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Mark Center Building is New Consolidated Site Location!

On December 11, the Alexandria City Council gave approval for the City to sign a lease for approximately 230,000 square feet of office space in a building located on Mark Center Drive to serve as a new consolidated site for the majority of DCHS programs and services along with those from the Health Department and Neighborhood Health.

Since the merger of the City's social and behavioral health services into one department in 2010, a single location has been identified as a critical factor when it comes to increasing client access to services and improving employee communication and collaboration. The Department currently operates out of eight main locations across the City and clients frequently have to go to multiple settings to receive the services they need.

Many DCHS clients also access programs provided by the Health Department and Neighborhood Health. By moving the majority of programs and services under one roof, the City can provide a "one-stop shop" for clients accessing those programs, providing seamless transitions from one service to another coupled with a "no wrong door" approach so that clients can

Continued on page 4

MAP IMAGES BY FREEPIK





Director's Corner



DCCHS Director Kate Garvey

Creating a Vision for the Best Experience

A major milestone occurred on December 11 in the City Council Chambers. The Council authorized the City Manager to enter into a lease (with the option to purchase) for 4850 Mark Center Drive. As you will see in the details provided in the article on the new facility, this building provides us with the opportunity to move closer to the vision of a fully integrated health and human services organization. With the size, the space, the

amenities, and the location, we have the opportunity to create an optimum environment for our clients and for ourselves.

In our work, we frequently have to make the best out of difficult situations. It is both a strength and barrier in our field, because while it pushes us to be creative and resilient, it also tends to make us accept circumstances that are not actually acceptable. It will be important in this endeavor for us to focus on what is the best approach vs. the best we can do.

Rather than envisioning

how we will fit what we currently have and the pathways we use for services, we will instead create a vision for the best experience the people we serve can have from the minute they approach the building to the end of their visit. What is the environment that we want to create and the messages that we want to send with the layout, the signage, the space? How do we want to work together most effectively? How can we create a space that is trauma-informed, reflecting best practices to improve the experiences for clients and staff, and reducing incidents of re-traumatization?

My hope is that we can attract supporters and experts to assist us in our design work (all for free, I hope!) to create a state of the art building. There is currently much work being done that is focused on

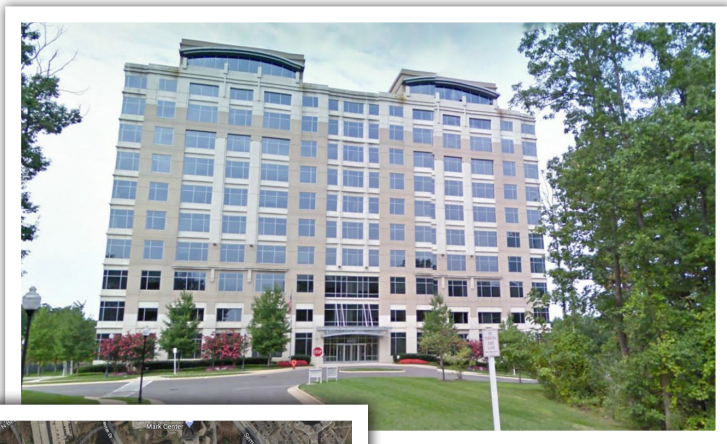
erience!

human-centered and trauma-informed design that allows for the creation of an environment where the work that we are doing together can be fully supported and strengthened. The voices of the people we serve and those who serve them will be critical in all that we imagine and develop.

We will be creating multiple opportunities for input and design work over these next four years. In the new year we will begin to layout the key steps and work groups that will assist in all of this work. This will include thinking about practices and approaches that can be tested in our current settings, as well as improvements that are needed in our current buildings. As always, please look out for future opportunities to be involved in this work.

Thank you! 🌱





4850 Mark Center Drive

NEW CONSOLIDATED SITE LOCATION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



experience a continuum of services available at all points of entry. The move will increase opportunities for staff collaboration and interaction, both within and between programs, increasing operational efficiency which translates to even better access and outcomes for the client.

The Mark Center building was selected as it best meets the space needs for co-location and is the newest, in the best physical condition and the least expensive of the options considered.

The building is located in an area that gives clients easy accessibility while also providing space that meets the City's workspace and size requirements. The building is located next to a public transportation hub, where multiple DASH bus routes stop, and has over 800 parking spaces located in a multi-story parking garage as well as a drive circle in front of the building for easy drop off.

Each floor has 27,000 square feet and almost nine-foot ceilings, which can be remodeled to accommodate the programmatic needs of the departments. It also has an existing cafeteria and fitness center, with space to accommodate other possible amenities.

The building is currently occupied by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), which will be moving to a new site at Potomac Yard. The City had originally hoped to open the new consolidated site by July 2019, but IDA will need a few years to complete their move, and so the move date has been shifted to 2022.

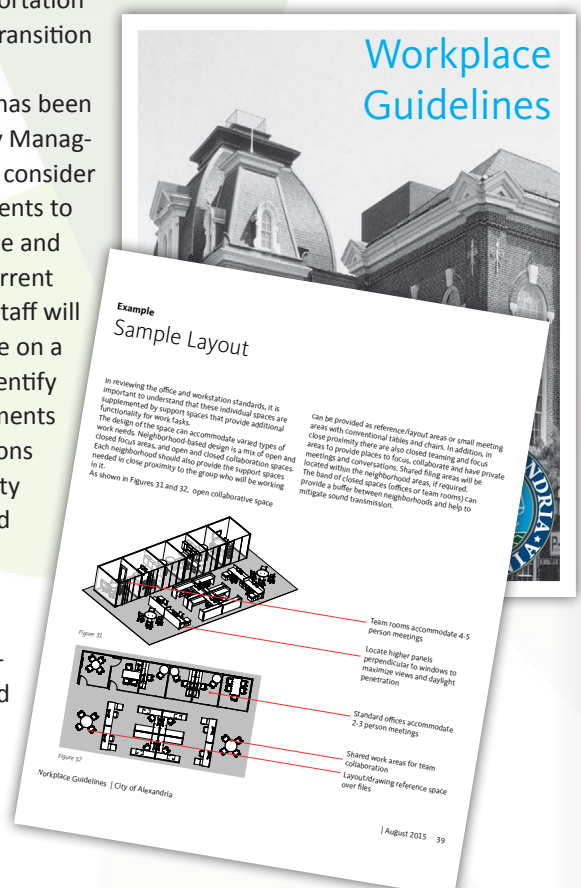
Once IDA vacates the building, the building will be renovated to meet workplace guidelines, which focus on open workplace environments that best utilize space and increase collaboration and employee engagement and include spaces for meetings, privacy and focused work. (To read more about the City's *Workplace Guidelines*, see "General Services Issues Final Work Place Guidelines at alexnet.alexandriava.gov/GeneralServices).

The period before IDA

vacates will allow time to focus on how to design the space for the best user experience for clients, enhanced collaboration within and between programs and a productive and supportive employee workplace experience. Plans are also underway to gain staff, stakeholder and client input and feedback as well as communicate with those areas in the community where services are currently located and to map out the best solutions to deal with transportation challenges and transition issues

As the move has been delayed, the City Manager has agreed to consider some improvements to the existing space and equipment at current DCHS facilities. Staff will be asked to serve on a workgroup to identify facility improvements to current locations and buildings. City Council approved the extension of leases at 2525 Mount Vernon Ave., 1900 Beau regard Street and 720 N. Asaph.

Other work groups will be identified to assist in the planning and development for all aspects of the new facility and the steps needed to carry out this major transition. Please read prior updates and keep up with news and information about the consolidated site at alexnet.alexandriava.gov/DCHS—and keep an eye out for upcoming opportunities to be involved and contribute your input! 🌱





Kim Burson Performs at Carnegie Hall

In July, Burson both sang and performed on the piano on the New York stage

How did Kim Burson go from being a shy kid who wouldn't sing in public to performing on stage at Carnegie Hall?

"I could never have imagined something like that," Burson laughs. "I call it a bucket list item that wasn't on the bucket list."

Burson, the team leader for the Substance Abuse Outpatient Program, has been singing for as long as she can remember. As a child, she would spin and sing to 45s while her sisters were outside playing.

"Singing has always been my companion," she says.

But Burson struggled with singing in public.

One day, someone at her church heard her sing and asked her to sing with a group in front of the congregation. "I

was petrified on stage in front of people," Burson remembers. "I was super shy."

Without telling anyone, Burson began to take singing and piano lessons.

"I wanted to be more comfortable singing in public," she recounts. "I thought that if I could really know the language of music, it would make me more confident and performing would be less traumatizing."

Burson took music lessons on and off for years. She took a break for a while after her mother became sick and passed away. Afterwards, Burson realized how much she missed being involved with music and loved singing—and she got serious. She signed up with the Roberson School of Music with the goal to launch a second career as a profes-

sional performer after she retired.

One day, unbeknownst to Burson, the owner of Roberson sent a set of five student performance videos—one of which was of Burson—to Carnegie Hall as part of an audition package. Carnegie Hall awarded the school a date on their calendar.

"I was in a daze for weeks and weeks and weeks," says Burson, adding that, in spite of her dream to be a professional performer, the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall was totally unexpected.

A year and a half later, on July 21, 2018, Burson performed on the New York stage, where she sang *Steal Away to Heaven*, a medley of Negro spirituals by Mark Hayes, and played *Minuet in A Minor* by Johann Krieger on the piano.

That experience among others is helping Burson become more comfortable with performing. Even so, Burson says she is still shocked when people ask her to sing and finds it a little surreal when she sees people in the audience moved by the music or songs she performs.

"What do they hear that I don't hear?" she muses with a laugh.

Obviously, they hear something beautiful. In 2020, Burson is slated to perform with other Roberson students at the Kennedy Center.

A voice teacher once told Burson that she needed to learn to wear her voice and performance like a comfortable coat.

By all indications, it seems to be fitting pretty well these days. 🌿

Alexandria Residents Shaping and Supporting

How boards, commissions, committees and non-profits support DCHS

DCHS is committed to providing a wide range of effective and essential safety net services to improve or maintain the wellbeing, safety and self-sufficiency of all city residents—and resident involvement and leadership are crucial to fulfilling this mission.

Boards and commissions are one way in which residents help shape and provide support for the Department's policies and services.

Eight boards and commissions advise and influence policy and services for the broad range of DCHS clients (see sidebar). Some of them focus on older persons, women, or children and families while others focus on service areas like mental health, intellectual disability, substance use disorder services, employment and training, affordable housing and homelessness

prevention—and service areas and client populations often overlap.

These bodies make it a priority to reflect a broad diversity of viewpoints in their membership. In addition to interested residents, membership can also include client representatives of those being served, local elected officials and other collaborating board or commission members.

For example, of the 15 members on the Commission on Aging, 11 must be 60 years of age or older and include individuals from underrepresented or minority populations. The commission also requires representation from a range of different organizations and populations, including older persons, health care providers, supportive services and the Commission for Women.

This kind of diversity and population representation brings a wide range of ideas and expertise to the decision-making that goes into maintaining, improving and developing services for DCHS clients.

Residents can find out about position vacancies through eNews, on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office. City Council makes appointments during their first legislative meeting of the month.

Local non-profits are another way residents help support and improve DCHS services for clients.

For example, Sheltered homes of Alexandria (SHA)—formed in 1973 by parents wanting to support their family members with disabilities by giving the individuals options to live in the community

DESIGNED BY MAKYZZ / FREPIK

Supporting DCHS Programs

instead of a state institution—has partnered for over 30 years with the Community Service Board (CSB), which has managed the operations of the over 50 residential sites that have provided housing to over 140 Alexandrians with disabilities since the early 1980s. SHA's board, led by Chair Julie Jakopic, meets monthly with DCHS staff to look for ways to expand their portfolio to provide additional affordable housing options for Alexandrians with disabilities.

"SHA's continued commitment to providing affordable housing options to Alexandrians with a mental health, substance use disorder, and/or developmental disability is vital to the DCHS mission of providing the essential safety nets for Alexandrians in need," says Phil Caldwell, CSB Administrative Operations Officer.

DCHS strives to continuously improve programs and services, and collaboration with residents and partners through entities like boards, commissions and non-profits helps ensure that the services promote responsive, efficient and innovative solutions to current and emerging challenges. 🌱

More about..

DCHS Boards, Commissions & Committees

Alexandria Community Policy and Management Team (ACPMT)

Responsible for managing the Children's Services Act (the cooperative effort to serve the needs of troubled and at-risk youths and their families) and to maximize the use of state and city resources that are designated for this purpose.

Alexandria Community Services Board (CSB)

Oversees the use of public funds to provide mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services through DCHS. Responsible for policy and budget direction, project development and program oversight for all City of Alexandria mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services.

Children, Youth & Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC)

Focuses on issues involving children, youth and family. Oversees the Children and Youth Master Plan, which establishes long-term, community-wide priorities for youth as well as specific action steps necessary to realize those priorities to ensure that all children and youth are healthy and safe, academically and vocational prepared, and social and civically connected.

Commission on Aging

Serves as principal advocate for issues relating to aging and promotes the implementation of the Older Americans Act and other age-pertinent laws and policies in Alexandria and Virginia. Advances programs and services addressing the needs of older Alexandrians, especially (but not exclusively) for low-income residents.

Commission on Employment

Responsible for developing a City-wide plan for employment services that reflects the goals of linking existing City employment and training programs with employment and training programs operated by the City school systems and with the economic development program operated by the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with City Council.

Commission for Women

Focuses on eliminating gender discrimination and encouraging equal opportunity for women in all aspects of their lives. Provides advice and consultation to City Council on issues concerning women.

Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)

Serves as an advisory commission to Alexandria's Community Action Agency. Advises the Alexandria City Council, the Virginia State Legislature and the Virginia Congressional delegation about legislative matters regarding issues including employment, affordable housing, health care, homeless prevention, utility costs and abusive lending practices.

Social Services Advisory Board (SSAB)

Interests itself in all matters pertaining to the social welfare of the people of the City, monitors the formulation and implementation of social welfare programs in the City, and advises City officials on public welfare issues.

Celebrating Sobriety and Anniversary

Sober Living Unit participants and staff celebrate 30th anniversary of program

The Alexandria Sheriff's Office and the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) hosted the 30th anniversary celebration of the Sober Living Unit at the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center on December 6.

Jonathan Teumer, the jail's Mental Health Team Supervisor, welcomed guests to the event and shared highlights and history about the Sober Living Unit (SLU), the jail's substance abuse treatment program. Teumer then introduced Carol Layer of DCHS and Chief Deputy Joseph Pankey

who both applauded the success of SLU and the partnership between DCHS and the Sheriff's Office.

During the SLU celebration, a dozen inmates currently in the program shared inspirational readings and original poetry with the audience, which included substance abuse counselors, community volunteers and former SLU participants who returned to the jail to encourage current SLU members. Bridget J. and a member of the men's program served as emcees, and Ahmad A., Leander J., Jonathan S., Cary L. and Patricia G. were among the SLU participants who shared their stories and their fight for sobriety. They also expressed their appreciation to members of the Mental Health Team, like counselors Beverly Randall, Elietta Lazaro and Lauren Broderick who provide therapeutic and other services to aid in their recovery.

Participants and audience members all appreciated the remarks of Gershon L., a former SLU member who returned to the jail to be a guest speaker. He recalled how substance abuse had negatively influenced his relationships, quality of life and decision-making, but after completing the SLU program when it was

still in its early years, he had embraced sobriety. In sharing his own personal experience, he sent a message of understanding and hope to inmates currently in the program. They were all inspired by his story and by the presence of other SLU alumni who showed that treatment, counseling and 12-step programs could indeed bring lasting success and sobriety.

After the ceremony ended, inmates, guests and staff enjoyed cake and refreshments to celebrate the milestone anniversary of SLU as well as the sobriety achievements of current and former SLU members.

When SLU first started in the late 1980s, SLU inmates generally struggled with alcohol abuse and addiction to crack cocaine. Today alcohol abuse remains a problem but inmates may be more likely to suffer from opioid dependency than they were 30 years ago. Whatever type of substance abuse they are dealing with, inmates in SLU are committed to sobriety and acknowledge the challenges they will face as they strive to remain clean after they are released.

In 2018, 64 inmates participated in the program and those currently in SLU look forward to continuing the success and following in the path that hundreds of other SLU alumni created over the past three decades. ~ by Amy Bertsch



Speakers included Jonathan S. (left), who shared the SLU philosophy, and Bridget J. (right), who also served as co-emcee.



Carol Layer, Center for Adult Services, and Jonathan Teumer, Mental Health Team Supervisor also spoke at the event.

21 Children Find Forever Families

DCHS recognizes adoptions at City's national day celebration

On November 17, DCHS recognized National Adoption Day at the Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. On this Saturday before Thanksgiving, the only people in the courthouse were those celebrating the adoptions of 21 unique and special children by 15 families who opened their hearts to raise, love and provide a safe home for these children to thrive and grow.

Chief of Child Welfare Greta Rosenzweig said, "Every year, we are amazed and humbled by the families who come forward to build relationships with and provide permanency for children who have received services through Alexandria's foster care system." This year, four children were adopted by their relatives and 14 were adopted by their City of Alexandria foster families.

The children ranged in age from 1-17 and included six sibling pairs. Foster families were made of moms and dads, single dads, same sex parents and aunts and uncles. Some children joined families as an only child, while others united with families of up to six siblings including other adopted children.

Many of the people involved in making this day possible came to celebrate – social workers, judges, attorneys, guardians ad litem, CASA volunteers and therapists. As the social workers presented each family before the full gallery of guests and a jury box of joyful and apprehensive children,

hearts swelled, eyes glossed over with tears and smiles and laughter abounded.

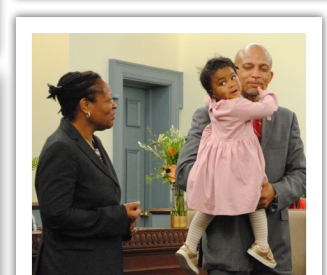
Each family joined judges Constance Frogale and Uley Damiani behind the bench where they received their official adoption certificate and paused for a family photo. Some younger children took the opportunity to whack the gavel, call for more attention through the judge's microphone, and before leaving the courtroom, take a spin in the witness stand chairs.

Following the ceremony, guests enjoyed a brunch reception in the courthouse, and 21 children went home with their forever families.

Each year, over 140,000 children in the U.S. are adopted. Learn more about the City of Alexandria's [Foster Care and Adoption programs](#) and efforts to keep children in their homes or return children to their homes when possible.

-Greta Rosenzweig contributed to this story. 🌱

the judges



Social workers — some of the people involved in making the day possible!



Serving Alexandria Residents in 2018

Read the 2018 Community Impact Report online

Take a moment to view the *2018 DCHS Community Impact Report* and learn about how DCHS programs and services are improving or maintaining the well-being, safety and self-sufficiency of Alexandria residents and the community.

The 28-page report highlights not only the work of the Department but the impact felt throughout Alexandria.

The report opens with a message from Director Kate Garvey and a review of the DCHS vision, mission, value and principles followed by highlights from each of the three direct service centers.

In the **Center for Children and Families**, the report touches on a number of successes in youth development and leadership, behavioral health and family care. The report provides highlights of the Center's continuing leader-

ship in the Children and Youth Master Plan as well as the work of Child and Family Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Children's Services Act Office, the Domestic Violence Program, Early Childhood Development and other programs. The report also included highlights on the number of residents served, including 7,235 engaged in youth development and 581 preschoolers served in 40 classrooms

The report also includes the impact of programs in **Center for Adult Services** serving seniors and those in treatment and recovery. Highlights included the work of the Division of Aging and Adult Services, Program of Assertive Community Treatment, the Opioid Treatment Program, Substance Abuse Residential Services and other programs. The Center provided 11,869 hours of per-

sonal care service.

The report also highlights the significant strides made by the **Center for Economic Support** in providing community support through the work of the Office of Community Support, Workforce Development Center and Benefits Program. The report also included highlights on the number individuals and families served, including the 2,292 assisted with financial stabilization services and rent relief.

The report also includes the impact of the work and contribution of **those who volunteered** in programs across the department, including the Adult Day Services Center, Domestic Violence Program and Sexual Assault Center. The work of the Fund for Alexandria's Child and Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center were also highlighted.

This year, the report also features two articles that demonstrate the impact DCHS services are making in the community. The first shares the impact of **Critical Incident Response Team**, who offers specialized supportive responses for critical incidents that occur in Alexandria. The second highlights the work and impact of DCHS programs and staff involved in the City's **Opioid Work Group**, which takes a multidimensional approach to the opioid crisis in our community.

The report ends with financial information, including revenues and expenditures by Center.

Read more about the impact of DCHS programs and services at alexandriava.gov/DCHS. The success of DCHS is all made possible by community partners, DCHS staff and other city employees. 🌱



DCHS Highlights

RETREAT ADDRESSES OPIOID RESPONSE

In September, key staff involved in addressing the opioid crisis from DCHS, the Alexandria Police Department and Inova Alexandria Hospital participated in an Overdose Response Retreat.

At the half-day event, staff discussed how all City agencies and partners currently respond to opioid overdoses and crafted a plan to work more closely together in the future.

As a result of this retreat, a number of new initiatives are underway, including enhanced clinical evaluations of all persons at risk of an opioid overdose who are treated at Alexandria Hospital, streamlined referrals of OD survivors into the DCHS treatment system, and the development of "Recovery Bags" which are now given to all OD survivors by Police. Recovery Bags include DCHS treatment information and burner phones, which are used by Police and DCHS staff to reach out to survivors and support the person entering the treatment system. In the future, the team hopes to further develop their response by including Narcan in all Recovery Bags and also incorporate peers into the overall OD response strategy. ~Liz Wixon

BIKES DONATED TO DVP FAMILIES

Vélocity Bicycle Cooperative provided over 20 bicycles this fall to children being served by the Domestic Violence Program (DVP).

DVP teamed up with Vélocity Bicycle Cooperative to provide the bicycles, which can be a fun way to get active in nature, explore the community and receive respite from daily stressors. Bike riding

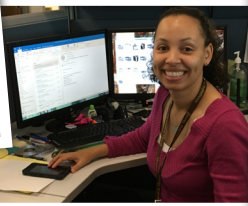
can also be an avenue for the healing process. Studies have found that cardiovascular exercise, like bike riding, can increase mental wellbeing by releasing adrenalin and endorphins and improving self-confidence.

The program is vitally important for DVP families whose experience of domestic violence is compounded by the economic strains of providing on a single income in high cost of living communities. As households struggle to meet basic needs, expensive children's toys like bicycles are not purchased. Vélocity Bicycle Cooperative was co-founded by John Patterson and Christian Myers in 2010. Patterson and Myers saw the opportunity and demand for a community-based and volunteer-run bicycle co-op in Alexandria to grow and





empower a more inclusive biking community through affordability, education and embracing the fun of riding. ~ Yemsrach Mehari



Prescription Drug Take Back Day is part of a national initiative by the Drug Enforcement Administration and one of four the City of Alexandria holds annually to provide locations for residents to drop off potentially dangerous expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs and other medications for safe disposal and destruction. The events help reduce the supply of drugs that can be a source for illegal use and a risk to public health and safety.

Alexandria holds four take back days a year.



STAFF PURPLE OUT

On October 18, DCHS staff wore purple to help raise awareness of domestic violence during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, an annual opportunity to educate the community on the pattern of abusive behaviors that many women and men endure while also celebrating the survivors of domestic violence.

The color purple symbolizes the courage, persistence, honor and commitment to ending domestic violence. Purple Out offers individuals a chance to take a stand against domestic violence and express solidarity with survivors of domestic violence and their families.

NEAR 200 POUNDS OF MEDICATIONS COLLECTED DURING TAKE BACK DAY

During the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on October 27, Alexandria collected **195 pounds of unused and expired medication** at multiple drop-off sites staffed by the Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Sheriff's Office and Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria.



HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATED

The Hispanic Heritage Committee hosted the Hispanic Heritage Luncheon on October 30 in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated from September 15 through October 15 to celebrate the rich heritage and culture and recognize the contributions made by people of

Hispanic and Latino descent.

The event consisted of Latin music, foods from across Central and South America, and a fashion show including traditional dress from El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Honduras, Mexico and Peru. A special guest comedian brought out the humor of growing up in America as a Latino child of immigrants.

Winners of the raffle went home with baskets consisting of various treats from Latin America. The proceeds from the event will allow the committee to continue sharing the rich variety of culture in future Hispanic Heritage events. ~ *Gloria Marin*



WDC PARTICIPATES IN PANEL

Last month, the Workforce Development Center participated in a four-part series of panel discussions on the global refugee crisis hosted by the Global Center for Refugee Education and Science (GCRES) and Veterans for American Ideals.

The first three evenings focused on the situation of refugees in Africa and Latin America and the Rohingya population. WDC participated in the fourth evening, which focused on solutions occurring in organizations like Starbucks, Dafero, WDC, GCRES (ESL training) and One Journey.

~*Nova Friends of Refugees*



CES STAFF CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING

Center for Economic Support staff celebrated Thanksgiving during the first annual CES Friendsgiving Luncheon on November 12.

Over 50 team members from Public Benefits, Workforce Development Center, Office of Community Services and the Customer Relations team enjoyed food, friendship and reflection on all they were grateful for this year.

The event was the idea of the New Outlook Workgroup, a new initiative within the center. NOW is working on increasing employee engagement across CES. The group is made up of two representatives from each division within CES, who meet monthly to discuss strategic ways to have a healthy and happy workforce.

CES staff contributed their time, money and food to make the lunch a success. Special thanks to those who set up, served and cleaned up after the event.

~*Jessica Lurz*



More DCHS Highlights!



CFW RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT

The Alexandria Commission for Women (CFW) hosted a reception to release their *Status of Women* report on November 13 in the Vola Lawson Lobby of City Hall.

It has been more than four decades since the release of the City of Alexandria's 1974 *Final Report of the Alexandria Ad Hoc Committee for Women*, and gender equality and the well-being of women have surfaced again in the national spotlight. Society is wrangling with the repercussions of sexual assault, gender discrimination, pay disparity, unequal representation and other circumstances that inhibit women's equality

and welfare.

Just as Alexandria emerged as a champion of women's rights in the early 1970s, the CFW believes that the City again has the opportunity to develop pathways to overcome inequalities and address challenges.

To guide such an effort, over the last two years, the CFW analyzed local, state and national data, conducted interviews with city and local leaders, and held focus groups to glean information about the status of women and girls in Alexandria.

The CFW summarized its findings in the *Status of Women* report to provide an understanding of the status of women today and to highlight emerging trends. Organized under five pillars—economic security, opportunity, leadership, safety

and health—the report highlights data from each area and offers specific and broad recommendations for the City and the community to consider.

The report is published online at www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS.

BUILDING SERVICES THAT ARE TRANS-INCLUSIVE

On November 19, 150 service providers gathered to learn what it means to be an ally to transgender people during Building Trans-Inclusive Services, a training sponsored by the Alexandria LGBTQ Task Force, Friends of the Commission for Women and NOVA Cares of Northern Virginia Community College.

Rebecca Kling, Education Program Director for the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), spoke from her own experience as a transgender woman, weaving in the stories of many other transgender and non-binary people, and used data from the U.S. Trans Survey to discuss what service providers can do to create safe and inclusive spaces for transgender people.

Throughout the presentation, Kling reiterated the message that participants don't need to be perfect to be allies. Instead, she encouraged participants to continue working to create safety and inclusion.

For resources, visit transequality.org. To join the Alexandria LGBTQ Task Force, email erikaock@gmail.com. ~Erika Callaway Kleiner





LANE PRESENTS AT REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Damian Lane, an investigator with the DCHS Fraud Prevention & Investigation Unit, spoke at the North Carolina Social Services Region III Conference on November 30, which hosted 55 fraud investigators, state representatives and social service leaders.

Lane presented a workshop on Fraudulent Documents & Interviewing Techniques for Fraud Investigators, which focused on identifying fraudulent documents, interviewing techniques for welfare fraud investigators and successful strategies used in Alexandria DSS Fraud Prevention & Investigation Unit.

Lane received excellent feedback. Participants noted him as a good speaker and great asset and thanked him for providing helpful and informative materials.

SAPCA MEETING CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF ACTION

On December 6, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) celebrated 10 years of citizen-led efforts to reduce underage substance use and abuse during a community meeting at Minnie Howard Library Media Center.

Representatives also discussed upcoming action plans, and attendees voted on open positions for the board of directors, which provides the policy, oversight and fiscal stewardship of SAPCA.

Since SAPCA's formation in 2007,

Alexandria has seen a significant decline in substance use by its youth. Formed to address youth use of alcohol, marijuana and tobacco, the coalition of non-profit organizations, schools, City agencies, local businesses, government, community leaders, youth, parents and other concerned adults has grown to over 150 members and partners. SAPCA uses a variety of community-wide strategies to accomplish the goals outlined in its annual action plans to build and maintain a healthy community.

SAPCA representatives also discussed upcoming strategic action plans to strengthen its relationship with community partners, identify and promote positive health choices and activities for children and youth, and use social and print media and community conversations around its campaign, "A Trend to Get Behind."



WIZARDS WIN ANNUAL BASKETBALL GAME!

On December 12, the Bellefonte Wizards triumphed once again over the DCHS Shooting Stars in a tight contest, with a final score of 34-33.

Everyone had a great time during the annual basketball game, and many DCHS employees deserve thanks for their participation, including Frank Tolson, Peter Mathews, Randy Arnold, Wykiki Alston, Mercedes Leon de Leon, Lori Marlowe (and son Dorian), Linda Gilmore, Tony Ulmer, Justin Wise and Octavius Fulton. The only negative was the refereeing by Darrell Wesley and Phil Caldwell who must have forgotten their glasses! ~Jeff Bollen



DCHS Star Awards

OCTOBER 2018 NOMINEES

Ana Castillo
Peggy Stypula

NOVEMBER 2018 NOMINEES

NONE

Star Award Nomination Form:
[survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/
DCHS-Star-Award-Nomination-Form](https://survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/DCHS-Star-Award-Nomination-Form)

Super Star Nomination Form:
[survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/
DCHS-Superstar-Award-Nomination-Form](https://survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/DCHS-Superstar-Award-Nomination-Form)

Hello & Goodbye



NEW STAFF



KATIE ALIBERTI

Katie Aliberti recently joined TRAILS as a Senior Therapist. She comes to DCHS after working in palliative medicine for several years. She also has experience working in housing, mental health and early intervention. Aliberti has an MSW from Boston University and is a licensed social worker in Virginia. In her spare time, she likes to run and spend time in the pottery studio. She is excited to be part of the TRAILS team.



CATHERINE FERNANDEZ

Catherine Fernandez joined DCHS as a Case Worker with the Center for Children and Families.

JULIET KWARTENG

Juliet Kwarteng joined DCHS as the new part-time Senior Therapist in Emergency Services. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Old Dominion University and she has a Master's in Social Work from Norfolk State University. She is a licensed clinical social worker. Prior to coming to City of Alexandria, she worked at Fairfax County Department of Family Services doing child protective services for two years. Kwarteng has extensive experience working with the mental health and dual diagnosis population. Additionally, she works part time in private practice, working with clients of diverse background. In her free time, she enjoys catching up with friends, family, traveling and learning new things.

JAMIE DIVELBISS

Jamie Divelbiss recently joined DCHS as a Benefits Specialist Supervisor. She has eight years of experience as a benefits specialist, having worked for both the Fredericksburg City and Spotsylvania County Departments of Social Services. Prior to her employment with the City of Alexandria, she served as the CSA Coordinator for Fredericksburg City for one year. She has a bachelor's degree in sociology and ethics from Randolph-Macon College. She currently resides in Odenton, Maryland, with plans in the near future to relocate to Alexandria. She is excited to join the DCHS family and looks forward to serving the Alexandria community.

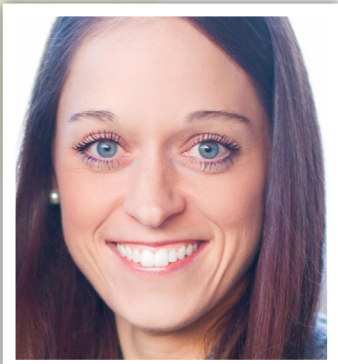
SHIRLEY SANCHEZ

Shirley Sanchez joined DCHS as a Supervisory Administrative Analyst in Operations/ Finance Unit. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Administration and International



Image by Jannoon028 / Freepik

Business from Norbert Wiener University and has 13 years of work experience in the business administration field. Sanchez started with DCHS in May 2017 as a temporary employee. She performed the duties of this position with outstanding results and was instrumental in maintaining the CSA fiscal invoices and handling vendor inquiries.



SHANNON SOUTHARD

Shannon Southard joined Child Protective Services as a Bilingual Family Services Specialist. She received her BSW from Virginia Commonwealth University, MSW from the University of Michigan, and Master of Arts in History (Contemporary Latin American

Studies) from the University of Costa Rica. Southard is fluent in English and Spanish and is an active user of American Sign Language. Outside of DCHS, she is a competitive gymnastics coach; she has coached in Virginia, New York, Mexico and Costa Rica. Shannon believes in compassionate living and is a strong proponent of vegetarian/vegan eating. She also enjoys running, yoga and reading.

JOB CHANGE

Chrissy Campbell is the Developmental Disability Day Support Supervisor. **Rodnina Green** is a Human Services Benefits Program Supervisor. **Latasha Younger** is a part-time Residential Counselor.



EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Corey Castle, a Family Services Specialist II with the Office of Aging and Adult Services, received a Mindfulness Teacher Certification from the Engaged Mindfulness Institute in May, which certifies him to work with groups teaching mindfulness and meditation.

"It involves learning how to teach basic mindfulness of body, breathe, emotions and thoughts," says Castle of the training. "I've been facilitating groups with the Aging office staff, and I'm planning to do groups with seniors in the coming months, teaching basic meditation techniques along with mindful movement techniques."





News You Can Use

NEW DCHS COMMUNICATIONS FAQS PAGE

Looking for information about letterheads, PowerPoints, surveys, social media? Want to know how to invite the mayor or city manager to your next event? Interested in learning how Communications can support your initiatives? See the new DCHS [Communications FAQs](#) page in AlexNet and find answers to these questions and information on many more topics including: design requests, media inquiries, printing, photography, giveaways and communication-related policies and procedures. Check it out!

NEW PERMANENT MEDICATION DROP BOX AVAILABLE

A ribbon cutting was held on Tuesday, October 30 for the **second and newest permanent prescription medication drop box in Alexandria**, housed at Inova Alexandria Hospital (4320 Seminary Road). This drop box is located in the visitor's lobby next to the cashier's window. Medication can be dropped off here between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Another permanent drop box is located at the Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray (2204 Mt Vernon Ave). Medication can be dropped off at this location Monday through Friday (9 a.m.-7 p.m.), Saturday (9 a.m.-2 p.m.) and Sunday (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

LEARN MORE ABOUT AFHS

There are more than 40 local non-profits receiving Alexandria Fund for Human Service (AFHS) funding to support programs and services that may benefit DCHS clients and families. Many DCHS staff already work with these agencies and refer clients for services.

AFHS is the umbrella fund through which the Department of Community and Human Services administers competitively awarded grants to non-profit and community agencies that serve Alexandria's children, youth, families, immigrants, seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income individuals. Grant recipients offer programs and services that address five Grant Priority Outcomes:

- Children and youth are school and career ready
- Children and youth are socially connected, emotionally secure and culturally competent
- Individuals, families and seniors are economically secure
- Individuals, families and seniors have access to health and mental health resources

- Individuals, families and seniors are assisted in preventing and remedying crisis

A listing of descriptions and contact information for the 43 programs awarded funding for the FY 2019-2021 grant cycle is also available in “DCHS Info” on your computer desktop, and on the DCHS AlexNet page.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Employee MLK Program: Keep an eye out for the date of the annual staff celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. in January. During the celebration, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Spirit Award will be awarded to City employees (as individuals or teams) who exemplify the leadership and vision of Dr. King through their commitment to social justice, diversity, inclusion and service.

Black History Month: Black History Month, an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of blacks in U.S. history, begins February 1. Keep an eye out for upcoming information about the annual DCHS celebration sponsored each year by the Gift from the Heart Black History Committee.

PREPARING FOR WINTER SNOW

Winter is here, so now is a good time to make sure you are informed regarding the City’s inclement weather policies.

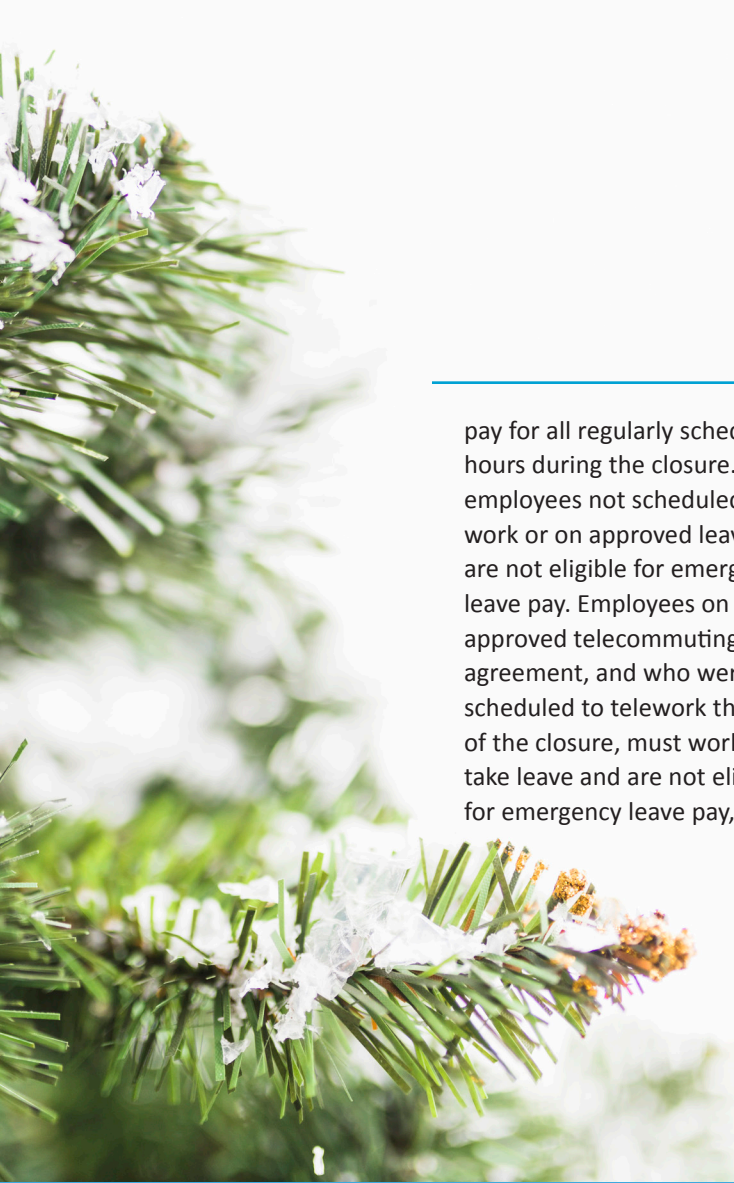
City policy is that offices will be open for business during storms and snow emergencies. Generally, when getting into work is difficult due to snow and ice, the City alerts employees that a liberal leave policy is in effect. Department heads, after ensuring that offices are adequately staffed, are able to approve requests for annual leave, compensatory leave or leave without pay if employees are unable to come to work. Under a liberal leave situation, employees must contact their departments immedi-

ately after opening to request liberal leave.

Please note that when liberal leave is declared, emergency employees (those in jobs that are vital to public health, safety and welfare) are expected to report for work on time. Check with your supervisor if you are unsure whether you are an emergency employee.

There are times, however, when the City will close some or all facilities, services or programs for specific periods of time due to inclement weather or emergency. Non-emergency employees are not to report to work, and full and part-time regular employees will be paid emergency leave





pay for all regularly scheduled hours during the closure. All employees not scheduled to work or on approved leave are not eligible for emergency leave pay. Employees on an approved telecommuting agreement, and who were scheduled to telework the day of the closure, must work or take leave and are not eligible for emergency leave pay,

either.

During closures, regular full and part-time emergency employees must report to work and will receive emergency leave pay for all time worked during the period of closure; temporary and seasonal emergency employees must report to work and are compensated for all hours worked.

The City will advise local television and radio stations when operating on a liberal leave basis or closure. Most will carry City snow information beginning early, at 6 a.m. In addition, you can call the City's 24-hour Emergency Hotline at 703.746.INFO (4636). You may also subscribe

to eNews to receive email and text announcements (member.everbridge.net/index/1332612387832027#/login) or check the City's web site (www.alexandriava.gov) to see announcements on the City's status. In the rare occurrence of a status conflict between a TV or radio announcement and the City's announcement will prevail.

If you have any questions about the City's snow policy, please call the Human Resources Department at 703.746.3777. You can review the policies concerning liberal leave and emergency leave pay in the [Administrative Regulations](#).



IMAGE BY FREEPIK.COM

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](#).