

The Link

Building Partnerships & Connections for the Life You Choose

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Farewell Message from the Executive Director



On March 15, 2010, I officially submitted my letter of resignation to RCPGC's Board of Directors. Here are some excerpts from my letter:

have touched.

"There are so many things I am proud of that we have been able to accomplish, but perhaps the most significant has been our commitment to fully including those we support in our activities and work. The Steering Committee is so unique – at least here in Maryland. We have striven hard to assure that individuals and families have an important voice in what we do and say.... I have great confidence in the Directors, Team Leaders, and staff of the organization and look forward to their ability to accomplish a great many things in the future with the support of the Board.... Again, my sincere thanks for the opportunity to have served as the Executive Director of RCPGC. This is a wonderful organization and I am so proud to have been a part of its growth and development."

"It is with very mixed emotions that I am submitting my resignation as Executive Director to the Board, effective April 30, 2010. It has been an honor to have served in this leadership capacity for the organization during the past seven years and I want to thank the Board for the tremendous support and guidance that has been provided to me and the organization as we grew from a concept on paper to a quality agency recognized and acknowledged not only here in Prince George's County, but across the state. The partnership between the leadership of the Board and staff has been outstanding and has in no small way helped us during our formative years.... That the opportunity offered me to lead the organization became a reality is quite an honor and one which individuals don't often get in their professional careers. I will always treasure this and do hope that my contributions have helped the individuals and families we

As I leave RCPGC, I leave with such pride in what the staff has been able to accomplish in the past seven years of serving the residents of Prince George's County, as well as confidence that the organization will continue to grow and move on to even greater accomplishments.

Bea Rodgers
RCPGC Executive Director



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Questions? Comments?

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RCPGC's New Executive Director a Familiar Face



RCPGC Board of Directors President Jacqueline Randall recently announced the Board's choice of current RCPGC Program Director **Joyce Sims** (pictured at left) to succeed Bea Rodgers as the agency's next Executive Director, effective May 1, 2010. "We are excited to report," says President Randall, "that Joyce accepted with enthusiasm when offered the position." She added that "the Board looks forward to continuing our work with Joyce as we strive to move the organization forward in the next few years and we have confidence in Joyce's leadership qualifications."

Ms. Sims joined RCPGC as Program Director in 2006 after a long history in the developmental disabilities field here in Prince George's County. She was chosen based on outstanding executive-level experience, a wide range of work within various aspects of the developmental disabilities service system, a history of successful collaborations in a number of key issue areas, and very positive references from current and former colleagues.

As the transition process began in April, Ms. Sims said, "I look forward to working with the Board and staff, taking on the opportunities and challenges which appear on the horizon as we continue to provide the best possible services for individuals and families throughout Prince George's County." Her colleagues wish Ms. Sims well in her new role as RCPGC's Executive Director.

Looking Back on the 2010 Legislative Session



Although the current economic climate caused most to go into this year's Maryland General Assembly session with a discouraged outlook, the hard work of many advocates on behalf of developmental disability services produced some very positive results.

First, the best news is that Maryland's **FY 2011 budget** passed with no new cuts to DDA funding. While there are no large increases, there is full funding of Transitioning Youth services for the year beginning July 1, 2010. In addition, \$750,000 was restored to the Department of Human Resources Respite Care Program.

We are also pleased to note the passage of several other bills during the 2010 session:

- **SB633/HB1034 (Rate Commission and Adjustments)** requires that developmental disability/mental health community programs receive the same inflation-indexed budget increases as comparable state programs do, with increases not to exceed 4% per year.
- **SB9920/HB1226 (DDA - Low Intensity Support Services)** creates the LISS program. It clarifies that LISS services are not one-time only, waives the requirement that families of minor children apply for Medicaid, and allows those who have not yet applied for DDA services to receive LISS funding.
- **SB318/HB830 (DDA Waiting List - Voluntary State Income Tax Check Off)** establishes a system that, starting in 2011, allows Maryland taxpayers to make voluntary contributions to the Waiting List Equity Fund for services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Unfortunately, **SB717/HB 832 (Lorraine Sheehan Health and Community Services Act of 2010)**, which would have raised the state alcohol tax and used a portion of the new revenue to fund developmental disability services, did not come to a vote. Look for it to be proposed and debated again next year.

Go to www.thearcmd.org for more information on what happened during the 2010 legislative session.

Transitioning Youth Corner

The recent *TY Open House* was a success! Families in attendance had the chance to meet individually with RCPGC staff and have their questions answered. Our next event is the *TY Fair on April 29th*. Transitioning Youth of 2010 and 2011 are invited to attend with their families. This will be an evening full of information to educate you on the TY process. There will be presentations by DDA, Prince George's County Public Schools, DORS, and opportunities to meet with provider agencies. TY 2010s should currently be working with their chosen providers to complete the Service Funding Plan process and have them submitted to DDA. TY 2011s should be visiting providers in order to have their choice letter packet completed and submitted to RCPGC by October 15, 2010. TY Coordinator Jan Dethloff is available to assist you through the process and answer your questions. Contact her at jdethloff@rcpgc.org or 240-898-9381. We hope to see you at the TY Fair!



RCPGC's Raychon Stroman (right) reviews possible TY services with Carol Gibson, one of the parents who attended the recent TY Open House at our Lanham office

TY 2010/2011 Checklist

- __ Visit DDA day provider agencies**
- __ Submit Choice Letter / 3 Agency Receipts**
- __ Apply to your 1st choice agency**
- __ Sign a complete Service Funding Plan (SFP)**
- __ Apply for DORS services**
- __ Apply for Medicaid through DSS**
- __ Apply to MVA for a Maryland Photo ID**
- __ Apply for MetroAccess**
- __ Consult TY Coordinator regarding SFP**

***Exiting School?
Be Ready!
Be There!***

Prince George's County Transitioning Youth Fair

***Thursday, April 29, 2010
6pm to 9pm***

***Flowers High School
10001 Ardwick-Ardmore Road
Springdale, MD 20774***

***Representatives from DDA, DORS,
RCPGC, and many provider
agencies will be there to meet with
TY 2010 and TY 2011 individuals
and their caregivers.***

Sponsored by DDA, PGCPs, MAPS-MD, DORS, and RCPGC

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee continues to advocate on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities. SC member **Ramona Tidwell**, along with RCPGC's **Joyce Sims** and Ardmore Enterprises' **Janelle Schamberger**, attended a March Metro hearing in Lanham which sought public input on proposals to close the transit provider's \$189-million budget gap. Options include fare hikes, service cuts, and changes to MetroAccess, which recently saw fares increase by 10 cents per ride. Ms. Tidwell submitted SC testimony into the Metro hearing's official record, stressing that reductions to MetroAccess service would mean less access to work and community activities for individuals with developmental disabilities. While no one wants rate hikes, they are seen as preferable to service cuts. Most bus/train routes would not provide accessible transit to people who cannot follow bus schedules, make transfers, or make their way unassisted once they have reached their destination. It was noted that, without MetroAccess, many SC members would not be able to attend evening committee meetings at RCPGC's Lanham office due to the time Metro buses stop running. SC members who attended the Metro hearing say it was a valuable experience and remember the moving testimony of other attendees worried about the impact the possible service changes could have on their day-to-day lives.

The committee also continues its work on developing the script for a training DVD to accompany the Rights Booklet and could always use some "production assistance" in shooting the video. The committee is very excited about the project, hoping to have it completed and in use throughout the county in the near future. Plans for the 2nd Night Out are also ongoing with more details to come.

The Life You Choose: Richard Eckley



Richard Eckley had been working at the U.S. Census Bureau for more than 25 years when health concerns forced him to quit. In 2006, his health restored, Richard chose ROI to be his Supported Employment service provider and, along with his job coach, began looking for employment. He went on interviews and considered jobs as a custodian and courtesy clerk, but knew they were not what he wanted. Richard told his team he wanted to be a Bus Aide for the Prince George's County Board of Education. He took the initiative to complete an application and was granted an interview. After successfully completing testing and training, Richard was hired as a Substitute Bus Aide in 2007. Still on the job today, he is the most sought after Bus Aide on his lot. Hiring freezes have kept him from getting a permanent position. But, with his team's continued encouragement, Richard hopes to someday achieve that. For now, he dedicates himself to being a valued employee at a job he loves. In 2008, Richard received an award (pictured above) at RCPGC's Annual Dinner to recognize his success in moving toward his hopes and dreams. Richard credits others for his success, citing the love and support of his family. He and his wife recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. Richard remains determined as ever to live the life he chooses.

Staff Spotlight: Kim Murchison



Resource Coordinator **Kim Murchison** came to RCPGC in February of 2007. For many years now, she has been a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities throughout Prince George's County. Kim has helped people access DORS services, apply for home modification grants, and access other public benefits. She has served on the Prince George's County Commission for Individuals with Disabilities and testified at many public meetings. Since joining RCPGC, Kim has helped individuals transition from institutional settings into community services while ensuring their needs and preferences are attended to. Kim says she likes working at RCPGC because it is a "family-friendly agency and everyone comes in with a smile." Kim travels to RCPGC from her family's home in West Virginia. She says she strives for a day when individuals with developmental disabilities enjoy "equal access to community activities, services, and benefits."

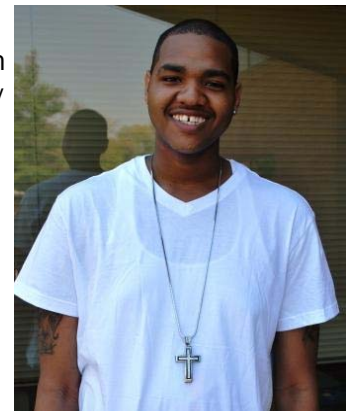
News & Notes: Annual Dinner, Staff Recognitions, Comings and Goings

RCPGC's **2010 Annual Dinner and Silent Auction** will be held on Monday, June 7th at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt. We have a big night in store, with good food, great auction items, and what promises to be a memorable performance from RCPGC's Connections Chorus In keeping with the Annual Dinner's theme of "**Community: Recipe for Success,**" we welcome nominations of non-administrative RCPGC staff who, like a chef creating a special meal, have utilized exceptional planning, creativity, patience, and persistence as they helped some one realize a goal or become more active in the community. If you know a staff member deserving of such recognition, get a nomination form at www.rcpgc.org (or call 301-429-9300), fill it out, and submit it to Joyce Sims at RCPGC We are happy to welcome a new arrival, even as we say goodbye to some familiar faces. **Adolfa Kegan**, formerly with Melwood, recently joined RCPGC as a Case Manager, bringing years of experience in the developmental disabilities field to help individuals on the DDA waiting list in accessing community resources. Adolfa succeeds **Angel James**, who recently left RCPGC to accept a position elsewhere. Former Case Manager **Kasey DeMent**, meanwhile, is now a Community Supports Specialist at The ARC of Prince George's County. Finally, we also bid farewell to lead Administrative Assistant **Shauntaye Hardy** (pictured), who accepted a position at the University of Maryland. In an e-mail to staff announcing Shauntaye's departure, RCPGC Executive Director Bea Rodgers cited her excellent supervision of work/study students from Flowers High School and called her "an excellent ambassador for us as the first point of contact for individuals, families, and the public." Everyone at RCPGC wishes Shauntaye, Kasey, and Angel the best of luck in their new positions!



A Successful Partnership: Alton Mason

RCPGC is pleased to recognize the accomplishments of **Alton Mason**. Since coming to our Lanham office as part of his work/study program in the fall of 2009, the Flowers High School senior has done an outstanding job sorting the daily mail and performing a variety of clerical duties. His co-workers have found Alton to be fine young man and a reliable employee with a positive attitude toward his work and his schooling. In his free time, Alton enjoys playing video games and hanging out with his friends. After he graduates from high school this summer, Alton plans to start taking Business courses at Prince George's Community College. He is the fourth student to intern at RCPGC as part of its partnership with Flowers High School. RCPGC is pleased to be able to provide opportunities for students to gain meaningful work experience and looks forward to the next student's arrival in the fall. In the meantime, we wish Alton the best during his remaining time at RCPGC and for everything else that comes after.



Resource Corner: Summer Edition



Summer is coming fast and so is summer camp registration. Whatever summer fun you're looking for, here are two great guides to help you find it. The Arc of Prince George's County's **2010 Summer Camp and Vacation Guide** gives a useful introduction to our region's most popular day, sleepover, and weekend camp options. To get a copy, go to www.thearcofpgc.org (click "Program/Services," then "Children," then "Recreation") or call The Arc at 301-925-7050 x269.

Another great resource is at www.pgparcs.com. The **2010 Summer Programs Brochure** (click "Things to Do," then "Day Camps and Playgrounds") has information on the many therapeutic recreation camps open to county residents with developmental disabilities. If you do not have access to a computer, call the Department of Parks and Recreation (301-699-2255) or RCPGC (301-429-9300) and ask for a copy of this very useful guide. Don't forget to ask about the possibility of receiving assistance in covering camp expenses.

2010 Annual Dinner and Silent Auction



Monday, June 7, 2010

*Martin's Crosswinds
7400 Greenway Center Drive
Greenbelt, MD 20770*

Tickets are \$45 per person. To buy yours or to RSVP, call Aungela Parker by May 24th at 301-429-9300.

Annual Dinner and Silent Auction proceeds help individuals with developmental disabilities access recreational, social, and educational opportunities in Prince George's County.

3 Ways to Help RCPGC



#8559



#18115

www.goodsearch.com

Applying for DDA Services

Individuals interested in DDA services must first apply and be determined eligible. The first step in the eligibility process is completing the **DDA application**, which you can get by calling the Southern Maryland Regional Office of DDA at 301-362-5100, going to the DDA website at www.ddamaryland.org, or calling RCPGC at 301-429-9300. Fill out the application and mail it to DDA with any available **documentation of a disability**. After DDA receives the application, an RCPGC Eligibility Coordinator will call to schedule a **face-to-face interview**, during which documents may also be submitted. Eligibility Coordinators recommend to DDA: (a) whether the applicant is eligible for DDA services; (b) which services the applicant is eligible for; and (c) the priority category for each service. After DDA makes the final decision on eligibility, the applicant receives an **eligibility determination letter**.

If you have questions about the eligibility process, contact Noelle Gehrman with RCPGC at 240-898-0414 or Gail Singletary with the Southern Maryland Regional Office of DDA at 301-362-5100.

Search for: [Services](#) • [Program Information](#) • [Maps](#) • [Directions](#)

www.mdcsi.org

Maryland Community Services Locator

"Connecting people to community services"

\$6
Tickets

Lights Left
Dim

Sound
Lowered

One World Center for Autism - Saturday Family Movies

April 24th
May 22nd
June 16th
July 10th

Oceans
Shrek 4
Toy Story 3
Despicable Me

10am SHOWS AT THE MAGIC JOHNSON CAPITAL CENTRE THEATER
PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES, & CAREGIVERS WELCOME
QUESTIONS? CALL OWCA AT 301-957-1400

\$6
Tickets

Lights Left
Dim

Sound
Lowered