



The Unpredictable Nature of Wellness

-Darlene Karpaski

In the fall of 2003, Recovery Workshops were offered at TCV to Residential and Partial Hospitalization staff and Persons in Recovery.

The participants made the workshops a success. Staff described how valuable it was to meet persons in recovery who had at one time been very ill, and now have recovered to the point of having jobs and productive lifestyles. A new vision of hope emerged through listening to personal examples and stories of those who have recovered. Hope is a central theme in all recovery processes, but historically the treatment focus was on symptom reduction and stabilization with an emphasis on the illness and its progressively worsening prognosis. This contributed to a sense of hopelessness for persons in recovery and staff providing services.

However, there is accumulating empirical data that indicates that persons diagnosed with schizophrenia can and already have recovered. "Nine longitudinal studies conducted in Asia, Europe and the United States **reported an average of 50% and higher rates of recovery for persons diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia** (Monitor, 2000)." Perhaps the shift from illness to wellness focus will help us observe the "unpredictable nature of wellness" and the human capacity to demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of great adversity. For further information, see Monitor on Psychology (Vol. 31, No. 2, February 2000) or contact Darlene Karpaski, Dkarpaski@tcvmhmr.org.

Board of Directors Annual Dinner Meeting

On Monday December 9th, 2002 dinner was held to honor employees working at the agency 10, 15 and 20 years.

10 years of service

Margaret Clapie
Rosalia Danchak
Helen Donahoe
Duane Evans
Patricia Friedrich
Janet Kolar
Dionne Sullivan
Michael Wise



15 Years of Service

Joanne Batyi
Victoria Karabasz
Janie King
Steve Szmigrosky
Thalia Wotherspoon

20 Years of Service

Pamela Panyko
Arlene Shanks
Janet Stanich
Bart Vant

Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc.

Volume 3, Issue 1

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answer on pg. 6

Can you guess what this is?

- a.) Where employment services delivers Meals on Wheels
- b.) Where Community Link went camping for the weekend
- c.) New MR residential house



Congratulations
to the MR New
Beginnings staff for
passing their first
OMR audit on 12/5
with 100%
compliance!

Employment Services News and Upcoming Events

~Amy Sljva

The Employment Services Department has been up and running for several months now. If you haven't already heard we are a Supported Employment project that provides individualized employment services to adults with a mental health diagnosis. Services include but are not limited to job skills training, job development, accompanying individuals on interviews, assessment, and follow-up. We receive referrals from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Action Housing as well as self-referrals. In addition to the services we provide for individuals, we can assist you in obtaining information related to work incentives such as benefits counseling, social security, and other resources related to employment. In the near future, we will be providing free workshops for individuals that are currently receiving services within the agency that can assist them in choosing, getting, and keeping the job of their choice. Also, presentations will be provided to individuals in the different departments about the services that are available to them. *Are you interested in learning how you can be a part of increasing employment opportunities for individuals as well as help our service grow?* Spread the word about our services. We are also looking for businesses that hire individuals with disabilities to help expand our job placement opportunities. If you are interested in learning more about our services feel free to contact **Amy Sljva, Employment Services Supervisor at (412)461-4100 ext. 714 or Christina Lipinski, Employment Specialist at (412)461-4100 ext. 779**. Our office is located at the COG building in Homestead on the 2nd floor (room 228). Some of our highlights are included below:

- * Congratulations to the 12 individuals that have utilized the service and successfully obtained competitive employment over the last several months. Some of the employers include Giant Eagle, Shop and Save and UPMC Health System. A Special thanks to Christina Lipinski in her efforts in assisting individuals in securing competitive employment. Way to go!!!
- * Our agency is now enrolled in the Employer Assistance Referral Network which enables us to receive job vacancy announcements from employers in the community who are also enrolled in this service who hire individuals with disabilities. This not only increases our exposure in the community but also expands job placement opportunities.
- * We are also exploring other opportunities such as becoming a community center through Career Link, and becoming an Employment Network provider through the Social Security Administration Ticket to Work Program.

Prevention

The Department of Family Services Tobacco Prevention team has been hard at work the past few months to initiate their tobacco prevention project in the Woodland Hills, East Allegheny, Steel Valley and West Mifflin School Districts. The project is designed to prevent children from smoking and to help teens that have started smoking to learn how to stop. A process is being initiated in each district to have all students caught on their first smoking offense to be referred to TCV for tobacco education classes. When the student completes the tobacco education class and would like to learn ways to quit smoking, they are given the opportunity to enroll in cessation classes offered at the high school.

In January, Life Skills Training began in the fourth grades of the EA, WH and SV School Districts. All students participating in this program take a pre-and post-test survey on their knowledge of tobacco use and are given information on the harmful effects of smoking.

A Youth Coalition was set up at UPMC-Braddock through a collaboration between TCV, Tobacco Free Allegheny, UPMC-Braddock and youth living in Braddock. The coalition is comprised of secondary school children and has become actively involved in an alliance against tobacco. The coalition's first project was a Kwanzaa event on December 30th at the auditorium in UPMC-Braddock. The event celebrated the 5th day of Kwanzaa, Nia, and gave the coalition the opportunity to pass out tobacco educational materials to parents and youth. WPXI covered the event on the 11:00 news that evening. Additional youth coalition activities are underway in the Steel Valley School District. On December 18, a family dinner and quiz show demonstration was held at Auberle. The event was a collaborative effort of TCV, Auberle Center, Youth Places and Tobacco Free Allegheny and functioned as a kick-off to youth coalition activities that will occur on a regular basis.

Members of the Prevention staff attended the Life Skills Training of Trainers in White Plains, NY to be certified in conducting Life Skills training workshops. This certification will allow other TCV staff to be trained in the Life Skills program.

Family Services collects most for Food Drive!

Thank you to all of the sites who participated in the Thanksgiving Food Drive to benefit the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. There were boxes located at the following TCV sites: St. Robert's, South Side, Turtle Creek, 723 Braddock, Homestead House and outside agencies at the Rankin Christian Center and Carnegie Library of Braddock. Out of all of the sites, the **SV COG's Department of Family Services** collected the largest amount of nonperishables. The food collected will play a very small part to benefit the 350 member Agencies and 120,000 unduplicated clients served monthly. Thank you!



Rally to Restore Human Service Funding

On November 19, 2003, 6:45 AM, thirty-one persons in recovery and ten Turtle Creek Valley staff boarded a bus at Homestead House to go to Harrisburg to "Rally to Restore the Cuts". The rally was advocating the restoration of Pennsylvania's proposed funding cuts to Human Services. The proposed cuts included a 5-7% cut to Mental Health Services, 50% cut to Drug and Alcohol Services and no cost of living increase for a second year for Mental Retardation Services.

Residential/Partial Hospital/Supported Housing staff, as a team, coordinated the trip to Harrisburg. People took notice of the group with the black and gold "We're mad as hell and we're not taking it anymore" t-shirts.

The group stayed dedicated to their purpose throughout the rainy day. **Bobbie Nesbitt**, Homestead House staff member, believed that "we had a voice, we were strong in number and in passion for the task at hand. It was a great day, with several of the staff and consumers getting all the way into the State Legislative offices in search of people who could make the changes that we needed." Not only did the group meet the task at hand, but they also had an enjoyable time. The day ended with a stop at the Golden Corral for a buffet dinner before returning home.

We would like to thank everyone who participates and Greg Mungan from the MH Association of Southeastern PA for the grant towards the cost of the trip.

In the end, all of the efforts, from letter writing campaigns to rallies proved to be successful. Human Service funds were restored.

16th Avenue Holiday

~Barbara Brown

Christmas arrived at the 16th Avenue CHIMR on December 1st. Site supervisor the 16th Avenue consumers invited families, friends and staff to participate in a decorating party. Those who attended helped with the lights and display of gingerbread and lollipops outside.

Inside, the attendees, hung ornaments that were hand made or given by the families, helped with the tree and decorated other rooms in the house.

The night was finished by all enjoying delicious snacks. Pies, cookies and homemade Tiramisu were enjoyed by all while carols were playing in the background. In the end, the house sparkled with cheer from room to room.

Those living at 16th Avenue extend holiday good wishes to everyone.

Welcome to new employees!

Dennis Inserra - SV COG Family
Frankie Martin-Sambuco - SV COG
Prevention
Heather May - CHI MR Payne Street
Charlotte Miller - 723 Braddock BSU
Mark Noel - SV COG Prevention
Abayomi Odumosu - CRRS HH
Kimberly Pollack - HH OP
Rose Race - Turtle Creek OP
Michael Sarsfield - CRRS Next Step
Christopher Woods - CRRS Munhall



Goodbye and Good luck!

Lawrence Braszo - CRRS Munhall
David Bruno - Homestead House ICM
Antoine Carswell - CHI MR Brinton
Jackie Halsaver - SV COG RC
Paige Hartranft - CRRS HH
Thomas Lee, Sr. - HH Partial
Darryl Mance - 723 BSU
Daniel Melonya - CHI MR Electric Ave

Day Voc Christmas

~submissions by Dave Chara and Nancy Naulder

On December 19, 2003, the MR Day/Voc programs held their Christmas party at the St. Robert Bellarmine Parish Conference Center. Consumers, family members and staff of the New Beginnings ATF, Steel Valley ATF and MR Senior Program celebrated the annual event with music, dancing and eating. The event was catered by Stratwood and included a variety of food and cookies for all to enjoy. Santa even stopped by the party to pass out gifts to each individual in attendance.



Wanted: Life Skills Mentor Volunteers

The Department of Family Services and the Tri-Boro Communities That Care partnered to form the Tri-Boro Prevention Network to address some of the problems facing children in their critical years of growth and development. The Prevention Network provides children with the skills needed to resist the pull of destructive activities, including the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Cultural and educational enrichment activities that promote clear and healthy lifestyles are also provided for the children who participate in the program.

The initiative is funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. TCV collaborates with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh to provide mentoring relationships with children who are involved at the Braddock Carnegie Library, Youth Enrichment Services, UPMC-Braddock and the Youth Investment Plan which is sponsored by New Hope Baptist Church.

An objective of the program is to match the participating children with Big Brothers Big Sisters. This will promote academic success and reduce substance abuse and delinquency while promoting opportunities for pro social involvement for youth. How can you help an at risk child? Call **Phil D'Antonio, Big Brothers Big Sisters at 412-363-6100 or Rick Williams, TCV MH/MR, Inc. at 412-351-0222 x421** for more information on how to become an adult Big Brother Big Sister in the Tri Boro area.



Ashton, a 12 year old student in the Woodland Hills School District, is fortunate to have a great Big Brother, D.J. The two are a great match, and truly show the benefits to both the child and the Big Brother or Sister.

Questions to Big Brother - D.J.

How do you think that the BBBS/Life Skills program affects Ashton's life? **He is exposed to new ideas, environments and people who he may not have been without the program.**

How does being a big brother enrich your life? **I made a life long friend that brings out the "kid" in me. I talk about the fun we have to all my friends and coworkers.**

Why do you think that others should participate in the program? **There are plenty of guys like myself that may have a hobby or favorite sport and would benefit by sharing it with a little brother.**

How do you think that your match is a success? **We really enjoy each other's company. There is also a lot of trust and respect that we've earned. I learned a lot from him, and hopefully, he learns from me.**

Questions to Little Brother - Ashton

What are the things that you like the best about having a Big Brother like DJ? **We do things, go places, and he's someone good to talk to.**

How do you feel that the Life Skills program can help you and others that are your age? **It teaches you right from wrong and how to say no to bad things.**



Annual Waterfront 5K

Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc was proud to be one of the supporters of the Weed and Seed's 4th Annual Waterfront 5K – Run and Walk on Sunday, November 2nd. The race raised \$2400 to benefit the Homestead and West Homestead Police Forces and the ALS Foundation in memory of late TCV staff person, Andy Nodaros.

TCV played a big role in the walk this year. All of the consumers in the ATF helped with the "stuffing" of the Waterfront 5K "goodie bags." Three consumers assisted in passing out water to the walkers at the water station the day of the event. Nine staff and three consumers participated in the walk. Thank you to all helped the Homestead Weed & Seed with the preparation of materials for the event and to those who walked.

Lynda Lane Relocation

~Gail Burner

The four consumers that lived in CHIMR Main Street had an especially happy New Year's celebration this year because they celebrated in a new home. The housemates have lived in the Main Street CHIMR since 1985. They loved their home but the long flights of stairs were becoming a challenge for the group. To assist them in addressing the challenge, TCV purchased a ranch style home on Lynda Lane in North Versailles.

The purchase was finalized in November of 2003. The lady of the house even has her own dressing room. A wrap-around deck encircles the entire house allowing everyone easy access to fresh air and sunshine. Best of all there are no stairs to climb.

The home was in excellent condition when purchased. The only renovation needed was the addition of an integrated fire safety system. The cost of the system was partially funded through a grant of \$4,000 from **National City**. Their generosity is greatly appreciated.

The consumers at Lynda Lane and the staff that support them are planning an open house in the near future. Fliers will be posted. Please try to find time to join them.

Resource Coordination News

~Robin Evans

Dan Vallus has recently returned to Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc. He is now working as an Adolescent Resource Coordinator under Brian Johns. Dan is excited to return to the Resource Coordination team.

Adult Resource Coordination Openings:

The Adult team is currently accepting resumes for an Adult Resource Coordinator. A job description is available at ww.tcv.net under employment opportunities. If you're interested in applying, please contact Nancy Folino at (412) 461- 1004 x. 552 or send your resume to:

Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc.
Attention Nancy Folino/Adult RC Supervisor
1705 Maple Street, B#, Homestead, PA 15120

View Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR, Inc's 2002-2003 Annual Report in the News & Events section of our website - www.tcv.net

Employee Spotlight

Every newsletter a random employee will be chosen to be profiled. Who will be in the next issue??

Name: Lindsey Considine

Site Location: The Next Step CRR Homestead House

How long have you worked here? 2 years, 4 months

What is your position? Resident Advisor

What do you like best about your job? The best part of my job is watching people succeed in the community who have once lived at The Next Step. It makes me feel good to be able to say that I helped a person get to where they are. I enjoy being a positive influence in so many people's lives everyday.

What is your favorite movie of all time? "Ransom" with Mel Gibson and Rene Russo. (I can almost recite the whole movie off by heart....Literally!)

If you could have dinner with anyone (living or dead) who would you choose? My grandmother, who passed away. I would give anything to see her one more time.

What 3 things can always be found in your fridge? Pickles, kool aid and jelly

What is your favorite vacation spot? Universal Studios, Florida

What accomplishment are you most proud of? Being young and living on my own. When I was growing up my biggest fear was being homeless.

What is your pet, and it's name? I have a rotwieler named "Ceazar" and I raise sea monkeys (they don't have names).

Whom do you most admire and why? I admire my supervisor because she is a compassionate person who truly cares about everybody and everything around her. She helps me grow as an individual by guiding me to make the right decisions in my professional career. Her guidance has helped me realize my own personal goals and aspirations. I am grateful to have someone like her to look up to.



Letter from the Editor

Happy New Year to everyone who reads Turtle Creek Valley News! So far, this year has already proved to be an exciting one for the staff and consumers at TCV MH/MR. Not only have the consumers and staff held their own holiday parties and events, but they have also been active in the community. Staff members helped with the Braddock Light Up Night, Martin Luther King Day Celebration at the Braddock Carnegie Library, and supported other local organizations with their events.

Exciting, new projects, which were made possible through funding sources, are underway. The Employment Services project is helping individuals with disabilities find a job. How can our consumers help your business?

Please continue to check out our website for events happening at Turtle Creek Valley.

Answer to page 1: The house in the picture is our new MR residential site on Lynda Lane

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.

TCV's United Way code is #136.

Judy Monahan Grystar, LSW

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