DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES

THE NEWS YOU NEED | THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH

Connect

MARCH/APRIL 2016

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We're Not So Different After All

Developing community through interpersonal and intercultural communication

What does transformation look like? How does transforming yourself become a singular focus of everyday life?

Questions like these drive the work at the West End Wellness Center (WEWC).

For many of us, understanding who we are and how to interact with others is a substantial hurdle in and of itself. Now, imagine coping with serious mental illness while simultaneously attempting to adhere to the social constructs surrounding us.

The prevalence of mental illness is significant. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately one in five adults in the U.S. — or 43.8 million people—experiences mental

Staff and members of the West End Wellness Center.

Continued on page 3

Taking Care of Business

THROUGHOUT THE month of April City Manager Mark Jinks is meeting with departments to review our Work Plans, which provide information on the many projects and initiatives in each department.

The DCHS Work Plan has 66 items, many of which are in addition to the day-to-day work of the Department. In reviewing the progress and the categories of this work, it is clear that the we are focused on providing high quality services and ensuring that we are as responsive as possible as an organization.

The areas of focus included in the Work Plan are:

- Assessing and addressing increased resource demands;
- Assessing and strengthening our systems and approaches;
- Grant seeking and grant implementation process;
- Implementation of strategic and master plans;
- Use of technology and implementing efficiencies; and
- Utilization of best and evidence based practices.

As we look at the ***increased resource demands*** for our services and where waitlists occur, they cover the life span, from child care subsidies to rent relief for seniors, and cross service domains, from Emergency Services to Workforce Development. We know that individuals and families continue to need and want access to our services, and many of you work hard to develop strategies to meet those needs, even in times of diminishing resources.

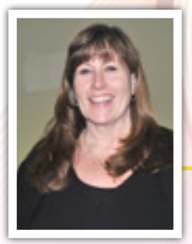
The work that has been done to ***assess and strengthen our systems and approaches*** has been done throughout the Department utilizing diverse approaches. We are working collaboratively with City and non-profit partners to build an Out of School Time Program system that will ultimately have shared standards and stronger mechanisms to ensure access for families. Internally, we have worked hard to strengthen our performance management and recruitment processes to improve consistency, time frames and support for a strong workforce. We also have undertaken reviews of our Intern Program, System of Care, Homeless Services Assessment Center and Detox, among others, to assure effectiveness and optimum functioning.

To increase the capacity and the responsiveness of the Department, much work has been done to pursue ***grant funding and to assure that grant processes are implemented effectively***. The Department has significant experience in successfully competing for funds and for implementing the grants in such a way that we are identified for future funding. The TRansitioning Adults Into Living Successfully (TRAILS) and the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Assessment Center grants have created the opportunities to implement innovative approaches to support young adults and adults who are at two ends of the spectrum in facing a mental health crisis.

The Department has also focused on the ***use of technology and efficiencies*** to increase access and effectiveness. The use of tele-psychiatry will begin in Aging and Adult Services with homebound seniors. In addition, the Benefits Program team has been working on the implementation of the Virginia Case Management System as well as other state systems initiatives to assist residents and to unify data. As we look to the future, we are beginning conversations with the state and the Office of Performance and Accountability about interoperability, which is the ability of different information technology systems to communicate, exchange data, and use the information that has been exchanged—in an effort to increase convenience for those who use our services and create a comprehensive service approaches for the Department.

Finally, our Work Plan shows that the Department is committed to ***utilizing best and evidence based practices.*** Here again, this work is taking place in multiple places in the Department, from the continued implementation of High Fidelity Wrap Around to Permanent Supported Housing. Across the Department, the building and strengthening of cultural and linguistic competence, trauma-informed approaches and youth and client voice build the overall effectiveness and responsiveness of the organization to our community and to those who engage in our services.

We have a great story to tell, and I have not even shared half of all the things on our Work Plan. I will be proud to share these things, along with the Leadership Team, at our meeting with the City Manager! Thank you for all you do each day!



Director's Corner

DCHS Director Kate Garvey

WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT AFTER ALL — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

By Joseph Davis

A special thanks to Dr. Bob Weigl and Allyson Coleman for conducting the initial WEWC interview

illness in a given year.

Mental illness is often overlooked or misdiagnosed at varying stages. Not only that, rehabilitation and re-introduction to society for individuals experiencing from some form of mental illness lags behind.

WEWC strives to fill the gap for these individuals in our community. In a broad yet distinct way, this program works to transcend not only the stigma of mental illness but also foster understanding and personal development.

The Alexandria Community Services Board established the West End Wellness Center in 1985 to offer psychosocial rehabilitation for City residents with a serious mental illness who were returning from a hospital or other institution. The program's purpose is to assist individuals in achieving personal, social and vocational competency, while promoting mental health recovery and physical wellness. Through this, individuals are assimilated back into the community with adequate education, skills training and social support.

The Wellness Center provides what each of us often crave—a safe place to gradually transition from one state of being to another. This transition fuses aspects of cultural, vocational and psychological well-being. WEWC considers mental health recovery a journey, not only of reconstruction but also healing. It is this philosophy that leads to the learning, discovery and participation brought forth by the innovative curriculum-based courses and training offered at WEWC.

There is plenty to glean from the work being done at WEWC, namely, the sense of community developed through interpersonal and intercultural communication.

"Persons with mental illness are no different from other people in how they benefit from intercultural experiences," says Wendy Vaughan, West End Wellness Center Team Supervisor. "Intercultural experiences offer an opportunity to learn that there are many different perspectives in life, that there are myriad ways to accomplish goals, and that differences among people are vastly interesting."

Individuals at the Wellness Center are exposed to recognizing differences — in culture, ethnicity and mentality—aiding in reinforcing acceptance of others. No matter how distinct each of their separate characteristics may be throughout their small community, emphasizing empathy aims to reduce the skepticism associated with improving person-to-person dynamics.

"Understanding others enables the client to recognize that, while he or she has a mental illness, they are similar to others in basic ways," Vaughan noted. "It de-emphasizes the weight given to the mental illness, and helps the person recognize the wholeness of their being, rather than defining themselves and letting others define them by their mental illness."

The Wellness Center recognizes that understanding intercultural contrasts is achieved through personal transparency and trust. That trust among staff and clients is a major factor.

The program thrives on specialized training, managing constructive evaluations of how to combat the combination of mental and cultural challenges. There is a high value placed on preparing clients for what they will encounter inside and outside the doors of WEWC—other culture, religions, perspectives—and using the WEWC community as a guide, strengthens the learning process.

Because this program provides a transformative opportunity, those with serious mental illness can go there to gain a new outlook on life through skill building classes, recreation, social outings, employment guidance and more importantly, taking on roles as explorers.

As one staff member said of their work at WEWC, "I am proud of being a part of a person's journey to health and wellness. There is nothing better than seeing people grow, change and recover."

Not only can staff be proud of the job they do every day, but WEWC members can as well. Both equally share in the success of breaking down personal barriers and enriching the lives of those affected by mental illness.

Living with with mental illness is hard, by any measure. Yet, clients of the Wellness Center are valiantly confronting those unique challenges head on. We have a lot to learn from them—we are all still learning.

For more information about the West End Wellness Center visit www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS or call 703.746.3456.

Mobilizing to Promote Change

Study gives DCHS opportunity to reduce disproportionality

NATIONAL studies reveal that children of color under age 18 are over-represented in the child welfare system compared to their representation in the general population. In addition, they receive fewer services and have less favorable outcomes than Caucasian children.

Researchers report that several factors contribute to this disproportionality. At the broadest level, this includes disparate treatment at the institutional and societal level, including government, religious and financial institutions as well as cultural values. It also includes community factors such as poverty, homelessness, crime and violence, as well as parent and family risk factors like poverty, unemployment, drug use and mental illness.

But researchers also report that explicit or intentional biases within child welfare agencies as well as the outlooks, life experiences and biases of individual social workers and administrators also factor into disproportionality and disparity in the child welfare system. These things are frequently revealed in the referral and investigation process, substantiaion of reports and removal of children from the home.

For example, children of color are more likely to be reported to Child Protective Services than white children even when they present with equally severe injuries. While involved with child welfare, they receive fewer contacts by caseworkers, less access to mental health services and drug treatment services, stay in foster care longer and are less likely to be adopted or reunited with their families.

The DCHS Child Welfare Services team decided to tackle this issue head on. Last summer, they partnered with a Virginia Tech graduate class to examine disproportionality in Alexandria's child welfare system. The students recommended DCHS conduct a self-assessment to determine its current state of practice with the goal of reducing disproportionality.

Last fall, George Mason University graduate students Shante Johnson and Beth Plionis took on the project as DCHS interns under the leadership of Margaret Dhillon, a child welfare services supervisor.

Johnson and Plionis adapted a diagnostic survey from the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators to assess what might cause disproportionality in the City of Alexandria's child welfare system. They also developed a point-in-time snapshot of the demographics of all caseworkers' clientele, which involved leading a team of fellow interns in conducting the survey and interviewing Child Protective Services and foster care social workers.

As expected, the results reflected what is seen nationally: While representing 67% of the City's population, children of color represented 95% of the children in the child welfare system in Alexandria.

"This is consistent with national trends," says Johnson, "but it still stands out."

"You realize what everyone had visually noticed is accurate," says Plionis of her reaction to seeing the results. "Now we have the numbers to back it up."

The study revealed opportunities for the agency to strengthen its response to disproportionality. Respondents expressed the need to develop a strategy to deal with disproportionality as well as increase communication and education around the subject.

The study also identified strengths within the agency. Respondents indicated the Department has an abundance of resources available to clients and that staff members communicate with culturally sensitive language, encourage each other to be culturally sensitive, and they are able to access culturally competent service providers.

In their presentation to staff about the study and its results, Johnson and Plionis shared what other child welfare agencies are doing to successfully reduce disproportionality. For example, one agency reduced the rate of African American children being removed from home by 14.6% in three years through "blind removals," where a committee reviewed cases in which the race and ethnicity of the child were redacted.

Johnson and Plionis were pleasantly surprised by the response to the study's findings.

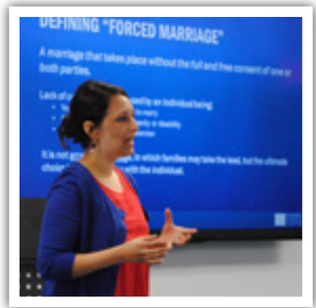
"The reaction we've gotten from staff and administration has been really supportive," says Johnson. "The study showed opportunities for change within the agency, and they are embracing that."

So, what's next?

Greta Rosenzweig, Chief of Child Welfare, reports that an internal child welfare workgroup will be developed that will guide the next steps, which will include the development and implementation of additional training for staff, mandated reporters (schools, police and pediatricians) and community partners. "We will review our internal policies, continue to strengthen our family engagement practice, and expand our network of culturally and linguistically competent service providers," says Rosenzweig.

"Disproportionality is a national problem, but we must solve it here locally and we can," said DCHS Director Kate Garvey following the presentation of the data to the Child Welfare Services Team. "It will need to be done both through our internal work and the work we must do with our partners. The efforts thus far show the commitment on the part of CWS to address these critical issues."

If you would like the PowerPoint about the study, please send an email to Greta.Rosenzweig@alexandriava.gov.



Forced Marriage in the U.S.

LAST MONTH, DCHS staff learned about the reality of forced marriage in the United States during a presentation by Dina Baky from the Tahirih Justice Center.

Baky reported that as many as 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage were encountered in a two-year period all across the United States, according to a 2011 Tahirih survey of more than 500 respondents from 47 U.S. states.

A forced marriage takes place without the full and free consent of one or both parties. Forced marriage can happen to an individual of any gender, age, ethnicity, and cultural or religious background. A forced marriage may be one that is threatened, or one that has already taken place. Forced marriages involving U.S. victims can happen either in the U.S. or when the individual is taken abroad. Factors behind forced marriages are complex and varied, but may include economic concerns, cultural norms, or family agreements.

If you would like more information about forced marriages or the work of the Center, visit www.tahirih.org.

Alexandria Women Honored at Awards Banquet

Over 150 attendees came out to honor 13 outstanding women nominated by fellow Alexandrians for their valuable community contributions and their impact on the well-being of Alexandria's women at the Commission for Women's 36th Annual Salute to Women Awards Banquet on March 28. This years recipients included: Stephanie Wright and Tricia Sabatini of Together We Bake, Leadership in Business and Career Development Award; Kathleen Burns, Making a Difference Award; Hannah Godshall, Rising Star Awar; Shakina Dunbar-Rawlings, Rising Star Award; Isabella Lovain, Youth Community Services Award-Youth; McKenya Dilworth-Abdalla, Youth Community Services Award-Adult; Claire Dunn, Women's Health and Safety Advocate Award; Priscilla Goodwin, Maguerite Payez Leadership Award; Gloria Barbre, Donna Bergheim Cultural Affairs Award; Helen Morris, Marian Van Landingham Legislation and Public Policy Award; Tamika Coleman, Vola Lawson Award; and Lisa Baker, Susan Lowell Butler Lifetime Achievement Award. You can find more photos in the DCHS Information folder under Department Wide Photos.

Staff Participate in Two-Day Training

Jessica Lurz, Carolyn Jones, Ron Frazier, Bill Rooney, Deborah Warren and Dimitri Warren (seated) display their team's marshmallow and spaghetti structure.

Thirty-six DCHS employees participated in a two-day project management training led by Lou O'Boyle of Zelos at the request of Kate Garvey.

Participating staff included members of Leadership Team, senior and mid-level managers and several additional employees who are overseeing significant projects.

Ambassadors for Safety

Safety Committee helps make DCHS locations safer for clients and staff

SAFETY IS a top concern for both employers and staff—and the DCHS Safety Committee is working to maintain a safe work environment for you.

The committee, made up of staff from across DCHS programs and facilities, provides Department-wide review and recommendations for a wide range of safety issues in order to promote a safe environment for employees and consumers.

An important part of those efforts includes conducting facility inspections and drills to prepare for emergencies and disasters. The committee considers a broad spectrum of emergencies in its planning, ranging from loss of utilities and severe weather to fire and acts of terrorism.

One of the committee's current focuses is updating drills and safety measures for each DCHS location.

"We will be meeting with a safety officer from the Alexandria Police Department to review safety procedures for each building," says Safety Committee Chair Justin Wise.

The safety officer will also help them coordinate drills, including those for active shooters, a new activity for the Department.

"Each facility will have its own drill in order to address the unique concerns of each location," Wise says.

As part of its regular efforts, the committee also inspects DCHS facilities and locations twice a year, making sure each is adequately prepared for emergencies with the needed number of fire extinguishers and emergency supplies and that hazardous chemicals are correctly stored and handled. They also assess general building and vehicle conditions to identify and address safety concerns.

Another of the committee's current focuses is inspecting DCHS facilities for compliance with ADA regulations. The committee began the inspections after concerns were raised regarding building modifications made to the Substance Abuse Center at Mill Road may not allow disabled staff or clients to safety evacuate the building in an emergency.

"We are now checking all buildings," says Wise, who says the committee is working with representatives from Risk Management, General Services and DCHS Facilities Management in conducting the inspections.

In addition to drills, inspections and maintaining emergency supplies, the committee is also responsible to review incident reports, assure an annual inspection by an external authority and convene special meetings following any serious incident.

With all of their current projects and continuing responsibilities, the committee is looking for additional members. The committee seeks representation from all locations and services, particularly social services. If you are interested in serving, please send an email to Justin.Wise@alexandriava.gov.

Members of the Safety Committee

If you have any safety concerns or would like more information about your location's safety procedures, contact your location's representative or any of the committee members below:

- 720 N. Saint Asaph: Justin Wise, Justin Euell-Malcolm
- 4480 King Street: Celia Luyando (5th Floor), Selene Butler (6th Floor)
- 2355 Mill Road: Vicky Diggs
- 4401 Ford Avenue: Robyn Brown, Sue Quinn
- 2525 Mount Vernon Avenue: Chris Washington
- 1900 N. Beauregard Street: LaTanya Wooten
- MH/SA Residential: Renee Chandler
- ID Residential: Sue Quinn

TIPS TO STAY SAFE AT WORK

- **Subscribe to Alexandria eNews to receive email or text alerts and notifications about a variety of emergencies throughout the City.**
- **Carry a cell phone with you when doing field work. If you don't have one, check one out.**
- **Document any risk to health or safety in the workplace with an incident report and immediately bring it to the attention of your supervisor.**
- **Notify your supervisor if you identify the presence of a firearm, explosive or dangerous substance in any DCHS facility. Follow incident reporting procedures and contact the police if appropriate.**
- **Know where emergency supplies and fire extinguishers are located at your work location. Fire extinguishers will typically be located in well-traveled areas such as stairwells and hallways and in areas most likely to catch fire.**
- **Know your building or location's evacuation routes. If you need to evacuate, stay calm and do not run. Exit the building and proceed to your building's meeting place.**
- **In the event of a fire, always use the stairs; do not use the elevator. If smoke is filling the hall, get close to the ground and cover your mouth with a wet cloth if possible. Test doors with the back of your hand before entering; if the door handle is hot, do not open the door. If your clothes catch fire, do not run around—instead, Stop, Drop and Roll.**
- **Configure and maintain your office space so as to create a safe physical environment. Don't block access to egresses. Make sure sharp objects and other potential weapons are not easily accessible. Alert co-workers and your supervisor when meeting with a potentially aggressive client or employee. Ask a co-worker or supervisor to sit in on any meeting in which there may be a threat of aggressive behavior.**
- **If you encounter suspicious actions directed towards you while working in the community, move immediately to a safe location and notify your supervisor and the police as appropriate. This includes warning signs of potentially violent persons, any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying or behaviors which arouse concern or suspicion for potential verbal or physical violence.**

Staff Celebrated for Service

35 Years

25 Years

20 Years

15 Years

10 Years

You can find more photos in the DCHS Information folder under Department Wide Photos.

The Annual Service Award Ceremony honoring DCHS staff who have reached milestone years of employment was held on March 3.

35 Years (1980)
Walter Brown
Elizabeth Dorton
Teddy Jones
James "Chucky" Moore
Lucinda Mosley

30 Years (1985)
Gail Henderson
Deborah Warren

25 Years (1990)
Carlin Brodie
Vivian Dewberry
Laurie Ferreri
Christine Gass
P.J. Gingery
Edward Harris Jr
Connie Juntunen
Stephanie Morrow
Patrina Rice
Denise Sequeira
Karen Slade
Vanessa Ward
Margaret Wickliffe

20 Years (1995)
Lavonda Brown
Rickey Brown
Ed Byers
Darlene Cannaday
Saba Gebrehiwet
Eileen Mcclung
Godwin Okafor
Debra Smalley
Savita Sood
Juno Vazquez
Rhonda Williams

15 Years (2000)
Marilena Artiga-Hernandez
Loretta M. Baylor
Kurt T. Brandt (retired)
Chuck Cause Jr
Sorin Cetina
Celestine Chew
Sinae Choi
Cindi Christensen
Patricia Eitemiller
Debra Evans
Jackelyne Flores
Harriet Kamanda
Asta Lynch
Peter Mathews
Luis Munoz-Schaart
Genean Puryear
Veronica Soler
Deatrice Williams

10 Years (2005)
Andres Acosta
Yameeka Bailey
Zelma Cosio
Jennifer Enslen
Jennifer Miller
Craig Pearson
Sylvia Salamanca
Betty Sewell
Jennifer Staton
Lillian Vagnoni
Cynthia Yeboah

5 Years (2010)
Farjana Akhter
Clement Atanga
Emmett Brown
Leecie Brown
Jo-Ann Callender
Liselotte Draney
Melanie Hammonds
Monica Johnson
Lydia Looney-Cain
Chukwudinka Mason
Dennis Moiwo
Ruben Quiles
Channell Sanchez
Jennifer Sarisky
Tiera Watkins
Jessica Wenger

DCHS Star Award recipients pose for a group photo at the DCHS Star Awards Carnival on March 23 at 2525 Mount Vernon.

DCHS Stars Shine at Awards Carnival

DURING THE DCHS Star Awards Carnival, staff celebrated individuals recognized as DCHS Stars and the individuals and groups nominated for Super Star Awards during the previous six months.

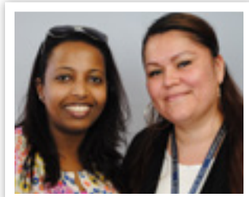
Stars nominees, who were nominated for actions that were significant to another employee, were recognized as a group by the Star Awards Committee Chair Octavius Fulton and DCHS Director Kate Garvey.

Garvey then invited the nominees for Super Star awards to come forward and talked about their actions. The Super Star nominees were nominated for actions outside of normal work expectations which had a significant impact on internal or external DCHS customers or departmental operations. They are publicly recognized twice a year, either during a March celebration like the Carnival or the DCHS Fun Day in the fall, and profiled in Connect in the April/May and September/October issues.

Individual Super Stars

There was only one nomination in this category. **Anita Martineau** was recognized for leading the Office of Community Services staff through the creation of a dynamic and inspiring mission statement. Over three months, she took the group through a series of fun and interactive activities to create a livable mission statement that captures what, how and why they do what they do. Furthermore, she committed to continue to work with OCS on developing their vision for the next five years. She made the process fun and painless, all staff felt safe and comfortable to risk putting forth their ideas and opinions.

Anita Martineau



Mahlet Mekonnen and Carla Oliver.

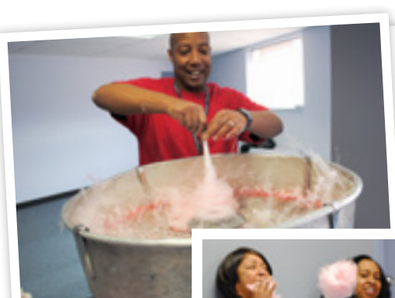
Group Super Stars

Community Wraparound Team (CWT) members—which included **Sinae Choi, Andrés Acosta, Walter Brown, Sandra Cañas, Monique Laguerre, Carmen "Jeanette" Little, Magaly Maltez, Brenda Marquez-Rey, Mahlet Mekonnen, Carla Oliver, Nicole Ramirez, Nicole Smith, Victoria Garcia, Jessica Rozelle** and **Alex Pilotti**—were recognized for their exemplary performance in the wake of losing their talented and beloved team leader, Laurie Meyer, who died unexpectedly during FY15. Sinae Choi immediately stepped into the team leader position, and together the team kept going. They continued to be recognized and sought out for their clinical, systems and coordination expertise and strengthened and expanded elements of their services. They experienced multiple staff transitions, more than the usual personal losses and managed without having a Therapist Supervisor until September 2015. Many team members put in countless extra hours and re-organized schedules in order to meet the needs of very high risk families.

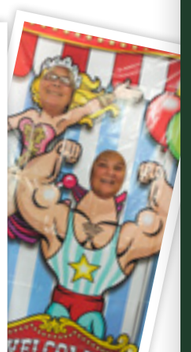
Resource Unit team members **Sylvia Salamanca, Tomas Cabrera, Natalia Spinner,** and **Rosa Chavez** were recognized for their teamwork and extraordinary actions after a trainer position was eliminated last year. They had to take over all training responsibilities for family child care providers, including covering evening training themselves, maintaining the training hot-line, ensuring that all training information was available online and putting together a successful school readiness conference for 60 family child care providers. The unit's quality of services weren't impacted because each member quickly jumped in to make sure all services were covered. As a result, the number of trainings provided increased, exceeding attendance and participation compared to previous years.

Tracey Reed, LaShawn Jenkins & Sylvan Dallas.

CSB Reimbursement Unit members **LaShawn Jenkins, Tracey Reed, Sylvan Dallas** and **Princess Forrester** were recognized for their teamwork and extraordinary actions in correcting old billing errors. From October 2010 through February 2014, Medicaid was overbilled by more than $200,000. Although this error was the result of the EHR being erroneously programmed, the team pulled together to identify the overbilled services, learn the method to repay the funds and monitor the payback process. This time-consuming task helped the Department avoid potential penalty fees from Medicaid.



More than 100 people enjoyed cotton candy, popcorn, hotdogs and games as they celebrated DCHS staff who received Star and Super Star awards. You can find more photos in the DCHS Information folder under Department Wide Photos.



Star Awards Program Improved

LAST YEAR, the streamlined DCHS Star Awards Program—which gives staff the opportunity to acknowledge and recognize significant employee contributions—saw a big leap in the number of nominations and received positive response from staff.

But the Star Awards Committee is always looking for ways to improve the program. When they received feedback suggesting that the Super Star level needed more recognition and reward, they decided to tweak the program to reflect those concerns.

After reviewing the system with leadership, the Committee did a bit of shifting and additions to the award levels. This year, nominees will receive the following recognitions and awards:

Star Award nominees, who are recognized for significant actions performed within normal work expectations, will receive a certificate recognizing their contribution, be listed in Connect and recognized during the March celebration event or the fall DCHS Fun Day. They will also be entered in a monthly drawing for a $10 gift card. Each month, five recipients will be awarded.

Super Star Award nominees, who are recognized for efforts above and beyond normal work expectations, can be nominated as individuals or part of a group. Both levels will receive certificates acknowledging their contributions, be listed and profiled in Connect and recognized during either the March Celebration even or the fall DCHS Fun Day. In addition, Group Super Star Award nominees will receive a pizza party and entered in a bi-annual drawing for $500 to be shared among the group. Each Individual Super Star Award nominee will receive a $25 gift card and be entered in a bi-annual drawing for $250.

The Committee will continue to send out monthly emails reminding staff to enter their nominations for the coming month with a link to the online nomination forms. Printable nomination forms are still available in the DCHS Information folder under Shining Stars Award Program.

Employees may be nominated for and receive awards from any or all programs in the course of a year. The nomination process is open to all staff—anyone can nominate anyone else in the Department.

If you have any feedback or suggestions, email the committee chair at Octavius.Fulton@alexandriava.gov.

DCHS Star Awards

February Super Star Nominees

None Nominated

February Star Award Nominee

Jennifer Miller

February $25 Gift Card Drawing Star Award Winners

Sorin Cetina, Areli Zelaya, Iris Melendez, Norma Sanchez and Margaret Dhillon

Nominate an individual online for a Star Award.

Nominate an individual or group online for a Super Star Award.

March Individual Super Star Nominees

Dana Matthews, Natasha Jones, Tiffany Gray, Wilma Roberts, Shawn Coles, Mutesa Bennett-Johnson

March Group Super Star Nominee:

Kate Garvey, Debbie Anderson, Tammie Wilson, Beth Plionis, Shante Johnson, John Porter, Lesa Gilbert

March Star Award Winners

Michele Mintling, Darrell Wesley, Gary Smalls, Rochelle Hill, Yoshabel Velazques

SPECIAL SERIES

DCHS CENTER PROFILES

Over four issues, Connect will highlight the services and programs of each center in DCHS. While it is not a comprehensive list of all services and programs, we hope it will be helpful to you as a DCHS staff member. This is the second installment.

ADULT SERVICES | CHILD SERVICES | ECONOMIC SUPPORT | ADMIN/OPERATIONS

CENTER FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

ACPMT

Alexandria Community Policy and Management Team
Responsible for managing the Children's Services Act (CSA), the cooperative effort to serve the needs of troubled and at-risk youth and their families, and to maximize the use of state and city resources that are designated for this purpose in the City. 703.746.5787

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Youth & Family Services
Offers family counseling and programs for parents and children to help improve communication and problem solving skills. Provides training and consultation to professionals who work with youth and families. 703.746.3400.

Community Wraparound Team
Coordinated network of services that serves youth with serious mental health needs and their families. Helps youth and families function better at home, in school, in the community and in all aspects of life. 703.746.6010.

Family Partners Program
Offers a variety of services that allow families to access assistance throughout Alexandria. Designed to create working partnerships between families and the rest of the community. 703.746.6010.

CHILD WELFARE & PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Abuse and Neglect
Child Protective Services (CPS) receives and responds to concerns of abuse or neglect of children. 703.746.5800.

Child Assessment & Treatment Center for Health (CATCH)
Provides comprehensive health, dental, developmental and mental health evaluations in a safe child-friendly environment for children ages 0-5 who are involved with Child Protective Services, any age child in foster care and those who are homeless. 703.746.3704.

Family Services: Foster Care and Adoption
Designed to provide substitute care in a licensed household to children needing care for temporary or extended time periods, during which the biological family environment is either non-existent or dysfunctional. Adoption services provided for children who cannot be returned to their piror custodian. 703.746.5858.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Domestic Violence Program (DVP)
Provides information, intervention and support through a 24-hour hotline, Battered Women's Shelter, counseling and crisis intervention, court advocacy, the Hispanic Outreach Program and a Children's Program. Hotline: 703.746.4911.

Sexual Assault Center (SAC)
Offers support to victims of sexual assault and their families and friends. Provides crisis intervention and emotional support; advocacy with medical, police and court systems; short-term individual and group counseling; and information and referrals. 703.683.7273.

Stalking
Support services and resources for individuals fearful for their safety because someone is repeatedly pursuing, harassing, and/or following them. 703.746.4911.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Services
SAC and DVP serve **all** survivors of violence, including LGBTQ survivors. The goal is to enhance the quality and sensitivity of services to persons who identify as LGBTQ so that survivors from these communities will receive informed and respectful treatment. 703.746.4911 (24-hour hotline) or 703.683.7273.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION

Child Care
Child care assistance, regulation and training for small family child-care providers.

Parent Infant Education Program (PIE)
Provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers up to three-years-old whose physical or mental development is slower than expected, who are diagnosed with a condition likely to result in a delay or who have a 25 percent delay in one or more developmental areas. 703.746.3350.

Preschool Prevention Program
Works in collaboration with Alexandria's early childhood community to promote the healthy social and emotional development of children ages 0-5 by strengthening caregiver-child relationships. 703.746.6009.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Office of Youth Services (OYS)
Plans and coordinates services to promote positive development among Alexandria's youth. 703.746.5970.

School-Age Youth Development
Provides services that promote healthy youth development and prevent alcohol and drug use, pregnancy, emotional problems, violence and school drop-out. 703.746.3634.

Project Discovery
Prepares and motivates low income and first generation college-eligible students to access opportunities in higher education. 703.746.5970.

Celebrating Black History Month

DCHS celebrated Black History Month in February, culminating in the Black History Celebration on February 29.

Through donations, ticket sales and a silent auction, the Gift from the Heart Black History Committee raised $1,365.00, which will go towards a $1,500 scholarship towards college tuition for an eligible 2016 TC Williams graduate.

The Committee also announced the winners of the Black History Questions Contest: First place, Terri Steward (CWS); Second, Helyett Alvarez (PIE); Third, La'Shon Jospeh (Customer Call Center); and Fourth, Delores Countee (Operations/Finance).

You can find more photos in the DCHS Information folder under Department Wide Photos.

Dancing the Night Away

On a Friday night in late February, more than 150 adults and children attended the annual Hip Hop for Heart, a celebration and dance party for youth in foster care and youth associated with services in the City as well as their families, child welfare and City staff and volunteers.

"Fun was had by all in attendance as evident by the many smiles I saw throughout the evening," said Krystal Fenwick, Coordinator of Community Resources and The Fund for Alexandria's Child.

The event, held at the Durant Center in Alexandria, included music, dancing, games and prizes, crafts and a photo booth.

Hello & Goodbye

NEW STAFF

BHUMIKA ACHHODWALA

Bhumika Achhodwala joined DCHS as Early Intervention Service Coordinator for Alexandria ITC. She has a Master of Science degree from University of Texas A & M Kingsville and Bachelors of Arts from State University of New York at Buffalo. As an undergraduate and graduate, she was a research assistant in the Psychology department. She has worked with children of all ages in school, center, clinic and community based services as an applied behavioral therapist and mental health professional. She has experience working in agencies helping families and children in crisis situations by providing behavioral intervention, parent training, case management and psych education. Her work experiences have given her the desire to help children with developmental disorders progress to their greatest ability. "Learning has always been an important foundation upon which I build my career goals and dreams," she says. "Without education and learning, I would not be able to achieve my greatest ambition: to help children develop to their fullest potential and embrace their uniqueness. Throughout my life, my professors, supervisors, mentors have helped me gain insights into our ever-changing world and also introduced me to the field of psychology sciences and mental health." Currently, she is working on Behavior Analyst coursework with Chicago Professional School of Psychology; the Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®) is a graduate-level certification in behavior analysis.

STEFAN CAINE

Stefan Caine graduated from James Madison University in 2013 with a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations. He completed a service term with Americorps VISTA program at the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness in Richmond and helped coordinate federally funded homeless programs for Fairfax County before coming to the City. He loves travel, the outdoors, Philly sports teams and looks forward to making homelessness rare and brief in the City of Alexandria.

ANTOINETTE COMER

Antoinette Corner is a Case Worker with the Mental Health Youth Case Management team.

GEZU GEBRE

Gezu Gebre is a residential counselor at Seminary Road Group Home.

SEVERINA HENDERSON

Severina Henderson is a residential counselor with the Intellectual Disabilities Program.

MONICA HUERTA

Monica Huerta is a therapist with the Sexual Assault Center.

HYUNGMIN KIM

Hyungmin Kim is a Family Services Specialist with the Center for Adult Services.

SABRINA LYNCH

Sabrina Lynch is a Senior Therapist with the Community Wraparound Team.

MELISSA LYTE

Melissa Lyte joined the PIE Program team as an Early Intervention Specialist for infants and toddlers and their families. She received her Bachelor's degree in Arts from Virginia State University in 2012, and she has worked in different areas of the social services field, including foster care, residential treatment, preventive and placement services as well as therapeutic day treatment. She is of Guyanese descent, originally from Queens, New York, where she resided before moving to the Northern Virginia area in May 2015. She looks forward to meeting and working with everyone.

DANIEL MEKIBIB

Daniel Mekibib joined DCHS in March as Employment and Training Supervisor at Alexandria Workforce Development Center. Daniel has had more than 20 years of experience in the field of human services in the United States and abroad. He worked for about 10 years in Fairfax County in various capacities. In addition to his supervisory role in VIEW and SNAPET programs, Daniel was also actively involved in county and department wide initiatives focusing on process improvement, employee engagement, employee career management, customer service satisfaction and strategic planning for economic self-sufficiency initiatives in Fairfax County. Daniel has an MBA from Johns Hopkins University and recently completed his studies towards MPA at Virginia Tech. Daniel lives in the Fairfax County section of Alexandria with his wife and three children.

UZMA MIAN

Dr. Uzma A. Mian, M.D., recently joined DCHS as the new Opioid Treatment Program Medical Supervisor at Mill Road. She is board certified in internal medicine and Antiaging, Functional and Regenerative medicine. She has been a physician for 25 years and has been in the US for 20 years. She completed her internal medicine residency at Mount Sinai, New York, and has worked as a medical director in different facilities in the U.S. for the past five years. Dr. Mian is passionate about her patients' inner health and wellness and firmly believes in a healthy diet and exercise protocol for all her patients. She is keen to get to know her patients and is very excited to work in her new position with the City of Alexandria. In her spare time she loves to read books and travel.

SUSAN SNIDER

Susan Snider recently joined the Adult Services as the Senior Residential Counselor at New Hope. She started in the recovery field in Minneapolis, Minnesota, working first with teens and then later with adults. She has lived in Virginia since 1999 and worked for the last 15 years at the Rappahannock Area Community Services Board. She is married to a Navy Reservist, has two adult children and one cat, and loves to read. She is very happy to be at DCHS!

ETHIER SOTO-GONZALEZ

Ethier Soto-Gonzalez is a Senior Therapist with the Center for Children and Families Home-based Program.

NAOMI WILLIAMS

Naomi Williams joined DCHS as a residential counselor with the Intellectual Disabilities Program.

JOB CHANGES

Cheryl Bowen is a residential counselor at the Taylor Run Group Home. **Victoria Garcia** is the Lead Case Worker with the Parent Partner Program. **James Green** is now a Residential Detox Counselor at the Alexandria Substance Abuse Center. **Sue Ellen Mawhinney** is a Senior Therapist with Emergency Services. **Nicole Ramirez** is the Discharge Planner with the Comprehensive Recovery Team. **Constance Speight** is Supervisory Administrative Support in Finance.

RETIREMENTS

Carol Johnson retired in January after 23 years with the City. She was a therapist in the Center for Adult Services.

Leslie Cummings retired in March after 14 years with the City. She was a Benefits Specialist with the Center for Economic Support.

EDUCATIONAL ACHEIVEMENTS

Anne Kamau, a Therapist/Case Manager with the Adult Mental Health Outpatient Program, is now a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC).

"Although I have worked in the field of mental health for several years, including internationally, my current role has been the most rewarding," says Kamau, who has been in the position since 2011. "This has been a period of tremendous professional growth, including the opportunity to build up my clinical hours towards licensure."

Kamau also expressed her gratitude for the MHOP team and supervisor Asta Lynch for their moral and professional support while she worked towards her licensure.

James "Beaver" Green was honored at a luncheon on February 24 for his 25 years of dedicated service to ex-offenders reentering the community through the Virginia Cares/Alexandria Cares program, which closed in February. Green is staying on with DCHS, now supporting clients as a Residential Detox Counselor at the Alexandria Substance Abuse Center. Alexandria Cares services are now being provided by a non-profit doing similar work in Arlington and Fairfax.

News You Can Use

ID/DD WAIVERS GET REDESIGN

The Perfect Storm tells the story of a commercial fishing vessel that was lost at sea during a nor'easter. A perfect storm of sorts hit Intellectual Disability Services, when the Commonwealth of Virginia undertook the process of amending three home and community based services waivers. We, however, will fare much better than the crew of Andrea Gail.

What is a waiver? A waiver is a specialized type of Medicaid funds that can be used for community-based alternatives versus institutional care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who qualify for waiver services. Virginia has been offering Medicaid-funded community based supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities through the MR/ID Waiver since 1991.

While the current waivers have met some of the needs, the need for services in Virginia has outpaced available funding, resulting in long wait lists for waiver services and a shortage of providers. Changes to the three waivers mean that individuals will have more flexibility in using their services and broader choices in the areas of community living, integrated day services and employment. The waiver redesign will also provide individuals the ability to move to the least restrictive environment suitable to their needs.

Starting July 1, the three waivers—Intellectual Disability (ID) Day Support, Individual & Family Supports Developmental Disabilities (DD) and the Intellectual Disability (ID) Waiver—will all be housed in the 40 community service boards (CSBs) across Virginia. CSBs will be the single point of entry into the developmental disabilities service delivery system.

This will be a dramatic shift because individuals who previously only had a developmental disability (i.e., autism, epilepsy and Cerebral Palsy) would not have received CSB services and are now eligible for behavioral health services.

Meetings are being planned to update those programs that are being directly impacted. Information about the redesign efforts is also available online at www.dbhds.virginia.gov/individuals-and-families/developmental-disabilities/my-life-my-community.

Director of Intellectual Disability Services Phil Caldwell, who served with a small group that helped redesign the waiver options, is available for brief presentations. Contact him at Phillip.Caldwell@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.3380. *~by Phil Caldwell*

WIZARDS TAKE THIRD PLACE!

The Bellefonte Wizards, a team of men and women with intellectual disabilities who live in DCHS residential group homes, took **third place at the 2016 Special Olympics State Championship**.

The team got a surprise when they arrived home from their victory. Neighbors had decorated the front of the group home with balloons and streamers.

In an article in the Bellefonte News, team coach and Bellefonte Direct Service Professional Peter Mathews says he had tears of joy and will never forget the kindness he and the team receive daily from their neighbors.

"We need to cherish times like these," says Bellefonte DSP Renee Galloway, who also coaches.

JOIN THE DCHS SOFTBALL TEAM

Who's ready for some beautiful weather and softball? The City Cup recreational sports softball season begins on May 5 and runs for eight games plus playoffs. Games will be held on **Thursday nights at 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30 p.m. on Field #2 at Joseph Hensley Park** at 4200 Eisenhower Avenue. City recreational sports are coed and encourage a fun team building environment. If you are interested in playing or coaching, please email Jeff.Bollen@alexandriava.gov. Coaches can also play on the team.

Evans Speaks for Domestic Violence Victims

ON APRIL 8 **in City Hall, Debra Evans, Chief of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (second from the right), spoke at the vetoing of Senate Bill 626 and House Bill 766 about the dangers of adding guns to volatile situations.**

State senators, delegates to General Assembly and advocates witnessed Governor Terry McAuliffe's vetoing of the bills, which would have allowed victims of domestic violence to use a Family Abuse Protective Order as a concealed weapons permit.

Domestic violence advocates said the legislation would send a false message to victims: a firearm will protect you. Statistics show that firearms and domestic violence are a lethal combination, no matter who has the permit to use the gun. When faced with having to use lethal force to protect their lives or the lives of their children, victims who "successfully" defend themselves fare poorly in criminal trials. Additionally, perpetrators of domestic violence exploit the legal system by obtaining temporary Protective Orders against their victims. This bill could have unintentionally allowed them to also obtain a firearm and further endanger victims and their children.

BENEFITS FAIR

Remember to attend the City's Health, Wellness and Benefits Fair on **May 12 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m at First Baptist Church at 2932 King Street**. This year's Fair will be a stimulating mix of health and wellness screenings, exercise routines, cooking demonstrations and exhibitors who will provide employees and retirees with helpful information that supports a healthy lifestyle. You do not have to use leave to attend, but you must obtain supervisor approval before attending.

PARKING UPDATE

Construction has begun on the 4480 King St. garage and surface parking lots. It is expected to take up to six month. During the construction period, there is very limited parking access at 4480 King; any surface lot spaces are prioritized for DCHS and Health Department clients. Please refrain from scheduling any large meetings or trainings at the site during the construction period. There continues to be limited zoned street parking, and we are maintaining handicapped accessible spaces throughout the construction.

720 HAS WIFI

A City Wifi network is now available at 720 North Saint Asaph. The WiFi network has two sides, Private (CoA) and Public (CoA_Guest).

The **Private** side is for internal use and intended for use by City employees with City issued computers. In order to connect your laptop to the Private WiFi network, you must connect to the CoA WiFi network using your network login credentials (firstname.lastname and password). Once you authenticate you should have access to city network resources and will be subject to the same network access policies as your wired connection.

The **Public** side is intended for use by visitors, on non City-issued laptops and for all handheld devices such as iPhones and iPads. The CoA_Guest network only has access to the Internet; it does not have access to internal city resources. The CoA_Guest network does not require a password, but it does require that the user accept the usage policy.

This wireless network replaces all existing wireless networks at 720.

Leadership Learning

Are you interested in leadership learning with DCHS colleagues? If so, please email Anita.Martineau@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.5771. In the meantime, find out if you are more of a manager or a leader by taking this Quibblo quiz: www.quibblo.com/quiz/9YU7av4/Are-You-More-of-a-Manager-or-a-Leader.

BEWARE OF MALWARE

Malware (viruses, spyware, adware, ransomware, trojans, worms, bots) - these are things that can wreak havoc on the City Network.

Malware—like viruses, spyware, adware, ransomware, Trojans, worms and bots—is short for Malicious Software, meaning software that can be used to compromise computer functions, steal data, bypass access controls, or otherwise cause harm to the host computer. And these things can wreak havoc on the City Network

It is very important to be vigilant and aware of how malware can make its way into our environment.

Malware authors use several common tricks to install their malicious software on your PC. Understanding the most common ways they do this can help you stay protected. Below is a list of commonly used techniques to deliver malware to you, and how you can avoid taking the bait!

- **Websites**. Never open links to web pages that you don't recognize or that are sent from people you don't know
- **Social engineering**. Malware authors often try and trick you into doing what they want. This can be clicking or opening a file because it looks legitimate, paying money to unlock your PC or visiting a malicious web page.
- **Email**. You should never open an attachment from someone you don't know or if an email looks suspicious. Instant messages and requests for file transfers can also spread malware.
- **Pirated software**. Malware is often bundled together with pirated software.
- **Passwords**. Attackers may try to guess your Windows account or other passwords. This is why you should always use a password that can't be guessed easily. A strong password has at least eight characters and includes letters, numbers, and symbols.
- **USB flash drives and other removable drives**. Some types of malware, such as worms, can spread by copying themselves to any USB flash drives or other removable drives that are connected to your computer.

If you think you have been infected, make sure to notify the Help Desk immediately at 703.746.3007.

Connect

Connect seeks to inform DCHS employees about programs, services and changes within the Department. It also introduces you to one another on a more personal level, recognizes employee and team accomplishments, and helps foster relationships between programs and employees across DCHS. It features program activities and special events and helps keep you informed on departmental initiatives.

We are always looking for news and ideas for stories. If you have an idea for a story or content, contact Carmen Andres at carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov or call 5753.

To report significant errors in this newsletter, please email carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov

City Manager Town Hall

City Manager Mark Jinks held an employee town hall meeting on Thursday, February 25, at 2525 Mount Vernon Ave. He presented an overview of the proposed budget, answered staff questions and responded to concerns.