Go-ahead given to pursue DCHS consolidated site

This month, DCHS moved one step closer to obtaining a single location when City Manager Mark Jinks gave the go ahead for the Department to move forward and seek out possible locations for a consolidated site to house the majority of its services.

Since the merger of the City’s social and behavioral health services into one department in 2010, one location has been the most frequently identified factor by staff at all levels across the Department when it comes to improving employee communication and collaboration and increasing client access to services. Currently, DCHS services and programs are located in eight major locations across the City.

The City initiated a Strategic Facility Planning process that included engaging Savills Studley and meeting with departments to discuss

Continued on page 3
Key DCHS Updates

City Employee Engagement
Many of you participated in the Employee Engagement survey for the City in the latter part of the summer, and we recently received the results. Each department is being asked to review and discuss the results and develop “commitments” to respond to any concerns or issues that are conveyed through the report.

Some of the areas of strength in our results are feelings of pride, inspiration and engagement in our work. Areas of challenge include understanding why changes are made and how we fit in to the City’s future plans, as well as belief that we will be recognized for contributions to the City’s success.

We will get into more detail on the data and opportunities to discuss and develop solutions throughout November. Please keep an eye out for those opportunities.

City Mission, Vision and Values
The City Manager has initiated an effort to bring together a Senior Executive Leadership group to begin developing draft Mission, Vision and Values for the city. The group is meeting throughout October and into November to create drafts that reflect the critical work and desired state for the city. There will be more information available on this effort in the coming weeks.

Single Facility
As you can see by the lead story in this issue, we are moving into the next phase of exploring a single location for the Department. This is an exciting possibility that could help us address issues that have been raised for years and most recently during the Organizational Assessment.

Our work at this juncture will be to identify our space needs as well as develop a vision for how a single location would operate most effectively for those who use our services and for us.

One interesting fact: Data shows that across all of our buildings, we have roughly 180,000 visits per year. That is not an unduplicated count, but it shows the significant volume of contact that occurs each day.

We are continuing to collect and produce data that will assist us in our planning. Opportunities for input coming soon!

Retirements
More than 20 of our DCHS colleagues will be retiring from the City by the end of November. This is a significant loss of expertise, knowledge and good company. We are very happy for all those who are moving on to this next phase of life and we truly wish them well! They will be missed. November will likely break all records for retirement parties in a given month.

Benefits and Opportunities
Over the last seven years, staff and management have identified multiple benefits and increased opportunities of one location, which surfaced through activities like engagement surveys, focus groups and town halls.

By moving the majority of programs and services under one roof, DCHS has the potential to provide a “one-stop shop” for clients with seamless transitions from one service to another coupled with a “no wrong door” approach so that clients would experience a continuum of services available at all points of entry.

The move would also increase opportunities for staff collaboration and interaction, both within and between programs, increasing operational efficiency which translates to even better access and outcomes for clients.

Co-locating programs associated with DCHS with those of the Health Department and Neighborhood Health—services that DCHS clients access on a regular basis in partnership with Department programs—increases collaboration, which would enhance the seamless experience of services for clients.

In addition, the move would provide the opportunity to reinvent the workspace, providing client-facing and centered spaces as well as improved work environments for staff.

Workspace priorities identified include creating welcoming environments for clients, more space for client privacy, and a setting where clients can learn about and access DCHS programs and services as well as those of partner agencies.

Workspace priorities identified outside client spaces include more training, conference, interview and counseling spaces as well as a variety of common spaces and settings for work that requires individual focus and collaborative team work with the goal to increase opportunities for informal and formal collaboration both within and among teams.

Employee well-being is also an identified priority. Goals for a location could include the potential for amenities such as fitness rooms, mother rooms, common gathering spaces and an environment that provides a variety of work spaces and choices. Also desired could be space for potential child care facilities and cafes, the latter of which could be managed by and serve as training spaces for partners.

Co-locating DCHS services as well as those provided by the Health Department and Neighborhood Services is projected to reduce transportation costs for clients and maximize the City’s financial investments by reducing the City’s footprint and costs of maintaining multiple locations.

The proposal’s goal of a single location by July 2019 was set in large part due to expiring leases of four buildings housing DCHS programs and services, locations which in some cases continue to present structural challenges such as adequate HVAC, sufficient parking and ADA compliance.

Location, Location, Location
The next step for DCHS is to develop a comprehensive program of space requirements and to work with the broker hired by the City to formerly pursue a location in the City in an area with a high concentration of clients or easy accessibility that meets the workspace and size requirements. Areas initially identified include the West End and Eisenhower corridor, but actual possibilities won’t be known until the broker comes on board in November.

In the next few months, clients, partners and staff will have opportunities to provide input on the elements of decisions described above through surveys, focus groups and town halls.

Staff are needed to provide valuable input in areas such as what is wanted and needed in a building, how to develop a culture to nurture a stronger connection among staff, and how to design and create space so programs can work collaboratively within and among each other while affording space for individual or confidential work.

This and upcoming news and information about the potential of one DCHS location is available for reference at alexnet.alexandriava.gov/DCHS.

Keep an eye out for upcoming opportunities to be involved and contribute your input!
Memorial Bears Witness to Domestic Violence Victims

Candlelight vigil held on Market Square

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that on average nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Each day, an average of three or more women are murdered by their boyfriends or husbands, according to the American Psychology Association.

On September 28, community members gathered at Market Square for the Silent Witness candlelight vigil and memorial to honor the lives of Alexandrians who died at the hands of domestic violence.

The Silent Witness Project is a nation-wide initiative that began in 1990 by a group of women who felt the urgency to do something about escalating domestic violence in their state of Minnesota. Twenty-six life-size red silhouettes were created, each bearing the name of a woman whose life was brutally cut short due to the violence in her life.

Since then, exhibits have been springing up in cities across 46 states—including Alexandria, which hosts candlelight vigils to raise public awareness of domestic violence and create a space of healing through a visual memorial to those lost.

This year, the Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP)—a cooperation between numerous City and community organizations—erected 18 silhouettes in front of City Hall memorializing Alexandria victims of domestic violence since 1990. The exhibit included a male silhouette memorializing Rolf Marshall, who was shot and killed by his wife last year. Another silhouette was labeled “The Unknown Victim” to represent residents who are in danger from and being hurt by those they love.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive or coercive behaviors like physical assaults, harassment, threat or harm or emotional, sexual and verbal abuse. These behaviors are used by one individual to exert power or control over another individual in the context of a family or intimate relationship such as husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend (whether they live together or not), parent/child (child as well as elder abuse/neglect) and persons in same-sex relationships.

Overwhelmingly, domestic violence is perpetrated by men against women. Nationally, statistics indicate 95 percent of the victims are women. In Alexandria alone, hundreds of women and children live in constant terror and pain as a result of family violence. The abuse can be physical, ranging from slaps and kicks to punching and stabbing or psychological, including threats or verbal abuse that make a person fear for her or his safety.

After a pre-vigil viewing for the families of victims, reflections were given by Mayor Allison Silberberg, DCHS Director Kate Harvey, Alexandria Commonwealth Attorney Bryan Porter and Alexandria Police Department Captain Gregg Ladislaw as well as domestic violence survivor Rhonda Griffin.

As the sun set, the name of each victim was read aloud and a candle was lit at the feet of the silhouette bearing his or her name. After a moment of silence and a song played by saxophonist Otis Hicks, Alexandria poet laureate Hicks, Alexandria poet laureate Wendi Kaplan—who also a clinical social worker and certified poetry therapist—read a moving poem about the graphic emotional and physical anguish suffered by domestic violence victims.

A reception was held after the hour-long program in the VoLe Lawson lobby in City Hall. The silhouettes remain on display in various locations around the City during the month of October.

To read more about the Silent Witness Project, visit www.silentwitness.net.

For more information about domestic violence or the DVIP, visit www.AlexandriaVA.gov/DomesticViolence. Participating agencies in DVIP include a wide range of City programs such as the DCHS Domestic Violence Program, Sheriff’s Office and Alexandria Police Department, social services, emergency services, court services and programs and the Alexandria City Public School system as well as community organizations ranging from Alexandria INOVA Hospital to private citizens.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, you are not alone. Whether you need information, support, or a safe place to stay, the Domestic Violence Program has people who can help. Call 703.746.4911 to speak with someone from the Domestic Violence Program about the services offered.

More about...

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM SERVICES & RESOURCES

- 24 Hour Hotline: 703.746.4911
- Safe House shelter: Donate items from the shelter wish list or donate to the shelter’s children’s holiday party
- Court advocacy and accompaniment, help obtaining protective orders, and ensuring the assailant is held accountable
- Help developing a safety plan or victims, children and pets
- Confidential support groups for victims and survivors
- Counseling and crisis intervention for victims
- Children’s Program of comprehensive intervention and prevention services
- Information on support and intervention skills for friends and families of victims
- Community education including the Hispanic Outreach Program
- Coordinated community response through DVIP
- Information on workplace recognition of employees experiencing domestic violence
- Access to resources throughout the DMV region
The American Community Survey indicates that Virginia had the eighth largest immigrant population in the U.S. in 2012. Northern Virginia hosts 68 percent of the state’s foreign-born, with one in four residents who were born in another country. More than 40 percent are skilled immigrants holding a bachelor degree or above. Having data on these populations is critical to maximizing their integration in the U.S.

The City of Alexandria was one of 25 cities selected nationally. Recognized for its commitment to developing its diverse community, the city joins other grant recipients such as the cities of Dallas, Oklahoma, St. Louis, and Phoenix.

The Workforce Development Center provides job preparation services to residents who are unemployed or underemployed. Services are provided to a diverse population with varying skill levels, ranging from those with less than high school to advanced degrees. Services and resources for job seekers include Career Center access, career readiness workshops, career assessments and customized hiring events.

For more information about WDC, visit www.alexandriava.gov/WorkforceDevelopment.

Event Celebrates Recovery

Program staff, clients and community members gathered at Lee Center on September 13 to celebrate Alexandrians on the path to recovery from mental health and substance use conditions.

The event was held in conjunction with National Recovery Month, a national observance held every September to educate Americans that substance use treatment and mental health services can enable those with a mental and/or substance disorder to live a healthy and rewarding life.

The event included a cook-out, music, inspiring speakers, prizes and children’s activities.

In addition, the celebration honored four “Recovery Champions” for their contributions to the community and individuals in recovery.

Shay Holman, a Prertrial Services Officer in D.C. and a long-time member of the Alexandria Community Services Board, was honored as a strong advocate for services for Alexandrians with behavioral health, substance use and intellectual disorders. After witnessing that those involved in the criminal justice system often have behavioral health disorders, Holman became certified to conduct Mental Health First Aid training, which she utilizes in her work in D.C. as well as in Alexandria. Many community members have benefited and continue to benefit from Holman’s caring, activism and support.

Stephanie Wright, co-founder of Together We Bake, was also honored. The job training and personal development program serves women in need of a second chance after experiences such as incarceration, long term unemployment, addiction and homelessness. The graduates of Together We Bake gain life skills, job skills and the nationally-recognized food and alcohol safety ServSafe certification.

Paul Haire, who has worn many hats throughout his career including real estate investor and broker, was honored for his work as owner of Your Dog’s Best Friends in Del Ray. Haire hires people who are returning to the community after a period of incarceration. People experiencing reintegration can be vulnerable and having someone believe in them can go a long way toward making that transition successfully. Haire makes that encouragement concrete by offering employment and teaching valuable skills that can help improve their lives, both personally and professionally.

Kelvin Manurs was also recognized. A U.S. Army veteran and certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS), Manurs is also a “returning citizen from incarceration” himself. He knows first-hand the unique challenges for people trying to reintegrate into community life. Through spiritual guidance, he started Arm & Arm, a program and curriculum for incarcerated drug dealers like he had once been. Now the non-profit serves as a resource and support system for returning veterans and community members who have recently been released from incarceration.

The celebration, which reminded those in recovery that they are not alone and recovery is possible, was sponsored by DCHS, Department of Recreation and Cultural Activities, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria, the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board and Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center.

“Noraime Buttar

WDC and Partners Selected for Research Award

The Workforce Development Center and their public-private partners received a Research Award for customized quantitative research reports on the demographic and economic contributions of immigrants to their communities from New American Economy and Welcoming America. The information will be utilized to develop plans that help integrate immigrants, including refugees, asylees and SW visas.

The City of Alexandria was one of 25 cities selected nationally. Recognized for its commitment to developing its diverse community, the city joins other grant recipients such as the cities of Dallas, Boise, Chicago, Memphis and San Diego.

The award will support efforts to develop a comprehensive and reliable set of data on the contributions of immigrants to the local community. This data will serve as a basis from which agencies can work to enable this population to further contribute both culturally and economically. Data generated will inform the following about immigrants in the city:

- Spending power and tax contribution
- Share in wealth creation
- GDP contribution
- Housing wealth

Entrepreneurial contributions—self-employment, job creation, business income

Labor force—representation in key sectors, roles in keeping jobs in the city

Share in wealth creation—GDP contribution, housing wealth

Spending power and tax contribution

In recognition of Workforce Development Month, the Workforce Development Center (WDC) hosted an Open House on September 28 at its location at 1900 N. Beauregard Street.

Attendees were able to meet with nationally certified WDC staff, tour the center, learn about services and program offerings and hear directly from local employers and job seekers.

“Our workforce professionals at the Alexandria Workforce Development Center are driven by the Department of Community and Human Services’ mission to contribute to the realization of improved quality of life for all Alexandrians through effective workforce development services,” said WDC Director Daniel Mekibib. “We also partner with Alexandria’s businesses, providing them with employees who are skilled and ready to work.”


Those in attendance heard directly from local employers and job seekers about how they have benefited from the programs and services provided by WDC.

“As we continue to grow and evolve as a comprehensive one-stop-shop, we will provide best-in-class integrated and streamlined services,” said Mekibib.

The Workforce Development Center provides job preparation services to city residents who are unemployed or underemployed. Services are provided to a diverse population with varying skill levels, ranging from those with less than high school to advanced degrees. Services and resources for job seekers include Career Center access, career readiness workshops, career assessments and customized hiring events.

For more information about WDC, visit www.alexandriava.gov/WorkforceDevelopment.
DCHS Super Stars Recognized
Nominees honored at annual pizza party

During a pizza party on Octo-
ber 5, individuals and groups
ominated for the Super Star
ward during the previous
months were recognized
for actions outside of normal
work expectations that had a
significant impact on internal
or external DCHS customers or
departmental operations.
Super Star nominees who
ominated to attend were treated to pizza,
cookies and drinks and recog-
nized for their actions by the
Star Awards Committee Chair
Octavious Fulton.

In addition, all nominees
ominated to enter drawings for
cash prizes. Each year,
two groups per year receive
entered into drawings for
cash prizes. Each year,
two groups per year receive
entered into drawings for

Super Star Award
nominees receive a
$25 gift card and are entered in
an annual drawing in which two
Super Stars receive $250 each.
This year’s Individual
Super Star nominees are listed below.

Ben Toma, a therapist
supervisor at Mill Road, was
ominated by Alison Guernsey
for readily covering challeng-
ing and unpopular shifts during
a staffing crisis in Emergency
Services. He was noted for his
flexibility, positive attitude and
willfulness to take on addition-
als shifts and provide coverage
during holiday periods.

“Without Ben we could nev-
er have maintained adequate
coverage in this department
during the staffing crisis,” writes
Guernsey. “Ben helped our
program to meet our mandated
service requirements, assisted
with training our four new hires
and is a genuine pleasure to
have on the team.”

Carmen Andres, a member of
the DCHS Communications
team, was nominated by her
supervisor Jennifer Cohen-Cor-
dero for her work as part of the
Cultural and Linguistic Compe-
tence Committee. Andres took
the lead in the development of
two lunk and learns about
immigrant populations. She was
noted for her passion to build
understanding of immigrant
and refugee populations and to
increase the support they have
and staff’s knowledge of and
access to those supports.

Linda Lovelace, a direct sup-
port professional, was nomi-
nated by her supervisor Mario
Rodriguez for her reliability
and selflessness in her position
with the Safe Haven residential
program during an unexpected
staff shortage. In particular,
Lovelace was noted for her
leadership role, willingness to
volunteer for additional respon-
sibilities during holiday periods
and coordinating Thanksgiving
dinner during that time.

“Linda’s selflessness pro-
vided coverage for the program
and it allowed it to run smooth-
y during holidays,” wrote
Rodriguez.

Sharrane McClain-McFad-
den, a direct support profes-
sional, was nominated by her
supervisor Mario Rodriguez
for her hard work, reliability,
self-control, quick reaction,
awareness and dedication dur-
ing two emergency incidents
involving residents at Safe
Haven. During both events,
she remained focused, calm
and composed and followed
the appropriate emergency
procedures. In both events
the individuals received the
necessary medical/psychiatric
treatment. Her actions also en-
couraged the program to set up
safety procedures, case review
for each referral and better
coordination of state hospital
discharges and admission to
the program.

Phenories Massenburg, a
registered nurse at the West
End Wellness Center, was nomi-
nated by Adult Day Services
Center Coordinator Darrell
Wesley for her service at the
Center when it was having diffi-
culty securing a temporary reg-
nistered nurse. For two months,
Massenburg maintained ADSC
medical records, administered
medications and took vital signs
as well as conducted functional
assessments on new partici-
pants. She also stopped by the
Center on her way into work at
the Wellness Center as well as
on her way home.

“She went above and be-
yond and called on her day off
to make sure that the staff and
the program were okay,” wrote
Wesley.

Daniel Ratliff, a manage-
ment analyst with the Mental
Health Center, was nominated
by his supervisor Alaina Grimm
for consistently going above
and beyond to further and
continue the work capacity and
output of the Program Evalu-
at ion Department. He consis-
tently displayed a high degree
of willingness to be helpful and
meet the ongoing needs of
managers in a way which is far
beyond the current expecta-
tions of his position.

Groups nominated for Super
Star Awards are listed below.
The Child Care team of
Lillian Vagnoni, Thomas Ca-
brera and Natalia Spinner
were nominated by Anita Martineau
for their exceeding responsive-
ness to requests from the Fam-
ily Engagement Unit to locate
child care providers at the last
minute so their parents could
participate in Family Partner-
ship Meetings, which are often
arranged at the last minute for
families in crisis to address im-
mediate safety needs.

“The team always accepts
the requests with good cheer,
despite having to put their
regular work on hold to as-
sist,” notes Martineau. “These
meetings would not be able
to proceed unless there was
child care available to provide
supervision in a setting sepa-
rate from where the adults are
meeting.”

Communication team mem-
bers Joseph Davis and Car-
men Andres were nominated by
their supervisor, Jennifer
Cohen-Cordero for their work
to develop three DCHS videos
representing the values of staff,
the missions of programs and
the passion with which DCHS
serves the community. While
neither Davis or Andres are
videographers, they produced
and edited hours of footage to
create the short videos.

“These videos not only
educate about our programs,
but they further humanize who
we are by helping us tell our
stories as employees while also
shining a light on the people
we serve and their courage
and strength,” writes Cohen-
Cordero.

Former employee Megan
Stacy was also nominated for
an individual Super Star Award.
The nomination process is
open to all staff—anyone can
nominate anyone else in the
Department. All nominees are
invited to the annual pizza party,
profiled in Connect, entered into
a drawing for cash prizes and
receive certificates acknowledging
their contributions.

Nomination forms for Star
Awards and Super Star Awards
are available online (see links in
sidebar). Printable nomination
forms are still available in the
DCHS Information folder under
Shining Stars Award Program.
If you have any feedback or
questions, email the commit-
tee chair at Octavious.Fulton@alexnet.alexandriava.gov.
STAFF DONATE SUPPLIES FOR HURRICANE RELIEF

In response to the devastation in Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria last month, staff donated enough supplies to fill a utility van to capacity—all in less than a week. Donations included food, water, cleaning supplies, toilet paper, sanitizer, mosquito repellent, baby products, clothing, garbage bags and dog and cat food.

In an email, Organizational Development and Equity Coordinator Allyson Coleman thanked all those who donated and recognized the contributions of those who helped collect and load the supplies as well as Angie Aponte, who provided the opportunity to participate in this critical humanitarian effort.

More photos are available in Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief in the Department Wide Photos in the DCHS Information Folder.

ACAP RECOGNIZED WITH NETWORK AWARD

The Alexandria Campaign on Adolescents’ Pregnancy received the Healthy Teen Network Youth 360 Innovation Award during an awards luncheon at the Hilton Baltimore on October 3.

The award recognizes organizations for emerging innovations and achievements in adolescent sexual and reproductive health promotion that integrate the social determinants of health. Innovation is a critical component of a comprehensive strategy to respond to the dynamic lives of adolescents and young adults.

ACAP was selected because of their commitment to using a holistic, Youth 360 approach to working collaboratively for and with youth to achieve lifetime success and its embrace of the idea that Youth 360 is an approach to systems-based change to respond to the dynamic lives of young people.

“ACAP’s hard work and commitment to youth and health promotion is deserving of our appreciation and admiration,” Healthy Teen Network wrote on its website, “and we are honored for ACAP to accept this award.”

WOOLFOLK EARNs FIRST DTM FOR ALEXANDRIA TOASTMASTERS

This summer, the City of Alexandria Toastmasters club celebrated its first Distinguished Toastmaster Award (DTM), which went to recipient Dana Woolfolk, DCHS Path Coordinator.

The award, which is the greatest honor that can be earned by a member of Toastmasters International, is given to those who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and communication skills and who have used these skills to help others in their self-development efforts.

Woolfolk served as the five-year-old City of Alexandria Toastmasters Club President from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, when the club was recognized with the President’s Distinguished Award. He also served as Toastmasters International District 27 Area 63 Director from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, and mentored a newly chartered club in the District. His hard work and dedication to the club and Toastmasters International makes him a pioneer and trend setter in his club and district.

RESIDENTS AND STAFF ENJOY COOKOUT

Staff and residents who participate in the intellectual disability residential programs enjoyed their annual cookout along with games and other activities on September 9 behind the Bellefonte group home. Those in attendance enjoyed grilled food and side dishes and desserts prepared by the group homes, which included homemade potato salad, macaroni and cheese and apple and peach cobbler. The highlight of the 2017 picnic was an hour of free ice cream from the Scoop2U truck.

“The cookout was a huge success,” wrote Developmental Disabilities Residential Services Director Berline Lewis in an email. “Thanks for all your assistance in making this another memorable event!”

“Youth participated in the intellectual disability residential programs enjoyed their annual cookout along with games and other activities on September 9 behind the Bellefonte group home. Those in attendance enjoyed grilled food and side dishes and desserts prepared by the group homes, which included homemade potato salad, macaroni and cheese and apple and peach cobbler. The highlight of the 2017 picnic was an hour of free ice cream from the Scoop2U truck.

“Youth also participated in a community circle where they shared open and honest thoughts about the tragic events that had just occurred in Charlottesville and discussed ways to promote inclusivity and positive dialogue on race. They also took part in workshops and a networking fair.”

CONFERENCE GATHERS YOUTH LEADERS

On October 14, 30 youth leaders from Alexandria gathered for three days at the Lee Center for the fourth annual Alexandria Youth Leadership Conference hosted by the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescents’ Pregnancy and the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria.

Participants heard from local community leaders, including Alexandria Police Chief Michael Brown and Bill Rausch of “Got Your Six,” about what it takes to be effective leaders in their communities. A panel from the Central Intelligence Agency shared opportunities for college students to obtain paid internships with the agency, conducted mock interviews with the youth and shared tips for successfully completing the background investigation process, including avoiding the illegal downloading of music.

Youth also participated in a community circle where they shared open and honest thoughts about the tragic events that had just occurred in Charlottesville and discussed ways to promote inclusivity and positive dialogue on race. They also took part in workshops and a networking fair.

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“ACAP’s hard work and commitment to youth and health promotion is deserving of our appreciation and admiration,” Healthy Teen Network wrote on its website, “and we are honored for ACAP to accept this award.”
where participants had the opportunity to interact with other community leaders and learn about leadership opportunities in the City.

The three-day conference was lauded as “the best one yet” by returning participants, and new participants expressed their interest in “definitely signing up again next year.” —Lisette Torres

CIT LUNCHEON HONORS FIRST RESPONDERS

Alexandria’s Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) held its annual Awards Luncheon October 17 at the Alexandria Police Headquarters on Wheeler Avenue.

The CIT program has trained more than 500 first responders to intervene with persons experiencing a mental health crisis, helping divert many away from the criminal justice system and into appropriate treatment. The program has helped decrease the cycle of criminal justice recidivism often experienced by person with mental illness and substance use disorders, thus changing the lives of many in the process.

The event was hosted by CIT Coordinator Justin Wise, Police Chief Michael Brown, Sheriff Dana Lawhorne and Liz Wixson, Director of Clinical and Emergency Services.

(Several of the award recipients can be seen in the photo above.)

STAFF “REPRESENT!” PROGRAMS AT EVENT

Children and Family Behavioral Health staff participated in Minnie Howard’s and T.C.’s back to school information sessions. Andrés Acosta (TRAILS), Jerry Lowell (Youth and Family) and Steve Frutos (CATCH) provided outreach to youth, families and staff at the events.

Check out the table top display and tablecloth, both which are available for use to DCHS staff. To borrow, contact a member of the Communications Team.

EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE ON DCHS FUN DAY!

DCHS employees gathered for fun, music, food and games on September 16 at Hensley Park in Alexandria. The annual celebration is a time for staff across the Department to relax and mingle with colleagues. This year’s celebration also featured a raffle and karaoke along with food trucks from Ada’s Kitchen on Wheels, Dirty South Deli and Scoops2U as well as vegetarian selections from Lebanese Taverna.

You can view more photos from Fun Day in Departmental Photos in the DCHS Information Folder. 

MEDAL DESIGNED BY STARLINE / FREEPIK
NEW STAFF

NELLY ADAPOE
Nelly Adapoe recently joined DCHS as an Assistant Residential Services Coordinator for the Developmental Disabilities Residential Program. Adapoe has a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and 20 years of experience working in intellectual disability programs. Originally from Accra, Ghana, Adapoe recently became a naturalized citizen. A single parent with a daughter who attends VCU, Adapoe enjoys music and spending time with family and friends. She is excited to be a part of the DCHS family.

FATMATA BANGURA
Fatmata Bangura joined DCHS as a Benefits Program Specialist.

ORIOLA DOTSON
Oriola Dotson joined DCHS as a Benefits Program Specialist.

GUSTAVO DURAN
Gustavo Duran recently joined DCHS as a Residential Detox Counselor. He earned a B.A. in Psychology and has worked in the public health and mental health areas. He has volunteered for the World Health Organization and Doctors Without Borders as an interpreter in South America. He enjoys kayaking and hiking.

AMANDA GILL
Amanda Gill joined DCHS as the bilingual (Spanish/English) Float Therapist. Her counseling experience includes working with military families, using dance/movement therapy in treatment with youth and families and providing counseling for adults in inpatient and partial hospitalization programs. Gill is from the D.C. area and in her free time enjoys taking dance classes and traveling to the Caribbean to pursue her love for Cuban popular dance.

JOY KONE
Joy Kone joined DCHS as a Youth Engagement Specialist with the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy.

PATRICK PENAHERERRA
Patrick Penaherrera joined DCHS as a Senior Therapist with Youth and Family Services.

LAUREN QUESENBERRY
Lauren Quesenberry joined DCHS as a Residential Detox Counselor. Born and raised in New Orleans, Richard spent 23 years in the Army and then began his work in social service. He worked at a residential youth program for at-risk ages 16-19 for eight years, child protective services and foster care for five years, and then started working strictly with mental health and substance abuse. He graduated from Kaplan University with a Bachelor’s in Psychology with Child Development and Master’s in Psychology with Addictions. He started at Alexandria Detox as an intern in December 2016 and was recently hired in September. He also facilitates a Dad’s Parenting Group for Fairfax County, helping fathers to better parent their children.

SONJA SCHROCK-FISCHER
Sonja Schrock-Fischer joined DCHS as a Senior Therapist with Emergency Services. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who graduated from George Mason University in 2014. She has vast experience working with a diverse population in multiple settings including domestic violence and substance abuse services. She also has extensive experience providing crisis evaluations and interventions while working for several years on an ACT team in Washington, DC.
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS
Donielle Marshall, a Family Services Specialist II with the Adult Protective Services Unit, recently received Certified Domestic Practitioner (CDP) certification. A CDP certification reflects a deep personal commitment on the part of front line staff, health care professionals and the organization’s sense of accountability by abiding by NCCDP Ethics’ statement, inspiring confidence and dedication in an individual’s professional knowledge through quality of life and quality of care provided by the CDP to the dementia patient.

This certification compliments Marshall’s professional credentials and training, providing her with additional understanding of the population that she serves and their possible ailments.

NEW STAFF
Sala Adam is a full time Direct Support Professional at Randolph Avenue Group Home. Wykiki Alston is a Direct Support Professional at the Adult Day Services Center. Brian Conaway is a Senior Benefits Specialist for the Long Term Care and other specialized cases unit in Benefit Programs. Robin Crawley is the Chief of Early Childhood Division. Yemersach Mehari is a Community Services Specialist II with the Domestic Violence Program. Mahlet Mekonnen is a Senior Therapist with the Community Wraparound Team.

MALISSA SPENCER
Malissa Spencer joined DCHS as Benefits Program Specialist. She comes from Charles County, Maryland, with six years of case management experience. She is originally from Oklahoma, where she graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in English. She has two children, Hannah (19) and Ian (24), and three cats, Ren, Stimpy and Indi. She enjoys shooting pool, playing golf, singing karaoke and cooking. She is also a lead singer in a band and currently lives in Indian Head, Maryland.

RETIREMENT
Lib Gillam, after 14 years with the City providing leadership on the Preschool (MH) Prevention Team, retired on October 20.
Elke Hays, a cook at Mill Road Detox, retired in August after nine years with the City.

REMEMBER TO USE BCC FOR LARGE GROUP EMAILS
When sending an email out to a large group—for example, to the entire Department or to an entire Center or building—please put the group in the “Bcc” box and put your own name in the “To” line. If you want recipients to know who received the email, simply add “This email to all DCHS staff” or “This email to all [Building/Center Name] staff” at the top of your email.

This prevents people from replying to the entire department or group, perhaps inadvertently, and cuts down on email clutter.

Replies to all will go only to the sender of the email. Should readers wish to reply to someone else, they can either forward the email to that person or create a separate email.

To display the Bcc box in Outlook, follow these steps. First, open a new email message, and then click Options. Next, in the Show Fields area, click Bcc.

HOw TO RECIeIVE NOTIFICATIONS OF CITY JOB OPENINGS
Did you know that you can sign up to receive automated notifications of City job postings?

Start at the Job Opportunities page at www.governmentjobs.com/careers/alexandria. In the top left corner, click “Menu,” then click “Job Interests.” Then you are able to select the different categories of jobs that may interest you.

For DCHS job postings, the category of “Community and Social Services” is always indicated. Select that box if you want to be notified of all DCHS job postings.

Once you click “Subscribe,” you will be prompted to sign up with your email address. This can be your City email or a personal account. You will need to re-register after 12 months, so set a calendar reminder for yourself after registering. Please contact the HR team at DCHS.HR@alexandriava.gov with any questions pertaining to recruitment. “Jeff Bollen.

DCHS PROGRAMS MOVE TO A NEW LOCATION
The Sexual Assault Center, Domestic Violence Program and the Youth Development Team are now located in Suite 225 at 123 N. Pitt Street. The move locates the DCHS programs on the same floor with other City departments already in the Old Town area, including Housing, IT, General Services and Internal Audit, and helps to maximize City facility investments by reducing rent costs.

The new offices at 123 N. Pitt St.
MAKE A DIFFERENCE
If you are looking for a way to volunteer in the Alexandria community, consider joining the Sexual Assault Center as a Volunteer Hotline Advocate. These volunteers are at the core of the program and the 24/7 Sexual Assault Hotline could not function without them.

Volunteers accompany survivors to the hospital or police station and provide crisis intervention and resources over the phone to survivors of sexual assault and their loved ones. Volunteers must complete a 40-hour training to learn the life-saving skills necessary for crisis intervention.

If you are interested or would like more information, contact Volunteer Developer Lydia Guirgis at 703.746.3127 or Lydia.Guirgis@alexandriava.gov.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID
Youth Mental Health First Aid is a training and certification on skills to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers and other caring residents how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis.

The course is taught over two half-day sessions and covers risk factors, warning signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use disorders, the effects of the illnesses, an overview of treatments and a five-step action plan for helping.

There are two upcoming trainings available:

- Wednesday, November 1, and Thursday, November 2, from 3:30p.m. to 8:00p.m. at 4480 King Street, Room S14
- Friday, November 10, and Monday, November 13, from 8:30a.m. to 1:00p.m. at 2525 Mt. Vernon Ave., Multipurpose Room

Please note, you must the full eight-hour training to complete certification. (This training is not recommended for mental health professionals.)

Visit survey.alexandriava.gov/OMHQRegistration to register for the sessions.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES REMINDER
On October 12, staff were evacuated from 2525 Mount Vernon Avenue as a precaution after a large cooler with bricks placed on top was noticed next to the building near Stewart Avenue. A staff member reported the cooler to the guard, who in turn contacted the facility manager. The authorities were notified and immediately dispatched first responders.

The authorities found the cooler to be stuffed with clothes, which were later discovered to have been left by a young man experiencing homelessness. The young man was referred to the Office of Community Services.

“This was a classic example of ‘see something, say something,’” wrote Facilities Manager Chris Washington in an email to staff. “It is the responsibly of all of us to do this should we see something out of place, looks suspicious or does not look right.”

Please review the emergency procedures for your location so that you are familiar with evacuation procedures and assembly areas in the event of an emergency.

VACSB ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS
Each year, the VACSB issues an annual report of the Behavioral Health Authority and the 39 Community Services Boards in the state, which compiles highlights, innovations and success stories that demonstrate how the CSBs and BHA are an important part of community infrastructure.

This year, Alexandria submitted various stories that met the VACSB category requirements and illustrated the great work that DCHS staff and programs provide in serving City residents. Examples of those stories include:

- Program to Take Nontraditional Approach (PACT)
- Substance Abuse Center Featured on WUSA
- Groups Advocate for More Psychiatric Beds
- Serving the City’s Growing Refugee Population
- Events Put Focus on Mental Health of Children
- SOC Workgroup Participates in Competitive GU Program
- Youth Development Workers Recognized

DCHS also submitted highlights featuring the number of FY 17 clients served in programs selected by the VACSB (see table below).

HIGHLIGHTS OF CSB/BHA CLIENTS SERVED
Jail Emergency MH Services 702
Jail Motivational Treatment 138
Jail Sober Living Unit 57
MH Critical Care Unit 93
Forensic Discharge Planning 71
Total Unduplicated Jail Services 772
MH Juvenile Detention Center 64
Adult Mental Health First Aid 135
GAP Assessments 28

*Does not include Youth MHFA Training
DON’T DELAY—SIGN UP FOR COMMON GROUND TODAY!

Earlier this spring, The Common Ground Experience was introduced in response to employee feedback received during Brown Bag sessions with Director Kate Garvey. A 2017 employee survey also affirmed the need to build a more engaging, respectful workplace, build trust, and create more civil and respectful teams. This training- required for all DCHS staff- is designed to begin the conversation and encourage staff to reflect on how they engage with colleagues and clients and their roles in creating a positive work environment. To date, 350 employees have been trained, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Seats are available for sessions scheduled for October 27, November 7, 14 and 21. All staff are expected to attend by the year’s end.

In December, training may be limited.

CMS TRAINING RESUMES THIS MONTH

The Office of Communications & Public Information will resume CMS Training beginning Tuesday, October 24. CMS training is required for all City employees who have been designated to manage content on the City’s website.

The new registration process allows students to select from a list of upcoming training dates, and submit their registration request. The request will then be sent to the department webmaster for final approval.

CMS Classes are held twice a month, from 8:30 a.m. to noon in the ITS Training Room #1 at 421 King Street, Suite 201. To see available dates and register for training, please submit a CMS Training Class Registration Form.

For questions about CMS Training, please email michelle.davis@alexandriava.gov or gerry.dineros@alexandriava.gov.

What is Connect?

Connect seeks to inform DCHS employees about initiatives, programs, services and changes within the Department. It also introduces staff to one another on a more personal level, recognizes employee and team accomplishments, and helps foster relationship between programs and employees across DCHS.

Have a story to share?

We are always looking for news and story ideas. If you have an idea for content, email carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov or call 5753.

See a Significant Error?

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

Are you leaving the City?

Don’t miss out on important news and alerts! Sign up for the Behavioral Health and Human Services subscription group on eNews to continue receiving Connect content. The City of Alexandria’s free eNews service lets you sign up to receive information on nearly 100 topics, including vital emergency alerts. Go to www.alexandriava.gov/Communications for the link to sign up.

Want to know more about DCHS Programs?

Check out our Department webpages at www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS or read summaries of our Centers and programs with these summaries published in Connect: Center for Adult Services, Center for Children and Families, Center for Economic Support and Center for Operations.