

# THE Writing on the Wall

WINTER 2015



*Making life better together.*

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## Director's Corner

by Jack Wall

### Waiver Redesign / Impact on Sponsored Residential Services

There is a lot of work being done by committed people in various roles across the state on redesigning the Medicaid Waiver system. The outcome that is sought is the ability to “right size” support so that people get what they need, but not so much that the funding needs over tax the system and do not allow for everyone who needs support to be funded. These are admirable goals that we fully support. Ending the very long wait list continues to be a very important priority. Assigning limited available dollars based on the fairly assessed support needs of an individual makes sense.

The problems that we are experiencing with the current proposed treatment of sponsored residential services, is first, Wall Residences was not included in the discussion when the new rate model was being created. Because of this, we believe that there was not a full understanding of the way sponsored residential services are delivered and a devaluing of this service model occurred. Wall Residences contracted family providers and many of the individuals we support and their family members have been meeting with state legislators to inform and advocate for this model of services. We appreciate this advocacy very much and know it comes from a place of personal understanding of sponsored residential services. In some cases, it has been the only model that

has worked for people with significant and difficult to meet needs and there is genuine fear of losing access to this service. It is also true that because sponsored residential services work very well for individuals with the most intensive level of support needs, it can appear that sponsored residential is actually adequately funded – this is



not a fair analysis. These services tend to require additional support staff, and this is costly. We propose that funding be based only on the support needs of the individual, not where that individual chooses to receive services. Otherwise what tends to happen is people who are somewhat “easier” to support may be encouraged to live in a group home. In actuality they could be offered a more individualized service in a sponsored home, allowing the person a greater connection to the larger community.

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# Individuals *in Action*

## **On Top of Buffalo Mountain** *by Colleen Redman*

When Triona Bason hiked to the top of Buffalo Mountain on August 14th, she was excited about her accomplishment. She posted a photo on Facebook from the 3,971 foot summit with a caption that read, “This is the sight of Buffalo Mountain. I loved it. Wow, I can’t believe I did it.”

The daughter of Paula Bason and the late A’Court Bason, Triona (25) has a large extended family and many friends in Floyd. She lives with her mother and is supported by companions from Wall Residences to pursue her active life, which includes housekeeping work at the Hotel Floyd and at the Floyd Fitness Center, where she trades work for membership.

Reaching her goal of getting to the top of the mountain was especially satisfying for Triona because she and her support companion had almost completed the climb a few weeks earlier. That hike took longer than they expected, and, because they didn’t want to be late for an upcoming event, they turned back before reaching the top.

Making the mile long, steep hike to the top of Buffalo Mountain was not the first time Triona persevered in her life. Her mother remembers when Triona decided she wanted to try out for varsity cheerleading at Floyd County High School (FCHS). She gave her daughter some realistic feedback about how hard it might be, but that didn’t deter Triona. “And wouldn’t you know, she made the team,” Paula Bason said, explaining how Triona takes the initiative to make things happen in her life.

Triona, a 2009 FCHS graduate, fondly recalls her high school days. “They helped me. I studied and liked hanging with my friends,” she said. Today, lots of activities have taken the place of cheerleading, and Triona continues her life education. She takes Taekwondo with Skip King at the June Bug Center and has also taken dance classes there.



*Triona on the Buffalo*

Well known as a fun loving person, Triona is supported by more than her Wall Residences companions. She likes to watch movies with her friend Toni Lamberti, speak Spanish with her friend Kike Rodriguez and get encouragement at the gym from trainer and friend Rowan Chantal.

Dancing runs in Triona’s family and she has a natural flair for performance. Her cousin Leia Jones is a professional dancer and her grandmother Ruth Bason is known for her meditative dancing talent. Every first Sunday of the month Triona’s friend Toni takes her to the Dogtown Open Mic where Triona

dances on stage. “Sometimes I sing,” said the dancer who takes voice lessons with Sally Walker. She also likes to “make people laugh” and spend time at the library.

When asked what she likes about living in Floyd, Triona confidently answered, “It feels like a family to me.” Her mother agrees and tells this story: When Triona graduated from high school, instead of sending out announcements, her mother sent out art cards designed by family friend, the late Rio Semione. On the card were the words “It Takes a Village.”

“What that card was saying is ‘she’s graduating. Thank you for your role in this,’ Paula Bason said. “It takes a town like Floyd to raise a kid like her to be as free and comfortable as she is, and where everybody knows her.”



*Triona overlooking downtown Floyd*

## Director's Corner continues

The current proposed rate model provides a higher reimbursement rate for a service that is delivered in a four bed group home, versus a sponsored residential service for the same individual and the same services being offered. This just fundamentally does not make sense. Wall Residences contracted family providers are available to provide 24 hour a day support and are most often people who meet Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional standards. They are responsible to provide for their own retirement and healthcare costs. They employ direct support professionals to back up their service when they are not available to provide care and to attract highly qualified people, they must offer competitive salaries for this work. They provide homes, meals, and transportation (as group homes do as well) and therefore have similar costs. Wall Residences has a team of professional support staff including; two clinicians, a BSN, MSN, RN, BCBA, and a highly experienced leadership team that supports the over 40 program managers who visit and support each service

at least monthly. This level of oversight is protective for the people and contracted family providers we support. We provide a quality, professional level of service delivery that does have administrative costs as well.

We are excited about the opportunities that the Waiver Redesign may offer the people we support – including more emphasis on paid employment and more active days. We are happy to be a part of making the new system function well, and willing to be of service to state decision makers when asked to participate in improving our system of service. We ask that sponsored residential services not be penalized in the process of the redesign. We fear that not providing adequate reimbursement rates to sponsored providers could result in less qualified providers being willing to take on this lifestyle commitment. We are in full support of ending the wait list. Too many people are waiting for services in Virginia.

## Making Hot Sauce

Early this past spring Nick asked if he could start a garden, his own garden. Being a lover of hot sauce; or rather, watching others test the heat of hot sauce, he wanted to grow peppers so that he could make his own. So began our journey in search of the hottest variety of pepper seeds we could find. Nick chose lemon drop, tequila sunrise, jalapeño and time bomb peppers as the perfect fit for his mission.

When the seeds arrived, Nick lovingly chose a spot in the garden next to his father's tomatoes and the planting began. He carefully tended to his garden by watering, pulling weeds and checking on the progress of his beloved pepper plants. Every time someone came to the house, Nick was eager to pull a pepper off one of his plants and challenge his guests to eat one! He had a few takers and thoroughly enjoyed watching them fan their mouths as they crunched into one of his tasty treats!

Finally, all of peppers were ready for picking and he was lucky to get quite a bounty! Nick chose to can some of his peppers and make hot sauce out of the rest. We ordered special bottles and labels and Nick Payne's Pungent Peppers was born! He now has several bottles of sauce and canned peppers that he intends to sell or give as gifts. They're delicious ... but very hot!! We can't wait to build on Nick's entrepreneurial spirit next year and begin to sell his product at farmers



markets. If you're interested in buying some of his limited stock, just let us know, I'm sure he'd be happy to watch you fan your mouth!!



*Nick cooking and bottling his Hot creations.*



## Role of Medical QA Director

**Jessa** Many of you may already know this but it has been 4 years since I was brought on to be a member of the Wall Residences team. It is a wonderful and fulfilling opportunity to work with such intelligent and compassionate people every day. The work of Sponsored Providers and other Wall Residences staff is inspiring!

Like most things in life, “the only thing constant is change.” This also includes my role at Wall Residences. Over the years my role has changed and evolved in response to state and agency needs. With those changes, come new opportunities and challenges.

When I first started, I had more direct contact with service providers as I needed to understand the medical complexity of services offered by Providers and to better understand the landscape, both regionally and statewide, that Providers worked in. Now, however, my role has evolved to work more directly with regional and administrative staff at Wall Residences and various state agencies. I have been working closely with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and other nurses from across the state to address challenges affecting services for all individuals being served. Being involved with state wide system assessments and planning sessions, allows

for Wall Residences to plan and respond to changes much more effectively. It has also shown me that Wall Residences is WAY ahead of other agencies in how services are provided, the quality of those services, how resources are allocated and the overall responsiveness and transparency of our agency. Additionally, as a member of the Quality Assurance team, it is my pleasure to develop agency wide responses and systems that support regional teams and, ultimately, individuals receiving services and Providers.

These changes have allowed for Wall Residences to be able to deliver more consistent and meaningful support in regards to how medical concerns are managed and how we comply with ever-changing regulatory obligations and expectations. So though I may not be directly involved in overseeing the medical issues of every individual in our care, I work diligently to ensure that the system that you, as a Provider, depend on provides the service, support and expertise you need. If you have a specific medical concern, feel free to contact your Program Manager and we can address it as a team.



## Quality Assurance Coordinator

**Courtney** My name is Courtney Evans and I was recently promoted to the Quality Assurance Coordinator position. Having worked at Wall Residences for almost nine years as a Program Manager, Senior Program Manager and a Regional Coordinator for the Central Virginia area, I am excited about this new position on the Quality Assurance Team. As part of the new duties, I will be reviewing various documentation to ensure Wall Residences is meeting and/or exceeding Licensure and Medicaid regulations. This is important, not only for promoting continued excellence in addressing the health and safety of the individuals we serve, but also for supporting appropriate billing practices and the continued stability of the agency.

In my former positions at Wall Residences, I was more directly involved with the individuals we support and their providers. I am honored to have been involved in these day to day activities that supported individuals to

have a life that is meaningful to them. While in my new role, I will not be as directly involved as I once was, behind the scenes I will be working closely with Regional Coordinators and Program Managers to ensure they are confident in navigating how we meet the demands of those who regulate and oversee our services. Documentation is a necessary part of providing services, however as we all know, the real work is done in by our talented providers who ensure individuals have a life like ours. I am interested in helping providers and staff maintain the delicate balance between effective documentation and exceptional service delivery. In recent years, we have seen the system evolve and change dramatically. This often creates uncertainty, however Wall Residences is dedicated to helping providers navigate these challenging times. I look forward to continuing to promote our mission and ensure the individuals we support continue to receive the high quality services for which Wall Residences is known.

# Provider Advocacy Effort

Winchester area providers recently had the opportunity to speak with local lawmakers about the proposed rate cut for sponsored residential services. Appeals were made to 27th District Senator Jill Vogel and 29th District Delegate Chris Collins in a meeting attended by several providers as well as program managers, and directors. Both legislators learned about the possible changes to compensation rates in which group homes would receive increased funding while sponsored residential services would be faced with cuts.

“My husband and I opened our home and our hearts to care for a 35-year-old woman with an intellectual disability. She’s part of our family and feels valued and she knows we’re there for her,” said Frederick County provider Bonnie Golliday. She explained that she is not compensated for all of the hours spent assisting her client and under the new plan, would be paid about 21 fewer days per year.

“Ask yourself, would you work at a job for almost a month for free every year” questioned Golliday.

Ron Snodgrass and his family have been assisting the same individual for nine years. “I understand what is like to be placed in a home where strangers pretty much are expected to care for you,” said Snodgrass who was adopted out of foster care. Snodgrass said that most of the pay he receives goes to house payments, utilities, insurance, food, wages for his backup workers, and gas. He also factors in retirement savings. “This is a calling and I’m committed to this gentlemen,” said Snodgrass.

Collins, a defense attorney who has had a client move into a Wall Residences home, told the group that they had done a very good job. Vogel characterized the meeting as “incredibly valuable.” She stressed that it was still early in the budgeting process and noted that representatives can return to Richmond and ask questions about the proposed cuts.



*Top: Senator Jill Vogel.  
Center: Delagate Chis Collins  
Bottom: Ron Snodgrass*

## Operations, Training and Technology Coordinator

**Keri** My name is Keri Basham and I am the Operations, Training, and Technology Coordinator at Wall Residences. I began working at Wall Residences nearly eight years ago as a program manager and recently started this new role and position earlier this year. I am a member of the Quality Assurance team and I work with the team to assure that our policies and procedures are current. My primary goal is to ensure our systems are user friendly while ensuring we remain in compliance with the regulatory agencies overseeing our services. It is important to me that all Wall Residences team members are comfortable and confident with carrying out their duties.

Most recently I had the opportunity to review and update our documentation systems in an effort to achieve a system that better captures supports and service delivery while saving time. I want to ensure that agency staff, providers, and back up workers are properly trained and supported to use these systems. I have spent some time traveling around the state and meeting many providers recently. I have also had the opportunity to problem solve and connect with many people over the phone as well. I look forward to continuing to meet and work with those of you I have not yet had the opportunity to see yet.

# Deerfield Home

Wall Residences began development of a specialized group home in the Spring of 2015. This home, named Deerfield, is located in a private neighborhood in Amherst, Virginia. While it has a rural feel to it, which allows a great deal of peace and quiet at the home, it is only a few miles from the town of Amherst. As part of the Department of Justice settlement agreement the state of Virginia is required to downsize, and eventually close, the state training centers. Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC) in Madison Heights continues supporting about 240 residents at this time. A number of the individuals who continue residing at CVTC have intense mobility and medical support needs that require a home providing 24 hour awake staff at all times. Further, they require nursing level care in a home that can accommodate significant mobility needs.

Wall Residences recognized the need for this type of model and began researching homes to purchase in the Central Virginia area early in 2015. Several homes were reviewed and it was determined that the Deerfield home in Amherst was best suited for the remodel that needed to occur to accommodate the mobility needs of the individuals who would be referred.

During the time that Wall Residences was reviewing potential homes Admissions Coordinator Alex Jackson reached out to CVTC to determine if there would be individuals who have consent to consider community placement who would benefit from a home like Deerfield. CVTC staff expressed excitement about the Deerfield home and began working to identify individuals at that facility who required nursing care on site and awake staff 24 hours per day.



Over the course of the Spring of 2015 Wall Residences purchased the Deerfield home and met with a contractor, Wall Construction, to review plans to remodel the home. The remodel included the following: replacing all of the carpet with wood flooring; widening all doorways; installing automated lighting in the hallway, main bathroom, and staff office; adding a ramp on the front and rear of the home; expanding and remodeling the bathroom to accommodate a mat table, shower trolley, side access sink faucet, and plenty of space for equipment use; landscaping the property; adding a terrace in the back to enjoy the outdoors; purchasing two fully accessible vans with wheelchair lifts; installation of a whole home generator that will power the home for up to a week and a half if a long term power outage occurs. The remodel at Deerfield took several months to complete.

During this time Wall Residences established a Deerfield committee to begin work on planning for the opening day of the home. These staff included Jessa Layne (Wall Residences Medical Director), Alex Jackson (Wall Residences Admissions Coordinator), Courtney Evans (Wall Residences Quality Assurance Coordinator), and Rebecca Ledingham (Wall Residences Regional Coordinator). The Deerfield committee began meeting weekly to outline the plans for opening the home. This included everything from continuing to identify referrals for the home to purchasing the necessary

kitchen, bathroom, and other household items. Other Central Virginia Wall Residences Program Managers assisted with purchasing some of the items needed for the home, including some of the furnishings. In mid-August a “work day” was held at Deerfield where the Central Virginia staff visited Deerfield and spent the day hanging mini blinds, putting together a grill for the rear deck, arranging furniture, hanging pictures, putting the kitchen together, etc. This day was a wonderful time of team building for everyone in the Central Virginia region. Everyone seemed to enjoy this day of working together as we moved closer to opening day. In late August a ribbon cutting ceremony occurred. Directors Jack Wall and Sharon Stroble participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony and this event was covered live by WSET news. It was an event that was well attended by Wall Residences staff, providers, individuals, and Delegate Ben Cline. Assistant Commissioner Connie Cochran had also visited the Deerfield home the day prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Identifying the referrals for Deerfield was a process that took several months. This was a collaborative effort between Wall Residences and CVTC which was very successful. Staff at CVTC could not have been more positive and wonderful to work with during this process and through this collaboration we were able to identify four individuals who would be a great fit for Deerfield.



Deerfield is licensed for four individuals. Each individual has a very large private bedroom and there is ample space throughout the home for a variety of activities. Deerfield also sits on an eight acre plot of land which allows for a lot of room to be outside when the weather is nice. With the two accessible vehicles on site this allows for a high level of community integration for those who prefer this. There is also a great deal of flexibility for the individuals as there will be three staff on site during all shifts. One of these will be an LPN and the other will be a combination of CNA's and direct care workers. Deerfield also has a registered nurse, Cathy Bailey, who is the Deerfield manager.

At times, depending on the activity schedule, there will be four staff on site for community outings. Nurses will accompany the individuals to all medical appointments to ensure accurate reporting of medical information as well. The individuals moving in to Deerfield will have opportunities to experience a number of activities in the community that they may not otherwise have been able to. Activities include movies, shopping, attending festivals, taking day trips out of town, or a weekend excursion to the beach. The sky is the limit and the individuals residing

in Deerfield will have opportunities to choose from a variety of community outings on a regular basis. One of the individuals moving to Deerfield likes cars. We informed his authorized representative that we would locate car shows to take him to and she was thrilled at this idea because he has not had the opportunity to experience this before.

Family support from the individuals moving into Deerfield has been strong. Relatives of individuals residing at CVTC have typically not experienced community placement options before and choosing to consider Deerfield was a big decision for them to make. Wall Residences ensured that family members interested in visiting the home had all of the supports necessary while they determined whether they would choose Deerfield for their relatives. Family members toured Deerfield and learned about the staffing patterns prior to making a decision to move their relatives into Deerfield. Wall Residences has received many compliments on Deerfield and the work completed to make this a model service in the community for the level of need these individuals have.

Deerfield's mission is consistent with the Wall Residences agency mission statement to provide a high quality community service to individuals with an intellectual disability or long term mental illness. Deerfield, like all other Wall Residences services, will provide a high



*Top: Deerfield resident William Dunn, attending Fall Ball.  
Lower: William at check-out.*

degree of individualized attention and support to the individuals residing there. Wall Residences works hard to support individuals to achieve their highest level of independence while encouraging the total health and well being of each individual in services. The mission of Wall Residences, which began when the first service was opened in 1995, carries over to Deerfield as it does to all Wall Residences services. Our mission continues to remain in place as Wall Residences and Deerfield continue providing individualized and person centered services with the best supports available from our committed and talented providers of our sponsored homes and the staff employed at Deerfield.



*Shower updates at Deerfield House.*

## Walk & Roll



Undeterred by a little drizzle, individuals from Wall Residences express their support to have A Life Like Yours (ALLY) and End the Wait for 10,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities on the waiting list for community support services. This event was organized by the Arc of Virginia. The crowd gathered at the Bell Tower on the Capitol Grounds, September 29th to raise awareness and support for this issue. Speakers shared their personal stories and led an inspired crowd through downtown Richmond to facilitate awareness. Letters asking the Governor for support of I/DD waiver slots and to improve access for community based services were collected and hand delivered.

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