



# TCV MH/MR, Inc. News



## Turtle Creek Valley Mental Health/Mental Retardation, Inc. Agency Newsletter

### Board of Directors Annual Dinner Meeting

The Annual Dinner of the Board of Directors was held Monday, December 11, 2006, at Banquets Unlimited in Wilmerding to thank Board members, staff, guests and volunteers for their continued dedication to our Agency.

#### 10 Year

Roberta Nesbitt  
Patrice Kerr

#### 15 Year

Robert Wilson  
Narda Rathbun  
Brenda Gergely  
Bernice Rowe-Stirbis

#### 20 Year

Precious Roberts  
Nancy Miller  
Denise Guidish  
Robert Pugh

#### 25 Year

Judy Monahan Grystar  
Jack Fouts

#### 35 Year

Mike Robertson  
Mary Egan  
Josie Ulrich  
Jim Kidd

#### Guests

Chuck Evans  
Betsy Krishner

#### Board of Directors

Raymond Logan - Chairperson  
Margaret Priselac - Vice-Chairperson  
Michael O'Donnell - Treasurer  
Judith Stevenson - Secretary  
Carmen Bell  
Charles Bofinger  
Mark Bukowski  
Linda Travisano  
Errol Miller  
Sean O'Connor  
Paul Wittman



Exec. Dir., Judy receiving her 25 year award



Supervisors Amy, Michelle and Laura

Turtle Creek Valley  
MH/MR, Inc.

Volume 6, Issue 1 - Jan. '07  
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### Second Annual Tree Trimming Party

~ Linda A. Miller

The individuals who live in the Breezewood Drive CHIMR invited their family members for a tree trimming party on December 11, 2006. This continues a tradition started by **Joanne Batyi** at the former Electric Avenue CHIMR.

**Camille's** brother and sister-in-law as well as a friend, **Helen's** sister and her sister's boyfriend and Joe's long time friend **Chuck Scripp**, joined the festivities. **Lagretta** invited her niece, who was unfortunately unable to attend.

**Linda Perris** prepared a delicious rigatoni dinner including a salad, cake and snacks. The Christmas tree was trimmed following dinner. Lagretta, Helen and Helen's sister were the most involved in this process, but everyone contributed by adding a decoration or two. My contribution was to hand the ornaments to everyone.

A special thank you goes out to the guests who made this a special occasion for the individuals. The extra efforts of the staff; **Margaret Reefer**, Linda Perris, and Joanne Batyi are greatly appreciated. A very special thank you to Chuck for making an effort to be there for Joe. We are looking forward to Christmas 2007 and our 3rd annual party.

## Thank You To PSR Department Volunteers

~Judy Stump

The PSR Department has a number of individuals in the program who spend many hours each month volunteering for the program. These volunteer projects range from facilitating a class to wiping up the coffee spills. On any given day, there are many individuals who help out in the program in some way. There are also several individuals who volunteer on a regular basis.

**Marietta** has been running our coffee corner for several years. She arrives early in the morning to make the coffee and takes care of filling all the sugar and creamer containers and then sets up a neat little coffee corner. She sells the coffee to individuals in our program for fifty cents per week and keeps track of everyone who buys coffee for the week. The proceeds of the coffee sales go toward funding our bingo games and bowling outings.

**Carl** has been volunteering for a couple of years in the ceramics class. He helps with pouring molds, firing and taking things out of the molds and kiln. He helps individuals with their projects and takes charge of the class when the facilitator is out of the room. Carl is also very helpful in cleaning up after classes and putting everything away. He is also very helpful around the department lending a hand to help cook, clean and decorate for the holidays.

**Sandy** also helps in many ways in the department; she is a regular volunteer in the front office where she averages 60 hours per month as a part time receptionist. In addition to her hours as a receptionist, Sandy also facilitates her own class each week, often co-facilitates in art class to help individuals who need assistance, and volunteers to fill in when other facilitators are out. In addition to these many hours of volunteering, Sandy is also involved in the Consumer Planning Committee which discusses program issues, and she is always looking for ways to help individuals to become engaged in program activities.

**Gail** is a contract staff, but spends many hours off of the clock helping out in the program. She takes individuals under her wing when she sees they need assistance in learning to ride the bus, to budget their money so they can go on outings, etc. Recently, she undertook a ceramics fundraising project for our program which involved about 50 hours of coming in early and staying late. She made and cleaned many nativity sets, snowmen and angels.

**Judith** volunteers on an average of 25 hours per month as a regular part of our front office team. In addition to carrying out all her receptionist duties, she has a schedule of regular job assignments which she cheerfully and successfully completes each week. Judith is always looking for more things to do and offers suggestions on ways to improve the way we do things.

This by no means is a complete list of volunteers. There are other individuals in the past who have volunteered many hours of their personal time in the PSR Department, and there are others who are stepping up to plate to volunteer. We dedicate at least one day a year as Recognition and Appreciation Day to personally recognize and appreciate everyone who takes part in volunteering in any capacity.

## Thank You Donors!

TCV would like to thank the following for their donations:

**PSR Department**- Idlewild Park for 45 free passes last year, Free passes from the *Pittsburgh Zoo*, Discounts from the *Homestead Carnegie Library* for a concert, Discounted tickets to the *Carnegie Science Center*, Discounted prices for outings to *Buttermilk Hollow Pizza Hut* and *Playmor Bowling Center* and a \$50 donation from the **Homestead United Presbyterian Church** to help with the annual Christmas Party.

**After School Program** - An anonymous donor contributed funds for a holiday pizza party we used the money for holiday craft supplies, pizza, cupcakes, hot chocolate, and movie rentals... the kids had a blast!

**Children and Adolescent Resource Coordination and CASASTART Program**- received almost 200 coats from *Operation WARM*, sizes 5x – 14/16 for the children we serve and their siblings. We also participated in the *Westinghouse Human Services Center's* toy drive with **Outpatient Program** and got gifts for about 70 families, including the After School Program children.

## TCV Tobacco Department Events

TCV's Prevention Department staffed booths at the Steel Valley COG in Homestead and Westinghouse Human Services Center in Turtle Creek for two tobacco events; Great American Smoke Out on Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> and "Resolve to be Tobacco Free" on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

At the Great American Smoke Out tables, individuals were able to sign pledge cards, sign up for cessation classes and enter to win a \$20 gift certificate to Target. That day, we staff were able to speak to over 50 people and 8 people were referred to our smoking cessation classes

The Great American Smoke Out event was geared towards visitors and staff of the two buildings who made a New Year's resolution to quit smoking and to remind everyone of the new Clean Indoor Initiative in Allegheny County. Free tobacco cessation classes are offered on an ongoing basis at the Steel Valley COG and Westinghouse Human Service Center. You can start the classes at any time! Please call 412-464-1522 x500 for for information.



Anthony Fabian distributing information on smoking cessation classes available at TCV MH/MR, Inc.

TCV MH/MR, Inc. provides tobacco prevention and cessation services through a contract with Tobacco Free Allegheny.

## "Snax for Fax" Update

~ Shannon McCleary

In September, TCV's Tobacco Prevention Project began a fun and educational program. When the program began, there were 28 participating organizations, now it has grown to 69! The program works like this: Every week a tobacco related question is faxed to participating organizations, afterwards the participants fax back their answer. Out of the correct answers, a winner is randomly drawn. Initially, every weekly winner received a gift basket from Panera Bread, but now with adaptations, the school nurses win a \$20 gift certificate to State of Health Products (an educational materials/supplies company). Their section of the "Snax for Fax" program is called "Fax for Fun". We have also expanded to email with the name "Fax for Fun".

Even though the program has expanded and now has three different names, the purpose of the program still remains the same: to educate others on the dangers of tobacco AND to promote the free tobacco cessation classes offered at TCV. If your organization is able to make referrals to our cessation classes and is not yet part of Snax for Fax, contact **Shannon McCleary** x504. *Snax for Fax is funded by TFA.*

## PSR Christmas

~Diana Omeis

On Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, PSR celebrated Christmas Eve with program participants and their family members. The event began at 3 PM and continued until 7:30 PM. There was good food, combined with laughter and friendly conversations. A highlight of the evening was when a participant shared a Christmas family tradition which involved breaking apart a wafer and offering good thoughts and healing for the future to others.

## Welcome to new employees!

Sandra Brown - Turtle Creek  
Eboney Caldwell - CHI MR Crestview  
Denise Collette - SV COG PSR  
John Coma - CHI MR Lynda Lane  
Regis Conley - MR Driver/Training Spec.  
Georgina Crichlow - After School Prog.  
Christine Dario - SV COG Prevention  
Mike Deitz - SV COG ATF  
Grenith Fisher - CHI MR Crestview  
Pauline Giles - CHI MR Crestview  
Catherine Hewitt - SV COG PSR  
Judy Laird - St. Roberts  
Ernest Lint - Homestead House  
James Miller - Therapist  
Kelsey Morin-Werth - SV COG PSR  
Brandon Payne - After School Program  
Richard Prior - Homestead House TCM  
Cheryl Salary - Psychiatrist  
Asia Shabazz - SV COG TSS  
Elaine Treubel - Housekeeping  
Rochelle Williams - Homestead House  
Tameka Wills - CHI MR 16th St.



## Goodbye and Good luck!

Stephanie Deglau - Therapist  
David Gardner - CHI MR Lynda Lane  
Lynn Gustafson - MH OP Therapist  
Robert Hinton - TSS  
Lea Majewski - 723 Braddock SCU  
Clif Omeis - Rehab Coach  
Roselyn Price - CHI MR Lynda Lane  
Mike Robertson - HH Therapist  
Linda Ross - SV COG Prevention  
Janell Runco-Aguon - HH RC  
Elliott Shinn - Psychiatrist  
Judy Slater - HH RC  
Alexis Smearcheck - CHI MR Crestview  
Valorie Wiss - SV COG Prevention

## TCV's Safety Campaign

~Jennifer Brannigan

In an effort to raise awareness about SLIPS, TRIPS, and FALLS at the workplace, TCV's Risk management committee held a banana campaign throughout the Agency during the week of November 10, 2006. All employees who did not have a slip trip or fall that week were given a prize. All week staff were curious to find out what their prize would be. All speculated, but they found out on Friday that week that it was a banana!!! Only one person out of TCV's 300 employees was not eligible to receive their prize! The awareness campaign got people thinking about being careful where they walked and really brought a sense of excitement throughout the Agency. This was the first time that TCV MH/MR, Inc. held a safety awareness campaign. The Risk Management committee hopes to hold another campaign next year. Thank you to all who participated with this activity and for making safe thinking a priority!



*Jen passing out the prizes!*

## TCV Prevention Interfaces with Woodland Hills School District SHINE Program

~Christine Dario/Steve Zmigrosky

The SHINE Program is an after school program run by the Woodland Hills School District for children in grades 4-8. The program helps students better prepare for standardized testing and provides life skills and other enrichment activities. It is currently administered at 5 locations: Rankin, Edgewood and Dickson Intermediates; Braddock Library; and Woodland Hills East Junior High.

In 2006, TCV Prevention staff personnel, **Erica Ways** and **Christine Dario**, conducted lessons at Rankin Intermediate and the Braddock Library. In 2007, TCV programming will be held at East Junior High, Edgewood and Dickson Intermediates. TCV's classes are held once a week at each site for 2 hours. Each week a new topic is discussed, some of the topics include: communication, self-esteem, decision making and stress. Instead of a classroom atmosphere, activities are tied in with each lesson plan. These activities, such as collage making, give the children an opportunity to interact with one another and gain a better understanding of the topic being discussed. Forty-four students participated in 2006.

## PSR's Ceramic Project

~Amy Sljva-Blystone

The Wilksburg Family Support Center approached TCV MH/MR, Inc.'s PSR Department to purchase ceramic items for center members to paint for the holidays. Consumers from PSR and Activity Assistant, **Gail Gantt**, (facilitator of the ceramic classes offered within the program) volunteered to complete 15 nativity sets, 5 angels, and 10 snowman molds. Gail worked for hours on her days off to get some of the items completed so that members of the center could have their projects to work on for the holidays. The molds turned out great and the center was very pleased. The money for the molds was donated back to the program. It will be used towards PSR's summer trip. Kudos to Gail for coordinating this project!

## MR Christmas Party

The Steel Valley and New Beginnings (St. Roberts) Adult Training Facilities (ATFs) invited staff and consumers to join them at their Annual Christmas Party on Friday December 22<sup>nd</sup> from 11 am – 2pm. Everyone enjoyed the fun and festivities that ATF staff had planned for the get together. The event was catered by TCV staff and included a variety of food and goodies. Santa came on his sleigh to give all individuals in attendance presents. Everyone had a great time singing Christmas Carols. Thank you to the very talented family member who played the piano for everyone to sing along.



*Guest enjoying the fantastic meal that TCV staff prepared*

## IEP Training

On Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, the TCV MH/MR, Inc. Child & Adolescent Resource Coordination Department hosted a Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership Seminar at the Steel Valley COG. The Introduction to Special Education Question and Answer session was conducted by Deb Eskeman of the PEAL Center. The PEAL Center is an organization of parents whose children have disabilities that reaches out to assist other parents and professionals. The Center provides training and information for parents and friends of children with disabilities, as well as their educators and their advocates.



*Deb explaining the IEP process to the group*

Deb was very helpful explaining parents rights to the 15 attendees of the training. In addition to her knowledge of the school system, Deb also has first hand experience dealing with school districts and their IEP (Individualized Education Programs) since both of her children have a learning disability. Deb explained tips that she has learned throughout the years, including the process of getting IEP for their children, the special education process and questions about the parental rights of children with learning disabilities. A child with a disability is defined as mental retardation, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech and language impairment, serious emotional disturbances, orthopedic impairment, specific learning disabilities and autism.

The PEAL Center and TCV MH/MR, Inc. have resources available if you have questions regarding childhood disabilities. Please contact TCV's Child and Adolescent Resource Coordination Department 412-464-1522 x500 for further information.

## Biggest Loser

~ *Arlene Shanks*

In keeping with the Agency's Blue Cross/Blue Shield Healthy for Life Program, 16 staff members from the Children & Family Services Department have committed to "getting healthy" in 2007. These 16 staff joined together in losing weight and getting fit. They have formed a "Biggest Loser" Contest. They are eating better, using less portions,

exercising or working out at the gym. They are getting weighed each week, starting January 2, and then reporting their weight loss for that month. The Biggest Loser will be announced at the end of each month. They have found a bond in helping one another, talking about food planning and preparation, and supporting their plans to lose weight. Soon you will not recognize us!

**Congratulations Outstanding  
TCV MH/MR, Inc. Employees  
December 2006: Michelle Baker, Karen  
Moeller and Marci Laskey**

## Safety Tips

~ *Jerry Potts*

### Avoid Eye Strain

Working on a computer for extended periods can lead to eye discomfort and vision problems. Eyestrain symptoms include burning, redness, dryness, blurry vision, uneven vision or eye coordination, and halo effects and/or headaches. OSHA recommends:

- Visit your optometrist once a year and talk about how much time you spend at a computer, and whether you need glasses or contact lenses designed for computer use.
- If possible, adjust the room's lighting so it is neither too dim nor too bright.
- Adjust the monitor's contrast or consider a glare filter to reduce screen contrast
- Take a ten minute break for every hour spent at the computer.
- Use rewetting drops if your eyes are dry.

## Donate Your Used Cell Phones

~Patti Ferron

Please donate your unwanted cell phones to help raise much needed funds for TCV's Mental Retardation Department. We will be collecting used cell phones from January 22, 2007 through March 9, 2007 for the purpose of providing much needed community integration opportunities for our consumers. TCV will receive money from a company called Phoneraiser for each cell phone during this fundraiser. "Phoneraiser" specializes in recycling and refurbishing used technology.

Your donation will also help protect the environment. Your unwanted cell phones will be recycled in accordance with the EPA regulations. Phoneraiser makes your un-needed technology available to those who can use it, while keeping it out of the landfill.

Donations may be tax deductible. Remember, this recycling program not only benefits our individuals but assists in preserving the environment and bringing communications to people who could not otherwise afford it.

All cell phones are accepted. The MR Fundraising Committee will provide boxes at TCV's St. Roberts site and Steel Valley COG site (or you could create your own) and will pick them up as needed. We will also pick up if you have too many cell phones for the donation box. If you would like a donation box at your location, to inquire about other site locations or just need general information, please call Patti Ferron at 412-823-0600 x 102.

## Caroling in the community

~John Meikle

We celebrated the season this year with a number of social events, including two trips to local care facilities. The PSR Department's intrepid singers – a group of about a dozen of us who had been rehearsing carols and songs leading up to the holidays – traveled to the Wightman Center in Squirrel Hill and then to the Eldercrest Care Home in Munhall. Accompanied with bells, festive hats, props (for the "Twelve Days of Christmas") and enthusiastic voices, we shared the joy and community building experience with the residents, many joining with us in song. To be able to bring some festive cheer into the lives of others and see smiles and feel the appreciation of our efforts gave us all a warm feeling of fellowship and love. We all felt that we might be able to do this kind of activity more often, building meaningful connections with the broader community around us...now that would be a good New Year's Resolution to keep!

## MR Residential News

~Janet Yniguez

TCV MH/MR, Inc.'s MR Residential program has the pleasure of providing services to two new individuals.

**Jay** moved into the Lynda Lane site on November 15, 2006. He has been a part of the Agency's Semi/ Supported living program for almost twenty years. Jay has brought much joy to the other individuals and staff at the site. He is an exceptionally sweet and caring man with a great sense of humor. He has built a wonderful relationship with his housemates. Jay invited his friends and family to his new home for a housewarming party on January 9th. He was very thankful to all who came to celebrate his new home.



*New housemate, Jay*

**Lori** moved into the Crestview site on January 9th. She has been trial visiting since October and finally received approval to move in. She was ecstatic! Lori has been a part of TCV's Day/Community Link Programs for almost twenty years. She has built a very loving relationship with her new housemates. One housemate in particular has blossomed by having Lori around. She has brought some new energy to the house. Lori is also looking forward to yet another move when the Crestview site moves to a new house that TCV has purchased in North Versailles sometime in February. Lori is a very special lady, who also has a great sense of humor.

We are looking forward to working with Jay and Lori for many years to come.

## Benefits Fair

~Jennifer Brannigan

This year's Open Enrollment Benefit Fair took place at 723 Braddock on November 28 and 29, 2006. Vendors such as **Colonial Insurance, Omega Federal Credit Union, Ameriserv Financial, United Concordia Dental, Highmark, Davis Vision, Sprint/Nextel** and **Pre-Paid Legal Services** were all on hand to give TCV staff further information on all of the benefits that they can receive as an employee of the Agency. Refreshments were served and computers were available to all staff to enroll or change enrollment in health and dental insurance, with the assistance of Human Resources and vendors.

Each of the vendors was asked to bring a prize valued at approximately \$50 to be raffled off to all staff that attended. The following are employees that were lucky enough to win the great prizes!

**George Poser** – Bluetooth – Sprint  
**Aaron Rivers** - \$50 Target Gift Card – Colonial Insurance  
**Diana Omeis** - \$50 Visa Gift Card – Prepaid Legal  
**Martin King Smith** - \$50 Visa Gift Card – Omega Federal Credit Union  
**Dionne Sullivan** - \$50 Eat N' Park Gift Card – Ameriserv  
**Marci Laskey** – pen – Concordia  
**Manaya King** – Portable bar – Highmark  
**Toni Daniels** – Picnic basket – Highmark

Employee participation was outstanding! Congratulations to all of the winners and I hope this year's benefit fair was both informative and fun!!! If you have any questions about benefits please feel free to contact the Human Resources Department.



## Employee Spotlight

*Every newsletter will randomly profile an employee. Who will be in the next issue??*



Congratulations to this edition's Employee Spotlight, Marieke Johnson, in her promotion to Child and Adolescent Resource Coordination Supervisor. Marieke has been a Resource Coordinator for nearly three years at TCV. She has shown commitment and dedication to the Agency's mission. Marieke has been a true leader within the RC program and has significantly contributed to the program's success over the past several years. Congratulations Marieke!

**Employee Name:** Marieke Johnson

**Site Location:** SV COG B3, Children and Adolescent Prevention Department

**How long have you worked here?:** 3 years in February

**What is your position?** Child & Adolescent RC Supervisor

**What do you like best about working at TCV?** ? Friendly and fun coworkers **Or what do you like best about your job?** Making a difference in the lives of children

**What was your very first job?** Making pretzels at an Auntie Anne's

**What is your favorite movie of all time?** Annie or My Best Friend's Wedding

**If you could have dinner with anyone (living or dead) who would you choose?** Bono (leader singer of U2)

**What three things can always be found in your refrigerator?** Liverwurst, cheese and green tea

**What is your favorite vacation spot?** The Netherlands – where my mom lives

**What accomplishment would you say that you are most proud of?** First person in my family to finish college

**What are your pets, and their names?** 2 dogs – Oskar and Autumn, and 2 cats – Opie and Mr. Bojangles

**Whom do you most admire and why?** My mom –she's very strong and smart



## What time is it??? TEE TIME!!!

Even though Old Man Winter finally hit, and everyone's putting away their golf clubs, it's time to start looking into the summer golf season. We have set the date for our **2007 Toward a Brighter Future Golf Benefit** and hope that everyone will save the date and participate!!

The golf outing will be held at Southpointe Golf Club on Tuesday, August 7th! The format will be the same as the last two years, Registration at 8 AM, Shotgun Start at 9 AM and Lunch at 2 PM.

Please feel free to contact Kym at 412-351-0222 x420 or [kmroziak@tcvmhm.org](mailto:kmroziak@tcvmhm.org) if you would like to register early, or if you have any questions about the day.

Last year's profits enabled TCV to provide After School programming to 30 children living in Braddock, Rankin and North Braddock. We thank you for your support!

*Please remember to ask your family and friends to designate Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc. as the recipient of their United Way gift through the Contributor Choice option when completing the United Way form, or donate online at [www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org](http://www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org).*

### TCV's United Way code is #136.

A copy of the official registration and financial information of Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc. may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

**Judy Monahan Grystar, LSW**  
*TCV MH/MR, Inc.*  
*Executive Director*

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Turtle Creek Valley News

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