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Helping City Teens Help Others

Youth Development program trains peer advisors

Today's teens face a myriad of pressures and challenges, and one Youth Development leadership program not only helps teens successfully face these challenges, but also trains them to help others do the same.

Youth Development Counselors Theodore "Teddy" Jones and James "Chucky" Moore and Health and Community Education Specialist Kim Hurley train teens as Peer Advisors, who help their peers and elementary school children learn anger management, substance abuse and violence prevention, and negative peer pressure refusal skills. In addition, the teens sit on local committees, participate in community service projects and give presentations. After a period of volunteering, peer advisors are eligible to become paid part-time City employees.

The program, which Jones and Moore founded in 1985,



Theodore "Teddy" Jones (top) and James "Chucky" Moore (bottom) mentor a peer advisor group.

Continued on page 3



Planning for the Future: Budget Update



DCCHS Director Kate Garvey

We have been in a period of budget reductions for many years, and all indications are that this trend will continue. As a Department, we provide critical services and resources to Alexandrians, and that makes it even harder to grapple with the impact of reductions on the individuals and families of our community.

For our FY18 budget, we had a reduction target of \$2,298,274, which represents 5% of the General Fund portion of our budget (with Acute and Emergency Services portion excluded).

As I shared in the PowerPoint that was distributed at the end of last month, we used a criteria to try to make the best decisions possible about the budget. The exclusionary factors included avoiding mandated services, services that directly impacted safety and those that are primarily funded by another source (Federal, state, revenue).

Wherever possible, we focused on revenue maximization and finding efficiencies to avoid reductions. An important goal was to protect critical

direct services.

We submitted reduction recommendations on December 5 and will be working through a decision-making process with the Focus Area Teams and the City Manager's Office to determine which of the suggested reductions/revenue approaches will go forward.

We have been asked to prioritize our reductions and convey which items we would like to remove from the reduction list. It is highly likely that the department reduction will be less than 5% and that several of the cuts that were recommended will not have to be taken. As more information can be shared, we will keep you updated on the current process.


In order to face these funding challenges most effectively over the long haul, we will need to work together to be creative and visionary in our thinking related to our budget and services.

Innovative ideas that can improve/maintain outcomes and reduce cost at the same time are ideal.

Some of the early sugges-

tions and thoughts that have come forward include:

- ▶ Efficiencies, savings and benefits from the entire Department being located in a single location/campus.
- ▶ Ensuring that all resources and revenue are being maximized—from fully claiming from all sources, to adopting practices that enable a higher level of reimbursement, to seeking out alternative funding sources.
- ▶ Looking at program affinities where aligning services more closely could result in better service integration and the reduction of costs to provide the service.
- ▶ Forecasting trends that may indicate a need to change how we provide services or ways to be more responsive.

It is important for us to come together to explore the most productive and creative ways to meet the needs of those we serve in these times of reduced resources. We will continue to seek out your feedback and suggestions to address these challenges in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner together. 



Director's Corner

helps teens showcase their talents and nurtures educational and professional objectives. In addition to their community and peer mentoring responsibilities, peer advisors go on college visits and receive mentoring and support from Jones, Moore and Hurley who have watched former participants-considered high risk- go on to reach educational goals and successfully launch careers as teachers, doctors, lawyers and clergy.

Peer advisors are making a significant impact on Alexandria's children. Last year, peer advisors mentored, tutored and supported hundreds of elementary school students at the Charles Houston Recreation Center. They also led

changed the way I see life."

Gabriela encountered peer advisors as a KAT camper herself. "I want to be a change and role model for my brothers," she adds.

Being a peer advisor does come with challenges, both professional and personal.

"Kids can have off days," says Hadi. "It can take a little effort to reach them and see what the issue is."

"Sometimes it can be a challenge to deal with their attitudes," agrees Monnik. "Each kid is different."

Personally, the program challenges teens in other ways.

"It can be a struggle to manage my time," says Me'iani, a junior in high school.

and engage in something bigger than myself," Hadi reflects. "It has had a positive effect on each and every one of us."

Watching the teens grow and succeed also inspires

Jones and Moore.

"Each of them is unique in their own way," says Jones.

"It is rewarding to help them find their niche and reach their goals." 🌱

More about.. The Youth Development Team

The Youth Development Team has over 30 years of experience promoting healthy social emotional development of children and youth through evidence based prevention services and initiatives, subsequently preventing costly risk outcomes such as alcohol and drug use, pregnancy, school drop-out, smoking and violence. Evidence-based programs and practices include: the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria, Too Good for Drugs, LifeSkills Training, Be Proud! Be Responsible!, Girls Circle, Untouchables, Peer Advisors, Young Stars Success Program, Kids are Terrific Camp, and Life Decisions 101. The team also provides youth leadership initiatives and programs, skill-building groups, school-wide campaigns, parent outreach and education, mediation, after school and summer camp programs, and supportive coaching.

LOCATIONS OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

T.C. Williams Main and Minnie Howard Campuses
Charles Houston Recreation Center (CHRC)
Hammond and George Washington Middle Schools
Tucker, Ramsay and Patrick Henry Elementary Schools
Brent Place Apartments

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Noraine Buttar, Youth Development Team Leader
Theodore "Teddy" Jones, Youth Development Counselor at the Hammond and T.C. Williams Main campuses and CHRC
James "Chucky" Moore, Youth Development Counselor at the TC Williams Main campus and CHRC
Kim Hurley, Health & Community Education Specialist with focus on youth engagement in public policy and youth leadership programs at T.C. Williams, CHRC and the middle schools
Norka Antelo, Youth Development Counselor at the Ramsay
Amalia Quinones, Youth Development Counselor at Tucker and Brent Place
Henry Amaya, Youth Development Counselor at Patrick Henry
Whitney Chao, Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) Coordinator
Lisette Torres, Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP) Coordinator
Rachel Mendelson, ACAP Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Coordinator
Seven paid and three volunteer youth Peer Advisors
Two social media youth interns

"I used to sit in front of the rec center and watch the peer advisors come in."

~ Peer Advisor Detriona, who says the program helps her stay focused

educational sessions and helped chaperone almost 300 eight-to-twelve year olds at 10 community locations in the summer Kids are Terrific (KAT) Camp, another Youth Development program.

Encountering peer advisors in the community inspired some of the current team to become one themselves.

"I used to sit in front of the rec center and watch the peer advisors come in," says Detriona, who says the program helps her stay focused.

"My sister was a peer advisor, and I saw how good it was for her," says Haydee. "It's

"It takes a lot of energy," reflects Shannon.

The weekly meetings led by Jones and Moore can also be challenging, says Detriona, especially when the teens discuss the problems they are struggling with. "Sometimes a topic catches you off guard."

But all of the teens agree the program is worth it—from working with the kids and watching them grow to experiencing their own personal growth and taking advantage of the opportunities to network and go on college visits.

"Being a peer advisor forces me to leave my comfort zone

Alcohol That Comes With a Sticker Shock

Youth and adults affix warning stickers to alcohol products to draw attention to risks and penalties associated with underage drinking

On November 5, more than 25 youth volunteers and 14 adult volunteers visited 50 Alexandria stores armed with bright yellow and orange warning stickers to remind adults of the important role they play in preventing underage drinking and the legal consequences of providing alcohol to minors.

During the Annual Sticker Shock event, teams of volunteers place the stickers on multi-packs of beer, wine coolers and other alcoholic products, highlighting the penalties for furnishing alcohol to those under 21.

In Virginia, providing alcohol to a minor is a Class 1 misdemeanor, with a punishment of up to \$2,500 and up to 12 months in jail, or both. In addition, a person found guilty

of this offense will have his or her motor vehicle license suspended for a period of up to one year.

"We hope that when adults see the warning stickers, they will think twice and decide not to make the purchase," says Whitney Chao, Coordinator of Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA), which coordinated the event.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, underage drinking is a significant but often overlooked problem in the United States. Although adolescents and young adults drink less often than adults, they tend to drink more, frequently drinking as many as five or more drinks on a single occasion.

Underage drinking is a considerable public health challenge and a serious threat to adolescent development and health. According to the National Institute of Health, the developing adolescent brain may be particularly susceptible to long-term negative consequences of alcohol use.

"We've all witnessed the tragedy of losing our young people to alcohol related accidents. Sticker Shock sends an important message to parents and other adults that it's simply not okay to provide alcohol products to anyone under 21—even in your own home," said SAPCA Chair Allen Lomax in a press release about the event.

"Turning a blind eye to underage drinking is seen as an endorsement to youth who far too often drink too much, drive while intoxicated and engage in risky behaviors. While the legal consequences to parents and other adult enablers are significant, the

real damage is to our youth. Sticker Shock is a reminder that, as adults, our job is to protect our youth."

SAPCA is an alliance of more than 80 members representing parents, youth, schools, City of Alexandria health and recreation agencies, media, nonprofits, businesses, faith communities, policymakers and law enforcement whose mission is to engage the entire community in reducing youth substance use and abuse in Alexandria. SAPCA was created in 2007 as part of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria (www.healthieralexandria.org) and is a member of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. Information about SAPCA, including membership, is available at www.preventitalexandria.org.



Sheriff Office Deputy Valarie Wright (second from left) poses with SAPCA volunteers at a local store.



Left: Members of Laurie Meyers' family sit on the memorial bench surrounded by City employees.

Below middle: Laurie Meyer

Bottom: The plaque on the memorial bench

Bench Dedicated to Family Advocate

Colleagues gather to honor the memory of Laurie Meyer, founding Community Wraparound Team leader

On November 18, former Congressman Jim Moran, Alexandria Mayor Alison Silberberg and more than 30 colleagues and family gathered in Four Mile Run Park to dedicate a bench in memory of Laurie Meyer, the founding team leader for the Community Wraparound Team and beloved advocate for children and families.

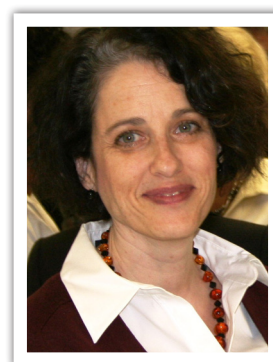
Meyer, who died of breast cancer at 53 in September 2014, worked for the City for 24 years, where she strengthened the system of care for children and families. She led the highly successful community-based children's behavioral health team in the DCHS Center for Children and Families for 15 years and was recognized across the system for her leadership and work initiatives. She is highly respected by families, staff and the child-serving community across the state.

Moran, Silberberg, ACPS Lead Social Worker Arnecia Moody and members of the Community Wraparound Team expressed deep gratitude and compassion to Meyer's family and spoke of her major contribution towards transforming Alexandria's System of Care for children. Meyer's family spoke about the power of love.

"Laurie saw in others what they didn't see in themselves and her ability to bring out the best was reflected in her work with families and colleagues as well as mentoring her staff through the years," reflected Center Director Deborah Warren during the dedication.

A plaque on the memorial bench reads in English and Spanish, "In memory of Laurie Meyer – family advocate, clinical social worker and mentor – from her colleagues in the City of Alexandria."

The bench is facing the new wetlands area near the Bruce Street entrance to the park. A new playground area is scheduled to be installed, after which the bench will be moved to face the playground. 🌱 ~Thanks to Tricia Bassing for her contributions to this article



Immigrants Learn How to Rebuild Careers in the U.S.

WDC partners with non-profit to meet needs of skilled immigrant clients

The Workforce Development Center (WDC) hosted a two-hour information session on November 18 that connected about 30 immigrants with Upwardly Global, a national non-profit organization that helps work-authorized, skilled immigrants rebuild their professional careers in the U.S.

The participants—mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Ethiopia—represented a variety of career backgrounds, ranging from an architectural designer to a human resources professional to an Arabic language professor.

According to Upwardly Global, there are more than

1.8 million immigrants like them in the U.S. who are college-educated but unemployed or significantly underemployed. In their home countries they were engineers, doctors, scientists, accountants and nonprofit professionals. In the U.S. they become cashiers, nannies and cab drivers, if employed at all.

Dina Jaffary, a Community Outreach and Engagement Associate with Upwardly Global, encouraged those in attendance not to settle for a job that is not in their field. She also advised them not to redo education they already completed in their home countries or “dumb down” their resumes in order to get entry level positions in America.

Jaffary also shared options for skilled immigrants, including the customized job-search training, access to employers looking for global talent needs and support offered by the non-profit at no cost to qualified immigrants. In order to be eligible, participants must be a permanent resident, refugee,

asylee or have affirmative pending asylum status with full work authorization in the United States. Participants must also have a bachelor’s degree or higher from a non-U.S. institution, a minimum of two years professional experience outside the U.S. and computer and intermediate English language skills. They also must have lived in the U.S. five years or less and not worked in the U.S. in their professional field.

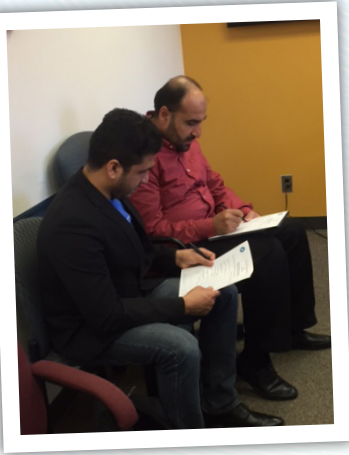
While there is no given timeline for how long it will take program participants to get a job, Upwardly Global provides them with self-paced online training, matches them with an advisor from the same career background who has successfully worked in the U.S., and grants admission to events such as mock interview sessions, elevator pitch practices and networking meetings.

Feedback from WDC clients was positive, and many stated that they planned to apply with Upwardly Global that same day. Participants also indicated interest in continuing networking opportunities, learning more about packaging a resume, and volunteer or internship opportunities as they search for jobs in their field.

Clients interested in Upwardly Global services can apply online at www.upglo.org/apply.

WDC plans to continue the partnership with Upwardly Global and hopes to hold more follow-up events for the skilled immigrant population. 🌱

~ by Savannah Hill



More about..

The Workforce Development Center

The City of Alexandria’s Workforce Development Center, a proud partner of the American Job Center network, offers staffing solutions that provide businesses with employees who are skilled and ready to work. As a certified One Stop Center, WDC serves a variety of skill levels from those with advanced degrees and years of experience to those with limited education and experience. We provide services and resources for job seekers including access to our Career Center, career readiness workshops, career assessments and customized hiring events.

WDC provides a range of business services at no cost to businesses, including job placement, recruitment, labor market information and certified Business Services Specialists to assist in workforce planning. WDC operates the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) Program, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA - Adult Employment, Dislocated Worker and Youth and Young Adult), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment Training (SNAPET), Teen-sWork!, Refugee Employment Program,

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



Making a Lasting Impact

TC Williams grad and Project Discovery alum achieving lifelong dream

Cathy Hurrin, a family services specialist with the Early Childhood Division (ECD), first met Devonta Nelson as a preschooler when his mother came to DCHS seeking child care services for her children.

Hurrin stayed in touch with Nelson while he received care in family child care homes, which are regulated by ECD, and later participated in after school programs and summer camps at the YMCA.

Long after Nelson aged out of child care, he maintained contact with Hurrin, who continued to encourage him in his dream to be a chef.

Nelson went on to attend

T.C. Williams High School where he was involved in Project Discovery (a college preparatory program for at-risk youth coordinated by the Office of Youth Services), ROTC and the culinary arts program.

While in high school, he placed third in Virginia in the culinary competition portion of SkillsUSA, a national occupational skills contest. The competition encompassed both hot and cold food preparation and presentation. Contestants demonstrated their knowledge and skills through the production of a four-course menu in a full day competition. The contestants

were rated on their organization, knife skills, cooking techniques, creative presentation, sanitation food safety techniques, and above all, the quality and flavor of their food.

Upon graduation, Nelson was accepted into Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he majored in culinary arts. This past spring, Nelson interned in one of the largest restaurants in Disneyworld and graduated with a two-year degree in culinary arts.

He is now working on his four year degree in restaurant management.

“Devonta’s dream is to open his own restaurant in Alexandria,” says Hurrin. “No one doubts that he will do just that.” 🌱 ~ by Cathy Hurrin



More about..

The Early Childhood Division

The Early Childhood Division is committed to making quality child care available to families who live and work in the City. ECD provides free information about child care, including what to look for in a quality program and lists of providers, financial assistance for low-income families to help pay for child care costs, investigation of complaints against family child care homes and training, professional development and other support for child care providers and families with children.

Other ECD programs include the Preschool Prevention Program, Parent Infant Education Program (PIE) and Children's Intellectual Disability Services, Child Support Enforcement and Head Start.

Devonta Nelson

WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY

RUN > HIDE > FIGHT

Have an escape route
and plan in mind

Leave your belongings
behind

Keep your hands visible

CALL **911** WHEN IT IS
SAFE TO DO SO

Hide in an area out of
the shooter's view

Block entry to your
hiding place and lock
the doors

Silence your cell phone
and/or pager

As a last resort and
only when your life is
imminent danger

Attempt to incapacitate
the shooter

Act with physical
aggression and throw
items at the active shooter

Image by freepik.com

Active Shooter Training Underscores Importance of Preparation

Safety Committee informs staff on how to report and what to do during an active shooter incident

On Wednesday, November 30, DCHS held an Active Shooter Preparedness Training for all department staff at 2525 Mount Vernon Ave. The training, led by Justin Wise and Chris Washington of the Safety Committee, aimed to inform staff on how to report suspicious or concerning activity, when to call 911 and what to do during an active shooter incident.

The term “active shooter” is defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearm(s) and there is no pattern or method to the selection of victims.”

Highlighted early on in the training was one of the keys to preventing an active shooter situation in the workplace – being aware and recognizing

suspicious activity or behavior. This is generally considered something “not normal,” or any event that is inconsistent with the normal operations of the building. While “not normal” is subjective, it’s important to understand circumstances, and whether you recognize patterns vs. single incidents around you. There was an emphasis placed on staff having the wherewithal to recognize, and report suspicious activity to police – even if you’re uncomfortable doing so – you’re reporting the suspicious activity, not the person.

This topic led to the next significant key, calling 911. During an incident, it’s important to find a phone, call 911 and most of all, to give your location first in case your call is dropped. It’s easier said than done, but staying calm while talking to a 911 dispatcher is critical to informing them of who, what, when, where, why and how in a situ-

ation. And, always be sure to give as many details as possible (how shooter looks, weapons, car driven, etc.).

The third topic covered during the training was what to do during an active incident. Between 1994 and 2014, homicides in the workplace decreased by 62 percent, however, in light of more recent active incidents, it’s crucial to know the signs of an impending incident, as well as have a plan if one occurs.

While vigilance is a prime aspect of preparedness, staff must be aware that an active shooter situation is not always characterized with the use of a gun. There could also be the use of a knife, or other dangerous weapons with the intent of doing bodily harm to another.

Employees can improve their chances during an active situation by going through “what if...?” scenarios, discuss-

ing tactics with others, developing a plan and most imperative, during an active situation – simply *doing something!*

DHS focuses on three reactions to an active incident: run, hide or fight. You should always make an attempt to run first, and get out of the building. If that’s not possible, hide in what you deem a safe space, and if all else fails, fight back.

There is not a perfect response to an active shooter situation, but it’s paramount that you understand your environment and be prepared in the event of an active incident. 🌿

The information and resources covered during the training came by way of Officer David Lloyd of the Alexandria Police Department, DHS and the FBI. The Safety Committee is in the process of developing protocols for staff in the event of an active incident, which will be released in 2017.

DCHS Hosts City Brown Bag

City Manager shares his journey with staff

On October 26, DCHS hosted a Leadership Lunch featuring City Manager Mark Jinks, who shared his personal and professional journey.

The “brown bag” was part of a City-wide series that features a senior City leader and provides staff with an informal opportunity to engage City leadership and learn more about growing into a leadership position in a local public sector organization.

Jinks has been in public service for more than 40 years. He started his career with the City in 1999 and became City Manager in 2015.

During the one hour event, Jinks shared about his experiences as a farm boy in upstate New York, delivering the *New York Times* and later attending Penn State. He touched on his early career in mental health and human services finance, including what it was like for him to be passed over for several jobs—including city manager—and how he moved forward and served those who filled the very positions he desired. He also spoke of the importance of civility in the workplace and the differences between managing and leading people.

The event gave employees the chance to ask questions, both about his personal journey as well as his work with the City. Jinks responded to questions about his personality (he is an extreme INTJ on the Meyers Briggs scale) and how he spends his spare time (reading non-fiction, running and gardening). He also shared that his family—including his two adult daughters, one of whom is living in Spain—is his proudest life achievement.

Jinks answered questions about the City’s strengths and challenges, including expanding civic engagement to more diverse populations. He feels his greatest work accomplishment so far was leading the development of the Alexandria/Arlington Waste-to-Energy Facility. When asked, he also shared about “who his peeps are” and the significance of being of service to the community.

A video of one of Jinks’ sessions is now available on [AlexNet](#). 🦋



City Manager Mark Jinks with moderator Melissa Riddy (left) answers questions from DCHS staff.

DCHS Star Awards

OCTOBER

SUPER STAR NOMINEES

Individual: Ben Toma

Group: Lillian, Vagnoni, Tomas Cabrera and Natalia Spinner

STAR AWARD NOMINEES

Yoshabel Velasquez, Juan Basurto, Darrell Wesley, Kimberly Taylor, Eugenia Jones, Jackie McCord, Angela White, Wykiki Alston, Michelle Walker, Rodney Douglas and Jessica Harris

NOVEMBER

SUPER STAR NOMINEES

Individual: Carmen Andres

Group: Joseph Davis and Carmen Andres

STAR AWARD NOMINEES

None

Star Award Nomination Form:

survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/DCHS-Star-Award-Nomination-Form

Super Star Nomination Form:

survey.alexandriava.gov/s3/DCHS-Superstar-Award-Nomination-Form



Chief Deputy Mavis Thomas (left) and Yusuf W. (right) at the Sober Living Unit celebration.

Detention Center Celebrates 28 Years of Sobriety Advocacy and Success

Anniversary celebration highlighted Sober Living Unit graduates and program philosophy

On December 1, at the William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center in Alexandria, participants and graduates of the Sober Living Unit (SLU) program celebrated 28 years of promoting continued efforts toward self-improvement, devel-

opment and sobriety.

Community volunteers and law enforcement personnel were in attendance to recognize the difficult, yet rewarding, work of individuals within the program. The anniversary celebration highlighted the

SLU Philosophy (goal setting, acknowledgement, caring and improvement), a former SLU program graduate success story, and recognition of recent SLU graduates.

"The [SLU] program is one of hope, spirit and faith," said Chief Deputy Mavis Thomas. "Through this, these men and women can enjoy the miracle of sobriety."

The Sober Living Unit is a treatment program located within the Alexandria Detention Center. The program aims to help men and women in the Detention Center recover from substance abuse and develop a drug-free lifestyle upon release from incarceration.

"To support you when you move past here, we have to come together as a community to support you in your sobriety and success," said Kate Garvey, addressing the program participants in attendance. "Your success is our success."

The services of the Sober Living Unit are provided through the joint efforts of the Alexandria Sheriff's Office and the Department of Community and Human Services.

For more information about the SLU program, contact DCHS Mental Health Team Supervisor, [Jonathan Teumer](#) at 703.746.5087. 🌱

More about..

The Sober Living Unit Philosophy

We came to this unit like a group of lost souls
We know only hurt, pain and life without goals
We've suffered thru trials, tribulations and such
And only misery to ourselves and our families who loved us so much
We have but one chance to give up the past
This life of drinking and drugging, a life we know that can't possibly last

We cam here alone, feelings of guilt and of pain
Were told that no longer we need carry all of that shame
Now we know how to make it as one
And never go back to life with a gun
Now that we're here with all our new brothers
It's time to learn to live with and care for one another

So remember this thought before you pick up
How does it feel deep down in your gut
It will not be easy and all won't be well
It's our life to live however we choose
For it can only get better if only we don't use





DCHS Highlights



DESTRESS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Last month, Child Welfare workers attended a Holiday Self-care training workshop with Cathy Canfield, LCSW. Together they experienced the power of enhancing mind-body skills to shift their thinking and offered ways for fresh perspectives. Art therapy and RELAX! Bingo activities also gave staff ideas to decompress and enjoy the season without burning out. "An important piece is knowing that a healthier you helps when you are taking care of clients," said Peggy Stypula, Supervisor for Staff Development and CATCH Coordinator.

October 2016 marked the 30th Anniversary of the passage of Public Law 99-457, which established Part C and mandated Part B, Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These programs have played a critical role in improving results and upholding the rights of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families.

PIE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF EARLY INTERVENTION

In recognition of the 30 years of early intervention and the thousands of families served in Alexandria, the Parent Infant Education (PIE) Program providers,

who support our youngest residents, hosted an open house on December 12 to say thank you and provide an opportunity for the community and professionals who work with families to learn about "All The Pieces of PIE".

The open house allowed attendees to learn all the phases of the early intervention process, ask questions, meet program staff and see demonstrations in two specialty areas (infant massage, and inclusive playgroups).

PIE offers intake, developmental screening, developmental evaluations and treatment planning at no out of pocket cost to families who have concerns about their child's development. Eligibility for the program is not income based. Families of all income levels receive these services when they have a child who may be vulnerable to negative impacts of developmental delays.

Early intervention has many benefits for children, including improving and enhancing the development of a child with developmental delays, special needs, or concerns resulting from environmental trauma; providing assistance and support to empower families of children with developmental delays, special needs, or other concerns to be the primary agents of change for their child;



and laying a foundation that can improve the life of a child and offer greater opportunities for optimum participation in society.

The ages between birth to three years old are the most critical years for learning and development. Some children, due to conditions noticed at birth, special needs, or developmental delays which occur in the early years, risk missing some of the most important learning and developmental milestones. Early intervention helps keep these children on a path to making the most of abilities and skills developed during the early years.

~ by Robin Crawley



WELLNESS CENTER HONORS CLIENTS

October was National Disability Employment Awareness month, and the Wellness Center's Supported Employment Program had the honor and pleasure of recognizing many of their clients who achieved employment during the last three years. Family members, friends, employers and therapeutic "supporters" were invited to attend the October 28 celebration and special thanks went to these supporters.

Each award recipient was honored at

the podium with a gift and their superlative certificate. A full spread, variety buffet followed the ceremony. Generous support was provided from local businesses, who donated gifts and food. Over 75 people attended, including DCHS Director Kate Garvey and board members of the Friends of Alexandria Mental Health Center. ~ by Susan Clay



GODWIN OKAFOR RAISES AWARENESS FOR ID

Godwin Okafor, Director of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Vocational Service Program, participated on a panel during a USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS) event in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The event's goal was to reinforce the value people with disabilities add to the workplace and communities and FNCS' commitment to inclusivity. The panelists shared how their respective organizations support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

Okafor, who has worked for DCHS for 20 years, oversees programs providing support to individuals with an intellectual disability in the areas of employment, day and residential services.

STAFF WIN GILMORE CUP

The DCHS Shooting Stars took home this year's Gilmore Cup after defeating the Bellefonte Wizards on November 16 at the Cora Kelly Recreation Center.

The annual basketball game pits the DCHS staff team against the Bellefonte Wizard players, adults with intellectual disabilities who live in City residential housing and participate in activities designed to develop community relationships and connections.

This year's Shooting Stars was coached by Residential Counselor Frank Tolson.



DCHS KICKBALL TEAM WINS CITY CUP—FOR NOW

The DCHS kickball team defeated Department of Parks and Recreation to win the City Cup on November 16.

The City Cup league is a cumulative contest of employee teams through three sports seasons: kickball in the fall, basketball in the winter and softball in the spring.

After defeating the DASH team 6-1, the DCHS team advanced in the playoffs to the "Final Four." Matched up against the number one and undefeated City Hall team, DCHS battled and took them down 6-4 in extra innings and advanced to the final game, once again facing the Department of Parks and Recreation who had defeated the Alexandria Police Department.

DCHS jumped out to a big lead in the first inning and never looked back. With a six-run margin heading into the final inning, the team held off Recreation's late push with the bases loaded to win 6-1.

Congratulations to everyone who participated! After several years away from the City Cup, DCHS is back to winning trophies. This also means that we're on top of the overall City Cup standings at



the moment, with basketball season right around the corner.

For those who are interested in playing basketball, stay tuned to your inbox in the coming weeks for more information.

~ by Jeff Bollen



CELEBRATING NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY

On November 19, Joe Theismann's Restaurant hosted a celebration brunch to honor families participating in National Adoption Day.

Judge Constance Frogale was in attendance and spoke of the families' dedication to the children and how adoption is an opportunity for the children to expand their families, not start a new one.

Alijah Tracey, an adult adoptee and the son of Family Services Specialist Diana Tracey, also shared a few words of encouragement to the guests, speaking about his own experiences.

Since last November, the City of Alexandria has finalized 10 adoptions, six of which were celebrated at last year's National Adoption Day. This year the City recognized four children whose adoptions have been finalized and two children who are in the process of finalizing this month.

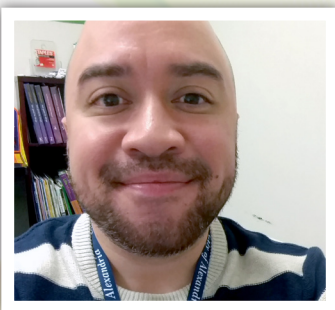
Currently the City has 38 children in foster care with a goal of adoption. These children and their families receive services to make best efforts at reunification while concurrently looking at permanency through adoption. ~ by Becky Tavenner



Hello & Goodbye



NEW STAFF



HENRY AMAYA

Henry Amaya recently joined DCHS as a Youth Development Counselor based at Patrick Henry Elementary School. He graduated from George Mason University and has taught elementary school classes in South Korea, Guatemala and the United States. Most recently, he worked as a Caseworker for a non-profit, focusing on “at-risk” youth throughout Northern Virginia. Amaya was born and raised in Alexandria and is very excited to make a difference in the local schools and community. He believes it is a blessing to be able to give back. In his free time, Henry enjoys traveling, sports, music and anything that makes him laugh.

ASHLEY BLOUNT

Ashley Blount joined DCHS as an Employment & Training Analyst with the Workforce Development Center. She is a



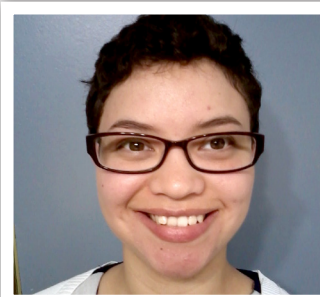
recent graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business & Economics from Bowie State University in Bowie, MD. Her background includes working with DC government, non-profit agencies and the private industry in the business sector. She is originally from North Carolina and her hobbies include sewing, traveling, ATV riding, softball, flag football and reading. She enjoys spending time with her friends, family and church family. She is excited to begin a fulfilling career with the City of Alexandria.

TONYA COLEMAN

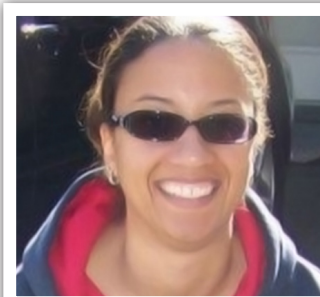
Tonya Coleman joined DCHS as a Human Services Benefits Program Specialist with the Center for Economic Support.

SANDRA FONSECA

Sandra Fonseca recently joined the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program as a temporary employee, where she assists as a residential counselor. She previously interned with DVP



during her last semester of college. She graduated from George Mason University in August 2016 with a bachelor's degree in Criminology, Law and Society. She is a native of Alexandria, spent part of her childhood in Honduras, and is fluent in Spanish. During her free time, she enjoys reading, watching movies, and spending time with family and friends. She is grateful for the opportunity to be part of a great team, assist others in the community, and continue learning.



LORI MARLOWE

Lori Marlowe recently joined the DCHS team as a Registered Nurse for ID Residential Services. Lori received her Bach-

elors of Science Nursing degree from Howard University and has been employed at an Acute Care Trauma Center in Washington DC for over 17 years. Both she and her husband are Alexandria natives who love spending quality family time together with their two sons and two cockapoos. Marlowe is excited to be a part of this team and is looking forward to learning and sharing her clinical expertise, as well as giving back to her community.



RACHEL MENDELSON

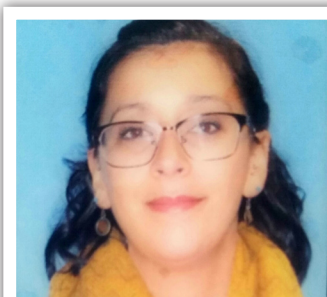
Rachel Mendelson recently joined the Youth Development Team and the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (ACAP) as the PREP Grant Coordinator. She is a licensed social worker and certified health education specialist with more than 10 years of experience working in youth programming and five years of experience in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Her experience also includes the

development of educational and social programs for vulnerable populations, including homeless and at-risk youth, particularly LGBTQ and youth of color, older adults, and children with special needs. Before returning home to Northern Virginia, Rachel lived in New York City for seven years, where she received a MSW from New York University and a MPH from Hunter College, City University of New York. As a native of the DC Metro area, she is an avid DC sports fan and is always cheering on the Nats and Caps. Rachel is thrilled to join ACAP and the City of Alexandria in empowering and educating young people in making informed health decisions.

IONE MOREIRA

Ione Moreira joined DCHS as a Senior Therapist in Emergency Service. She is a trilingual (English/Spanish/Portuguese) Licensed Professional Counselor and a *Dialectical Behavior Therapy* Therapist with extensive experience in the mental health field. She graduated from Columbia University/Teachers College with a degree in Counseling Psychology. She just relocated to Alexandria from New York, where she has worked in the field for the

last 19 years, including as an Outreach Coordinator/Senior Health Educator for Health and Hospitals Corporation Gouverneur Hospital in New York and as a Rape Counselor with Victim Services. For the past 16 years, Moreira worked as a Rehabilitation Specialist with the New York Presbyterian Hospital/Westchester Division (White Plains) in the Crisis Stabilization/Personality Disorders Unit.



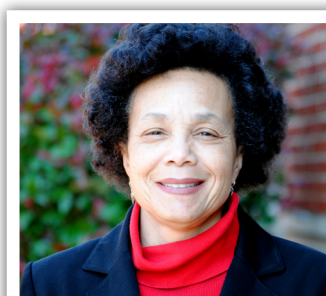
BETH REED

Beth Reed recently joined the Mental Health Collaboration for Recovery and Reentry (CORE) team as a Clinical Recovery Coach/CM. Beth is a recent transplant from New York State and comes with over 10 years of experience in the human services field. She has diverse experience working with many different populations including at risk youth, youth sex offenders, veterans and young adults

with substance abuse, and co-occurring/seriously mentally ill. Recently, she developed a recovery coaching program in Buffalo, New York, where she was fondly referred to as a "hope hustler." She is a New York State certified RC and opiate overdose trainer with a passion for harm reduction and advocacy.

JESSICA TAYLOR-PICKFORD

Jessica Taylor-Pickford joined DCHS as a therapist with the Center for Children and Families.



SHARON VAUGH-ROACH

Sharon Vaughan-Roach joined DCHS as the new Director for the Center of Operations. She has extensive experience in operations in both the public and private sectors and has a Master of Science degree in Administration. She has worked in the District of Columbia in the Department of Disability Services and Police Department, as well as AARP, Freddie Mac, and for six years, as a Fiscal Officer for the former Mental Health Center here in Alexandria. She has previously been responsible for managing budgets, finance, HR, IT, procurement, contract services, labor relations, commercial property management, quality assurance, strategic planning, customer service, call centers, intergovernmental

collaboration, diversity and EEO compliance, fundraising, business process mapping, data analysis, space design and facility planning. She is described as a solution-oriented and hands-on leader who is calm, steady, and has strong organizational and strategic visioning capabilities.

LE'VAUGHN WESTBROOK

Le'Vaughn Westbrook joined DCHS as a Family Services Specialist II with Child Protective Services at Center for Alexandria's Child.

JOB CHANGE

Genevieve Fields is now a Family Services Specialist Supervisor in the Office of Community Services. **Saba Gebrehwet** is a Therapist with Intellectual Disabilities Support Services.

RETIREMENTS

Carol Farrell, Division Chief of Early Childhood, will retire on December 30 after almost 43 years with the City.

Barbara Johnson-Terrell retired November 30 after 30 years with the City; she was a Human Services Benefits Program Specialist.

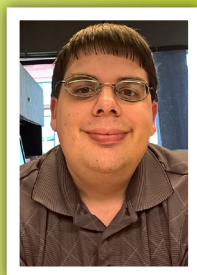
Johnnie Sumlin retired October 7 after 24 years with the City. She was a Human Services Benefits Program Supervisor.

Sharon Somers Veeney retired on November 30 after 38 years with the City. She was a Fiscal Officer with the Workforce Development Center.

Jonathan Zeitlin will retire on December 20 after 15 years with the City. He was a Senior Therapist with the Substance Abuse Outpatient program. 🌱

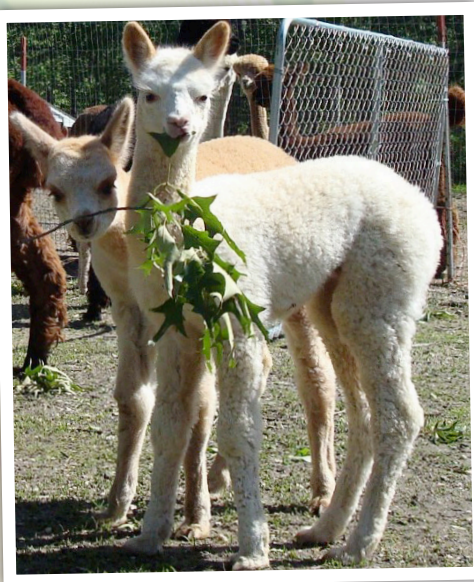
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Daniel Radcliff, the management information assistant in Program Evaluation, recently earned an Associate Degree in Information Systems with a certificate in Network Engineering through Northern Virginia Community College. Ratliff joined DCHS last year, with 10 years of background in customer service and database management. He is currently making plans to continue his education and work towards a Bachelor degree.





News You Can Use



OPEN FARM DAYS

There is still one date left to attend Open Farm Days at the Wildwood Alpaca Farm. Retired DCHS employee Judy Howe invites staff and their families, youth groups and clients to visit the acreage—which is home to 60 alpacas, two llamas and lots of chickens—and stop by the Alpaca Gift Shop on **December 17**. The farm is located at 8046 Fredericksburg Turnpike in Woodford, Virginia (22580). For more information, email wildwoodpacas@yahoo.com, visit www.wildwoodalpacas.com or call 540.604.4914.

HR TEMP FILLING IN

To fill in the gap left earlier this month by Senior Human Resources Analyst Jonathan Edmund, who left the City for another employment opportunity, Human Resources has hired temporary employee Natasha Anderson. For performance evaluations, please follow the exact same procedures and replace Johnathan's name with Natasha; her email has not yet been created, but she will be up-and-running soon.

For now, Jeff Bollen will be the Human Resources contact person for all other actions that Johnathan previously worked on (discipline, accidents, etc). As always, you can reach out to DCHS.HR@alexandriava.gov for any Human Resources inquiry.

PRYOR-ITIZE YOUR CAREER

The City has granted access to online courses through the Pryor Training Rewards Program for one year to 1,001 employees in administration, customer service, human resources, technology, facilities, finance, case management, benefits and therapeutic rec.

The program contains an e-library with nearly 5,000

professional webinars, eBooks, online courses and videos accessible anytime and anywhere. Course categories include:

- ▶ Communication and professional development
- ▶ Computer (Microsoft, design and web)
- ▶ Customer service
- ▶ Finance and accounting
- ▶ Front desk and administrative training
- ▶ Grammar and writing skills
- ▶ HR Training
- ▶ Marketing (social media, sales and design)
- ▶ Management, supervision and leadership
- ▶ Time and project management

To access this eLearning opportunity, go to alexnet.alexandriava.gov/HR/content.aspx?id=21233.

EAP'S FREE ONLINE WEBINARS

The Employee Assistance Program offers monthly webinars on a variety of topics. Previous seminars—which are available On Demand—include Beating the Blues, Caring for Aging Relatives and Communication Skills for Collaboration. New this month is Lighten Up With Laughter, and Maintain-



ing Personal and Fiscal Resiliency During Tough Economic Times will be available next month.

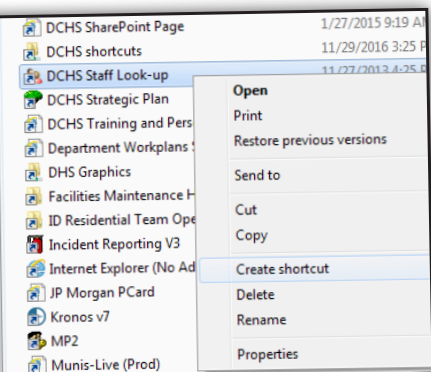
To access the webinars, go to www.inova.org/eap and enter your user name ("Alexandria") and password ("City"), which will take you to a page with links to the Online Seminars and other resources.

CANCEL IF YOU CAN'T ATTEND

If you sign up for City training and discover you won't be able to attend, please remember to cancel. Many classes fill up and have waiting lists, and your timely notification could allow another employee to attend. City HR reports that no-shows costs the City thousands of dollars every year.

FIND EXTENSIONS THROUGH DCHS STAFF LOOK-UP

Need a quick way to find the extension of a staff member? Use the DCHS Information shortcut on your desktop and scroll down until you find the DCHS Staff Look Up shortcut icon. For even quicker access, create your own shortcut by right clicking on the icon and choosing the "create shortcut" option.



CHECK OUT THE DCHS CUSTOMER E-RESOURCE GUIDE

Wish you had a guide to resources available to support customers? Check out the DCHS Customer Call Center eResource Guide, which gives you quick access to services and resources available within DCHS, the Alexandria community and our Commonwealth of Virginia or Federal partners for you to share with customers.

The guide is designed to collect and provide information to assist people calling in to the Department for assistance with many issues. It lists a host of resources for customers and includes a short introduction and instructions on using the guide.

The guide, maintained by the Customer Call Center Manager, Fernando Perez-Lee, allows all staff access to information that they can give directly to clients. It is available to all DCHS employees and is located in the DCHS Shortcuts folder. To access, click on the DCHS Shortcuts and locate the DCHS eResource guide.

To submit resources not listed in the guide, please email Perez-Lee at Fernando.PerezLee@alexandriava.gov.

NEW LOBBY HOURS AT 2525 LOCATION

Starting January 1, lobby hours will change at 2525 Mount Vernon Ave. The lobby will maintain its current hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday but will now be open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursdays.



At that location, customers have access to a variety of services, ranging from benefit programs to child welfare.

Customers can apply for and receive assistance accessing benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Family Access to Medical Insurance Security Plan (FAMIS), Medicaid eligibility and services, public assistance benefits and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Customers can also access services offered by the Office of Community Services (OCS), including food, clothing, furniture, prescription, burial, rental, utility and cooling assistance as well as homeless services.

In addition, customers can access child welfare programs, including adoption, foster care and child protective services.

The security desk will remain open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Thursday for staff and guests to sign in for meetings and trainings.



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

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

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