



Washington County
Department of Social Services
Commitment to Community



WCDSS Partners in Press

Volume IV/ Issue 2

240.420.2100

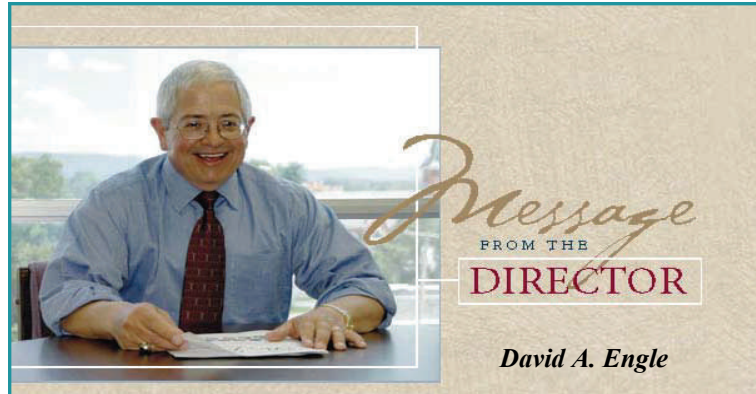
Summer 2011

**We serve people,
promote self-reliance,
and provide safety by delivering
quality services and developing
community partnerships.**

-WCDSS Mission Statement

You must look
into other people
as well as at them.

~ Lord Chesterfield



David A. Engle

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Dreams Come True

The Summer of 2011 will long be remembered by Social Services staff for the realization of three years of planning, when our dreams came true in the relocation of the Washington County Family Center and the creation of a family visiting center which staff named the Sunshine Center. July 11th was the "opening day" for these two new facilities at 221 McRand Court directly opposite Food Resources, just off Hump Road and West Washington Street.

Since 1995, from its location at 920 West Washington Street, the Washington County Family Center has been an inter-agency program that helps young parents complete their education and find employment, while learning outstanding parenting skills.

Continued on page 2.....

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Director's Corner
- 3 Discovering Diversity
- 4 Blended Teams Initiative
- 5 Sunshine Center Moves
- 6 Child Support Public Awareness Month
- 9 New Family Investment Intake Process
- 10 Family Center Receives Literacy Grant and much more ...



2010-2011 WASHINGTON COUNTY DSS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

- Dolores Harmon, Chairperson
- David Pool, Vice Chair
- Bonnie Elgin, Secretary
- William K. Beard
- Sheryl Goree
- Gladys Rojas
- Randall I. Schultz
- Evelyn Williams
- Terry Baker, County Commissioner, ex-officio

Board meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month (September-June) at 5:30 pm in the Washington County DSS Board Room.

How to reach us:

Wash. Co. Department of Social Services
 122 N. Potomac St., Hagerstown, MD 21741
 Phone: 240-420-2100 Fax: 240-420-2111
 Child Abuse Hotline: 240-420-2222
www.dhr.state.md.us/washington.htm

 The Safe Place — Child Advocacy Center
 24 N. Walnut Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740
 Phone: 240-420-4300 Fax: 240-420-4339

The Family Center
 221 McRand Court
 Hagerstown, MD 21740
 Phone: 301-790-4002 Fax: 301-790-4007

Martin O'Malley, Governor
 Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor
 Theodore Dallas, Secretary



Director's Corner Continued

The Washington County Family Center is one of 22 Family Support Centers located throughout the State of Maryland, sponsored by the non-profit, Maryland Family Network. Family Support Centers are child-centered, family-focused programs that serve young parents together with their children. Since its inception, over 4,000 local families have received services. Over 2,500 children have received developmentally appropriate child care while attending the Center. Over 200 individuals have received their high school diplomas, GED or External Diplomas. The Family Center is "a one-stop shop" where participants receive services from the Washington County Public Schools, Health Department, Hagerstown Community College, Department of Social Services, Community Action Council, and many others. The new Center provides expanded, custom designed space that better accommodates program needs and client flow.

As part of the Family Center relocation, the Department initiated a creative new family visiting facility, the Sunshine Center, to provide immediate, frequent, supervised visitations to families whose children are in the care and custody of the Department. Children who are removed from their homes often fear they will never see their parent(s) again. Frequent visits provide a means for parents and children to continue their relationships. Frequent visits also reassure parents their children are being cared for while they work on issues to help them reunite. The Sunshine Center provides a supportive atmosphere to bring families together in a more traditional home-like setting. The Center is staffed with a visitation coach who will help parents develop specific visitation plans to address their children's particular needs. Each visit will be critiqued by the coach and plans developed for succeeding visits. The Department currently supervises 120 visits per month. Approximately half of these will be served at the Sunshine Center.

These wonderful new facilities and programs were realized as a result of our outstanding partnerships with the Maryland Family Network, the Washington County Commissioners, our County Administrator and County Attorney, the Washington County Board of Social Services, the Washington County Community Partnership for Families and Children, the Washington County Community Action Council, the Fletcher Foundation, the Maryland Department of Human Resources, the Pauline Anderson Foundation, the Einbinder Foundation, the Washington County Public Schools and numerous contributions from generous citizens in our community. We are extraordinarily grateful for this tremendous community support which will help break the cycle of poverty for vulnerable Washington County families.

IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE OTHERS
TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE,
DO MORE AND BECOME MORE,
YOU ARE A LEADER.

~JOHN QUINCY ADAMS



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2011-2012

By Barbara Moyer

Good News! The agency's third Leadership Development Program (LDP) officially begins on Tuesday, September 6, 2011 with a kick-off in the Large Multi-Purpose Room. The program concludes with a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, May 15, 2012. Ten participants have applied for the program to take advantage of this opportunity to enhance their supervisory and leadership skills for the future. The curriculum is filled with interesting courses, e.g. Public Speaking, Strategic Planning, Conflict Management, Interviewing Skills and HR Practices to name a few. This initiative addresses succession planning and results in creating recommendations to improve agency services to the community. The Leadership Development Team has been meeting bi-weekly to cover all the details of implementing this great program in September. Best of luck to the participants!!

DISCOVERING DIVERSITY

By Carly McFerren

The staff of Washington County's Department of Social Services will be attending "Discovering Diversity" on September 28th and 29th. This program is tailored specifically to the daily challenges that employees face and is designed to help staff understand their own opinions about workforce diversity while offering suggestions and tools.

Tammy L. Ditzel and Ellen Jenkins of Inesse Consulting, LLC will present the seminar. Each attendee will answer a

series of 80 confidential questions in order to profile their understanding of diversity. In addition to the "Discovering Diversity" profile, the training will include various exercises that help increase knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and help address behavior when encountering diversity.

As a result of "Discovering Diversity," Inesse Consulting hopes to help employees limit the influence of stereotypes and assumptions, gather accurate data about differences, transform knowledge into awareness and empathy, increase tolerance and value differences through sympathy and empathy, and become aware of the impact that behavior has on others.



CHILD SUPPORT PERSON OF THE YEAR

By Barbara Moyer

It is with great pleasure that I announce that Laurie Taylor has been selected as the Child Support Person of the Year. Laurie certainly exhibits all the positive characteristics that our office was asked to consider in this nomination and selection process. She has great customer service skills, has a positive attitude, is dedicated, extremely reliable and is a team player.

Laurie is a wonderful asset to the child support program and exemplifies the phrase, "lead by example". Laurie's biography and picture have been forwarded to DHR Communications Office. In August, for public awareness month, the DHR website will display statewide pictures and biographies of the selections for this award.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LAURIE FOR A JOB WELL DONE!



Blended Teams Initiative

By Karen Christof

The child welfare units of the Services Division are planning to change their approach to delivering services. Beginning in January, the structure of child welfare will move from program specific units (CPS, Foster Care, Family Services), to three "blended teams". Each team will be comprised of supervisors and staff with expertise in all three program areas. As cases come into the child welfare system, they will be assigned to a blended team. That team will take responsibility for providing services from the least restrictive to the most intense of services and will serve the family and children throughout the life of the case. Families should experience a more seamless transition from one service to another in the process.

The goals of a blended team are to improve communication between service levels, improve outcomes for children and families and further integrate Family Centered Practice and other best practices in child welfare. Outcomes will focus on reducing recidivism rates, decreasing the length of time in foster care and increasing permanency, safety and well being for children and youth.

As with any change, this transition requires the consideration of many details. The program managers and supervisors are meeting weekly to make decisions regarding team composition & location, supervisor training, revision on procedures related to budgets, grant reporting, monitoring, etc. Staff are being kept informed by emails and monthly meetings.



“Supporting quality time between parents and children”

On July 6, 2011, Sunshine Center moved into its new home at 221 McRand Court, Suite 200, Hagerstown, MD. With the help of Family Center and DSS staff, coached visits between parents and children began the day after move in. Referrals can be made to Sunshine Center by foster care staff, or caseworkers may hold their own coached visits at Sunshine Center. Supported visitation services are now being provided to birth families and their children in out-of-home placement. Role modeling, one-on-one coaching and instruction, and teaching parents the importance of playing with their children allows parents to practice parenting skills specific to their child's safety needs. Increased responsibility is placed on parents to plan each visit and to bring any needed items for planned activities, special celebrations, or outings in the community. Sunshine Center offers visit rooms for infants, toddlers and teens. A large family room is also available to accommodate families with multiple children. Sunshine Center has a fully equipped kitchen for cooking activities and will soon have a large fenced in play area. Board games, craft supplies, scrap booking materials and a lending library are available as well.

Due to the generous support of the Community Engagement Committee, agency staff, and community volunteers, Sunshine Center offers families and their children in out-of-home placement a more comfortable and home-like experience in family visitation. For more information on how to become involved with Sunshine Center, or questions about visit coaching, please call Program Coordinator, Shana Matthews, at 301-790-4001.



Center's Entrance



Toddler's Entrance



Dad's Connection

The DADS Connection continues to provide support services to fathers who live in Washington County and have a child that is 8 years old or younger. The program also provides services to expectant fathers. The program is located at the Washington County Family Center at 221 McRand Court, Suite 300 and is staffed by Kim Dudley, Father Involvement Coordinator and Rick Johnson, Father Involvement Associate. Program goals are to educate parents on the importance and impact of father involvement through mediation and co-parenting services, to provide quarterly parent/child activities to support father involvement, to provide support services for employment development and search, to provide limited transportation for employment related activities and to provide a fatherhood education series. The program also provides linkage to other community services and resources. Referrals to the program can be made by contacting either Kim or Rick at 301-790-4002.

A LOOK AROUND CHILD SUPPORT



Child Support PARENT'S DAY CELEBRATION 2011

In keeping with our mission of raising the standard of living for children by enforcing their right to support from both of their parents and reducing or recovering cash assistance costs, Child Support appreciates those parents that faithfully provide support for their children. At this time of year the Washington County Department of Social Services' Child Support Office continued their annual tradition of honoring those parties by hosting a celebration in our local office on May 9 for Mother's Day and June 20 for Father's Day. Customers had the opportunity to ask questions and review informational resources about the child support program. Refreshments were served and children were given a gift bag. For the months of May and June Child Support displayed our message of recognizing those parents on a billboard located on Route 40 East.

Child Support Public Awareness Month

National Child Support Awareness Month is observed annually during the month of August. The State slogan this year is "Tender Shoots Grow Best with the Support of All Their Roots". The slogan represents the importance of having both parties involved in their child's life. The best interests of the child are critical to the child support mission. Child Support staff will participate in two community activities to promote our services to customers. A banner will be displayed on Washington Street, recognizing August as Child Support Awareness Month.

Also during the month of August the Department of Social Services' Child Support Office is recognizing its employees for their service to the program. Several activities are planned during the month to celebrate our accomplished staff. One employee, Laurie Taylor, has been selected Child Support Worker of the Year and will be honored during August at an event celebrating excellence in child support.

NEW CHILD SUPPORT ATTORNEY

R. David Pembroke began employment as the IV-D Child Support Attorney on July 1, 2011. Dave brings 29 years of legal experience to the child support program in the preparation and presentation of Family Law and Criminal matters. In 1990 Dave was appointed Special Counsel through the Attorney General's Office and for many years acted as the conflict Attorney and back-up Attorney for our Child Support Office. Dave resides in the City of Hagerstown with his wife and his daughter, Victoria, who is attending college. His household also includes 2 dogs and 4 cats. Please give Dave a big welcome to the child support family!

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day provides the opportunity to link nation-wide efforts to international initiatives. The United Nations International Plan of Action, adopted in 2002, recognizes the role of education and training in elder abuse prevention. The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) began planning the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2003. The first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was launched on June 15th 2006 from New York City.

This year, Governor Martin O'Malley issued a proclamation declaring the week of June 13th through 17th as Elder Abuse Awareness Week and June 15th in Maryland as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Governor's proclamation declares that "Maryland's older adults should be treated with dignity and respect for their significant contributions to the betterment of our state" and "Maryland is pleased to focus attention . . . on the issue of elder abuse as Maryland's elderly deserve our highest respect, protection and caring."

The Maryland Department of Human Resources and the Maryland Department of Aging joined with INPEA in promoting World Elder Abuse Day to raise awareness of the often hidden problem of elder abuse and neglect. They provided promotional materials to the local agencies.

Locally, the Washington County Department of Social Services Adult Protective Services Unit and Washington County Commission on Aging Area Agency on Aging increased awareness of elder abuse by displaying event posters in public areas, wearing purple clothing and giving out labels and book marks with the purple ribbon logo symbolizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

On September 24, 2011 Convoy of Hope and various area businesses and agencies are sponsoring "Hope for Hagerstown." This marks the fourth year of the event designed to aid struggling members of the community. Convoy of Hope is an international organization that partners with local businesses, churches and community organizations to provide assistance and transform communities.



This year's Convoy of Hope anticipates providing groceries to about 5,000 people, offering health care and community services to attendees, free haircuts, family portraits, entertainment, and a kids' zone among other events.

Bonita Bishop, Community Services Coordinator for Hagerstown Convoy of Hope Outreach, writes that the 2010 "Hope for Hagerstown" included more than 100 businesses and agencies, over 1,000 volunteers including 61 churches, more than 3,750 guests served, and 10,000 pounds of food was given away. For more information on this event and other local Convoy of Hope outreaches check out www.hopeforhagerstown.org.

CONVOY OF HOPE

By Carly McFerren

FOUR APPOINTED TO WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

At their June 14 meeting the Washington County Commissioners appointed the following persons to the County Board of Social Services:

Evelyn C. Williams has been an educator for Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) for 30 years. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal and currently is Supervisor for Secondary Social Studies for WCPS. Ms. Williams has been a member of The League of Women Voters for over 25 years and a founding member of Women at the Table (WATT). She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Girls, Inc. and the Washington Commission for Women. She is a member of St. John's Episcopal Church and serves in several volunteer capacities.

Randall I. Schultz was an educator in the Washington County Public School system for 32 years, serving as a principal in five different schools. Mr. Schultz is an active member of Zion Reformed United Church of Christ and regularly works in its soup kitchen.

William K. Beard, Jr., retired from Frick Company in Waynesboro, PA, as Director of International Sales. Mr. Beard is currently the Board President of the Washington County Commission on Aging and the Washington County Historical Society. He also serves on the Board of Directors for United Way. Currently Mr. Beard is Executive Director as a volunteer of two non-profits: MIHI, Inc., and the Corporation for Assistive Technology (the Home Ramp Project). Mr. Beard's volunteer career began with SCORE.

Sheryl Goree was appointed to a second three year term on the Board of Social Services. Ms. Goree is employed as Office Associate for the Hagerstown Housing Authority since 2004. Ms. Goree was an Office Service Associate for Allegheny Power for five years. She has been an Adoptive/Foster Care Parent since 1998.

The Washington County Department of Social Services is a field office of the Maryland Department of Human Resources, Theodore Dallas, Secretary; Martin O'Malley, Governor; Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor; and David A. Engle, Director.

GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Permanency for foster children has long been a priority of the State of Maryland, and for the Washington County Department of Social Services. Children need to be a true part of a real family. One of the more recently utilized permanency options for children who cannot be safely reunified, for whom adoption is not a viable option, and who are facing the possibility of long-term foster care, is subsidized guardianship. Subsidized guardianship occurs without a termination of parental rights, and gives the child a long-term and secure living arrangement, while assisting the guardian with financial support and health insurance for the child. Guardians are background checked adults, with stable lives, who have a strong bond to the foster youth(s). They are often relatives through blood or marriage, or god-parents but, in some cases, are the foster parents. W.C.D.S.S. has had 29 children's foster care cases closed due to subsidized guardianship since the program's inception in 2009.

New Intake Process

**F
A
M
I
L
Y

I
N
V
E
S
T
M
E
N
T**

Effective August 1st the Family Investment division made changes to the way customers are interviewed when applying for benefits. The Food Supplement, Medical Assistance and Temporary Disability Assistance Programs (TDAP) were affected. Applications for Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC) and Medical Assistances (MA) remained unchanged. The Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) application process remained unchanged.

Once an application is received by the agency, either in the lobby or via online application at www.marylandsail.org, workers identify what programs the customer wishes to apply for. Each customer is given an appointment time to be seen for an interview. Interviews are held Monday through Friday at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., or 2 p.m. Before each group intake session, customers are shown an orientation video to better detail the programs we provide. Afterwards, a group of five Family Investment Specialists interview the customers for benefits. Up to 20 people are scheduled for each group intake session.

The new process is designed to accommodate the increasing number of Food Supplement applications being submitted while providing case workers with more desk time to process them. It also utilizes fewer customer service workers in the lobby, allowing these workers more time to assist those customers who call into the agency's help line.

A group of 18 supervisors and staff from the Family Investment division have been meeting monthly for the past year to develop this new application process. Staff members have also traveled to Frederick County, Harford County and Anne Arundel County to observe their intake procedures and adapt them to the needs of Washington County residents. Assistant Director Rosalind Martin stressed the need for communication and teamwork: "This will only work if everyone bears the weight and shares it," Martin said.

FAMILY CENTER MOVE

By Dori Yorks, Family Center Director

The staff at the Washington County Family Center have been working hard over the past several months preparing for the relocation of the Center. The week of July 5th the Family Center moved to 221 McRand Court, Suite 300. Our phone number is still 301-790-4002. This new location is just blocks from the old Center (right off Hump Road). The new Family Center facility has a large kitchen, activity room and bright, warm and welcoming Child Development Rooms, as well as four education classrooms and a computer lab. Along with the move came the opportunity for the Center to be "linked" to the DSS intranet, so now all Family Center staff are available through GroupWise! The staff at the Family Center encourages everyone to stop by and take a tour!!!

Bester Community Cares to Tackle Family Stressors in Evening Routines

By Ligia Teodorovici

After a successful year of family-centered educational events, the community partners that make up Bester Community Cares (BCC) enjoyed having the summer off along with the Bester families. This next school year's first event will be held on Thursday, September 15th and will focus on learning skills and ideas to help make family evening routines less stressful.

After a healthy, nutritious dinner, topics will be arranged in various stations which families can choose based on their greatest needs. Chore management, homework organization, healthy snacks and bodies, and stress management are among the choices for families to participate in interactive ways with various sponsoring community partners. Involved agencies in this year's kick-off event include Potomac Case Management, Inc., University of Maryland Extension Office, the Community Action Council, the Maryland Coalition for Families and Children, and Neighborhoods First, among others.

Staff who work with families in the Bester district are encouraged to contact Ligia Teodorovici at 240-420-2128 or Kathy Boyd-Mansfield at 301-790-4002 to find out more information and register for the event. Community agencies may also contact us to learn more about this collaborative group and it's charge to "Be the Change in 2011."

WASHINGTON COUNTY FAMILY CENTER RECEIVES LITERACY GRANT

The Washington County Department of Social Services is pleased to announce that the Washington County Family Center was recently awarded a \$50,000 grant by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. This grant will enable the Center to integrate and coordinate adult education, early childhood, family literacy, and parent education programming for the young families that it serves.

Last year 126 adults and 121 children received educational services, case management, parenting classes, onsite childcare, peer support and health education.

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy supports the development and expansion of family literacy programs across the United States. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis to nonprofit organizations, correctional institutions, homeless shelters, schools and school districts, libraries as well as community and faith-based agencies. Over the past 22 years, the Foundation has awarded more than \$40 million to 876 family literacy programs in 50 states including the nation's capital.

The Washington County Family Center was one of ten implementation grants awarded by the Foundation's Maryland Family Literacy Initiative at the annual *Maryland Celebration of Reading* which was held at The Music Center at Strathmore in North Bethesda, MD on May 17, 2011.

"The home is the child's first school, the parent is the child's first teacher, and reading is the child's first subject."

~ Barbara Bush

Children with Disabilities Voluntary Placement Agreement

Prior to the Voluntary Placement, parents who had children with significant mental health issues and required services beyond what the community providers could offer would be forced to petition the agency for placement and surrender their custodial rights.

On October 1, 2007 the Children with Disabilities – Voluntary Placement Agreements Act of 2007 (SB579, HB1226) went into effect. The law requires local departments of social services to present all Voluntary Placement requests at the Local Coordinating Councils and requires the court to determine whether the local department made reasonable efforts to prevent placement or could have placed the child under a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) prior to adjudicating a child with a mental illness or developmental disability a Child in Need of Assistance (CINA).

The VPA policy is viewed as a resource rather than a last resort, a potential preventive service. Every request for Voluntary Placement will be processed and reviewed equally, and families will receive notice of eligibility or denial in a timely and uniform manner.

Once a parent or legal guardian contacts their local department via

telephone or in writing to make a request for a voluntary placement, the referral is assigned to the In-Home Services Program (Consolidated Services) to provide the initial assessment. Services to assure safety are also provided to the family prior to the Voluntary Placement Agreement being signed and approved. If it becomes necessary for a child to enter an out-of-home placement, the Consolidated Services and Out of Home Services work cooperatively to locate an appropriate placement. Upon locating the placement resource and the signing of the agreement, the case would transition exclusively to the Out of Home service program.

In Washington County, the initial assessments and in home services are provided by Mark Conrad. Once a child enters an out of home placement, services are provided by Beth Hawbaker. If you would like more information on the Children with Disabilities- Voluntary Placement Agreement, please contact Russell Citro at 240-420-2190 or at rcitro@dhr.state.md.us. You may also find more information online.

“Do not anticipate trouble,
or worry about what may
never happen.
Keep in the sunlight.”

~ Benjamin Franklin