



THE COMMISSIONER

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More Than A Face-Lift

by Linda
Filippi

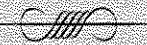
As stewards of the public's money, the Commission has always been frugal in its expenditures. Our goal has been to maintain modest fees by keeping our costs contained, thus serving as many youth as possible with the available resources. This principle is deeply ingrained in our agency's culture and we are proud of this tradition. Most of our revenue (85%) goes toward personnel, since our people are our service. Therefore, our facilities have been furnished mostly with second-hand or donated items. While we work hard to make the most of what we have, we have long wanted to improve the physical surroundings for the kids we serve.

There are two schools of thought about how to furnish a group home. The first viewpoint notes that kids living in groups tend to be destructive and therefore it is fruitless and wasteful to invest in attractive furnishings. The second perspective, espoused most eloquently by former director Ann Phillips, opines that kids will respond positively to pleasant surroundings and their behavior will rise to the standards that we set.

So, the question arose as to how the Commission could apply "the Phillips philosophy" while honoring our practice of fiscal restraint. As in many such matters, we turned to our Children's Resources foundation. Those of you who know CRHR director, Jeannie Martin, are familiar with her mantra: "We'll just ask!" And ask she did! She applied for capital improvement funds from the Norfolk Foundation to refurbish all of the group homes. The Norfolk Foundation allows such requests every three years, and once their representative toured a couple of our homes, Jeannie was encouraged to "ask for everything you need." As a result, we were awarded \$64,000 to completely replace the furniture, beds (where needed), lockers, desks and many other items. Ann Phillips, who now sits on the CRHR board of directors, has the happy task of picking out fabrics, colors and furniture designs. Talk about "living the dream!"

So, this fall you will see many changes. And what you will observe means more to us than the furnishings themselves. Our way of reaching youth depends on them feeling valued. We hope that our outward expression of this will go a long way toward promoting the development of high standards and goals in our young clients. Each of us responds emotionally to our environment: our mood, sense of well-being, and feeling of safety are affected by the sights, sounds, smells, and textures around us. Enhancing the living space for our young men and women is another way of showing our respect and caring to them. I'm not sure we will be able to show "evidence-based" results because of doing this. But, we will all feel better. And that's got to count for something.

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PROGRAM NEWS

Chesapeake Boys Home by D.J. Johnson

- ❖ Summer is in full swing here at Chesapeake and, as all of you know, that means plenty of therapeutic events and activities. Our young men have really enjoyed visiting the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, the Nauticus Museum and the Air and Space Center. Of course you can't mention outings without mentioning Mr. Wayne Matchett and the great work he does with our kids on canoe and bike trips. We would also like to thank Bryant Fields of the Va. Beach Parks and Recreation Department for the work he does with our young men at Little Big Island in Virginia Beach.
- ❖ We would like to take the time to recognize five gentlemen who were recent graduates of the program. D.B., M.W., and K.M. all graduated in May. D.L. and K.C. successfully completed the program in June. We wish these gentlemen and their families the best.
- ❖ We recently started our summer school sessions with Mr. Clayton Spruill. He meets with our young men Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and helps them with a wide variety of subjects such as English, Math, and Reading Comprehension. Mr. Spruill currently teaches at Chesapeake Alternative School and is therefore very familiar with our residents. This has helped him establish a strong rapport with the group.
- ❖ The CBH staff would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to Shawn Sawyer, our former Director. Shawn was a major reason that the program prospered these last few years and he will be sorely missed. Shawn will be taking over as Director of In-Home Services, which will include a wide range of responsibilities. Paul Greggs has been named to replace Shawn as our Director. Paul started his career at CBH as a counselor and is currently transitioning from Westhaven to CBH. On behalf of our entire staff, I want to congratulate Shawn on his promotion and wish him the very best. We also want to welcome Paul back to CBH and look forward to working with him.
- ❖ Finally, we want to welcome our newest counselor, Kevin Banks Jr. Kevin figures to be a great addition to an already competent and hardworking staff here at CBH.

In-Home Service Program by Karin Duncan

- ❖ Welcome aboard to our new director, Shawn Sawyer, who comes to us from Chesapeake Boys Home. We look forward to the wonderful contributions you are sure to make to our team!
- ❖ Thanks to everyone who attended our cookout for Alicia Hurdle and Suzanne Lalonde as they transition into new positions. Your well wishes were definitely appreciated as they venture into new challenges.
- ❖ And change continues still... We bid a sad farewell to our Assistant Director Tina Davis, who has been with IHSP for six years. Tina will be leaving to pursue interests in the ministry. The knowledge she has shared and her dedication to both the TJSAP program and to our team will never be forgotten. In honor of Tina, In-Home will be throwing a "Goodbye" luncheon on August 24, 2007.
- ❖ Congratulations to Karis Holder who, having passed her exam with flying colors, is now a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Wonderful job!!!
- ❖ Welcome to Yvonne Lewis, our newest in-home counselor, and Terrell Cuffee, our newest wraparound counselor! We look forward to working with you. And congratulations to Jermaine Brown who has recently moved from part time to full time in-home counselor.
- ❖ As summer continues, we are well into our summer programs. Kids have enjoyed biking and canoeing and are looking forward to fishing in Sandbridge and horseback riding. And of course - we look forward to the Commission Cup as always!!!
- ❖ Welcome to Gloria Gulley, our temp! Thanks for all your hard work!
- ❖ TJSAP continues to be busy with two groups each in Virginia Beach and Portsmouth, one in the 5th District and one in Newport News. Meanwhile, ART continues as we begin another Anger Management group in Portsmouth. And welcome back to Synethia Newby (formerly with COFY), who will be assisting with ART groups.

Family Group Home System by Carol DiGirolamo

- ❖ Meeting the challenges of change, focusing on implementing the vision, still focusing on "fostering a future" and welcoming our Family Development Specialist, Suzanne Lalonde ... we are FGHS.
- ❖ Meanwhile, recruitment continues for foster parents. If you know anyone interested in foster parenting, please have them contact Suzanne or Carol at 488-2630. Informational sessions are being scheduled regularly.

PROGRAM NEWS

Challenge Outreach by Carla Brown

- ❖ Motivational Interviewing (MI) Training continues! Counselors are now more comfortable and proficient with this style of counseling. Counselors were recently asked to turn in audiotapes to review how they incorporated the spirit of MI during home visits. We are proud to announce they are doing an excellent job implementing MI skills. Way to go!
- ❖ The Self Esteem group was a major success. The group met once weekly for five consecutive weeks, and the final session was a formal dinner at the Painted Lady in Norfolk. Loretta Goodman expressed how much the girls enjoyed themselves. This was the first formal dinner for all the girls, and they did an incredible job utilizing the skills they learned during groups. The girls continue to work on their skills and will serve as hostesses for our Cultural Arts night this August.
- ❖ Renee Hamilton-Wilson continues to head our 'Workforce Readiness' groups. Clients are learning the necessary skills for employment. We are proud to announce that four members of the group have found jobs. Keep up the good work, Renee!
- ❖ We bid farewell to Carla Brown, Nicole Wiggins, and Jeff Trimble, who are leaving the Challenge Outreach family. Carla is now the director of Freeman House, a group home for teenage boys. Nicole is relocating to Fredericksburg, where she has accepted a job as a school-based probation officer. Jeff has transferred to In-Home Services, where he will be a program aide. Good luck to all!
- ❖ Congratulations to Kalita Cuffee, who has accepted the position as Counselor-Coordinator.
- ❖ Summer Programs: As the nice HOT days of summer continue, the clients and staff of Challenge Outreach continue to participate in outdoor adventures. The staff is getting a workout while they try to keep up with our young, athletic youth!

Westhaven Crisis Center by Adrienne Ward

- ❖ Westhaven has been experiencing some changes over the last two months, and all of the staff have been putting their best foot forward to adjust. Here are a few of the changes made:
- ❖ Westhaven welcomes our newest counselor and team member Amanda Cassimore. Amanda had recently been hired as a relief worker when a position became available, and she is a perfect fit! Amanda came in full of energy and ready to "give it all she's got." The residents and staff alike feel as if she's been here all along. Welcome to the TEAM, Amanda!!
- ❖ Our population has remained consistent. Thanks especially to Virginia Beach CSU, who have made sure that our pop is up! We appreciate the level of trust they have in us that we will provide a service to their clients and families, including counseling and support for them to make positive changes in their lives.
- ❖ Phyllis Haynes has been doing double duty! After cooking meals at Westhaven, she has been taking her skills on the road by helping out at Crisis, cooking meals, ordering food, and buying groceries. Then she goes home and cooks for her family. What a trooper!! My hat and shoes go off to you!
- ❖ These changes alone don't compare to the biggest change of all, Paul Gregg's departure. He will truly be missed. He is such an important piece of the Westhaven puzzle. He keeps you laughing with his humor, thinking with his wisdom, and happy because of his presence. He is one in a million. Paul, I've always told you how glad I was when you came to Westhaven. I never thought I would be saying goodbye so soon. On behalf of the staff, THANK YOU! We thank you for the **patience** you show the kids and staff; the **attention** you give even when you are short on time; the **unselfishness** you have for others and the **love** for what you do. Thanks Paul !!
- ❖ Congratulations to a former resident who will be going to the Navy within a few weeks. A.P. was in R.O.T.C. at Norcom High School and has made the decision to continue his military experience and make it a career. We wish him well in his endeavors.
- ❖ Westhaven has graduated several young men over the last few weeks. We send best wishes for their continued success in whatever they do.

PROGRAM NEWS

Crisis Intervention Home by Faye Ebel-Orr

- ❖ It has been a very busy few months at the Crisis Home, our population has been very steady and we have had a high turnover rate. Welcome to all the new relief staff, who have been working hard to ensure that our program runs smoothly!
- ❖ We have been doing all that we can to keep the residents busy throughout these lazy summer months, and have been working with Wayne Matchett and Bryant Fields to provide our kids with fun activities such as canoeing, fishing, bike riding and horseback riding to occupy their time. We have also taken the residents to many of the local museums, library, beach, zoo and movies as a reward for their good behavior through the summer enrichment program. Jamaal Moore coordinated plans for a group of our young men to participate in DeAngelo Hall's MVP football camp on June 9th, and they all returned to the facility exhausted but pleased with the amazing opportunity to build teamwork skills and train with an NFL athlete. Mr. Moore has also been taking those interested to the Velocity sports performance facility every other Friday for fitness education.
- ❖ We would like to thank those who donate to CIH, as we are very blessed to have so many great supporters in our community. We have been fortunate to be receiving bi-monthly guitar lessons through Tidewater Arts Outreach, coordinated by MaryAnn Toboz and facilitated by several local physicians who donate their time to teach our residents. Thank you to Towne Bank for the donations of office chairs for our conference room and to Jeannie Martin for securing a grant for new furniture throughout the commission from The Norfolk Foundation.
- ❖ CIH staff would like to welcome the new faces at TRGHC, as well as wish the best to those who have recently made some changes. Teresa Slaughter gave birth to a whopping 9-lb, 8-oz baby boy and has left the commission to pursue having a horde of children so she can start a traveling acrobatic group (just kidding!). Our cook Margie Hopper is still dealing with some difficult health issues and remains on leave. She is very missed by staff and residents alike. We often get updates from past residents via visits, phone calls and letters, and many have asked about our beloved cook and expressed hope for a speedy recovery. Secretary Ruth Duncan has announced that she will be retiring shortly, but has graciously offered to stay on and help out until we find a replacement. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ruth's daughter, who has been dealing with some health issues, and we are glad to hear that there was good news in the last update from the doctor. Last but not least, good luck to all of the directors who appear to be playing musical chairs within the agency. TRGHC will certainly keep you on your toes!
- ❖ CIH staff is looking forward to our staff development day to share new ideas for the fiscal year, build teamwork and enjoy each other's company! So, farewell until next time, when we will be giving an update about our victory at the Commission Cup!

Transitional Living Program by Danna Hamilton

- ❖ The Transitional Living Program is doing well. We are fully staffed and have a full house: 12 residents. We would like to congratulate our resident J.E., who will be graduating from Barber School soon. He also got his learner's permit and will soon have his driver's license. J.E., you are on the right road to SUCCESS! Meanwhile, O.E. successfully completed Fast Track and is ready and waiting to take his GED exam. We know he will do well and we are very proud of the progress he has made in the program. A.C. finished his stint at Salem High School with a 3.0 average! Next year, he will attend Maury High School with only 2 more classes to complete to graduate. He also obtained employment at a really nice restaurant and is interested in attending TCC to further his education. It's great to see our residents doing so well, it definitely makes us proud.
- ❖ April White is working hard with the Independent Living Skills Program. Let's just say it keeps her quite busy! We'd like to congratulate her for doing such a great job at putting everything together and managing her many cases. Meanwhile, former counselor Kelly Mitchell is back from Japan and working with us again. We are all happy to see her back.
- ❖ Children's Resources has procured funds to buy new furniture for our facility, as well as others. We'd like to commend Jeannie Martin for all her hard work and thank her for the much needed furniture.
- ❖ It seems like summer just started, but autumn is fast approaching. Our Assistant Director, Joe Lloyd, will soon be busy working on school enrollments. It's a busy time of year but the successes always make our work easier, as we see our residents learning to live independently and succeed in achieving their life goals.

PROGRAM NEWS

Centerville Group Home by Paula Allen

- ❖ Greetings from Centerville Group Home! Can you believe that we only have 5 months before Christmas! The older I get, the faster time slips through my hands!
- ❖ Congratulations to our three June graduates K.K., A.J. and A.D. We wish them the best.
- ❖ This summer has started with a volley of activities - some new to us and yet many familiar favorites.
- ❖ Our luau was a success and YES! We Started On Time! I think I sometimes become too ambitious with my menu and work to a frenzy to complete more dishes than needed. A big thanks to Rick Belaire and Andrew Knight! They assisted us with this grand luau by hanging decorations and grilling the chicken. Thanks, Grill Chef Rick! Cindy Neal kept everything rolling as usual. She is our "Go-To Girl" for everything from decorating to grilling to crowd pleaser to cleaner! She was really on the ball! Thanks to Melissa May and Karen Edmonds too! They were our "Game Management Associates." Not only did they manage the games and prizes, they kept the eyes in the back of their heads alert for wandering residents! Hats off to ya both! We had lots of prizes for everyone attending and playing. Brightly-colored leis were given to all and if we could have given a prize for best original outfit, Mary Wenger (our renowned relief worker) would have won. From her Don Ho hat to her wild shirt and authentic grass skirt, she was THE Hawaiian at our luau! On a sadder note, Jeff Stringfield was unable to attend due to the dire illness of his father-in-law, who has subsequently passed away. Our prayers and condolences go out to his wife, Brenda, who has had both parents gravely ill. We were pleased to hear that her mother is making progress and at this writing has returned home.
- ❖ The program has had its usual events which the residents "love/hate," but do at least try! The biking, canoeing, and hiking help quicken the heartbeat and give them some much-needed exercise. And thanks to the help of Children's Resources, the girls are taking quilting classes (my personal favorite) and they are also being taught to knit and crochet. These are some quiet indoor skills and self-esteem building activities. The horseback riding has helped open their eyes to what's involved in having an animal that needs much care. After the grooming and stable-cleaning, they were rewarded with riding.
- ❖ The residents have also been involved with scrapbooking through the Girl Scouts, which gives them the opportunity to capture and save memories. We have purchased books and supplies for each girl.
- ❖ We will be starting a group called "Let's Talk" (in August) which is being coordinated by Veronica McMillian from RESPONSE. We are excited about this group as it went really well the first time we did it. The girls seem to open up in this group and it lifts their self-esteem.
- ❖ As of July 23rd, we are fully staffed with the addition of Jessica Strain. She is a Norfolk State graduate, and is one of four siblings so she is familiar with small group dynamics! She recently worked in a group home for pregnant teens, so she is also well-aware of girl issues and personalities. Welcome aboard!!!
- ❖ And while we are fully staffed, now we'll soon be losing our Director, Jeff Stringfield! He is being transferred to Westhaven while Paul Greggs is going to Chesapeake Boys Home. Jeff has been at CGH for six years as of July 16th and he introduced many innovative ideas. The house has become quite a showplace during his stint at the helm. He has made many changes that will leave a lasting impression on all of us. We had a little good-bye party for him, during which we presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation and a farewell gift (a beautiful engraved pocket watch). Jeff, we wish you well as you embark on a new journey.
- ❖ During the interim, Ann Phillips will be helping us a couple days a week. We are very happy to have her help us. I know that a large burden will rest on Cindy's shoulders, so we're glad that Ann will be here to help.
- ❖ Farewell for now and remember . . . "If people never did silly things nothing intelligent would ever get done; create balance."

Administration by Linda Arnold

- ❖ A heartfelt welcome to Amber Coley, who has joined us as our new accounting clerk. (She is the new Shannon!) Amber really hit the ground running and we are so grateful to have her on the team.
- ❖ Congratulations to Teresa Slaughter, who gave birth to bouncing baby Van on June 11th. Young Van weighed in at a whopping nine pounds, eight ounces! Congratulations to the Slaughter family on the new addition.

Children's Resources News

by Jeannie Martin

Need a little culture in your life? How about affirmation that your work with at-risk youth is important and truly makes a difference? If so, please join us for Cultural Arts/Youth Recognition Night, scheduled for August 23rd at the Sports Hall of Fame in Olde Towne Portsmouth. This year's keynote speaker is Suffolk Juvenile Court Judge Robert Brewbaker. We are delighted that Judge Brewbaker will be joining us and look forward to hearing his remarks. For more information on this event, please contact me at 488-9161 or jrmartin@trghc.org.

The year before she retired, Pat Flax-Jankosky, former Director of the Chesapeake Boys' Home, implemented a summer education program at that facility. The purpose of the program was to bolster the boys' skills in Math and Reading in preparation for the new school year. Under Shawn Sawyer's leadership, the summer education program has continued. Children's Resources has funded the program thanks to support from the Titmus Foundation. This summer, we have met one of the goals outlined in our strategic plan by expanding the summer program to include the Centerville Group Home. Funding for the Centerville program was provided by Dominion Enterprises. Many thanks to the Titmus Foundation and to Dominion Enterprises for helping us meet the educational needs of our residents.

The biggest news at Children's Resources is the \$63,466 grant awarded to us by The Norfolk Foundation to purchase new furniture for five group homes! With such a large sum at stake, we want to make sure we choose the furniture carefully - ensuring that it is strong and well-built as well as attractive. To this end, two board members with strong ties to the Commission - John Matish and Ann Phillips - joined me for a road trip to the YMCA on the Eastern Shore to have a first hand look at the furniture we plan to order. Satisfied that the furniture that we looked at is a good choice for our programs, it is now time for the shopping to begin! Our sincere thanks to The Norfolk Foundation for such a generous gift.

We would also like to thank the following for their recent gifts:

- The Virginian-Pilot for a \$5,300 contribution to the Chesapeake Boys' Home kitchen project.
- The Virginia Beach Foundation for \$1,500 to purchase two laptop computers for Westhaven Boys' Home.
- The Tidewater Children's Foundation for a \$5000 grant in support of the Franklin School-Based Case Management Program.

Mark your calendar! The 2007 Santa Claus Shuffle 5K Race and 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk is scheduled for December 8. See you there!

**an e-mail sent from Bill Harrell, 5th District
CSU Director to Linda Filippi**

Barbara Flythe, our Suffolk Office intake officer, just related an incident that is the ultimate testimonial for the Juvenile Conference Committee program.

A young Suffolk police officer came in today, for his first time, to file a petition on a juvenile. The youth had no prior record, the offense was a minor one, so Barbara began to tell him about the Juvenile Conference Committee program, how it works and its advantages for those types of instances over court referral.

After hearing Barbara's pitch, the officer said, "You know, I stole something from Wal-Mart when I was a kid, and went to a program that sounds like that. I remember the lady who ran the program had two last names." "Mrs. Stephens-Williams?" asked Barbara. "That was her," replied the officer.

