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Mission Statement

Macon Citizens Hab-
ilities advocates for
and protects the
rights of individuals
with intellectual and
developmental dis-
abilities.

MCH provides com-
prehensive residen-
tial and day services.

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From the Director...

Anne Bradstreet said these words which are so true: "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome." And what a winter it has been... snow is both beautiful and hateful in that it wreaks havoc with scheduling, personnel getting to work safely, and loss of revenues when services cannot be billed. Yet it is so beautiful as it silently falls to the earth with its pure white blanket. March is now that unpredictable time that bridges winter and spring.

Winter has affected MCH both with weather and with more changes in service delivery such as slow response from the MCOs and continued requests for information already submitted. As of now, MCH only contracts with 3 MCOs with the merger of Smoky and Western Highlands which has again changed many processes, especially billing for services. It appears that the next merger will be Smoky with PBH, another MCO we currently contract with. Mecklink merged with Cardinal, and we are now contracted with Cardinal. It is almost a full-time job just keeping up with the changes and adjusting to the fact that everything is slowing down because the MCOs are occupied with the mergers and forming committees to review and do everything that was so much simpler in the past. As one "old timer in the business" told me: "It ain't the good old days anymore." Perhaps there will be a time when we understand the creation of managed care for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities; however, we only see all processes becoming more cumbersome with less concern for clients and providers even though there is much lip service. The governor and DHHS Secretary, Aldona Wos, expect to have 4 MCOs in place by the end of the year. While the jury is still out on whether these are good moves, it is certainly affecting services to consumers. Only time will

tell the rest of the story, but it seems that those with little voice continue to get the fewest and slowest services or the short end of the stick. Our disenfranchised population cannot speak out, and often parents/guardians don't understand how. These are indeed sad days for the IDD population after what appeared to be a real concern in the '80s and '90s with new services being developed and offered.



Good food at the Special Olympics/Valentine's Dance at Mill Race Farm in Peachtree

On a more positive note, our clients have two events to look forward to.... Harrah's is sponsoring a Mad Hatters dance on St. Patrick's Day, and First Baptist Church, Franklin, will recognize our clients with IDD and have a luncheon for them and staff on March 23. Webster Group Home made a beach trip for the very first time in November.



Enjoying a WCU basketball game

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness month. The Willowbrook State School exposure in 1971 with Geraldo Rivera's sensational television expose, *Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace* exposed how persons with IDD were living in deplorable conditions. This exposure has been compared to the civil rights movement for developmental disabilities.

From the Director continued...

Thankfully, while much progress has been made, we still have miles to go. Too many are still underserved while the mental health system continues on a downward spiral. It never made sense that intellectual and developmental disabilities should fall under the umbrella of mental illness, but that is how our state and many others categorize the service. While people with developmental disabilities can certainly learn, the developmental disability cannot be cured. A developmental disability must occur prior to age 22 and often occurs at birth. While one with IDD certainly can have a mental illness, they are clearly two different disabilities. We hear much about bullying today, and rightfully so, but so often it was those with IDD who were bullied because they were different. Unfortunately, this still occurs all too often 40 years after Willowbrook.

Until next time.... Jeannie



Millrace Farm Valentine's Dance



Webster Group Home Visit to the Isle of Palms



A Review of Willowbrook and Christmas in Purgatory

The early 1970's was a period of huge turmoil in the provision of services for people living with developmental disabilities. Today, what is simply known as *Willowbrook* was in fact the catalyst for revamping the entire service system for people with developmental disabilities. From a state school for the mentally retarded mostly known for its horrific conditions, *Willowbrook* as a form of care was wrestled into a system cooperatively providing quality care across the entire state of New York. *Willowbrook* will always be remembered for changing the way people living with mental retardation, now referred to as *intellectual and developmental disabilities* were treated.

In the mid-1960s, the movement known as *deinstitutionalization* began in earnest. Pressure was building to move people out of state-run institutions for mental illness, mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Today we have the Olmstead Act to keep people out of institutions and promote community integration.

In 1965, U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy visited the now-infamous Willowbrook School on Staten Island, unannounced. Afterward, he declared the "wards were less comfortable and cheerful than the cage in which we put animals in the zoo." In 1971, Geraldo Rivera brought the horrors of institutional existence into our living rooms with his *Willowbrook* expose, forever changing the role of the state run institutional system. Rivera's expose and book on *Willowbrook* titled, "*A Report on How It Is and Why It Doesn't Have to Be That Way*," was the catalyst that brought about the class action lawsuit primarily responsible for changing this archaic system, New York State Association for Retarded Children, et. al. and Parisi, et. al. v. Rockefeller.

In early 1972, Geraldo Rivera, who was then a reporter for a television station in New York, conducted a series of investigations at Willowbrook (on the heels of a previous series of articles in the *Staten Island Advance* and *Staten Island Register*), uncovering a host of deplorable conditions, including overcrowding, inadequate sanitary facilities, and physical and sexual abuse of residents by members of the school's staff. This resulted in a class-action lawsuit being filed against the State of New York in federal court on March 17, 1972. A settlement in the case was reached on May 5, 1975, mandating reforms at the site, but several years would elapse before all of the violations were corrected. The publicity generated by the case was a major contributing factor to the passage of a federal law, called the **Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act of 1980**.

In 1983, the State of New York announced plans to close Willowbrook, which had been renamed the Staten Island Developmental Center in 1974. By the end of March 1986, the number of residents housed there had dwindled to 250 (down from 5,000 at the height of the scandal exposed by Rivera), and the last children left the grounds on September 17, 1987.

In 1974, *Christmas in Purgatory – a Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* was released. Today you can find the link on the (cont.)

Thank You

First Presbyterian Church, Franklin
Martin, Catherine & Jimmy Skiffington
Frankie Hughes
Victor Adan
Russ Gezon
Susan Blaydes
Whitmire Family
Presbyterian Women
Jack DeBetta
Linda Hedden
Sheila Stamey
Jane & Monty Beck
Geneese Gottschalk & Bill Hoehn
Eddie & Mary Henson
Cindy & Jim Benton
Nancy Wheeler
Laura Vollmer
Linda Caldwell
Tommy & Linda McGuire, Millrace Farm
Knights of Columbus - St. Michael's Council

In Honor of Roger

Robert Lee
David & Kay Pitts

In Honor of Henry

Ruby Collier

In Honor of Leanne

Michael J. DeLuca

In Memory of Daye Cathey Campbell

Dorothy Hillier

In Memory of The Reverend Bill Ruff

First United Methodist Church



Employee of the Year -- 2013 LaTonya Tannehill



LaTonya Tannehill was unanimously chosen as the employee of the year and presented with a plaque and gift certificate. She works at Webster Group Home and is the Scheduling Supervisor. She has been employed since May, 2007 and is always willing to fill in and work extra hours. She demonstrates excellent therapeutic skills when working with the clients at Webster.

Congratulations, LaTonya!

(cont. from above) on the internet: <http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/pdf/undated/Xmas-Purgatory.pdf> If you have never seen this graphic pictorial of the unbelievable way persons with IDD were once treated in our country, now is a good time to take a look and thank the Creator that we have at least made strides to eradicate this abuse from our history. However, much like racism, I believe there are and maybe always will be those who scorn and avoid persons with IDD. There are also those who have the power to make the lives of persons with IDD even better who will never step inside a group home, a day program, or even visit a family who has a child with IDD yet will legislate and dictate their services and treatment and pat themselves on the back for helping the less fortunate. Again, with much gratitude, we have come far from Willowbrook and the horrors of *Christmas in Purgatory*, but we have the ability to do so much more today, recognizing that just as we are all differently created, so are our friends with IDD. So finally, the same conclusion is reached... all services don't need to look alike but need to be tailored to individual needs. Take a stand! Let your legislators know your service needs. It's not lack of money so much as how the money is used or mandated!

"Have you had a kindness shown? Pass it on." Henry Burton

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Thank You!