities. City Council expanded the HIV/AIDS coordinator position to full-time to support the efforts of service organizations preparing a City AIDS work plan. The Alexandria Health Department provides an array of HIV/AIDS services, including testing for HIV infection; partner notification services for people diagnosed with HIV infection; and medical, dental and nutritional services for 210 low-income residents. The Alexandria Community Services Board, through a federally funded demonstration project, provided mental health services to 233 Alexandrians with HIV/AIDS during FY 1998, a 54% increase.

Alexandria Health Center for Women and Children

The bilingual nursing staff at this neighborhood health center provided family planning services, immunizations, and well care for 1,600 women and children in 1997 during 5,600 patient visits. Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc. (ANHSI), a nonprofit organization created in 1996 to support the Center, works with the Alexandria Health Department to manage the Center's operations. This unique partnership was recognized with the 1998 Metropolitan Washington Public Health Award for excellence in community collaboration. Efforts are underway to enlist public and private funding to co-locate the Center with other human service organizations.

Alexandria Children's Comprehensive and Enhanced Services System

Managed by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse, this demonstration project is one of 22 sites funded by the federal Center for Mental Health Services. The goal is to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of community-based treatment of youth with serious emotional disturbances and their families. In FY 1998, the program served 250 Alexandria youth.

Substance Abuse Services

A total of 886 adults and 78 adolescents received substance abuse services in FY 1998 as compared to 672 adults and 91 adolescents in FY 1997. People seeking drug and alcohol treatment typically received placement in outpatient programs within 10 days or were admitted to residential programs within 30 days.