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Directions Newsletter

Deep East Texas Regional Mental Health Mental Retardation Services

Volume 10 | Spring Issue | Number 3

Paychecks pave road to independence

The 20 million dollars Texas taxpayers expend annually on litter cleanup is not a total waste, considering that some of it goes to employ willing and able MHMR workshop clients.

Deep East Texas MHMR is currently heavily involved in contract services to the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation to provide litter pickup along state highways in this region.

"We think this is a very valuable service we are providing for the community, and it is one of the few contracts that allows our handicapped clients to make full minimum wage," comments Nancy Jones, workshop director in Nacogdoches County.

Workshop clients who form the work crews consider themselves the most fortunate among their fellow workers. Clients must continually prove their productivity or lose their place on the highway crew.

Full minimum wage is not the norm for the clients, even when they seek employment outside the workshop. The effect for many of the highway crew members has been a new sense of confidence in making it on their own. They have found their paychecks pave the road to new independence.

In some cases their wages have financed moves to private living quarters, which is an important first in their lives.

MHMR provides the necessary safety helmets, neon orange vests, boots, and rain gear for the crew members. The highway department furnishes the plastic bags.

Clients are supervised by a workshop staff member and are transported to and from the work areas in MHMR vehicles.

Assignments to sections of highway are made daily by the local highway department offices. The workers in charge of the crews phone in the number of bags filled and the area covered at the end of the day and are told where to report the following day.



PRIZED POSITION — Workshop clients on highway crews occupy prized positions and work very hard to keep their productivity high. The minimum wage and tight budgeting have allowed several clients to find private living quarters. James Sanders is a member of the Nacogdoches County Sheltered Workshop crew.



SHOULDER UP! Workshop clients from around the region are out early every weekday morning whether in the heat of summer or cold of winter to clean the highways of litter. Under a contract with the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation clients like Jan Price can earn minimum wage.

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Executive Director's report...

Local needs are top priority

by Jim McDermott

The remarkable progress that has been made over the past ten years in bringing community-based services for the retarded and mentally impaired to Deep East Texas has been possible to a large extent because a very able local MHMR Board of Trustees has been responsive to local needs.

This spring, MHMR staff are heavily involved in writing the 1986-87 funding request to the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. What we are finding as we prepare this funding request is a further affirmation of what we have suspected for some time now. There appears to be a steady erosion of the local authority of community centers' boards of trustees to decide what services are most needed at the local level. Through its budget guidelines, TDMHMR is becoming increasingly specific about what services they want community centers to deliver. In short, TDMHMR intends to fund heavily those services they think most important and leave other services with less funding. However, community centers like MHMR have always striven to provide comprehensive services to a wide range of needy people. We want to provide a full continuum of services for our local citizens.

We are attacking this problem at two levels. We are working hard at every opportunity to persuade state TDMHMR leaders that local boards know best about local needs, and are best equipped to make decisions about allocating resources to meet such needs. We are also working on the regional and county level to build up support for services the local community needs. All over our region we are encouraging staff to make their communities aware of services we provide. They are building a grassroots base of support in our local communities that will hopefully buffer our local citizens against the shifting priorities on the state level. County support organizations are being organized to raise funds to help support needed services, services which in many cases are not a high priority on the state level.

MHMR is not a state agency whose services are allocated on the state level by officials hundreds of miles away. We are local citizens, seeking local solutions to local problems.

In an emergency
call the MHMR
Crisis Line
1-800-392-8343

Former business manager honored

Former business manager Franklin Avant was honored on his departure by the MHMR Board of Trustees for more than six years of outstanding service to the Center.

In a resolution of appreciation passed by the board at a recent meeting, it expressed the board's "deep and genuine appreciation to Franklin Avant by reason of his dedicated service to MHMR and his abiding concern and efforts on behalf of the mentally ill and mentally retarded citizens of the Deep East Texas Region."

Mr. Avant was employed by MHMR as director of the business division on January 9, 1978, and served in that capacity until his departure in April, 1984.

Prior to coming to MHMR he was a staff services officer for Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR) where he worked closely with and provided assistance to community centers in Texas.

At MHMR, Mr. Avant provided leadership and direction in developing three biennial budget requests and six annual operating budgets.

He played an important role in the development, implementation, and continued operation of the Center's computerized accounting system.

Under his guidance and direction, MHMR's business division has continually been praised by annual fiscal audit firms, TDMHMR's management audit team, and various other auditors that have inspected the Center's business records from time to time.



FRANKLIN AVANT, left, receives Certificate of Appreciation from Judge Allen Sturrock, Chairman of MHMR Board of Trustees, at March 27 Board meeting at central administration in Lufkin, recognizing Mr. Avant's years of service as MHMR Financial Director.

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Kirbyville resale shop going great!



ADELA M. CROUCH
'Special Volunteer'

The Kirbyville resale shop, The Second Time Around, is off to a great start raising hundreds of dollars each month to benefit the mentally impaired of Jasper and Newton Counties.

Located in the old W & W Variety Store at 321 E. Main in downtown Kirbyville, the shop is owned and operated by the Kirbyville Mental Health Association. The store offers a variety of merchandise including clothing, household items, and appliances for sale to the public.

It is completely manned by volunteers and is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. five days a week. It is closed on Wednesdays and Sundays.

All proceeds benefit the mentally and physically handicapped of Jasper and Newton Counties.

Local Mental Health Association officials expressed their thanks to the people of Jasper and Newton Counties who have supported the shop. In addition, they expressed their appreciation to those who have donated items to the shop for sale.

President of the Association is George Hargrove. Vice president is A.L. Charlton, and secretary-treasurer is Ila Atchison.

Since August, 1983, the Association has funded a full-time aide's position at the Kirbyville Developmental Center.

"With the state MHMR office diverting more and more state money to services for the chronically mentally ill, we must rely on such outstanding local initiative to fund a broad range of services our local communities need and have come to expect," commented Joe McCulley, regional development officer for MHMR.

Special Volunteer

Among the volunteers at the Resale Shop in Kirbyville is a very special volunteer named Adela M. Crouch, a retired school teacher who is certainly not "retired". Mrs. Crouch walks to the Resale Shop and works there from three to seven hours daily, doing anything that needs to be done. The younger volunteers admit she "works them to death."

In addition to her volunteer service at the Resale Shop, Mrs. Crouch has held a garage sale in her home for three years, raising enough money to buy certificates of deposit which earn enough interest to pay for maintaining the cemetery.

Mrs. Crouch also helps the Senior Citizens Groups with fund-raising. As a matter of fact, she helps everyone.

On March 30 she had surgery, but plans to be back at the Resale Shop in May. Mrs. Crouch's birthday was February 13. Would you guess that she was 85 years old that day?



SECOND TIME Around Resale Shop in Kirbyville has been a tremendous success since its recent grand opening. Attending were, from left, MHMR Unit Director Sally Navarre, MHMR community aide Vonzetta Samuel, Mrs. George Gee (wife of the MHMR Board member from Jasper County), Kirbyville Mental Health Association President George Hargrove, and MHMR Unit Director Cassy Drake.

Committee guards rights

Deep East Texas MHMR Services is responsible for the care, treatment, rehabilitation, and habilitation of many Texas citizens. Personnel of this center are committed to providing these services in a manner which preserves the dignity and the basic human rights of every citizen under its jurisdiction.

Any client, relative of a client, or representative of a client who has a complaint, comment, or suggestion regarding the health, safety, welfare, or legal and human rights of a patient or client of this center is invited and urged to submit them in writing to:

Chairperson
Public Responsibility Committee
P.O. Box 935
Lufkin, Texas 75901

The Public Responsibility Committee is an independent, impartial body. None of its members are employees of this center.

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Deep East Texas MHMR Services
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FRIES HONORED — JoAnn Fries, right, was presented with a plaque by fellow sheltered workshop directors at an informal luncheon at the Hot Biscuit Restaurant in Lufkin on staff development day.



WORKSHOP secretary Barbara Nettles, who has worked part-time at MHMR since August 1, 1977, was named Employee of the Quarter for the spring of 1984. With her are Larry Welker, left, director of the Houston and Polk County Sheltered Workshops, and MHMR Executive Director, Jim McDermott.

House named for Mrs. Fries

On the recommendation of County Judge Pete McKinney, the new halfway house for the retarded in Silsbee has been named in honor of JoAnn Fries.

Mrs. Fries recently moved to the Austin area with her family after compiling a remarkable record of service achievement for the mentally retarded in Hardin County over the last seven years.

The JoAnn Fries House is currently under construction at 190 E. Avenue J and will be in operation by June 1.

At approximately 4,000 square feet the house has the capacity for 12 residents and one staff member.

The house is a regional service unit of Deep East Texas Mental Health Mental Retardation Services and is intended to prepare mild to moderately retarded clients for independent living.

The request to name the house for Mrs. Fries was also made by the officers of the Hardin County Advisory Council: Winnie Jones (chair), June Garrett, Pat Luxton, Elouise Smith, Alene Thomas, Francis Cobble, and Gilda Mitchell.

In making the announcement the Deep East Texas MHMR Board of Trustees expressed their appreciation to Mrs. Fries for "...showing such a degree of initiative and enthusiasm that her program has become a model for others."

Nettles is honored

Crockett native Barbara Nettles was named Employee of the Quarter this spring in recognition of her work as secretary for the Houston County Sheltered Workshop since August, 1977.

Because her supervisor, Larry Welker, is director of both the Houston County and Polk County Sheltered Workshops, Mrs. Nettles has been called on to attend to many extra duties.

"It was an honor for me," Mrs. Nettles said, "and I felt especially proud that Larry thought enough of me to recommend me for it."

Mrs. Nettles has worked part-time at the workshop since she joined MHMR August 1, 1977. She is a native of Crockett and graduated from Lovelady High School. She also attended Angelina College.

Mrs. Nettles and husband, Donald, have one son, Scott, 12 years old.

A member of the First Baptist Church of Crockett, Mrs. Nettles teaches pre-school Sunday School classes.