

# Connect

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2016

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## Dancing in the Streets to a Bolivian Beat

### A DCHS employee with pasión

Erwin Vargas, a DCHS Call Center employee since July 2015, is of Bolivian descent, a culture that he embraces daily.

At age 17, Vargas set out to learn the traditional folkloric dances of his country, such as Caporales, Diablada and Salay. Through the non-profit group Salay Bolivia U.S.A., Vargas and a troupe of dancers of all ages bring their energy and passion to festivities across the region, including the annual National Hispanic Heritage Month Parade in Washington D.C., where Vargas presented this September.

"When I'm dancing I feel peaceful; I feel like myself," says Vargas. "And seeing other great dancers inspires me to work harder.

"It's a nice distraction and the stomping is great calf exer-



Erwin Vargas performs traditional Bolivian folkloric dances during the National Hispanic Heritage Month Parade in Washington, D.C.  
Photo credit: George Newcomb

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# Community on Common Ground



DCCHS Director Kate Garvey

As many of you may recall, the department formed a Civility Framework and an Implementation Team to address civility related topics that arose from the employee engagement surveys as well as brown bag discussions. As a result of those efforts, I am excited to announce that we are now moving forward and will pilot the civility project through the “Building a Workforce Community on Common Ground” (Common Ground) initiative.

As an agency, we are privileged to work with a diverse and talented workforce. Our staff works tirelessly to serve our client community in a variety of ways. The strength of our workforce stems from individual talents and attributes as well as the relationships we build with our colleagues. The “Common Ground” initiative focuses on the commonalities we share that form the foundation of our “workforce community.”

Our core values and guiding principles remind us that we:

- ▶ Honor the dignity and rights of the people we serve (whether they are internal or external),
- ▶ Are accountable for our actions and demonstrate integrity in all aspects of our work.
- ▶ Are committed to hiring and keeping qualified, empathetic and diverse staff and recognize them for their creativity and professional achievements.

As professionals, whether we are serving on a workgroup or providing services to Alexandria’s residents, it is our ethical responsibility to treat everyone with respect. During the early stages of their work, the Civility Implementation Team and Communications created a video, which offers employee perspectives regarding civility in the workplace. Please take a look at what your co-workers have to say: [www.alexandriava.gov/Video/3562](http://www.alexandriava.gov/Video/3562).

There is so much we have in common in addition to our

shared passion to serve our community. Our workforce comes from all walks of life and from all parts of the world, yet we are more alike than different.

The Common Ground initiative promises to be engaging, enlightening and at times, even entertaining. So, I invite you to join me as we embark on this journey of finding common ground. The first (Alpha) phase of the Common Ground pilot launched last week with members of the Framework and Implementation Teams. Our Senior Managers and the Leadership Team will participate in the next (Beta) phase of the pilot that will begin in the next few weeks. After the pilot, you will receive updates on the development of this initiative. When it is ready for agency-wide launch, you will be invited to participate in the Common Ground Experience. Together, standing on common ground we can build an even stronger DCHS community. 🌱



## Director's Corner



## DANCING IN THE STREETS — CONTINUED FROM PG 1

cise!” he adds.

Vargas is proud of his heritage, and what’s more, he dances at times alongside his mother, who is part of the troupe.

In the photos, Vargas is dancing Salay, a compilation of dances and rhythms from such Bolivian valley communities as Potosí, Chuquisaca y Cochabamba. The term “Salay” is an expression that is used to complement someone, such as saying “My sweetheart!”

Salay is typically danced by young people who intersperse graceful and flirtatious movements with energetic stomping. With colorful costumes, swaying skirts and heads, and flaunting ribbons, the male is seen attempting to win the attraction of the female “cholita” (an endearing term for an indigenous lady), who eventually ends in his arms.

Salay is said to be a contagious delight to dancers and spectators alike, and DCHS is delighted to have a Salay dancer among the staff.

*¡Qué vive Bolivia!* 🌿

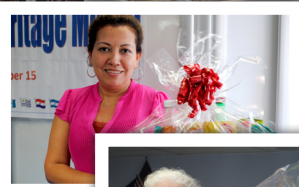


Photo credit: George Newcomb



Photo credit: George Newcomb

## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



On October 20, staff celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month at the annual luncheon.

“It was a great opportunity to forget for a moment about the daily stress of our jobs and share with our co-workers great moments of joy, homemade food, cheerfulness, comradely, music and of course ‘dancing’ too,” said Julio Basurto, Hispanic Heritage Committee Chair.

You can find more photos from the event in Department Wide Photos in the DCHS Info folder on your desktop. 🌿



**Left:** Marilena Artiga and Cindy Gaisor were among the raffle winners. **Right top:** Staff enjoy a variety of Hispanic dishes. **Right bottom:** Julio Cesar Basurto Vilchez poses with members of the Salay Bolivia U.S.A. troupe, including Erwin Vargas.





# Students Get Desks of Their Own

## Carving out a space for homework

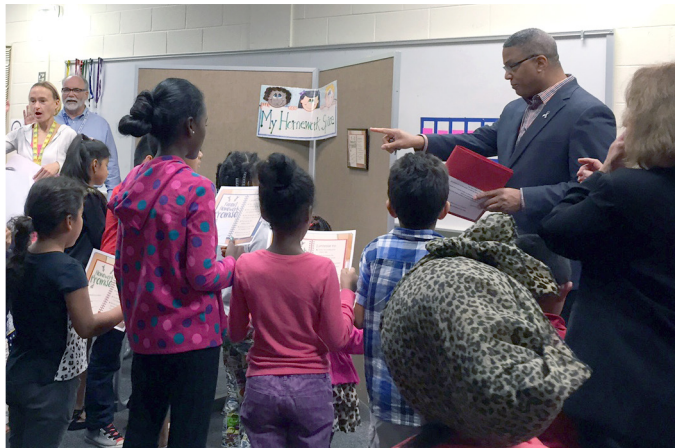
Thanks to a program created by Youth Development Counselor Amalia Quiñones, 30 students at Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School now have their very own desks at home to do their homework.

Quiñones, based at Tucker Elementary and Brent Place Apartments, came up with the idea two years ago after she realized that many of the students she served did not have a designated space at home to do their homework.

When she shared her vision with Roger Ball, Director of Procurement Services at Fairfax County Public Schools, he volunteered to donate the desks. The number of desks donated doubled from last year—and this year's students also received a lamp and chair donated by Bienvenidos, an Alexandria non-profit that supports Latino and other immigrant families and provides such activities as ESL classes, computer training, mentoring and a range of social services.

The students received their desks and supplies—which they get to keep and use throughout their school career—during a ceremony on September 28, where the students and parents each signed Homework Promise commitments. Students promised to complete their homework and reading assignments daily and keep their desk organized while parents committed to keep the desks reserved for homework and support their children's homework and reading commitments.

"It's an amazing program," says Noraine Buttar, Youth Development Team Leader, who praises Quiñones' initiative. "Amalia saw the need and engaged partners to make it happen." 🌱



FCPS Director of Procurement Services Roger Ball leads students in their Homework Pledge.



Youth Development Counselor Amalia Quiñones leads parents in a pledge to support their children's homework and reading commitments.

## Feeling Good About the Future

Elementary school students face a lot of challenges—and students at three Alexandria schools are learning life skills to help them be successful.

At Samuel W. Tucker and William H. Ramsay elementary schools, DCHS Youth Development Counselors Amalia Quiñones and Norka Antelo help third through fifth grade students build these skills through LifeSkills Training. At Patrick Henry, Quiñones facilitates Too Good for Drugs with kindergarten through fifth grade students. Both programs are evidenced-based and promote protective factors, support school success and help students resist pressure to participate in risk behaviors including

tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Recently, a fifth grader at Ramsay wrote a letter sharing how the program has helped her:

*I am 9 years old and really... sometimes I feel like I'm the only person in the world. But other times I feel like I'm on top of the world and feel like I have everything right here. I feel like I am clumsy and I mess up things every day.... I know I am not a normal girl; I am extraordinary. I come to school every day to make myself better and write everything that happens in my day journal and feel good about myself. I have a lot of hope and I know that and I have a good future ahead of me.*

"This moving letter summarizes the challenges and hopes of many children, and captures the impact the work," says Chief of Child Behavioral Health and Youth Development Tricia Bassing. "Teachers see the value, too: 98 percent agree these programs help students make good

decisions and 95 percent believe they help students identify and manage their emotions."

For more information about LifeSkills or Too Good For Drugs, see [www.lifeskillstraining.com](http://www.lifeskillstraining.com) and [www.toogoodprograms.org](http://www.toogoodprograms.org). 🌱







Panelists Annette Blancas (Catholic Charities Family Reunification), Razan Osman (Lutheran Social Services) and Dr. Patricia Maloof (Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services)



Panelists Tahani Jabarin (Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center) and Ingris Moran (Tenant Workers United).

# Lunch & Learn Highlights Resources to Help Refugees and Immigrants

Event offered wealth of resources and options for those serving immigrant and refugee populations

On October 6, in a packed room full of DCHS staff and Alexandria health and human-service practitioners, a panel of local community organizations presented valuable resources for refugees and documented and undocumented immigrant populations in Alexandria and Northern Virginia.

The Lunch and Learn presentation series, hosted by the Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee, offered a wealth of resources, services and options for those serving refugee and immigrant clientele. The panel of representatives included Mason and Partners Clinic (MAP), Tenant Workers United, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities and more.

Immigrants are defined as individuals who choose to leave their countries to settle in another; while refugees are those forced to flee their home countries because of armed conflict or persecution.

According to a University of Virginia Census Brief, in 1970, only one in 100 Virginians were

born outside the U.S., whereas in 2012, one in nine Virginians were born outside the U.S. This is a telling statistic signaling the increasing number of people seeking assistance in Northern Virginia coming from outside the country.

Lunch and Learn attendees gained meaningful insight into the experiences immigrants and refugees face upon moving to the U.S. Among the varying experiences, cultural understanding, lack of social status, unemployment, language barriers, and access to education and healthcare are frequently cited. Multiple panelists gave accounts of the harsh reality many of their clients face when arriving here — with integration and adjustment taking an awful long time to accomplish in a new land.

Panelists also discussed the myriad challenges facing refugees and immigrants. Learning English, finding a job, finding housing (many times prior to family arriving), sending money back home for family/relatives, as well as dealing with previ-

ous torture and/or trauma are some of the most pressing issues. However, panelists mentioned meeting those challenges required not only monetary support from federal, state and local agencies, but local volunteers, access to support groups, education and counseling, and community awareness.

Those in attendance asked the panel questions about different approaches to help refugees and immigrants, and were given a brief review of programs and services currently available. Resources and panelist presentations can be found by searching for [Multicultural Resources](http://www.alexandriava.gov) at [www.alexandriava.gov](http://www.alexandriava.gov).

Refugees and immigrants account for a significant portion of the individuals served by DCHS. Learning and understanding how to better assist those facing new and strenuous obstacles in this country is essential to this department's function — and dialogue surrounding it only strengthens our ability to help refugee and immigrant families. 🌱



Panelists Vanessa Flory (MAP Clinics) and Savannah Hill (DCHS Workforce Development Center).



# Supporting Aging Alexandrians

## APS helps seniors live safely and independently

The National Coalition of Aging reports that 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day—and this growing, aging population is redefining not only what it means to be a senior but also the roles local communities can play in helping them maintain independent and healthy lifestyles.

An independent, safe and healthy life is the goal of the Adult Protective Services team for Alexandria's older adults as well as adults with physical and mental disabilities.

APS serves some of the most vulnerable of Alexandria's population, ranging from investigating allegations of abuse, exploitation or neglect to serving those facing a sudden

decline in health due to a fall or medical condition that threatens their ability to care for themselves on their own.

In cases of imminent danger of death or serious harm, health issues possibly caused by abuse or neglect, and sexual abuse, the team assesses the victim's capacity to understand their risk and give informed consent and coordinates a variety of services, including emergency shelter, medical care, legal assistance and supportive services if needed.

In fiscal year 2016, APS received and investigated 284 reports of suspected adult abuse, neglect and/or financial exploitation. Of these, 127 cases were founded.

Ninety-five per cent of individuals with founded cases do not experience recurrence of maltreatment within 12 months of APS involvement.

Most of their cases involve challenges associated with aging or declining health.

"It is not unusual for us to get a call about an individual living alone with no family support in the area who is referred for concerns about their ability to take care of themselves," says Bennie Blackley, a Family Services Specialist on the APS team.

In each case, the APS team works to ensure the safety and health of the individual without the loss of liberty or with the least disruption in lifestyle.

"We make every effort to contact them and offer help and let them know they have choices to help them live safely and independently," says Blackley. "We don't enforce services. We make sure they know, 'This is an offer of information about what options are available to you, and let's determine which options best fit your situation.'"

Maintaining the individual's self-determination and choice is a top priority for the team.

"One of the most challenging things about my job is working with individuals that you are not able to help because they aren't ready to accept services," reflects Blackley. "Regardless of what you know and can see from investigating the situation, ultimately, the person has the choice to say 'No, thank you.' And that is the most difficult—when you need to walk away and know you weren't able to provide intervention that time."

Gaining the trust of those in vulnerable situations can also be challenging—especially given the misinformation and stigma associated with adult protective services. Even though APS is not a custodial agency and doesn't have the authority to take custody of any adult for any reason, individuals they contact are often initially suspicious.

"One of the obstacles we face during

*Continued on page 15*



**Above:** Bennie Blackley, Lucia Park, Velda Weathers (Supervisor), Donielle Marshall and Michele Mintling.  
**Not pictured:** Laurentia Obeng-Frimpong.





A sample of Superstar nominees. Top- Angela White, Debbie Brown Anderson and Lesa Gilbert. Bottom- Christine Levine and Peggy Stypula, Connie Juntunen.

# DCHS Super Stars Shine

## Individual and group nominees recognized during staff events

During the DCHS Fun Day in September, individuals and groups nominated for the Super Star Award were recognized for actions outside of normal work expectations and that had a significant impact on internal or external DCHS customers or departmental operations.

During the Fun Day presentation, Deputy Director Suzanne Chis, Center for Adult Services Director Carol Layer, Center for Children and Families Director Deborah Warren and Center for Economic Support Director Lesa Gilbert invited the nominees to come forward and spoke about their

actions. Below are the nominees and summaries of their contributions.

### Individual Super Stars

**Wilma Roberts** was recognized for her response to and support of a team member who was struck by a vehicle in the parking garage below 4401 Ford Ave. Roberts quickly took over the situation, advising the supervisor, transporting the team member to the emergency room, picking her up from the hospital later that evening and making sure she and her car got home safely.

**Shawn Coles** was recognized for assisting Leslie

Cummings in writing up 100 cases before her retirement. Cummings commended Coles for being a team player and displaying initiative and leadership.

**Tiffany Gray** was recognized for her positive influence on the Youth Aids at the Workforce Development Center. Gray coached the student assistants on administrative skills and office etiquette, instilling confidence in the students.

**Natasha Jones** was recognized for exemplary leadership of the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW) Green Team at the

*Continued on page 8*





**Top:** Superstar nominees Kirimi Fuller and Steve Frutos, Connie Speight and Humaira Hotaki.

**Bottom:** Group Super Star nominees also enjoyed a pizza lunch hosted by the Star Award committee on September 8.

WDC. Her efforts play a significant role in the team's success, resulting in a large percentage of their caseload employed, participating in training and education and volunteering.

**Dana Mathews** was nominated for her work as a liaison with the West End Business Association. As sole representative between WDC and WEBA, she was the primary resource for Alexandria's business community and their development initiatives. She was recognized as the Workforce Readiness Resource Specialist by WEBA and featured in their pamphlet.

**Mutesa Bennett-Johnson** was recognized for her many contributions to the WDC, including her patient multi-tasking in a busy environment, organization, front-desk duties, assistance to staff and her role during Clean Up Catch Up Day. "We wouldn't know what to do without her here," says Patricia Mantilla, who nominated Bennett-Johnson.

**Angela White** was recognized for her leadership in creating a video about the Adult Day Services Center. White worked with Public Information Specialists Carmen Andres and Joseph Davis to complete the video, which gives insights to families inquiring about

ADSC and how the daily program is operated.

**Allyson Coleman** was recognized for serving as a catalyst for a team of GMU graduate students conducting a department-wide organization development assessment. The project culminated in a report with a set of validated recommendations to enhance organizational performance. Coleman's coordination and facilitation of DCHS staff participation was a critical factor in the project's success.

**Donielle Wells** was recognized for her compassionate response to a client and her family, who had recently been evicted from their apartment. Wells efforts resulted in the client receiving her benefits in a timely manner, securing temporary shelter and being placed on the waiting list for low income housing. "In that small moment, the true value of compassion and the need for us to connect and empathize with each other as part of one humanity really dawned on me," says Gary Smalls, who nominated Wells.

**Carol Farrell** was recognized for contributions to the Adult Day Services Center. For the last two years, she has collected and donated hundreds of magazines, enriching and

enhancing the lives of the seniors and the program.

**Debbie Anderson** was recognized for her role in securing two grants totaling \$658,440. When state changes resulted in short deadlines for obtaining crucial signatures, Anderson made personal contact with required City officials, walked the applications to each office, and waited for signatures.

**Peggy Stypula** was recognized for her five-year leadership of the multi-disciplinary team who completes the Diagnostic Family Assessments (DFA) for Child Welfare. This year was especially challenging due to the number of new team members that required training. "Peggy continues to be the lynchpin that holds together the whole DFA process," says Steve Frutos, who nominated her.

### Group Super Stars

**Kate Garvey, Debbie Anderson, Tammie Wilson, Beth Pilonis, Shante Johnson, John Porter and Lesa Gilbert** were recognized for their roles in the writing of a grant that will be a public/private partnership between DCHS and eight non-profits. If funded, the grant will create 16 AmeriCorp positions to strengthen the work of each



of the agencies and expand efforts to move people closer to self-sufficiency and support youth with after school programming and mentoring.

**Debbie Ludington** and **Jennifer Cohen-Cordero** were recognized for quickly and efficiently developing the needed procedures to ensure the City boards and commissions are able to comply with Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements to post agendas and minutes on the City's website.

**Christine Levine, Peggy Stypula, Becky Taverner, Cathy Bartholomew, Taren Lambert** and **Margaret Dhillon** were recognized for their volunteer roles in making Fostering the Future Gala a success. "Their support helped us raise critical funds so we can continue providing enrichment opportunities for children in foster care or at risk of abuse and neglect," says Krystal Fenwick, who nominated the group.

**Michele Stevens** and **Bridget Oriaku**, both nurses, were recognized for their exemplary care of and assistance to clients, ensuring they are well taken care of and given the correct medications and dosages. "They are both responsible and dependable and the clients benefit from the care they give," says Uzma Mian, who nominated them.

MHOP Senior Therapists **Alexandria Campos Martin, William Lyne, Linh HarbesThai, Elizabeth San Pedro, Regina McGloin** and **Miriam Elwell** received overwhelmingly positive responses from 125 clients on a Client Satisfaction Survey. "I have never seen this overwhelmingly positive of a response to all senior therapists on the team," says Asta Lynch, who

nominated the group.

**Nicole Rohner, Andres Acosta, Kyah Khalsa, Anjali Jindal, Teklu Bedane** and **Connie Juntunen** were recognized for their roles in supporting the successes of the first referral for the newly established TRAILS program, a program that serves people who are experiencing their first psychotic episode.

Diagnostic Family Assessment (DFA) Team members **Steve Frutos, Kirimi Fuller, Lina Cuda, Lib Gillam, Lisa Ton, Stephanie Morrow** and **Debra Evans** were recognized for their roles in conducting an extensive all-day assessment for children and families served in Child Welfare. The team exemplifies the merging of expertise from various divisions in DCHS, says Peggy Stypula, who nominated the group.

Benefits Program Specialist **Humaira Hotaki** and Supervisory Administrative Support **Connie Speight** were recognized for their collaboration to ensure all case files had the information needed for the Foster Care Title IV-E Program state review. They dedicated numerous hours preparing while also ensuring their other job functions were completed. 🌱



## DCHS Star Awards

Images by freepik.com

### AUGUST

#### SUPER STAR NOMINEES

**Peggy Stypula**  
**Carol Farrell**  
**Debbie Anderson**

#### STAR AWARD NOMINEES

**Juan Carlos Gonzalez**  
**Shuron Speech**  
**Victoria Bradley**  
**Dena Wilson**  
**Lydia Looney-Cain**  
**Wanda Santiago**  
**Michelle Albert**

### SEPTEMBER

#### SUPER STAR NOMINEES

None

#### STAR AWARD NOMINEES

**Betsy Hiers**

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

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





# DCHS Highlights



## TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME

Clients from Vocational Services participated in the 2016 Nationals Post-Season events on October 5 at National Park. The clients watched the players' batting practice and toured some of the stadium. They also received gift bags for participating in one of the events. On the Go Nats Banner, the clients wrote "Good Luck Nats from Vocational Services, City of Alexandria."

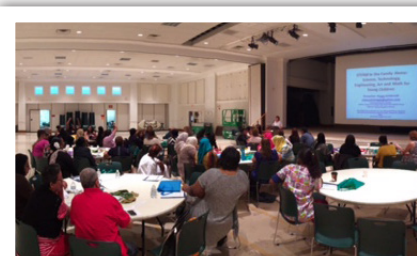
The DCHS program serves clients with intellectual disabilities who are learning work-related skills. ~contributed by Sonya Lee, Direct Support Technician



## KICKBALL SEASON UNDERWAY

Godwin Okafor is coaching the DCHS kickball team participating in the City Cup recreational sports kickball season this fall. Games go through November

10, and then playoffs begin. The next sports season is basketball; if you are interested in joining that team, email [Jeff. Bollen@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Jeff.Bollen@alexandriava.gov).



## PUTTING STEAM INTO KID'S EDUCATION

During a conference at First Baptist Church at the end of September, 55 enthusiastic family child care providers were introduced to STEAM, an interdisciplinary teaching framework that focuses on five disciplines: science, technology, engineering, art and math.

After a two-hour session on the overarching philosophy of the educational approach, the providers chose from a variety of workshops featuring hands-on activities that allowed them to interact and learn from each other and understand the importance of exploration, discovery and problem solving.

The conference was organized by Family Services Supervisor Lillian Vagnoni and hosted by the Early Childhood Division and Alexandria City Public Schools.

STEAM is based on natural ways of learning customized to each student. Unlike traditional science and math education, STEAM blends the learning environment, showing students how the scientific method can be applied to



everyday life. For more information, visit [educationcloset.com/steam](http://educationcloset.com/steam). ~contributed by Tomas Cabrera, Family Services Specialist



## EVANS TALKS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON NEWS4

Debra Evans, Chief of the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Center, recently joined Sergeant Joe Green of the Alexandria Police and Lisa Stapleton, Chief of Probation and Parole, on News4 to talk about the Domestic Violence Intervention Project, a comprehensive and cooperative approach by law enforcement and domestic violence advocates to combat domestic and sexual violence. Watch their interview with News4 Midday's Eun Yang to learn more about how Alexandria is trying to stop domestic violence before it happens and help the victims when it does: [www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/It-Takes-a-Village-Community-Works-Together-to-Tackle-Domestic-Violence\\_Washington-DC-396028911.html](http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/It-Takes-a-Village-Community-Works-Together-to-Tackle-Domestic-Violence_Washington-DC-396028911.html)



## VIDEOS HIGHLIGHTS DCHS SERVICES

Have you seen the new DCHS original videos about two of our unique community-focused programs and services?

The video feature about the Adult Day Services Center, a cost effective program

designed to offer services to seniors 55 years, highlights their weekly program and commitment to serving Alexandria's seniors.

The video featuring the Individuals with Disabilities (ID) Residential program, which provides permanent or transitional living arrangements, support and training for persons with intellectual disabilities, takes a look at the program and a few of the group homes residing in Alexandria.

View the videos and learn more about these programs—and the staff who serve in them—at [www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS](http://www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS) under Watch DCHS Video Features.



## STAFF DISPLAY SUPPORT FOR ANTI-BULLYING

In recognition of National Bullying Prevention Month and as part of the Alexandria Mayor's Campaign to End Bullying, DCHS Mental Health Center staff Jerry Lowell, Tricia Bassing, Suman Sood, Kirimi Fuller and Kay Lennett showed their support by wearing green. The campaign works to raise awareness about how to identify, respond to and prevent bullying. For more information, visit [www.alexandriava.gov/EndBullying](http://www.alexandriava.gov/EndBullying).

## ADSC CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

The Adult Day Services Center celebrated its 30 year anniversary on September 15. The Center offers services to seniors 55 years and older who may need assistance are may not want or cannot stay at home alone during the day. Below, Director Darrell Wesley speaks to those attending the



celebration, including Alexandria Mayor Allison Silberberg. For more information about ADSC, visit [www.alexandriava.gov/Aging](http://www.alexandriava.gov/Aging) and click on Caregiver Resources.



## ADSC PARTICIPANTS TEACH KNITTING

Little Lillies Knitting Club was one of the summer highlights at the Alexandria Day Services Center. The inaugural program matched two seniors, Karla Kombrink and Joan Dancy, with young ladies ages 10-13 participating in the Lee Center Day Camp. Once a week, Kombrink taught the girls how to knit while Dancy taught the girls to crochet.

Kombrink reflects, "I just can't believe how well they did! They actually learned to knit and crochet. I wasn't really expecting them to accomplish their projects, but they did. Miss Joan and I were so proud!"

The interaction between youth and seniors shows that we can all learn from one another and enrich each other's lives—one more way in which ADSC strives to serve Alexandria's seniors. ~contributed by Karla Kombrink, ADSC participant



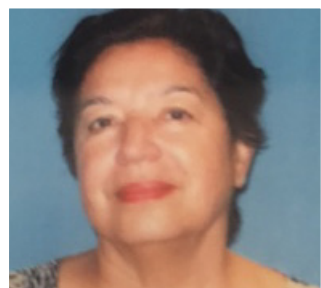


# Hello & Goodbye

## NEW STAFF

### JOANNA AHLERING

Joanna Ahlering, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, recently joined DCHS as Senior Therapist with the Center for Adult Services. Previously, she worked in DC with at-risk youth and their families in the medical and outpatient behavioral health services field. She received her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Social Welfare and Justice from Marquette University and her Masters in Social Work from San Diego State University.



### ASTRID CASONI

Astrid Casoni joined the Adult Intake Division as the new Intake Case Manager. She worked as a case manager for Mary's Center a Federally Qualified Health Center in Washington D.C. for 14 years and has a background as a psychologist from her native country of Chile. She is also a

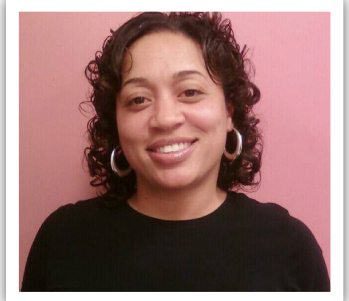
certified medical interpreter English/Spanish. She enjoys the area and community, describing it as "how beautiful the world can be when we all contribute towards the wellbeing of everybody." She also enjoys her drive on the parkway—"the mornings and sunsets are magnificent, a daily feast and a privilege."



### GABRIELA DEL CID

Gabriela Del Cid joined Child Protective Services as a Family Services Specialist. She obtained her Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, where she also worked in therapeutic foster care as a family counselor. Upon graduating with her MSW, she moved to Chicago to work at a group home for boys who were victims of abuse and neglect. She began her career in Chicago as a bilingual therapist and then was promoted to Program Supervisor. When

she is not working, she enjoys spending time with friends and family, hiking with her dogs, reading a good book, Netflix binging and traveling. She is excited to be a part of the CPS unit, continue to grow as a Social Worker and help children in need.



### EUDORA JOHNSON

Eudora Johnson joined DCHS as a Benefits Service Specialist with the Center for Economic Support. She is a Washington, D.C. native, returning to the DMV area after living in North Carolina for six years where she worked at the Wilson County Department of Social Services. She is excited to join the DCHS family and assist the residents of Alexandria. Eudora enjoys football, traveling, cooking, spending time with family and friends and actively serving in her community.



## PATRICK OKORONKWO

Patrick Okoronkwo joined DCHS as a Public Benefits Services Manager with the Center for Economic Support. He came from North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Before that, he worked for 25 years in social services in Michigan, of which he spent 20 years in management. He has two children, an 18 years old son who is in college in Ohio where he plays football and Lacrosse, and a 17 year old daughter who attends college in Houston, Texas. Patrick relocated to Alexandria, and he enjoys traveling, reading, music and culture when he is not working on his dissertation. He is enthusiastic and pleased to be a part of the Benefits Team.

## DANICA PALMER

Dr. Danica Palmer joined DCHS as a part time clinical psychiatrist. A highly skilled psychiatrist with over 10 years of clinical practice, she brings extensive experience working with a diverse, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population on a variety of mental health issues in both the public and private sector. She has significant experience in geriatric and adult psychiatry. She completed her training at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. She has worked in various settings, including Fairfax CSB and private practice. She is a diplomate of American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

## JASMIN ROLLING

Jasmin Rolling joined DCHS as a Senior Therapist with Emergency Services. Jasmin has an undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Sciences in Philadelphia

and a graduate degree in Human Services from Lincoln University. She has an extensive experience with children, adolescents, adult and seniors in residential, home, outpatient and primary care clinics. She is currently a Doctoral student at Argosy University in the Clinical psychology Program.

## MEGAN SCOTT

Megan Scott joined DCHS as a therapist with the Center for Adult Services.



## STEPHANIE SEIBERT

Stephanie Seibert joined DCHS as a Senior Therapist in the DCHS Emergency Services team. She completed her Doctorate of Clinical Psychology (PsyD) at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She completed her APA-accredited internship at the Bruce W. Carter VA Medical Center in Miami and more recently finished her postdoctoral fellowship at the Washington DC VA Medical Center specializing in working with serious mental illness and geropsychology. She is from the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area and excited to relocate to the DMV. In her spare time, she enjoys snowboarding, hiking and walking her Bernese Mountain dog.

## EVA STATLER

Eva Statler joined the DCHS Center for Children and Families as the Therapist/Developmental Disabilities Support Coordinator. Eva holds a



Bachelor's degree in Graduate School Preparation in Psychology and Health and Nutrition from Northern Michigan University, and a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Barry University. She has a diverse background of experiences, including working at multiple psychiatric hospitals, addiction counseling, working in the field of domestic abuse and sexual assault and at a residential group home for children with mental illness. Prior to joining the team, she conducted Applied Behavior Analysis therapy for children with autism spectrum disorders. She is passionate about wellness and living a well-balanced lifestyle.

## JOB CHANGE

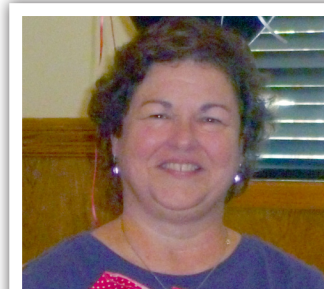
**Whitney Chao** is now the permanent Substance Abuse Presentational Coalition of Alexandria Coordinator. **Michelle McCoy** is a Therapist Supervisor with the Comprehensive Recovery Team. **Mario Rodriguez** is a Senior Residential Counselor. **Peggy Stypula** is the Child Welfare Supervisor for Staff Development. **Donna Warney** is a Family Services Specialist with Center for Children and Families.

## RETIREMENTS



**Linda Dell**, Business Project Manager, retired in September after 42 years with the City. During her career, she worked as the Finance Office Manager for Social Services, ITS in City Hall and then joined the former Department of Human Services where she worked as the IT and Facilities Manager until the 2010 merger.

**Delsa Bennett**, a Benefits Program Specialist, retired in October after almost 22 years with the City.



**Hope Toye**, Family Services Specialist Supervisor, retired in August after 32 years with the City. 🌿







# News You Can Use

## WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR LEAVE BALANCES IF YOU LEAVE THE CITY?

An employee who separates from City service in good standing will be paid for all unused annual leave up to the

maximum accrual cap listed in [Appendix 1](#) of Administrative Regulations (below). Employees who separate from City service may not use their accrued annual leave balance to continue their active status. Good standing

normally requires at least two weeks' written notice of the employee's intent to leave City service; however, it may be less if requested by the department head.

An employee who separates and then returns to City service within six months shall have his or her annual leave accrual rate restored; if the break in service is greater than six months, annual leave will accrue at the rate of a new employee.

Employees who are terminated for disciplinary reasons forfeit all unused annual leave.

Regular full-time and regular part-time employees who have completed 20 or more years of service and who voluntarily separate from City service will be paid 25 percent of their sick leave balance at the current rate of pay at separation. This payment shall be considered as payment in full and no further sick leave obligation exists.

## ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE TRAINING UNDERWAY

The Safety Committee is in the midst of active shooter assessment and drills. Active shooter response trainings began in September and will continue into November. Loca-

**REGULAR FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES  
ANNUAL & SICK LEAVE ACCRUAL TABLE I**

LENGTH OF SERVICE	DAYS EARNED/ YEAR	80 FT HOURS/PP ACCRUAL RATE/ MAX CAP	84 FT HOURS/PP ACCRUAL RATE/ MAX CAP	106 FT HOURS/PP ACCRUAL RATE/ MAX CAP	70 FT HOURS/PP ACCRUAL RATE/ MAX CAP
< 12 Months	13 Days	4.00 accrual 192 maximum	4.20 accrual 202 maximum	6.00 accrual 288 maximum	3.50 accrual 168 maximum
1 Year	14 Days	4.32 accrual 208 maximum	4.52 accrual 218 maximum	6.47 accrual 312 maximum	3.77 accrual 182 maximum
2 Years	15 Days	4.62 accrual 224 maximum	4.83 accrual 235 maximum	6.92 accrual 336 maximum	4.03 accrual 196 maximum
3 Years	16 Days	4.93 accrual 240 maximum	5.17 accrual 252 maximum	7.38 accrual 360 maximum	4.32 accrual 210 maximum
4 Years	17 Days	5.23 accrual 256 maximum	5.48 accrual 269 maximum	7.83 accrual 384 maximum	4.58 accrual 224 maximum
5 Years	18 Days	5.55 accrual 272 maximum	5.80 accrual 285 maximum	8.30 accrual 408 maximum	4.85 accrual 238 maximum
6 Years	19 Days	5.87 accrual 288 maximum	6.12 accrual 303 maximum	8.77 accrual 432 maximum	5.12 accrual 252 maximum
7 Years	20 Days	6.17 accrual 304 maximum	6.43 accrual 319 maximum	9.22 accrual 456 maximum	5.38 accrual 266 maximum
8 Years	21 Days	6.48 accrual 320 maximum	6.77 accrual 336 maximum	9.68 accrual 480 maximum	5.67 accrual 280 maximum
9 Years	22 Days	6.78 accrual 336 maximum	7.08 accrual 353 maximum	10.13 accrual 504 maximum	5.93 accrual 294 maximum
10 Years	23 Days	7.10 accrual 352 maximum	7.40 accrual 370 maximum	10.60 accrual 528 maximum	6.20 accrual 308 maximum
11 Years	24 Days	7.42 accrual 368 maximum	7.72 accrual 386 maximum	11.07 accrual 552 maximum	6.47 accrual 322 maximum
12 Years or more	25 Days	7.72 accrual 384 maximum	8.03 accrual 403 maximum	11.52 accrual 576 maximum	6.73 accrual 336 maximum

**SICK LEAVE ACCRUAL TABLE I**

	80 FT HOURS	84 FT HOURS	106 FT HOURS	70 FT HOURS
ACCRUAL RATE	3.69 accrual 12 days/year	3.88 accrual 12 days/year	5.54 accrual 12 days/year	3.23 accrual 12 days/year

tions that have already had at least one training include 4401 Ford Ave., 4480 King St., and 720 N. St. Asaph and 1900 Beauregard. Locations at 2525 Mt. Vernon Ave. and 2355 Mill Rd. will have their trainings within the next few weeks. Additional sessions are being scheduled at various sites according to the trainer's evaluation of the need for additional sessions. Safety Committee Chair and Quality Assurance Specialist Justin Wise reports that staff feedback has been positive.

## VIRGINIA PASSES FIRST ROUND OF FOSTER CARE ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Virginia has passed the first round of the Federal Title IV-E review, a first for the Commonwealth and a major accomplishment. Out of 80 cases sampled, only one was in error and one is still pending, and the dollar error was .0001 percent, a significant improvement from three years prior.

"This feat was accomplished with the foresight, persistence and careful planning of our VDSS partners," wrote Cathy Pemberton, Director Powhatan Department of Social Services, in an email congratulating those involved, highlighting the contributions of Commissioner Margaret Schultze, Chief Deputy JR Simpson, Carl Ayers, Alex Kamberis, Laura Polk and the Review Team at VDSS.

"And in 120 Local DSS's, our Family Services supervisors and specialists along with our Benefit programs supervisors and specialists and our CSA coordinators worked diligently, carefully

and sometimes frantically to get it right," Pemberton adds. "And they all got it right."

## CENTER PROFILES AVAILABLE

In the previous four issues, *Connect* profiled each DCHS Center. We have compiled these center profiles into one document for reference. You can find the document in [DCHS Center Summaries](#) in the DCHS Info folder on your desktop.

## MOVIE SCREENING FOR CITY STAFF

The Workforce Development Center presents a free screening of *Door to Door* for City employees and partners in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The film, starring William H. Macy, portrays the moving story of one man's refusal to allow cerebral palsy to defeat him. WDC is screening the film on Thursday, October 27, at 12 p.m. at Lee Center Auditorium at 1108 Jefferson Street. To get your free ticket, go to [www.alexandriawdc.eventbrite.com](http://www.alexandriawdc.eventbrite.com). 🐾



## SUPPORTING AGING ALEXANDRIANS — CONTINUED FROM PG 6

initial contact is the preconception that APS is intervening to put someone in a nursing home," says Blackley. "They think that knocking on their door means that we are there to take over their lives and move them out of their home."

People are also initially resistant due to the belief they can't afford services, fears they will lose their independence or discomfort with having strangers in their home, says Blackley.

So, the APS team works hard to assure individuals that interventions are voluntary. They carefully lay out the information about services and options available to them—ranging from programs like Medicaid and food stamps to home health and assisted living programs—so they can make informed and voluntary choices, explain the processes step by step so they know what to expect, and give them the time to make decisions.

For example, Blackley shares the story of a woman in her 90s living alone who came to the attention of APS. She had lived independently her entire life, but her health had declined due to a fall. She wanted to continue to live in her home, so the team assessed her medical needs, informed her of options and services available and helped her through the process.

"She is now able to continue to live in her home in the community," says Blackley.

Blackley finds these kinds of encounters inspiring.

"When we can help them accomplish what's most important to them—not what I think is right for them or someone else things is right for them—that is gratifying."

In a nation whose demographic is shifting as its population ages, APS is making a difference for older adults in Alexandria.

"Our ability to be able to respond to a person's situation in a timely manner and address their needs can be the difference between staying in the community or not," concludes Blackley. "And that means a lot to the older adults that we serve."

For more information about APS, click on the Adult Protective Services link at [www.alexandriava.gov/Aging](http://www.alexandriava.gov/Aging). 🐾





# DCHS FUN Day

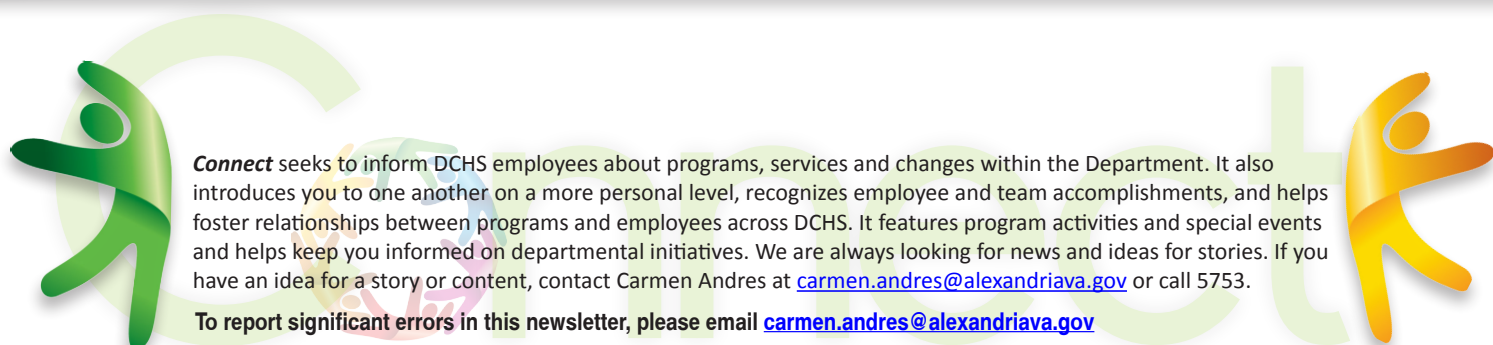
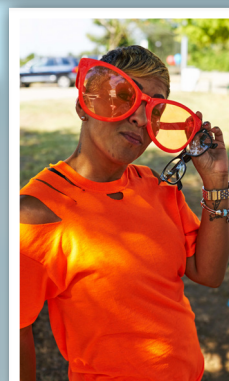
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On September 16, staff enjoyed music, food, games, awards and conversations during DCHS Fun Day at Eisenhower Park. For more photos, go to Department Wide Photos in the DCHS Info folder on your desktop.



PHOTO CREDIT: Jerry Lowell



**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](mailto:carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov) or call 5753.

To report significant errors in this newsletter, please email [carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov](mailto:carmen.andres@alexandriava.gov)