TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

Update

VOLUME 19 NO. 2

MAY 2016

The HEART of Healing

Dear friends,

Our May newsletter comes out during Mental Health Month and after we observe Children's Mental Health Awareness Week. I see these observances as wonderful opportunities to educate about good mental health for all ages *and* to fight against stigma.

This issue of *Update* highlights many activities and programs that serve to do just that, such as Art for Awareness and our growing Recovery Court system. I applaud the people working in the field who are effecting positive change every single day, some of whom are exemplary and are celebrated on these pages.

There are many ways to fight stigma. We can educate ourselves. We can be compassionate and mindful. We can watch our words, because language is powerful. Don't stereotype or be hurtful in your speech or in the written word. If you have a mental illness, be open about it. This could inspire and encourage others to do the same. If you'd like to do more, consider joining an advocacy group such as NAMI.

Mental illness is no different than physical illness. This is an important message. Thank you for helping to spread positive messages. Please let us know of programs and people in Tennessee who are making a difference in our world. Email Leslie.Judson@tn.gov.

Enjoy the *Update* and enjoy spring,

E. Douglas Varney, Commissioner

TN Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

Our VISION

To be one of the nation's most innovative and proactive state behavioral health authorities for Tennesseans dealing with mental health and substance abuse problems.

Our MISSION

Provide, plan for, and promote a comprehensive array of quality prevention, early intervention, treatment, habilitation, rehabilitation and recovery support services for Tennesseans with mental illness and substance abuse issues.

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES **Update**

May 2016

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TN Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

ON THE COVER

Our cover art is a selection of pieces from Art for Awareness 2016. These and others are currently displayed in the halls of Legislative Plaza.

Main cover art:
"We Are Wonderfully Made" by Virginia Winn

Accompanying pieces, top to bottom:
1. "Hope Everlasting" by Jennifer Grayson
2. "A Starry Night" by Stephanie Long
3. "Bold Red Tulips" by Mary Gaw
4. "Pieces of my Life" by Karen Worthy Doss
5. "Hot and Cold Moods" by Rick Winn
6. "The Beauty of Recovery" by Anne Puckett

See more Art for Awareness artwork starting on page 4.

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Davidson County Drug Court Turns 20

Commissioner E. Douglas Varney joined Governor Bill Haslam, Nashville Mayor Megan Barry, and other officials in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the Davidson County Drug Court residential facility. They gathered also to honor Judge Seth Norman who founded the initiative in 1996 in an attempt to provide alternative sentencing for addicted non-violent felony offenders. Under the leadership of Commissioner Varney and Governor Haslam, the recovery court system is now available in 75 counties and 28 judicial districts across the state of Tennessee. It is one of the nation's most comprehensive recovery court efforts. Dozens of current participants and graduates joined in the April celebration.

Above: Commissioner Varney and Judge Seth Norman

Left: Commissioner Varney, Honorable Melissa Blackburn, Davidson County Mental Health and Veteran Treatment Court Judge, and Liz Ledbetter, Division of Substance Abuse Services, TDMHSAS

To learn more about TN's Recovery Court program, visit: http://tn.gov/behavioral-health/topic/criminal-justice-services

Prescription for Success is a Success... But Work Continues

In the summer of 2014, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, with support and leadership from Governor Bill Haslam, multiple state agencies, local governments, and citizens across the Volunteer State embarked on a first-of-its-kind prevention campaign, created and conceived with the goal to take action and address Tennessee's prescription drug abuse epidemic. Dubbed Prescription for Success, the goal was to collectively get a handle on the availability and misuse of prescription pain medications.

"It was a terrible time," recalls Commissioner E. Douglas Varney. "Looking back, it's pretty remarkable what we have accomplished in the span of just a couple years. We put a framework of goals together, rallied support from lawmakers, stayed focused, and the results so far indicate we've come a very long way." The Department has recently measured the results of its statewide efforts.

To learn more about Prescription for Success, including the plan's achievements and what remains a priority, visit tn.gov/behavioral-health/topic/prescription-for-success

Art for Awareness attendees at the 2016 event held at Tennessee Tower ***Photos by Theresa Montgomery, State Photographer***

11th Annual Art for Awareness Honors Founder

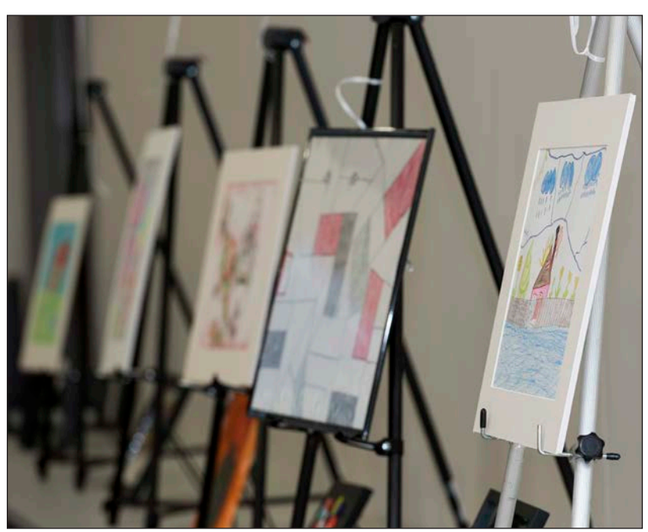
This year's Art for Awareness was held in memory and in honor of Louetta Hix (right) who passed away March 1, 2016. Art for Awareness was Louetta's vision. She proposed the idea in 2005. Louetta knew that celebrating and showcasing the artistic talents of people in recovery would reduce stigma.

The next year, more than 100 people attended the inaugural event at the Tennessee State Capitol. The Art for Awareness project has continued each year to encourage talented Tennesseans to explore the road to recovery through self-expression.

This year's event was held March 15 in conjunction with Healing Arts Project, Inc. Commissioner E. Douglas Varney and Deputy Commissioner Marie Williams addressed the attendees. Keynote was given by art therapist Catherine Harris who spoke on "The Healing Power of Art and Creativity." Goody bags filled with art supplies were prepared for each participant. It was another inspiring Art for Awareness afternoon.

Above: "Shattered Heart" by Julie Freeze

Below: "Sunny Day" by Daniel Swayney



A highlight of Art for Awareness is when attendees are given the opportunity to speak about what art means to them and to their recovery.

Thanks to everyone who participated and shared their artwork with us. Hope to see you and your artwork in 2017!

"Freedom" by LeAnn Wilson

In the News...

by Mike Machak, Director of Communications/Public Information Officer

Knoxville Hosts Nation's Top Drug Official

National Drug Control Policy Director Michael Botticelli traveled to Knoxville in January to discuss the problem of prescription drug and heroin abuse that's ravaging communities across the state. Botticelli spoke with representatives from law enforcement, public health, treatment providers, and former addicts. The forum offered further insight into what's driving Tennessee's drug epidemic, effective strategies to reduce demand, enforcement by federal, state and local authorities, and focused on addiction treatment.

It was a continuation of the conversation started by President Obama last year during a speech in West Virginia. "This could happen to any of us in any of our families," Obama said of prescription drug abuse. "This is an illness. We have to treat it as such."

Commissioner E. Douglas Varney stands with Michael Botticelli, Director of National Drug Control Policy.

Shelby County Mental Health Court Now in Session

Shelby County defendants who are in and out of jail and whose crimes are primarily related to mental health conditions may now go before a judge in a court that recognizes their illnesses.

Beginning in January, General Sessions Judge Gerald Skahan is hearing cases in which defendants' crimes are primarily related to mental illness.

"This is a breakthrough for Shelby County and for people with mental illness who have been arrested mostly for petty crimes, jailed, released and re-arrested," said Ellen Abbott, Director of the Office of Criminal Justice Services in the Department's Division of Substance Abuse Services. "We are delighted to be able to provide funding to this new Mental Health Court and work with them to help people with mental illness access resources, get properly diagnosed, stabilized, and hopefully keep them out of jail and the courts."

It is estimated that 500 of the approximately 2,000 people jailed at the Shelby County Criminal Justice complex have mental health diagnoses. Their crimes are typically petty in nature, nonviolent misdemeanor offenses, and they are arrested multiple times in a given year.

Left to right: Assistant Commissioner Rod Bragg; Kim Daugherty, Coordinator, Shelby County Mental Health Court; Martha Lott, Director, Division of Community Services, Shelby County; Judge Gerald Skahan, Shelby County Mental Health Court and General Session Court, Division 9; Dorcas Young, Deputy Director, Division of Community Services, Shelby County; Ellen Abbott, Director, Office of Criminal Justice Services, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

"By addressing their mental illness up front, getting them evaluated and further assisting them with housing, employment, and life skills, they have a greater chance of staying out of jail and have a much improved life experience," said Abbott. "It's much more cost effective to get them the help they need versus the alternative of being routinely arrested and jailed."

It's our goal to see a significant reduction in the number of people cycling through the court system in Shelby County, improving the lives of these individuals and the community as a whole.

East TN Launches Faith Based Prevention Efforts

The TDMHSAS Office of Faith Based Initiatives has been busy traveling across the state and educating community members about how to fight substance abuse on a grassroots level. This effort engages and connects faith-based organizations helping them to support and strengthen families in their communities by offering recovery programs to help individuals beat their addictions. Monty Burks, who leads this effort for the State, worked with Insight Alliance, a Johnson City prevention organization, to coordinate an East Tennessee meeting for those interested. The gathering was held March 10 at Boones Creek Baptist Church and was so successful that organizers ran out of materials. Keep up the good work, East TN!

For information about how to participate in this substance abuse prevention movement including how to become a certified Faith Based Community, visit www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/topic/Faith-Based-Initiatives

It Takes a Village

Above: Leading this effort in the Tri-Cities (left to right) is Lifeline representative Jason Abernathy; Jennifer Berven, Director of Insight Alliance in Johnson City; and Monty Burks, Director of Faith Based Initiatives, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Left: It was standing room only at the East TN Faith Based kick-off event.

Commissioners Meet with Media

Commissioner E. Douglas Varney traveled across Tennessee with fellow Commissioners (left to right) Derrick Schofield, Department of Corrections; Bill Gibbons, Department of Safety and Homeland Security; and John Dreyzehner, Department of Health. On this day, they visited McGhee Tyson airport in Knoxville and met with with local news media and editorial boards.

Conference Opportunities

From Crisis to Hope: Best Practices in Crisis Response Conference
A Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention Conference
June 28, 2016 | One Century Plaza Conference Center, Nashville
For more information, visit tamho.org

Suicide Prevention Conference
Empowering Faith Communities
June 11, 2016 | Murfreesboro

Rob Cotterman is Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute's New CEO

Please join us in welcoming Rob Cotterman as the new CEO of Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute. Rob is a veteran of the Department, having dedicated 32 years of services at the Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute in Chattanooga. Rob has served as a psychiatric technician, rehabilitation therapist and supervisor, program director, and most recently as an Assistant Superintendent for Program Services.

In addition to his responsibilities at Moccasin Bend, Rob has served as an ancillary professor in the Graduate School of Psychology for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and as a day treatment counselor for Chattanooga Psychiatric Clinic, now Fortwood Center.

Rob is a graduate of Tennessee Government Executive Institute and holds a Master of Science degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Counseling Psychology from William Jennings Bryan College.

Rob served on the Board of Directors for several community organizations that include: the AIM Center for Mental Health, Hamilton County Homeless Healthcare Center, and Hamilton County Mental Health Court Advisory Board.

In his free time, Rob enjoys spoiling his toy poodles, bowling, and working to preserve and maintain his historic 120-year-old home.

kidcentral tn

KIDCENTRALTN.COM

Small Starts for Families is a free online wellness tool designed to help parents and caregivers create a healthier future for their families. The program offers simple, daily actions that families can do to increase physical activity, create healthy eating habits, foster better sleep, encourage dental hygiene, and quit using tobacco. Created by the Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness in conjunction with Kids Central, Small Starts for Families is a resource for Tennessee families who are interested in living healthier.

Learn how to start today!
Visit healthiertn.com/families

Hospital Employees of the Year

Western Mental Health Psychiatrist Dr. Turner chosen as Department-Wide Employee of the Year

Each year, our hospitals choose an Employee of the Year. From those, an overall Department winner is named. Dr. Kevin Turner is our 2015 honoree.

Dr. Kevin Turner, Western Mental Health Institute, has consistently shown his dedication and willingness to serve our hospital, staff, and patients without hesitation, whenever and wherever asked, said CEO Roger Pursley. "On many occasions this may require him to cover more than one unit at a time as the primary treating physician, with the assistance of a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. He is a valued member of our medical staff. His compassion and effectiveness is recognized and appreciated by the patients and their families. And it does not go unnoticed or unappreciated by the staff he works with on a daily basis."

Dr. Kevin Turner is a Board Certified Psychiatrist, who received his board certification in general Psychiatry in September 2004. He graduated from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine with a medical degree in 1980 and completed his residency at the University of Southern California Medical Center in 1987.

Dr. Turner came to work at WMHI in May 1996 as a staff physician/psychiatrist. He served as Clinical Director and acting Clinical Director from 1997-2004. Dr. Turner left WMHI briefly in 2006 but returned full-time in 2007. He has almost 19 years of State service and 30 years of combined work experience.

Remaining Regional Mental Health Institutes Choose Employees of the Year

Moccasin Bend

John Gonzales has been employed 16 years with Moccasin Bend Mental health Institute. He provides quality therapeutic interventions both in groups and in 1:1 settings. He continually expands knowledge and expertise in psychosocial rehabilitation. He has a unique ability to relate to patients and staff alike in a very kind, engaging, enthusiastic, and therapeutic manner. He generally holds a captive audience when teaching through humor and by using personally relatable material. He touches patients' hearts with kindness, charisma, and a genuine concern for their safety and wellbeing. He consistently looks for ways to improve, teach, and facilitate higher-quality methods for engaging them. He is a valuable asset.

Memphis

Brenda Wiley is an outstanding telephone operator, the position she has held at Memphis Mental Health Institute for more than 12 years.

She is often cited for her excellent work. She is customer-focused and very knowledgeable about handling difficult situations in a respectful manner. She goes above and beyond to be courteous on a daily basis. She works very well with other employees, exuding kindness. Brenda has the skill to competently address the needs of individuals. Brenda maintains her calm composure and assists the client with whatever issues they may be experiencing.

Middle Tennessee

Sam Ejiofor is a Certified Nursing Technician. Employed by Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute since 1986, he has worked as a Psychiatric Technician in the Acute Treatment Program, Forensics Services Program, and intake. He also worked for five years as a Youth and Adolescents Counselor at Cumberland Psychiatric Hospital in Nashville.

Sam is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Pine Buff, and is a Certified Nursing Assistant. Sam is a member of the State's Sick Leave Bank and the Middle Tennessee Employee Advisory Committee Board. Sam isn't new to this honor. He was nominated for the Employee of the Month in 2011.

BRIDGES to a Brighter Future

MTMHI and Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association Teach How to Live in Recovery

The words didn't always come easy for the seven patients who gathered in the chapel at Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, but the excitement in the room was evident. It was graduation day, and they were making a milestone in their recovery. In partnership with the Tennessee Mental Health Consumers' Association (TMHCA), these patients were among the first at MTMHI to be taking an active role in leading their own recovery and taking ownership in understanding and managing their mental illness. "They are the first here to participate in the BRIDGES program," said TMHCA Program Director David Reichert. "You can absolutely recover from a mental illness."

Charles Gibson, Hospital Chaplain

David Reichert

"I've been able to learn what the doctors know," said one man. "I have a mental illness that I can recover from. I may never be cured, but I can see how the medicine will affect me. This is a great resource to have." Since its founding by TMHCA in 1995, BRIDGES has been implemented in large and small communities across Tennessee. Annually, more than 3,000 individuals take part in the program which stands for Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals through Education and Support.

At MTMHI, the 10-week program includes classes on mental illness, treatment, self help skills, and the philosophy of recovery. The pilot project looks to greatly improve patient outcomes and to reduce readmissions and the need for crisis services once a patient is discharged.

"Through this program, patients will learn so much about themselves," said Reichert. "They will create and implement a wellness and recovery path that's unique to them. We give them the tools, empower them, and then watch as they move forward to achieve their own life goals and dreams."

"This took a lot of personal dedication and a lot of work on your part," said Joyce Kovacs, MTMHI Assistant Superintendent. "I hope you use the tools and knowledge you've gained. We support you. No one recovers in isolation."

MTMHI began a second Bridges class last month.

Dr. Farooque Named Psychiatric Life Fellow

In recognition of a remarkable three decades of service to patients, colleagues, and students, Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute psychiatrist Dr. Rokeya Farooque has been named a Life Fellow in the American Psychiatric Association, one of the most prestigious achievements her profession bestows.

"I am very happy to be named as a Life Fellow," said Dr. Farooque. "I am grateful to have dedicated my whole life as a psychiatrist helping the people of Tennessee."

Dr. Farooque joined Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute in 1986 as an Attending Psychiatrist in the Acute Treatment Program. In 1993, she was promoted to Forensic Psychiatrist and has continued in that role for well over two decades. "I joined MTMHI right after finishing my residency," said Dr. Farooque. "Among my responsibilities has been serving as the state's Forensic Psychiatrist, providing expert testimony at court hearings."

From 1995 to 2004, Dr. Farooque complemented her work at Middle by taking on a teaching role at Nashville's Meharry Medical College. "I enjoy my work and I love my coworkers in this hospital," said Dr. Farooque. "We keep busy working very hard to help the people of Tennessee. I thank Almighty God for giving me the opportunity to help and work at MTMHI."

Mann, McCray Earn CEO Awards

The annual Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute's CEO Awards, given "for outstanding performance and faithful service to patients and staff" were presented recently to Michelle Mann and Clarence McCray.

"Both Michelle and Clarence were selected due to their outstanding commitment to quality patient care and their willingness to confront and highlight care that falls short of that goal," said CEO Mary Young. "Both Michelle and Clarence are tireless proponents for our patients and epitomize the best of Moccasin Bend." Congratulations, Michelle and Clarence!

Michelle Mann

Clarence McCray

Motown Comes to Middle

Story and photos by Mike Machak

In recognition of Black History Month, Motown made a comeback at Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute. From Gladys Knight and the Pips, to Rick James, to The Supremes, and The Jackson 5, staff and patients joined in to bring a golden era of entertainers and their music back to life in an American Bandstand-style program.

Hosted by David Reichert, portraying Dick Clark, and La'Wanda Jenkins, as Diana Ross, and produced by Barbara Nightingale and Valery Fletcher, the show wowed the crowd. Paul Bartoszek handled video and sound. "So many of us grew up with these artists and sang and danced to these songs back then and today," said Reichert. "Music, especially this era of music, is so positive, fun and uplifting. Everyone enjoyed it, whether they were performing or part of the audience."

Above: La'Wanda Jenkins, Clinical Nurse Specialist as Diana Ross; Jason Gordon, Treatment Team Coordinator; Melvin Rosenthal, Psychiatric Technician; The Supremes' Winnie Gill, Nurse; and Helen Johnson, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist; and Juannisha Gillespie, Clerk.

Far left: Vince McHollin, Vocational Services as Rick James.

Left: Vic Johnson, Recreational Therapy; Vera Graham, Human Resources; and Antony Samuel, Treatment Mall

Moccasin Bend Board of Trustees

Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute Board of Trustees met April 13. "The Board of Trustees functions in an advisory capacity," said Moccasin Bend CEO Mary Young. "It is comprised of NAMI members, consumers, and our community partners who also provide behavioral health services to our shared consumers. It is a valuable resource to TDMHSAS and the Chief Executive Officer."

Thank you, Board of Trustees, for your service to Moccasin Bend and to the State of Tennessee!

Pictured at the April 13 Board of Trustees meeting (left to right): John Arredondo, Assistant Commissioner of Hospital Services; Vice Chairman Dr. Larry Thompson; CEO Mary Young; Sylvia Phillips, NAMI; Randy Battles, CEO and President of AIM Center; and Chairperson Donna Maddox, CEO Johnson Mental Health Center.

Are you 16-25 years old?

Do you have personal experience with mental illness, substance abuse, foster care, juvenile justice, and/or are you at risk of homelessness?

Would you like to ....

Inspire change in your city and state?
Educate lawmakers? **Connect** with peers?
Use Your Voice to help others?

If this sounds like you, we would love to have you on our team!

The State of Tennessee is embarking on a new initiative for 16-25 year olds transitioning into adulthood. Youth and young adults who have "been there" and who have a passion to help others are needed to drive this movement!

For more information and to get involved, call or text Will Voss at (615) 925-9224 or email ihbt@TNVoices.org

Meetings begin soon!

Sober Living Community Breaks Ground

Submitted by Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services

The Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services (CADAS) held a groundbreaking ceremony on Feb. 29 for a 24-unit sober living community located on the current CADAS property at the corner of Manning and Minor Streets in Chattanooga. The new apartments will house residences for men and women in single occupancy apartments. Support services such as relapse prevention, life skills, and community meetings will be available for all residents. "We are thrilled to add this valuable component to our list of tools in our continuing struggle against addiction," said Paul Fuchcar, CADAS Executive Director. "Our hope is that, for these 24 people in early recovery, living in our apartments will redefine how they view their personal recovery and assist them in regaining their lives." The project is funded in part with grants from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati and the Tennessee Housing Development Agency with additional funding from Pinnacle Financial Partners, Inc. Other partners in the project are the Chattanooga Housing Authority, Tennessee's Creating Homes Initiative, and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The new residences are set to complete in the Spring of 2017.

ASAP Executive Director Recognized Nationally

Submitted by ASAP of Anderson County

CLINTON, TN – Stephanie Strutner has been named the 2016 Advocate of the Year by Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) who represents more than 5,000 community anti-drug coalitions across the country. She accepted the award Feb. 4 during CADCA's 26th annual National Leadership Forum. Strutner is the Executive Director of Allies for Substance Abuse Prevention of Anderson County, ASAP. She has worked in the field of prevention for more ten years.

This award recognizes substance abuse prevention leaders who are exceptional advocates, forging relationships, and educating their elected officials throughout the year about key substance abuse-related issues and the importance of community coalitions.

"Strutner is a tireless advocate for the substance abuse prevention field and her efforts have made a tremendous national impact," said CADCA's Chairman and CEO, Gen. Arthur T. Dean.

Strutner was selected for this award for her efforts in advocating for policies related to reducing prescription drug abuse in Tennessee and for working with Senator Alexander's staff to provide information on the importance of substance abuse-specific language related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

For more information about ASAP of Anderson County, visit www.ASAPofAnderson.org.

Vickie Daugherty | Tennessee Crisis Service

Outstanding Employee

by Mike Machak

Protecting children is her passion, her calling

Youth Villages and Vickie Daugherty have enjoyed a partnership for the past 13 years. It's a pairing that has revealed her passion for protecting the youth in her care. Skilled in completing clinical assessments and evaluating the holistic needs of the family, Vickie is committed to her mission to keep everyone involved and engaged, said colleague Connie French.

Vickie's strength comes into play when she finds herself in situations, with couples and families where everyone has a different idea about how to parent. It's these encounters when Vickie is in her element. She's especially mindful of engaging other key players early on, such as a therapist, case managers, so everyone is aligned with the recommended safety plan for the child.

"I love helping families identify their strengths and to teach them how to safely plan around their weakness," said Vickie. "When I can engage in a plan that I know will keep a youth safe and the parents feel empowered to parent and providers are on board, I feel like I've been swept up to heaven."

Vickie cherishes her work with children and families and considers it her calling. "As soon as I get a call from triage, I center myself and pray for guidance and wisdom," said Vickie. "I know that I will do my best for youth families and other key players. Afterwards I sit in my car, clear my mind, and say thank you Lord for a blessed day. When I get home to my family, we laugh, cook, eat, and watch a good movie." While Vickie has thought about other positions, she can't imagine working in any other field than one involving families and youth in crisis.

On a recent night out, Vickie experienced an unexpected reward for her years-long efforts. A young man rushed to her and hugged her. Looking to be in his early 20s, Vickie didn't recognize the young man who she would soon learn she had helped as a child.

"He began screaming out loud, this is one of my old therapists," said Vickie. "He was saying how much he appreciated me and if it had not been for me calling him out when he was acting up or listening to his corny jokes when he was in crisis, he doesn't think he would have made it."

Vickie Daugherty

A year later Vickie learned this young man had enrolled in college and was doing well. It is situations like this and a passion for keeping children safe, that keeps Vickie thriving.

"I could not imagine working in another field," said Vickie. "I will always be involved with families and youth that are in crisis even when I retire. I believe this is my calling."

TO NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE

as a Crisis Services Outstanding Employee, download a nomination form here and follow the instructions. Completed forms are placed in a pool of applicants and reviewed by a special TDMHSAS committee. Download a nomination form here.

Bradley County Agency Wins Governor's Award

Congratulations to Bradley County's Family Resource Agency for winning an Excellence in Building Resiliency Award, part of the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Early Foundations and presented at the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth's Advocacy Days. The winning project at the Blyth Family Support Center, in partnership with the Family Resource Agency, serves primarily low-income families and children by offering Head Start and preschool classes. Early learning programs have been offered at the site for almost 15 years.

Impact of My Health, My Choice, My Life Continues

by Mark Bresee, Statewide Peer Wellness Coach and Trainer

For five years, wellness waves washed east and west, north and south in Tennessee in the form of the My Health, My Choice, My Life (MHMCML) wellness initiative. On paper, the federal grant ended September 30, 2015, but is it really over? Testimonials from the program tell a different story, one whose impact lives on.

Kathy attended the six-week Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) and participated in eight weeks of Peer Wellness Coaching. Her goals included smoking cessation, losing weight, and getting rid of sixteen bags of stuff in her home. A grown son and a grandchild needing a place to live moved in. Stress went up and the cigarettes stayed. But Kathy lost 26 pounds and reduced the bags to four.

Billy attended the CDSMP and got in on the Peer Wellness Coaching. He wanted to lose weight and he also wanted to save money. His frequent use of TV dinners ran his food bill up pretty high. Billy had lost several teeth over the years, so - inspired by wellness classes - he asked his mom for a blender and a crockpot for Christmas. Billy still heats up a TV dinner now and then, but now he loves healthy smoothies and pinto beans. Who knew that you could save money and eat better?

MHMCML included reading, writing, and recess! Our annual recess, known as the Championship Games, dramatically increased the fun quotient. Young and old, tall and short, fast and slow participated in the games. Running, throwing, dancing, and especially the Tug-of-War competitions created smiles, laughter,

and a great deal of cheering. Who knew that regular folk, even people leaning on walkers and riding in wheelchairs, could karate chop boards?

In order to keep the wellness wave rolling, wellness activities are now included in contracts. Staff members are being trained. Peer Wellness Coaches who started off on grant-based salaries are now being hired and paid from local and state budgets. Lives are still changing. More and more agencies and behavioral health organizations are getting on board.

Thanks for reading. Now, get out there and DO something to feel better, live longer, save money, and please, please have fun doing it!

To find a Peer Wellness Coach near you, visit www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/article/Peer-Wellness-Initiative

Welcome Aboard, Sarah and Shannon!

Sarah Cooper
Director of Prevention Services
Division of Substance Abuse Services | Central Office

Sarah Beach Cooper has joined the Division of the Substance Abuse Services as the Director of Prevention and Early Intervention Services. She served as an Evaluation Associate II at Centerstone Research Institute where she was the evaluator for Tennessee's Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment program and Renewal House. She also has a background as a legislative liaison and independent researcher for a variety of non-profit agencies.

Sarah holds a Master's in Social Work from the University of Tennessee. She is married with 3 children and is involved with several community organizations including Scarritt Bennett Center and the League of Women Voters.

Shannon Hardin
Assistant Director
Division of Human Resources | Central Office

Shannon Hardin has joined the Office of Human Resources as the Assistant Director. Shannon comes to us from the Department of Human Resources where she was most recently the manager of Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement.

With nearly 20 years in human resources with the State of Tennessee, she brings with her a variety of experience including employee relations, classification/compensation, job analysis, and benefits. Shannon has a degree in sociology with an emphasis in personnel management and is currently studying for certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources.

Avis Easley Promoted to Director of Planning

Avis Easley is the new Director of Planning in the Division of Planning, Research, and Forensics.

Avis has a nearly 19-year history of work in the Department. Her work has included managing the Regional and Statewide Planning and Policy Council system and development of the Three Year Plan.

"Avis brings a great deal of experience, knowledge, skills, and expertise to this position and we look forward to working together," said Assistant Commissioner Marthagem Whitlock.

Avis has an MS in Psychology from Tennessee State University and has a work history that includes positions at Clover Bottom Developmental Center and Elam Mental Health Center. She has been a member of the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council since 2010 and currently serves as Council Chair. She also serves as a Tennessee Autism Network member.

The former TDMHSAS Director of Planning, Suzanne Weed, can be found at Mental Health America of Middle Tennessee where she serves as Chief Operations Officer.

Staff Briefs

Welcome to the Department

Maria Bush

Maria Bush joins the Office of Crisis Services and Suicide Prevention as Program Specialist. Some of her primary responsibilities will include the aggregation, analysis, and reporting of crisis services data, providing Mandatory Prescreening Agent training to prospective candidates, and involvement in the communication and collaboration with crisis services programs providers, stakeholders, and community partners. Maria earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Fisk University and her Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling at Argosy University. Maria served as a crisis counselor and call center triage counselor for nine years at Mental Health Cooperative. In addition, Maria served as a primary outpatient program therapist at The Next Door, a PANSS research instrument administrator at Health Analytics and a sexual assault and domestic violence therapist in Murfreesboro, among other roles.

Jenifer Robl

Jenifer Robl, Mental Health Program Specialist, was hired under the Cooperative Agreement to Benefit Homeless Individuals grant. She is leading the development of a Tennessee Homeless Data Repository that will aggregate data on homelessness needs and resources in Tennessee.

Dr. Ellen Omohondro

Dr. Ellen Omohondro has joined the Division of Planning, Research and Forensics as a statistical research specialist. Ellen will primarily be leading the work of the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) and working with the Division of Substance Abuse Services on other substance use issues. Ellen has most recently been a private consultant and facilitator for data collection, data management, and statistical analysis as well as data interpretation and technical writing. She has also worked with the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. as principal investigator for seven grants, developed reports for the Tribal Epidemiology Center, and supported collaborative community needs assessment projects. Ellen fulfilled a number of different roles as a statistical research specialist, project manager, and environmental epidemiologist while working in the Tennessee Department of Health. She honed her teaching skills and data tracking management at both Washington State University and Middle Tennessee State University. Ellen received her Ph.D. from Washington State University, an M.S. from Colorado State University, and a B.S. from Western Michigan University. She is the author of numerous publications and technical reports and has presented papers at a large number of conferences. Ellen has been active in the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association and the CDC's Performance Improvement Managers Network.

Micheal Jones Joins the Office of Legislation and Rules

Micheal A. Jones has joined the Office of General Counsel as the Assistant Director of Legislation and Rules working alongside Kurt Hippel. Prior to his new position, Micheal served as the Executive Assistant to Commissioner Varney and Deputy Commissioner Williams. He is currently enrolled at Nashville School of Law where he will receive his Juris Doctorate degree this month. "I look forward to this next step in my professional career and embrace the opportunity to represent our Department," Micheal said. "My goal is to further the Department's vision and mission through the implementation of effective legislation and policy."

Thank you, Sharon Kay

Jazzy88 host and General Manager Sharon Kay invited Bob Currie, Housing and Homeless Services Director, to Fisk University studio to talk about Tennessee's goal to end homelessness among Tennessee veterans, families, children, and the chronically homeless in the state by 2020. "It's definitely ambitions," said Bob. "A number of states have rapidly reduced homelessness by connecting individuals to established resources as well as federal and state benefits. Utah is among the states leading the way."

This was a reunion of sorts. Bob and Sharon previously worked together at what is now Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug and other Addiction Services, Inc. Bob was Executive Director, and he hired Sharon as Director of the Statewide Alcohol and Drug Information Clearinghouse. She also implemented Tennessee's first alcohol & drug prevention hotline, The Tennessee REDLINE.

Thank you, Sharon, for the work you continue to do!

Best Wishes to our 2015 Retirees

Moccasin Bend RMHI

William Ventress
Robert Gunther
Mickey Williams
Connie Bond
Lawrence Cosby
Jimmy Nowell
Johnny Skiles
John Hartman
Linda Archer
Thomas Evans
Bonnie Boynton
Dexter Gardenhire
Melony Magoon
Linda Gardenhire
Cynthia Strunk
Joyce Mclain

Middle Tennessee RMHI

Margie Dunn
Terrtha Woods
Tony Bell
Carl Brown
Betty Lane
Bruce Malone
Tamara McRight
Ricky Carney
Sammie Rollins, Jr.
Darlene Matney
Geanie Patterson
Freda Hunter
Beverly Jack
Kunda Vaikunth
Jacqueline Bowen
Virgina Burris
Sandra Hall
Kathy Holt
James Perkins
Patsy Simmons
Deborah Valeriay
Brenda Jenkins
Daniel Bender, Jr.
Dorothy King
Kathryn Jackson
William Regan
Drema Trimble
Edith Osaitile
Ruth Love
Nancy Kirby
Laura Pointer
Rebecca Smith
Sandria Smith

Central Office

Karen Colyer
Roy Chance
Kevin Dillehay
Stephen Kanies
Sue Roberts
Richard Potts
Gloria Westbrook
Glenda Rogers
Joseph Lipman
Tom Criswell
Rodney Sanders
David Shelby
Danny Yates

Western RMHI

James Mitchell
Robert Galloway
Lavoris Cheairs
Emma Cross
Roy Crouse
Roy Grantham
Robert Griswell
Clara Manley
Clara Prewitt
Louis King
William Young
Patricia Sewell
Alfred Verser
Leo Bufford
Marilyn Russell
Vivian Walker
Rodney Jones
Hazel Harvey
Winbon Mason, Jr.
Minnie Steward

Memphis RMHI

Spencer Sain
Emma Dye
Rosie Irving
Oscar Woodall
Ruth Harris
Rodney Howard
Lynnwood Cross
Alma Toney
Fannie Pruitt
Beatrice Moss
Robert Scott
Dorris Bell

Thank you, Dr. Barnes!

Dr. Louise Barnes retired from a 29-year career in state government on March 31, 2016. Upon joining the department in 1988, Dr. Barnes served as a trailblazer with tireless dedication to building and supporting early identification and intervention mental health programs for young children and their families.

Dr. Barnes provided oversight for Better Attitudes and Skills in Children (BASIC), the Regional Intervention Program (RIP), Child Care Consultation; the Early Intervention/Prevention Program at Renewal House; Planned Respite; and the Respite Voucher program.

Dr. Barnes is forever an advocate even using her retirement party as an opportunity to share data on children's mental health indicators. She was considered the early childhood expert in the Office of Children and Youth Mental Health and a historian of the Departments.

Her passion was evident in her daily work to improve the lives of children in need. She will be missed by both her colleagues and agency program staff working in the field and for whom she provided support on a daily basis.

Deputy Commissioner Marie Williams, Dr. Louise Barnes, and Commissioner E. Douglas Varney.