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On the 23rd of August of 2015, the US Department of Justice reached a comprehensive agreement with North Carolina to expand opportunities for people with mental illness to transition into homes of their choosing in the community. To ensure that people who had been living in adult care homes or other "Institutes of Mental Disease" (IMD), an acronym used in Medicaid law, NC set out to develop community-based services and supported housing projects to promote inclusion and independence as people adjust to living in the community.

Two services of significant importance in assuring the successful transition of people participating in the *Transition to Community Living Initiative* (TCLI) into the community are Tenancy Support Team (TST) and Individualized Placement Supports (ISP). TST is a rehabilitative service that helps people learn to live independently within their own communities by gaining or maintaining tenancy. RHA Behavioral Health has taken a lead role in North Carolina, providing TST across dozens of counties, by providing sensitive, person-centered, evidenced based approaches to supporting people with mental health needs and/or substance use disorders who need assistance to lead safe and stable lives in their homes. We are currently serving in Eastpointe, Trillium, and Cardinal Innovations LME managed care regions.



To read more about IPS, another significant service for people transitioning in the community, see page 4.

Expected Outcomes for TST

- Achieved recovery goals identified in the individuals Person Centered Plan (PCP)
- Continued community tenure
- Improved personal, social, and community living skills
- Increased access to necessary services in all life domains
- Improved functioning in community roles
- Re-established or restored network of healthy natural supports and community contacts
- Re-established or restored independent living abilities

For more information on TST services contact
Dr Kathy Smith at: ksmith@rhanet.org

The A-Word

Autism Family Drama Comes to TV



The one-hour drama about a family with a young child who has just been diagnosed with autism is headed to television. SundanceTV will air the six-episode series “The A-Word” later this year. Described as “thought-provoking and lighthearted,” the show focuses on 5 year old Joe, who is newly-diagnosed on the spectrum, and his parents Paul and Alison who are struggling with different child-rearing approaches. In addition, the drama follows Joe’s aunt and uncle who are struggling with marriage problems, along with his widower grandfather who owns the family brewery.

“The A-Word” is exactly the kind of intimate, unique and emotionally impactful story we want to showcase on SundanceTV,” said Joel Stillerman, president of original programming and development for AMC and SundanceTV. “It’s hopeful, honest and ultimately about the power of family, and the range of issues that families can face together, from autism to aging to marital struggles.” The show, which will premiere this spring on BBC One in the United Kingdom before airing on SundanceTV, is based on an Israeli series called “Yellow Peppers.”



Written by Michelle Diamant. These posts originally appeared on Disabilityscoop.com

> April 2 2016 is World Autism Day, designated by the United Nations.

Drug May Jump Start Conversation Skills

A widely-available medication may be able to significantly improve conversation skills in individuals with autism with as little as one dose, a new study suggests. Those people who have high-functioning abilities with autism who took the beta-blocker propranolol showed greatly improved communication abilities, just an hour after taking a 40-milligram dose, according to findings published online recently in the journal *Psychopharmacology*.

While its intended use is to treat high blood pressure, propranolol has been used off-label to treat performance anxiety for several years. However, this is the first study to show that a single dose of propranolol can improve the conversational reciprocity skills of individuals with autism,” said David Beversdorf, an associate professor at the University of Missouri and a senior author of the paper.

To read the entire article visit disabilityscoop.com



Q What are the common signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder? (ASD)

A Even as infants, children with ASD may seem different, especially when compared to other children their own age. In other cases, children may develop normally until 2 or 3 years old, but then start to withdraw.

Q In what populations does ASD occur?

A ASD occurs in every racial and ethnic group, and across all socioeconomic levels. However, boys are significantly more likely to develop ASD than girls. The latest analysis from the CDC estimates that 1 in 68 children has ASD

Q What are the social and communication difficulties parents face?

A Children with ASD may fail to respond to their names, avoid eye contact with other people, and only interact with others to achieve specific goals. Often children with ASD do not understand how to play or engage with other children and may prefer to be alone.

To learn more about Autism visit <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism>

The Wonder Working Power of Peer Supports

Joshua Snyder

New Bern, NC

During the past two years, Josh has really grown into his role as a stellar Certified Peer Support Specialist. He is doing incredible work with people struggling with severe and persistent mental illness and substance use. He is committed to his community and works closely with people to seek recovery. Josh was assigned to the case of a long time mental health and substance user, who refused for years to seek inpatient substance use treatment. He worked many hours with this individual to help him accept a chance to take responsibility and make that *first step* into recovery. He was able to convince him that this was the right thing to do and supported him and his family throughout treatment. He was eventually able to transition back into the community and is currently eight months sober. His mom, who wanted to support him but was always turned away, remarked "Now I know why I missed my son so much. He is a very loving and compassionate man."

Not only does Josh do great work for RHA and his community, he is a huge role model for his pride and joy daughter, Kayleigh Pearl.



*Josh and his daughter
Kayleigh Pearl*

For more information about this program please contact:

Carol Villarreal, Director RHA Behavioral Health New Bern, Morehead City, Jacksonville, NC 252-638-9091 or cvillarreal@rhanet.org

V What is Peer Support?

A Key Component of Recovery is Peer Support. Peer support accepts and respects the perspective and contributions of lived experience – it shifts the balance of power in subtle but significant ways. Peer support is an important and distinct component of mental health and substance abuse services. After reviewing lots of articles, material from other courses and documents about peer support, here is the definition of Peer Support that we think best covers what is important about peer support:

Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help founded on key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what is helpful. Peer support is not based on psychiatric models and diagnostic criteria. It is about understanding another's situation empathically through the shared experience of emotional and psychological pain. When people find affiliation with others they feel "like" them, they feel a connection. This connection, or affiliation, is a deep, holistic understanding based on mutual experience where people are able to "be" with each other without the constraints of traditional (expert/patient) relationships. Further, as trust in the relationship builds, both people are able to respectfully challenge each other when they find themselves in conflict. This allows members of the peer community to try out new behaviors with one another and move beyond previously held self-concepts built on disability and diagnosis. The Stone Centre refers to this as "mutual empowerment". (Stiver & Miller, 1998)

Beverly Wilkins

LaGrange, NC

Beverly Wilkins understands the importance of having a place to call your own. So she is always willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to find a home for her clients.

She recently helped three people find and maintain suitable housing, all of them previously homeless. Since finding suitable housing for two of these individuals, they are now employed and working in their communities.

In another case, Beverly had a client living in substandard housing, which was causing numerous health issues. So she went to work and found suitable and affordable housing in another town. Through her persistent efforts, this person not only found a job, but is making \$19 per hour!

Beverly has been employed as an Employment Peer Mentor since April 2014. She played an integral role in the Individual Placement and Support –Supported Employment Program, passing its initial fidelity review.



For more information about this great program please contact:

**Renee Bowie, Operations Manager IPS-SE
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To Support People Moving
Into Their Own Homes



Research

Research tells us that 60-70% of people with serious mental illness want to work. However, fewer than 15% of these individuals are employed. These figures are troublesome because having a job helps people manage their symptoms, rejoin their communities and decrease their reliance on the social service system. The good news is that this evidence-based approach helps people with serious mental illness to find and keep regular jobs in their communities.

There are many types of vocational programs for people with mental illness; however, *people who participate in IPS supported employment programs are almost three times more likely to gain employment than those who engage in other types of vocational programs.*

**from Dartmouth Supported Employment*

Individualized Placement Support (IPS)

Another significant service for people transitioning into the community is IPS. NC adopted the Dartmouth Model and it, too, is an evidenced based model. Our IPS team works with people across eastern North Carolina who have mental illness to obtain employment. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) believes that employment is one of the pillars of recovery for people living with Mental Illness and/ or Substance Use. Our IPS team is led by a team of employment coordinators who work alongside Certified Peer Support Specialists and behavioral health clinicians, and work as part of the treatment team. RHA's IPS team has been selected as one of four NC provider teams that serve as Dartmouth Research sites.

Recovery From Mental Illness Through a Job

"My name is Clark. There was a time when I was living in a group home on a rent-free basis and working as a volunteer. But I didn't feel as good about myself and I didn't have the money to do the things that I enjoy.

For me:

- Work is a morale booster
- It helps me feel equal with other people
- I want to pay rent and pay taxes

When I met with someone from the IPS supported employment program, she asked about the kinds of jobs that I would like to have.

"For me, <<
work is a
morale booster."
-Clark



Working at a regular job, not a job for people with disabilities, was important to me. My background is in acting and I like my job in the theater. Even though I'm part of the house staff, seeing those performers up on stage and hearing the applause is great!"

This article appeared on the Dartmouth Supported Employment Website. visit <http://www.dartmouthips.org>

In Memorium



Debby Huffman

January 27, 1950- January 26, 2015

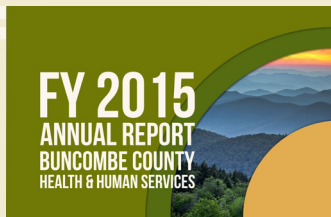
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Deborah Gilmore "Debby" Huffman died December 26, 2015, after a short battle with cancer. A native of Burlington, North Carolina, Debby is survived by her husband of forty-three years, William Howard "Bill" Huffman, Jr, and her daughter Christina Lee Huffman of Greensboro. *Her highest priority, the role she placed at the top of her list, was that of "Christina's Mom."* She was a tireless advocate for Christina and for other individuals with disabilities. Annually, Debby and Christina lobbied members of the North Carolina General Assembly during ARC advocacy events. She served as President of the RHA Consumer and Family Advisory Council (CFAC), and as an active member of RHA's ethics committee until her death. Just this past year, Debby was recognized as *Volunteer of the Year for RHA Howell*. This award recognizes those who have spearheaded exemplary initiatives that create opportunities, build relationships and raise awareness of the challenges faced in the disability community. She was a beloved member of the RHA family and she will be truly missed.

Asheville, NC

RHA ONCE AGAIN MAKES THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

Community Partners,



"The mandate of Health and Human Services is to help individuals and families lead healthier, safer lives with greater self-sufficiency. We know that for our work to have its greatest impact, we cannot do it alone. Together with our partner agencies, we are building out a resource grid that serves our community in ways that are practical and smart, appropriate, and evidence-based. We know that our ability to make progress- to help a mother feed her family, a father strengthen his relationship with his child, our citizens to trust that our restaurants and long-term care facilities are safe, our residents to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles – is dependent on our ability to coordinate and align our efforts across our community.

As a community partner, you (RHA) work with us to make the safe and healthy choice, the easy choice. Together, we create paths towards safety, health, and stability for so many in our community.

This annual report highlights some of the work we are doing together. We are grateful to live in a resourceful community, where the needs of our citizens come first and we look forward to our continued progress as we work to make Buncombe County a safer and more resilient community."

Mandy Stone, Health and Human Services Director Buncombe County



✓ *Excerpt from the Annual Report*

Comprehensive Care Center @ 356 Biltmore Avenue

Buncombe County HHS and community partners have joined forces in the creation of a single point of entry for behavioral health issues. A range of behavioral

health services will be offered at this location, including law enforcement drop-offs for involuntary commitments, an increase in the number of crisis stabilization/detox beds available for children and adults, immediate access to medication, and a peer-led respite program. This is not a project that one agency could undertake alone. This is a community response to the need to alleviate the burden on the emergency departments, jails, and the criminal justice system. Partners in this project include Buncombe County, Smoky Mountain Center, Mission Health, RHA Health Services, ABCCM, NAMI, Family Preservation Services of North Carolina, Inc., and the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse. Working together, this investment will provide a needed resource for citizens and will reinforce the safety net.

To read the entire report visit:

http://buncombecounty.org/common/humanServices/AnnualReport_FY15.pdf

SAM HEDRICK NAMED EXEC VP OF STRATEGIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Raleigh, NC – RHA Health Services is pleased to announce that Sandra (Sam) Hedrick has recently been named Executive Vice President of Strategic Business Development for the company. Over the last twelve years, Sam has served as Chief Operating Officer and later as President of RHA Howell, one of RHA's former operating entities, serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Armed with extensive experience, Ms. Hedrick looks forward to meeting the challenges of her new role within the company, spearheading growth initiatives and directing brand management – *"I am pleased to represent RHA in the area of strategic planning and growth as we navigate the waters of Medicaid Reform and changing models of care. It's an interesting and exciting time to be an observer and developer of innovative strategies that improve the health, effectiveness and personal satisfaction of each person we support. As a member of the RHA management team, we all look forward to playing a vital role in the further development of integrated health care models that are person-centered and improve the status and independence of persons with disabilities."*



Sam served on the Board of Directors of ANCOR, co-chaired the Government Relations committee, and participated in the ARC/ UCP National Policy Forum in Washington, DC. She is an active member of the NC Provider's Council, serving on the Medicaid Reform committee. Sam is a former RN and remains a licensed attorney with the state of NC. She worked for six years in New England as Editor in Chief of Business and Legal Reports. In 2014, Sam was selected as the *Triangle Business Journal's Executive Health Care Hero of the Year*. She was also involved in *Governor Jim Hunt's Emerging Issues Forum* where she spoke to leaders of NC's business community about opportunities and challenges in workforce development. Ms. Hedrick looks forward to continuing her commitment to RHA and bringing her unique strategic vision to the company's future business endeavors.

**To contact Ms. Hedrick: shedrick@rhanet.org
919-803-2960**

AROUND THE COMPANY

For more information about our Knoxville programs, contact:

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865-769-7491 ext. 101
865-691-5950 fax



The Tennessee state flower is the Iris

TOP SHOT

Panther Pride at Anson Children's Center



Send your picture in to enter the top shot contest!

I WANT TO WALK AGAIN

Knoxville, TN

Sheila Coin is a 47 year old woman who has used a wheel chair to promote mobility for the past 29 years. She has a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy, Paraplegia, and Degenerative Joint Disease. Even so, Sheila has always had a dream of walking again.

Each year at her annual Individual Support Plan meetings her goal was, "I want to walk". Of course as her Circle of Support we really wanted that for her too! Sheila has been through years of physical therapy in her home as well as in therapy centers. Her most recent PT included range of motion exercises in bed, Hoyer lift transfer, wheelchair transfer, and Hoyer lift to shower chair.

Outpatient PT services were recommended with Sheila's expressed desire in September of 2014 and we partnered with Max Potential physical therapists. They took the extra step to not only encourage Sheila in reaching her goal to walk, but they have made it a reality for her.

On May 26, 2015 Sheila's home manager called, laughing and crying with happiness, because "Sheila was actually taking steps." These were words I thought I would never hear. It was like a dream, a dream come true for Sheila! We are all so proud of Sheila and her unwavering belief in herself to walk and we are grateful to Max Potential for their commitment to Sheila and her goals.



>> "Sheila was actually taking steps." -words her home manager thought she would never hear.

ROCK & ROLL BLVD ON THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

Clear Creek Charlotte, NC

Clear Creek's very own Rock & Roll Blvd. (formerly Yellow Wing) has welcomed their new Program Specialist, Jason McWhorter and Qualified Professional (QP), La'Toria Blakeney. The new team has been working diligently on exciting activities for everyone. They have made several changes to improve the team atmosphere and the quality of life for people on a day to day basis. They are also providing choices for everyone according to personal preferences; whether it is exercising, talking about current events, playing "Family Feud" to increase communication skills, or participating in "Fun Friday Karaoke."



The Rock & Roll Lounge

Rock & Roll Blvd. has photo shoots on a regular basis. The staff selects names out of a hat and then picks out fun outfits,

costumes, and accessories.

These photos are sent home to parents and guardians. Many family members are not local and are unable to see their loved ones often, so receiving these pictures is really special to them.



L-R Veronica PoPo, Direct Care Staff Supervisor; Garga Tapeh, Shift leader; La'Toria Blakeney, QP; Jason McWhorter, Program Specialist.

Rock and Roll Blvd. is working to implement new and more effective methods to better serve people with focus on improving active treatment and peer interactions. Boogie on down to Rock & Roll Blvd. to see what's new!

>> For more information on this program contact:
Richard King, RN MEd , Administrator
Office 704.545.7200 Fax 704.545.2670
richard.king@rhanet.org

AROUND THE COMPANY

LIFE LONG LEARNING

Stones River Murfreesboro, TN



Examiner at Stones River, was determined to make that happen. With a little help from her friends at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), she discovered a wonderful program offered by the state of Tennessee.

This program allows seniors, and people with Intellectual Disabilities, the opportunity to attend any state supported college or university of their choosing. The best part is the tuition is free! Terri had to go through all the steps to become enrolled with admissions just like everyone else. She had her campus tour, she was issued a MTSU ID card and then like all freshmen, she purchased her MTSU sweat shirt!

On January 19, 2016, Ms. Terri Harris, now an enrolled student at MTSU, began taking her first college class in History. Congratulations Terri, we are expecting all A's!

Sometimes dreams really do come true! Ms Terri Harris is 49 years old and has lived at Stones River since 2005. Terri loves history and has always told her family she wanted to go to college.

Ms. Connie Hutchinson,
Senior Psychological



Welcome Stones River!

On February 1, 2016, RHA assumed management of Stones River Center in Murfreesboro, TN. Stones River has always been owned by RHA, but was previously managed by an outside management company.

Stones River Overview:

- Intermediate Care Facility for adults with Intellectual Disabilities
- 80 certified licensed beds
- Program consisting of 10 eight person homes, located in residential neighborhoods throughout Murfreesboro, TN
- Serving the community since 1991
- Administrator Lisa Izzi started at Stones River in 1995
- Over 12 fully equipped vans, some handicapped accessible

Contact Lisa Izzi, Administrator
615-895-7788 Phone
855-427-8311 Toll Free
615-895-6999 Fax

Nevins Group Homes Charlotte NC

Our Team Rocks!

Nevins IDD Group Homes is proud to announce that they now have eleven people employed in the community!

RHA Health Services Clear Creek
The Olive Garden at Northlake Mall
The Hyatt Place hotel
Charlotte-Douglas Airport
Chipotle Restaurant
Zab's Place
McDonald's
Carolinas Medical System Hospital

For more information about this great program please contact:
Ms. T. Mari Coachman-Owens, BS/QP/CM
Nevins DDA Group Homes
3827 Nevin Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28269
Office # / Fax #: 704-598-8222

Nevins Circle of Friends Talent Night Winner



A. Harrison, on the guitar

Circle of Friends establishes friendships between students with and without disabilities through inclusive meaningful participation on school campuses and in their community. This program provides the opportunity for students to improve social/conversational skills and problem solving strategies in a real world environment.

Nevins Special Olympics Second Place Bocce Winners



L-R A. Roseborough, K. Kennedy, D. Wilson, Su. Yates, D. Garner, Sa. Yates,

Our athletes placed second in NC, but they are first in our hearts. Bocce is an Italian game and it is also a Special Olympics sport. It provides people with special needs the opportunity to have social contact, develop physically, and to gain self confidence. Next to soccer and golf, bocce is the third most participated sport in the world.



Financial Wizard, Fierce Advocate, Beloved Mentor



NC lost a beloved leader, Jim Pantan, on Thursday morning March 3rd. He is survived by his wife, Donna Pantan; sons, Barrett Pantan and Bob Mitchell; daughter, Valerie Henley; and three grandchildren. Jim's official title was VP-Finance and Reimbursement. He was also a fierce advocate for staff and the people we serve and a beloved mentor to many. He loved his family, trips to the NC Coast, Disneyworld, and everything Carolina Blue.

"Jim joined Howell Child Care Centers in 2003 and was instrumental in leading the company through a financial reorganization, property rehabilitation and building financial reserves. Jim was an advocate for our employees – fighting for wage increases to ensure they made a living wage. Jim worked tirelessly on RHA's behalf and continued until the day he passed. It has been my honor to work with Jim. His values and loving spirit will be a guiding force to me for the rest of my life."

John West Former CFO RHA Health Services

I first started working with Jim Pantan in the mid-90s when DMA and DMH were planning on the first major expansion of the CAP-MR/IDD Waiver. He would come to meetings with notebook in hand and a very, very sharp pencil. As the meetings progressed, his glasses would slide down his nose and he would give me a look that only Jim had. That look of "really, you want how much for that rate?"

-Tara Larson Senior Healthcare Policy Specialist, Cansler Collaborative Resources, Inc.

I worked with Jim Pantan about 20 years, much of that time he was the Chief of Rate Setting for the NC Division of Medical Assistance. As Jim retired from the State and went to work for RHA Howell, he continued to be a great advocate for the adequacy of funding. He regularly participated in efforts to avoid cuts to Medicaid services as evidenced by his advocacy at our Legislative Days at the NC General Assembly. Jim was one of the best men I ever knew--I know there is less good, honor and integrity in the world without Jim Pantan.

-Bob Hedrick, Executive Director NC Providers Council



"We're not in Kansas anymore"-a refrain.. Jim shared with providers" <<
-Pam Shipman

"His fight for life was more about ensuring the successful future of others than it ever was about securing his own." <<
-Sam Hedrick

>> **"He would come to meetings (at DMA) with notebook in hand and a very, very sharp pencil."**
-Tara Larson

"The one man that believed in me and was developing a dream for me when I didn't even know it." -Jamie Clark Former DT staffer nicknamed "Cracker Jack" by Jim.

Hope you all got to know the loving softie inside that Marine CPA who managed taxpayer money better than most manage their own.... as long as I live, I will be sharing stories about this great man.

-Eric Wade Gabriel, Psychologist RHA Health Services

"Jim had a deep, deep commitment to the people we serve. When Jim was at DMA, he always took time to listen to providers who had ideas or problems. His famous mantra was "fair and reasonable." He made a huge difference in the specialty Medicaid program that will never be forgotten. Many will remember the refrain that was shared between Jim and providers, "we're not in Kansas anymore."

-Pam Shipman Chief Strategy Officer, Monarch

Vince Lombardi, one of Jim's heroes, once said that mental toughness is many things and rather difficult to explain. Its qualities are sacrifice and self-denial.....It's a state of mind – you could call it "character in action." I personally never knew anyone with more mental toughness than Jim, and it never waned. Jim also had compassion, kindness, and a gentle spirit (which not everyone got to see). Even in his last days, Jim Pantan maintained his resolve and his concerns were about the work, the people we support, and his family. His fight for life was more about ensuring the successful future of others than it ever was about securing his own.

-Sam Hedrick Exec VP RHA Strategic Business Development

A memorial fund has been established at North Lenior High School in Jim's honor. Send donations to: NLHS Athletic Booster Club c/o Wayne Barwick 2400 Institute Rd. La Grange, NC 28551 in honor of Jim Pantan.

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