



# The ANSWER



Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration's Newsletter

FALL 2011

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**Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration**

(724) 430-1370

[www.fcbha.org](http://www.fcbha.org)

Lisa Ferris-Kusniar  
Chief Executive Officer

**Fayette County Board of Commissioners**

Vince Zepotosky, Chairman  
Vincent A. Vicites  
Angela M. Zimmerlink

## Highlands Hospital Autism Center Grand Opening



Michelle Cunningham, Gerald Browell, Senator Richard Kasunic, Congressman Mark Critz, Commissioner Vincent Zepotosky, Lisa Ferris-Kusniar and Travis Haycock.

The long anticipated Highlands Hospital Center for Autism celebrated its grand opening with a reception and ribbon cutting ceremony on August 24<sup>th</sup>. The Education Center, located on 323 Breakneck Road in Connellsville, is now operational and complements the diagnostic center that began operating out of the Hospital in December 2010. The center is modeled after the renowned Cleveland Clinic Autism Center and is further supported by graduate students from California University of Pennsylvania as they gain clinical experience as behavioral healthcare specialists.

FCBHA played a key role in the development of the project since the concept was initially proposed by Highlands Hospital CEO, Michelle Cunningham, over two years ago. Lisa Ferris-Kusniar, CEO of FCBHA, was one of five distinguished guests who spoke to the crowd about the new center that will provide world-class care and treatment to those affected by autism. Ms. Ferris-Kusniar explained that while the center will provide both diagnostic services and education, FCBHA has supported and provided funding for the diagnostic portion of the program. She further explained how early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can positively impact a child's life and how difficult these services have been for many Fayette County residents to obtain. In closing, she noted that while the center is focused on providing developmental screening and day programs for children, counseling is available to all individuals and families regardless of age.

With Gerald Browell, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Highlands Hospital, moderating the festivities, Ms. Ferris-Kusniar, Congressman Mark Critz, Senator Richard Kasunic, Commissioner Vincent Zepotosky and Travis Haycock of Cleveland Clinic's Center for Autism all congratulated CEO, Michelle Cunningham and the Highlands Hospital staff on their hard work and dedication to the project and extended their best wishes for its success. The community, overall, is looking forward to the many positive benefits the center will provide to residents of Fayette County for many years to come.

If you would like more information about programs and services at the Highlands Hospital Center for Autism and Diagnostic Center, please call (724) 603-3360.

### Mission

*Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration enriches lives by providing access to and assuring choice among the best behavioral and developmental resources that promote recovery and resiliency.*



## Kid Talk

## Back to School

Whether their summer was jam-packed with activities or filled with complaints about being bored with nothing to do, kids often have a tough time making the back-to-school transition. To help ease back-to-school butterflies, try to transition kids into a consistent school-night routine. Also make sure that they:

- Get enough sleep (establish a reasonable bedtime so that they'll be well-rested and ready to learn in the morning)
- Eat a healthy breakfast (they're more alert and do better in school if they eat a good breakfast every day)
- Write down the need-to-know information to help them remember details such as their locker combination, what time classes and lunch start and end, their homeroom and classroom numbers, teachers' and/or bus drivers' names, etc.
- Use a wall calendar or personal planner to record when assignments are due, tests will be given, extracurricular practices and rehearsals will be held, etc.
- Have them organize and set out what they need the night before (homework and books should be in their backpacks by the door and clothes should be laid out in their bedrooms)

Although it's normal to be anxious in any new situation, a few kids develop real physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomachaches, associated with the start of school. If you're concerned that your child's worry go beyond normal back-to-school jitters, speak with your child's doctor, teacher, or school counselor.

Parents themselves can be a little nervous about the first day of school, especially if they're seeing their little one off for the first time or if their child will be attending a new school. To help make going to school a little easier on everyone, here's a checklist:

What to wear, bring, and eat:

- Does the school have a dress code? Are there certain things they can't wear?
- Will kids need a change of clothes for PE or art class?
- Do your kids have a safe backpack that's lightweight, with two wide padded shoulder straps, a waist belt, padded back, and multiple compartments?
- Do kids know not to overload their backpacks and to stow them safely at home and school?
- Will your kids buy lunch at school or bring it from home? If they buy school lunch, how much will it cost per day or per week? Do you have a weekly or monthly menu of what will be served?
- Have you stocked up on all the necessary school supplies? (Letting kids pick out a new lunchbox and a set of pens, pencils, binders, etc., helps get them geared up for going back to school.)

Medical Issues:

- Have your kids received all necessary immunizations?
- Have you filled out any forms that the school has sent home, such as emergency contact and health information forms?
- Do the school nurse and teachers know about any medical conditions your child may have, particularly food allergies, asthma, diabetes, and any other conditions that may need to be managed during the school day?
- Have you made arrangements with the school nurse to administer any medications your child might need?
- Do the teachers know about any condition that may affect how your child learns? For example, kids with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) should be seated in the front of the room, and a child with vision problems should sit near the board.

Transportation and Safety:

- Do you know what time school starts and how your kids will get there?
- If they're riding the bus, do you know where the bus stop is and what time they'll be picked up and dropped off?
- Do you know where the school's designated drop-off and pick-up area is?
- Are there any regulations on bicycles or other vehicles, such as scooters?
- Have you gone over traffic safety information, stressing the importance of crossing at the crosswalk (never between parked cars or in front of the school bus), waiting for the bus to stop before approaching it, and understanding traffic signals and signs?
- If your child walks or bikes to school, have you mapped out a safe route? Does your child understand that it's never okay to accept rides, candy, or any other type of invitation from strangers?

(This information was provided by [Kids Health](#), one of the largest resources online for medically reviewed health information written for parents, kids, and teens. For more information like this one, visit [KidsHealth.org](#) or [TeensHealth.org](#) © 1995-2009. The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.)



## FCBHA Employee Retires



On July 29<sup>th</sup>, the staff at FCBHA wished their fellow-employee, Linda Savochka, congratulations on her retirement. Linda began her work with us in July of 2001 as the ADAPT team nurse and in June 2003 was promoted to the position of Quality Risk Management Coordinator.

A graduate of California High School, Linda continued her education at Washington Hospital's School of Nursing where she became a registered nurse. Her 42 year career afforded her opportunities to work in various healthcare facilities and to meet a and work with a magnitude of wonderful people.

Linda is an amazingly energetic lady who knows the importance of giving back to others. Although she no longer works at FCBHA she continues to dedicate much of her time as a volunteer for numerous organizations including Make-A-Wish, Miracle League, and the Fayette County Special Olympics where she was just named Manager.

Linda enjoys traveling, walking, bicycling, dancing and reading. She is an active member of her church and has served on several missionary trips that have taken her to Haiti, Louisiana and Mississippi. This fall her mission work is keeping her in Washington County where she will be working on a rehabilitative housing project.

When they are not out dancing or volunteering, Linda and her husband of 43 years, Sam, enjoy spending time with their four children (Brendon, Jason, Justin and Roni Lynn), eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Congratulations on your retirement Linda, and good luck in all your endeavors!

### Seeking Nominations

FCBHA Advisory Board is accepting nominations for the annual "Community Recognition Award". This award is given to an outstanding community leader who has made a difference in the lives of people in recovery, children and adults with mental health needs and/or individuals with developmental disabilities. The nomination criteria, is as follows:

- Nominee should be a Fayette County resident.
- Nominee can be an individual, community organization, organized advocacy group, current or former employee or consumer of services.
- Nominee should have a direct linkage to the system of care in some form of collaboration.
- The reason for the nomination should be associated with significant positive outcome in the lives of consumers and/or Fayette County's community system of care.

Please contact Robyn Brady at (724) 430-1370 or visit our website to obtain a nomination form. Nominations for the award must be submitted on the form to FCBHA, **no later than October 31, 2011.**

### Training Opportunities

In a continued effort to educate our community, Fayette County's suicide prevention taskforce, Community Awareness of Life and Loss (CALL), has teamed up with neighboring organizations to sponsor the following trainings:

#### **October 14<sup>th</sup>, 9am-11:30am Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR): Suicide Prevention Training**

Presented by Rick Yaksic

Please RSVP by October 7<sup>th</sup> to Sara Gumola at [gumolas@westmoreland.swsix.com](mailto:gumolas@westmoreland.swsix.com) or (724) 853-4626.

#### **October 21<sup>st</sup>, 8:30am-12pm Gender Identity Issues and the Risk For Suicide**

Presented by Bethany Connors, LCSW and Matthew Kowasic, BS, Ed., CMHW

Please register by October 14<sup>th</sup> to Stacey Poirier at [stacey-poirier@fcbha.org](mailto:stacey-poirier@fcbha.org) or (724) 430-1370. SW/LPC CEU's are available.

Both trainings are free and will be held at Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration.



## Employee Service Awards



First row: Claudia Theakston, Amanda Kanouff, Amanda Skomsky, Tina Smith, Elmer Mosako, Shirley Giffin, Carol Jenkins. Second row: Bernadette Evans, Andrea Wright, Carol Lydig, Brenda Dow, Dayna Shallenberger. Third Row: Daneen Kammerer, Lou Ann Regish, David Geska, Renae Zuzak, Linda Savochka, Patrick Morrison.

The FCBHA Advisory Board held its annual Employee Recognition Luncheon on June 15<sup>th</sup>, at the Uniontown Holiday Inn. Staff from provider agencies and FCBHA were honored at this event for achieving 10 years of service.

Phil Michael, Advisory Board Chairman, and Lisa Ferris-Kusniar, CEO, acknowledged the recipients for their years of service. Following lunch, County Commissioners Angela Zimmerlink and Vince Zapotosky thanked all of the attendees for their dedication and hard work which continues to improve the lives of Fayette County residents.

This year's 10 Year Service Awards recipients were:

<b>ARC, Fayette</b>	<b>Fayette Resources, Inc.</b>	<b>Diversified Human Services, Inc.</b>	<b>Goodwill of Southwestern PA</b>
Amanda Kanouff Claudia Theakston	Robert George Carol Leydic Bernie Purdue	Jeri Alkhmour Willa Jean Bell Brenda Dow	Shirley Giffin Elmer Mosako
<b>Laurel Highlands Foundation, Inc.</b>	<b>Mental Health Association In Fayette County</b>	<b>Southwest Behavioral Care, Inc</b>	
Todd Biagini Lisa Briskey Tom Focht	David Geska Dayna Shallenberger	Andrea Moore Amanda Skomsky Tina Smith	
<b>FCBHA</b>	<b>Chestnut Ridge Counseling Services, Inc.</b>		
Clinton Anderson Patrician Heidt Carol Jenkins	Patrick Morrison Linda Savochka Renae Zuzak	Dennis Conway Bernadette Evans Mary Jo Friend Daneen Kammerer Carol Nicklow	Lou Ann Regish Allyson Ruse Jennifer Saxon Andrea Wright



## Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q)



Each year, the Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q) staff is busy asking questions and gathering comments to help improve the quality of life for individuals receiving services and supports through the Office of Developmental Programs. FCBHA contracts with the Mental Health Association in Fayette County to employ monitors who are individuals with a disability, family members, and/or community members.

A total of 89 interviews were conducted for FY 2010-2011. Topics covered included: participation in community activities, satisfaction with services and supports, relationships with family and friends, exercising choice and control in one's life, and living with dignity and respect. If a major concern is observed during an interview, such as abuse or a physical danger, this information is immediately reported to appropriate personnel.

Below is a sampling of Fayette County statistics collected from the IM4Q interviews conducted in 2009 – 2010:

<u>SATISFACTION</u>	<u>CHOICE AND CONTROL</u>
95% are satisfied with where they live	78% met some or all of their housemates before living together
94% report getting the services and supports they need	75% choose what to buy with their spending money
81% report usually being happy	43% of those who do not communicate verbally have a formal communication system in place
<u>SUPPORTS COORDINATION</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIPS</u>
95% have met with their Supports Coordinator in the past year	63% are always able to see friends whenever they want
97% report that when they call, their Supports Coordinator gets right back to them	98% report staff at their work or day program are nice to them
93% say their Supports Coordinator, when asked, will help them get what they need	
<u>COMMUNITY INCLUSION</u>	<u>DIGNITY, RESPECT &amp; RIGHTS</u>
67% visit with friends, family and neighbors at least weekly	33% say they vote
58% go to a restaurant at least weekly	46% always carry a form of identification
33% attend a place of worship at least weekly	

An essential part of IM4Q is the “closing of the loop” process. After the interview is completed, the monitors develop considerations geared toward improving the quality of life for the person and improving the service system overall. The “closing of the loop” process ensures that follow-up to considerations is completed in a timely manner by the Supports Coordinator. Considerations can be accomplished by referral to a community resource, discussed at the Individual Support Plan meeting, or by just making a phone call to a provider agency or family member.

Marlene Lavery Gray, IM4Q Coordinator for the local program, has participated in this process for 10 years. “I am excited about being a part of the IM4Q process. I enjoy meeting with people for interviews and value my role in creating a better life for those I encounter,” explains Marlene. Interviews for the FY 2011-2012 IM4Q survey began in September. For more information on IM4Q, contact Maureen Gibson, FCBHA Developmental Program Specialist, at (724) 430-1370.



## Here's the Buzz...



### OCTOBER-HEALTH & WELLNESS-FEST

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, the third annual October-Health & Wellness-Fest was held at Oakhouse Drop-In Center located at 31C Connellsville Street (Rear), Uniontown. The forum was free to all community residents who receive behavioral health services in Fayette County and featured guest speakers, informational tables that provided health screenings, healthy snacks, lunch and interactive art projects.

### HIGHMARK HEALTH FAIR

Employees of Fayette County were invited to attend a health fair sponsored by Highmark on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Health screenings, free flu shots and lunch were provided to all who participated.



### WEDNESDAY WALKS SEASON ENDS

As the Healthy Lifestyles Task Force members pack up the portable microphone and the "Meet Here" signs, we say farewell to another successful Walking Wednesday series. From June 15<sup>th</sup> to August 24<sup>th</sup>, over 1,300 people enjoyed the Wednesday Night Walks that were held in 10 communities throughout Fayette County. The Task Force partnered with communities, businesses, and local historians to explore the beauty, treasures, and history in our backyard. Some of the walks featured healthy dinner fare courtesy of a local community business partner. Each Wednesday walk had its own flare and unique tale. The season ended with a picnic at Jumonville Christian Camp & Retreat Center to celebrate a season of walking together. Thanks to everyone that joined in. We look forward to next year's adventures. *Been there walked that! (our motto)*

### EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM

After completion of a 12 week Weight Watchers Program, the total weight loss by FCBHA participants was 107 lbs. Congratulations!

### FAIRWEATHER LODGE

Fairweather Lodge in Connellsville is a reinvestment housing/employment program. Members of the local Lodge attended the Fairweather Lodge National Conference September 28-30th, in Carlisle, PA.

### YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Fayette County Youth Advisory Council is a youth-driven advocacy group that supports youth, ages 15-25, who have had personal experiences with agencies such as Children and Youth, Mental Health, Drug & Alcohol and/or Juvenile Probation. By sharing experiences and recommending positive change, the participants hope to improve systems of care for future generations. If you are an interested youth or an adult who knows someone who may like to join us, please call Christine Stone at (724) 430-1370.



## NAMI-Fayette



Front Row: Diana Williams. Back Row: Jeff Faieta, Chef Joe Carei and Toni Dursa.

National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI)-Care is a consumer group that meets in the Laurel Room at the Fayette County Health Center the first and third Tuesdays of each month to offer support and education to consumers affected by mental illness. Through their own experiences and peer-to-peer sharing, they have developed a close group always welcoming new members.

The group held an outing on June 28<sup>th</sup>, at Pasta Lorenzo with 18 people attending. Chef Joe Carei helped organize the event and seated them outside on the patio, where they enjoyed great food and a beautiful evening. Carol Warman would like to tell Chef Joe, “thank you for all of your help and keeping us within our budget.”

NAMI-Care used grant money that was awarded to them for additional activities which included going to Kennywood, attending a Pirate’s baseball game and visiting the Pittsburgh Zoo.

If you have any questions about joining the NAMI Fayette Care Group, please contact Carol Warman at (724) 439-1352.



## Recovery Corner

“I’m 32 years old now and I look back to June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 when I first walked into Douglas Education Center for my orientation and first day of classes. My mom was right by my side and so was Windi from Mobile Psych Rehab.

Throughout my time at Douglas, I learned to sculpt faces or one pieces, as they are called. I also learned to mold eyeballs and teeth, psychology, anthropology, portfolio, props and my favorite, being airbrush and special make-up effects. I have made many friends that have supported me throughout my time at Douglas; and the teachers were outstanding and so helpful. I had difficulty with some courses at school, but have passed all my classes and made Dean’s list twice.

On March 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, my mother was sadly diagnosed with cancer. She fought hard to battle this disease so that she could see me walk across that stage on graduation day. This was her biggest dream for me and she was so excited for this day! Unfortunately, on August 26<sup>th</sup>, my mother lost her battle with cancer. Sitting at her side before she passed, I promised her that I would graduate and I would not give up. It was hard without her, especially with only a few weeks left till the big day! With the support of my family, Windi, teachers, and my peers at school, I have made it. I completed all my work that was due and walked across that stage on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Even though I knew my mom physically wasn’t going to be there, she was with me as I walked across that stage and had the biggest smile on her face. She had the best seat in the house!

I am telling my story so that anyone out there that has doubts that they can’t fulfill their dreams or goals can see that anything is possible. With determination and hard work, I have a successful future and a promising career, and so can they. In the future, I hope to gain employment within a props shop or a theater within the area, working backstage on props, backdrops, and/or special make-up effects.

I was told that in the six years that Chestnut Ridge’s Mobile Psych Program has been open, I am the first consumer to graduate from college. See anything is possible. Never give up. Always ask for help if needed. And never, ever quit!”

~John D. Cramer

# The ANSWER

Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration  
215 Jacob Murphy Lane  
Uniontown, PA 15401

## Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration

Lisa Ferris-Kusniar, CEO

Telephone: (724) 430-1370

Facsimile: (724) 430-1386

Fraud & Abuse Report Line:  
(866) 275-6467

[www.fcbha.org](http://www.fcbha.org)

### **FCBHA CLOSINGS**

**Columbus Day**  
October 10, 2011

**Veteran's Day**  
November 11, 2011

**Thanksgiving Observance**  
November 24-25, 2011



**October 20, 2011 1:00PM-3:00PM**

**Women's Health Issues**

at FCBHA

Register at:

[www.hcqu.apshealthcare.com](http://www.hcqu.apshealthcare.com)

**Free**

**November 8, 2011 1:00PM-3:00pm**

**Men's Health Issues**

at FCBHA

Register at:

[www.hcqu.apshealthcare.com](http://www.hcqu.apshealthcare.com)

**Free**

**2011 WPIC/OERP Fall Videoconferences**

**Free**

**November 9, 2011 9:00am—11:00am**

Twitter While You Work: The Legal Impact of Social Media,  
Networking, and Cloud Computing in the Workplace

**December 14, 2011 9:00am—11:00am**

High Suicidal Risk Assessment and  
Management Across the Lifespan

To register please go to: [www.fcbha.org/publications](http://www.fcbha.org/publications)

*The ANSWER* is a publication of the Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration. Any comments, questions or suggestions may be submitted to the Newsletter Editor at [www.fcbha.org](http://www.fcbha.org) or Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration, 215 Jacob Murphy Lane, Uniontown, PA 15401.