

THE Writing on the Wall



Making life better together.

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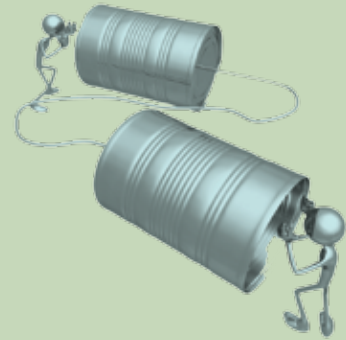
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Director's Corner

by Jack Wall

The Waiver redesign process has begun, and there are many changes being proposed in our field. The purpose of the Waiver redesign is to provide as many services as possible with the funds available to reduce the waiting list. While that is an understandable and even admirable goal, the approach that is being taken appears to lack common-sense and fairness. As one example, Wall Residences has always offered integrated day activities that are truly meaningful. The people we support contribute to the larger community through paid and volunteer work activities, creative expression (art & music) and being included as part of church (when chosen) and civic engagement. They are provided opportunities for a truly meaningful life. The Waiver redesign is looking at making this part of the day funded through a different stream, other than residential. This is likely to prove even more expensive and less effective (double the paperwork – another plan for support) than the methods we are currently using.

we can influence the system to respond in a cost effective, yet fair manner. We have been invited to be on a committee and we are looking forward to sharing our expertise. In



the meantime, Wall Residences intends to assist the providers who work with us to navigate these rocky times for the best possible outcomes. We cannot promise that the changes will not be difficult, however, we can and do promise to do our best to make sure that the impact to the individuals we support in sponsored homes operated in this agency are as minimal as possible. We intend to keep providers informed as information becomes available. We intend to advocate for fairness in the system

The Wall Residences leadership team has offered to participate with decision-makers on state committees to see if

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Individuals *in Action*

Dream Job

When it comes to what we like to do in our spare time, tastes vary. Some people like to read, some people like to hike, others enjoy cooking. Becky Combs, a young woman from Blacksburg, likes to do laundry.

Becky began seeking a new job over a year ago. She relied on her support team, DARS and Career Support Systems to help her with this process. After much patience and persistence, she found a job at The Hilton Garden Inn in Blacksburg working in their laundry department. Very quickly Becky became a valued member of their team, working 20 hours a week and earning competitive pay. Due to her strong work ethic and positive attitude, Becky received the “Employee of the Month” award for December 2014.

Her co-workers speak highly of her, joking that “Becky won’t leave until she has finished,” but in a hotel as large as The Hilton, the loads of sheets and towels are never really finished. Becky looks forward to going into work each day and is eager to return the next.



Becky at work.



Becky volunteering.

In this naturally supportive environment where Becky’s skills and interests are matched to the tasks she is doing, Becky has found the secret that Confucius spoke of, “choose a job you love and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.”

In addition to her regular job, Becky enjoys volunteering. She is a regular volunteer at Montgomery Regional Hospital, The Arc of the NRV, and at The Giving Tree Food Pantry.

Director's Corner continues

for the sponsored residential model. For now and the foreseeable future, our focus is on educating the public and state legislators on the sponsored residential model and the proposed rate changes. It is important that decision makers fully understand how these proposed rates would impact this service model should they be implemented. Right now these changes are still a "proposal." We have been assured that no changes in rates for sponsored residential services will occur until January 2017. We expect that we will be able to provide a true picture to providers about the rates they can expect in their individual circumstances no later than July 1, 2016. This will give providers six months to decide how they wish to respond to reliable information and plan their own futures and the future of the services they provide.

In the past few months Wall Residences has held several family provider listening sessions and we will be scheduling more over the summer months. These meetings allow for a brief presentation of the latest information we have on system changes followed by discussion and action planning. So far we have had excellent participation from our contract families and agency staff as we work together to understand, plan for, and work to influence the coming changes. We appreciate the efforts of our family providers to

inform state legislators in their areas about the services we provide and their impact on the individuals we support.

We believe that sponsored residential is the most effective service model for individuals who benefit from access to 24-7 support. We now have 20 years of experience to back this up. The outcomes, as far as quality of life for people who receive support from consistent and caring support providers, cannot be matched by any shift based program. Bonded emotional relationships are required for human development and this is hard to establish in shift staffed models. To not fund this model of services on par with other, less efficient, models makes little sense and we will need to work together to inform the decision-makers of why this is true. The people who take the time to visit services in the field know the difference and see the benefits of the sponsored residential model.

Wall Residences has the best, most committed, and professional family providers in the state. These are the people doing the most important work in the system, the day to day support of people who have significant support needs. They deserve our respect and support.

Globetrotters

The McDorman service had the opportunity to see the Harlem Globetrotters play recently. They arrived to the game early and were able to meet the players, try on their uniforms, and talk with them. They were even treated to a special display of their tricks before the game.



Phillip (L), James (C), and Brian (R) meet a Globetrotter.



Brian (L) and James (R) try on Globetrotter uniforms.

Meals on Wheels

When Kristen Nave and her husband Benjamin Robinson relocated from the Spotsylvania area to Charlottesville, their provider thought Meals on Wheels would be a good way for the couple to become familiar with their new community while doing something meaningful. “I explained what Meals on Wheels does and told them that they would be helping those who may not be able to leave their homes,” says provider Nick Cione. After they all went to an orientation, he asked them if this was something they’d like to do. Nick recalls Kristen asking her husband, “What do you think babe?” Benjamin responded, “That’s fine with me.”

And with that, they began their volunteer work with the organization. Kristen and Benjamin, who have been together nine years and married “in the eyes of God” for five, have been delivering meals once a week since November. They pick up the meals and Benjamin reads from a list that directs Nick and Kristen to the homes of residents in a senior citizens complex. Kristen then takes the meals, knocks on the door and says, “Meals on Wheels!” At first she was nervous and shy. Now she is more comfortable, smiles and wishes the residents a good day and gives out hugs when needed. “It’s great to see them getting familiar

with the residents, saying ‘hi’ and ‘how are you’,” says Nick. “The residents in the complex also look forward to seeing them. It’s been very nice.”



Kristen (top) and Benjamin (lower left) delivering meals.

Staying Busy & Warm



Robert enjoying his latest creation.

Robert Bean loves to keep himself busy. He likes gardening, beading, painting, and sketching and this winter he began a new craft making fleece blankets. “He started his first blanket over the snow days,” says his Winchester area provider Bridget Daniels. He received a little bit of help from Bridget but did the majority of the work on his own. The blanket is now a part of the décor in his room and has a prized position on his bed.

Prior to starting the blanket, Robert made a fleece pillow for his mother’s birthday. He is now making her a blanket for Mother’s Day and has a list of people who he’d like to gift with his creations. “Robert likes to do things for others,” says Bridget. “This new craft is great for him because he’s broadening his talents and doing something he enjoys.”



Wall Residences Honor Roll

Celebrating Provider Service Levels 2015



Diamond Level – 15 years

Marie Elkins & Greg Floyd, Laura Gunter, Eric Fendley

Platinum Level – 10 years

Hugh Mattox, Karen & Barry Ferrell, Lanny Bean & Stella Trudel, Nancy & Bill Mayo
Ann & Richard Garrett, Melanie & Robert Jennings, Patricia & Michael Ware, Donald Nester
Lewessa DiBattista, Amanda McDorman, Robin Hilderbrand

Gold Level – 5 years

Laura Beth & Brian Parnell, Carolyn Russell, Toni Lusk, Ashley & Samuel Lolley, Judy Rosenthal
Tammy Caudill, June Krishna, Natalie Johnson & Jerry Romine, Jeff Allen, Sarah Perry, Ashley Ware
Tajiri Ali, Julia Taylor, Diana Dyer, Terri Rittwage, Judith Ronan, Mary Henley, Sandi & Brett Johnson
Keri & David Wagg, Belynda & Scott Riley, Mari & Michael Martin, Bridget Daniels
Victoria & Michael Bromley, Debra & Layton Gossom, Erika & Dennis Cornwell

Employees – 5 years

Michele Morris, Amanda Craig, Matthew Hutchens, Crystal Pratt

Employees – 10 years

Beth Howell

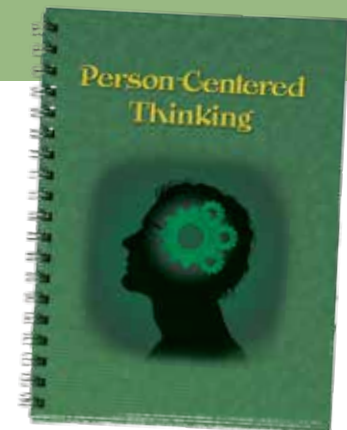
Person Centered Thinking Training

“Everyone in our organization has had some experience with the term ‘person centered’ and one of the things people tend to believe is that it’s person centered for people to get what they want all the time,” says program manager and Person Centered Thinking (PCT) instructor Amy Braswell. “That’s not really all of what person centered is. The main thing is helping someone get balance in their life.”

Over the course of this year, Amy will be sharing her knowledge of person centered thinking in a series of two-day training sessions that will be scheduled in various locations across the state. The focus of the training is to learn how to help people get better lives. “It’s not necessarily about how to do better Person Centered Plans,” says Amy.

“It’s what we do every day to help people have good days. It is collecting information throughout the year so we know how to best support people based on what is important to them - the things that make them happy, people to be with, places to go; and what’s important for them - their health and safety, what makes them a valued member of a community, and having that balance in their life.”

The skills used in PCT can be used with everyone. While it is important for those who are providing supports to people with intellectual disabilities, it is not limited to the disabled. “It’s not about the disability. It’s about people,” says Amy. “I use this with my husband, my children, when I’m talking about myself and what I want out of life. It’s used with people who have dementia and with school children. It’s universal.”



Amy has been an endorsed trainer for two years and completed a one year training process in order to become an instructor. Prior to that, she was a PCT coach with Rappahannock Area CSB.

“I’m very passionate about it,” says Amy. “I’ve seen that the principles and skills help people have better lives. I know that having our providers trained is going to really help improve the lives of the people we support.”

The Entrepreneur

Curtis Pleasant is a collector. Since moving to Floyd, Virginia, he has formed collections out of music tapes, key chains, and photo albums. He collected all 50 of the U.S. state quarters; a collection that hangs on his bedroom wall. Most recently, Curtis has been collecting baseball caps and wallets. “I like hats because they keep the sun out of my eyes,” says Curtis. “But my favorite thing to collect is wallets.”

“I think one of the reasons Curtis likes wallets is that he loves the feel and smell of leather,” says provider Diane Giessler. “His very favorite is black leather. That’s always what he’s looking for.” About a year ago, his providers

realized he had more hats and wallets, over 100 of each, than he had room to store them. One Saturday they helped Curtis set up a yard sale where he sold a few wallets and hats and thought it was fun. A backup worker learned of Curtis’ interest and put him in touch with a friend, Ken “Chic” Smith, who owns an antique shop. Chic agreed to help Curtis sell his items at Chic’s Antiques and thus began their business partnership and special friendship.

Curtis finds hats and wallets at yard sales and flea markets for a dollar or less and Chic sells them for \$3.00. He keeps his displays fresh by replenishing them from his large stash of wallets and hats. “He



Chic & Curtis with the hats & wallets they sell.

knows what’s in his stash but it’s constantly changing,” says Diane. “He takes things out and takes them to Chic’s. Or he’ll decide that he hasn’t seen a wallet or hat for a while and he’ll take them back home.” Curtis visits Chic’s weekly to see if anything has sold and often leaves with a few new bills in his own wallet.

Managing Stress

The nature of the work of caregiving is stressful. Because it is 24-7, and the caregiver is always “on” to help another person, it is hard to remember to take care of your own needs. Over time this can lead to feelings of frustration, anger and even illness. When asked about stress, caregivers will often identify their emotions first rather than identifying a specific problem or situation that is causing stress. While recognizing and talking about emotions is important, if that is all that occurs, there can be a feeling of being stuck. Identifying the situations that are causing the problem can be a key to managing and relieving stress.

1. Make two lists of what is causing stress – things you can control / things you can’t control. On the list of things that can be controlled, try different strategies to see what techniques can lessen the stress – if electronic health records stress you out, is there a different time of day that works better to complete this task? Would more training

help? Is there something the program manager could do to lessen the work required?

For the list of things that you determine are beyond your control, what techniques work for you to accept these things? Prayer, meditation, talking to others in a similar situation, finding joy each day in some portion of the work we do, practicing gratitude for all of the blessings we receive, and connection to nature are all strategies that can provide some relief. Finding the strategies that work best for you is the key.

2. Visit with another provider. Seeing the challenges that another provider is facing can put your own experiences in perspective and provide opportunities to share coping strategies.

3. Remind yourself that tomorrow is another day and try to approach the situation with renewed energy and vision. Feed yourself well, as you do



those you care for and make sure you are getting enough rest.

4. We are all interdependent – even the most accomplished person benefits from help now and again. Perfection is not expected. Share your frustrations and accept help - friends, family and your program manager can help, if asked. Give people specific tasks to accomplish when they offer their help.

5. Schedule breaks – give yourself permission to have some fun! Hire a personal trainer or join a dance class, take walks with a friend. When was the last time you saw a movie or went on a date with your partner? Maybe it’s time!

Know that Wall Residences appreciates the work you do each day! Thank you for all you do!

Advocating for Sponsored Residential Services

There are lots of changes occurring at the state level that will impact which community-based services will remain viable options for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, many of these changes will negatively impact existing services for many people. In fact, these changes could potentially dismantle many valuable community options, including Sponsored Residential Services.

Sponsored Residential Services provide an alternative to the traditional shift-based group home model. With Sponsored Residential Services, individuals live in the home of a professional service provider and become an integrated part of a family. Sponsored Residential Service programs are developed to promote individual independence and autonomy while ensuring a person's health and safety.

Additionally, individuals in Sponsored Residential Services:

- Receive services uniquely tailored to meet their needs and preferences
- Receive professional support from consistent, caring and well trained staff
- Choose how they want to spend their time and manage daily activities

Currently the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) has proposed a funding plan that will drastically cut funds to Sponsored Residential Services. DBHDS has released a breakdown of the proposal for public comment and review. The proposal creates a tier system based on the support needs of individuals. Theoretically, funds under the waiver redesign will be funneled based on an individual's support needs. However, based on the information DBHDS has released about the proposed waiver redesign, funding is being allocated with more emphasis placed on the service model an individual chooses and not based on an individual's support needs. Sponsored Residential Services will receive a significant rate reduction which may lead to a lack of Sponsored Residential Service options for people with disabilities. If these funding cuts are accepted by Virginia's General Assembly next year, people who need services will have fewer community service options to choose from.

Wall Residences is actively participating in advocacy ef-



orts to combat these changes. Our advocacy efforts include educating state officials and Virginia elected representatives about the value of the Sponsored Residential model and how it differs from other community based options. Also, Wall Residences is working with an advocacy group called Support Sponsored Residential Services in Virginia. This advocacy group is focused on preserving, sustaining and promoting Sponsored Residential Services in Virginia. Advocacy efforts of the group are aimed at educating state officials and Virginia elected representatives about the proposed rate cut and how it will negatively impact services to thousands of Virginians with disabilities.

We are asking for your support with our advocacy efforts. Below are three things that you can do today to advocate for Sponsored Residential Services:



1. Please "like" Support Sponsored Residential Services in Virginia on Facebook.
2. Sign the online petition showing your support for Sponsored Residential Services. The link to the petition can be found on the Support Sponsored Residential Services in Virginia Facebook page, or go directly to: change.org and search for Sponsored Residential Services.
3. Call your local elected Delegate and tell them not to cut funding to Sponsored Services.

With your help, we can stop the proposed funding cuts to Sponsored Residential Services. Thank you for your support!

In a Dolphins World



Chris Russell recently had a fabulous week's vacation in the Riviera Maya area of eastern Mexico, what he called "tropical paradise." Chris, supported by his parents, enjoyed lounging on the beach, meeting new people, and swimming with dolphins. He was even brave enough to feel a dolphin's tongue and teeth while "snuba diving" (a combination of snorkeling and scuba). Afterwards he grinned from ear to ear and said "the dolphins let us into their world!"

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