



# The Valley Views

A Newsletter of the Ohio Valley Residential Services, Inc.

## Trying to S-t-r-e-t-c-h the Dollars

Human Resource Director, **Priscilla Faux**, and the Executive Director, **Michael DeFrancesco**, visited 18 of OVRS' licensed homes to meet with staff regarding the agency's yearly financial goal. They explained and reviewed existing and new personnel policies and identified how a financial goal and personnel policies intersect.

OVRS has two major sources of revenue: 1) an individual's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security (SSA) to provide support for a person's room and board; and 2) Medicaid waivers to pay for the staff support. The waiver rates have not changed since 2005. Service organizations—like all businesses—must constantly examine their revenue sources as well as each expense line item. Given the financial condition of Ohio, there is no expectation of any rate increase for at least two more years.

The challenge for OVRS, is to find ways to increase income and to reduce costs. Three critically important numbers under constant review are: overtime, housing maintenance costs, and utilization of services. In 2008, OVRS experienced an overtime rate of 6.7%; so far in 2009, that number is 2.6%—a savings of \$43,000.

By hiring an inventive maintenance coordinator, **Patrick Landoll**, and bringing many contracted services in-house, maintenance costs are almost \$30,000 under costs from 2008. Service utilization is the percentage that a service agency uses of its authorized units for each resident. If an agency uses only 90% of its authorized units, that agency is leaving 10% of its potential revenue "on the table." If those units can't be billed within a specific time-frame, it is lost revenue. OVRS' utilization for 2009 so far is 96.7%. During the month of May, the utilization rate was 99.2%.

While statistics can be tedious, given the staggering deficit in the state's budget, knowing a few key data points helps allay fears in the mind of families regarding the continuity of an agency's financial integrity. Efficiency is not surrendering quality, but it does take an "all court" press from all staff to realize even tiny efficiencies. For OVRS, a special note goes to **Chris Alexander**, business director; **Karen Burr**, program director; and **Priscilla Faux** for studiously attending to weekly data, which affects the elements of personnel and service utilization.

July 2009

The Valley Views is published four times a year by the Ohio Valley Residential Services, Inc. (OVRS). Designed for OVRS families, consumers, staff, and friends, the newsletter includes articles, training opportunities, and personal stories contributed by OVRS residents, staff, and families.

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Consumer Sites & Programs

Charlemar, Parkview, Ivanhoe, Carmel Terrace, Cypress Way,

Ferncroft, North Bend, Shadymist, Clovernook,

Woodsfield, Hansford, Lisbon, Meyerhill, Brookforest,

Epworth Court, Galbraith,

Strifler, Wayland, Cheviot

Apartments, Faircrest, Foster Settings, and Supported Living

*The Valley Views is proud to be the second-best newsletter, because every other newsletter claims to be the best.*

## New Board Director: Kelien Keen on Medicaid



Sandy Kelien

The OVRS Board is delighted to announce the addition of the newest director to the Board—Ms. Sandy Kelien. Ms. Kelien brings to the Board a rich background working in the county board MR/DD system. As a consultant working with Medicaid Consulting Group, Inc. Sandy assists county boards in many phases of their operations: preparation of cost reports/analysis, developing personnel policies, and maintaining Medicaid compliance—to name a few.

As the entire MR/DD system has become extremely dependent upon Medicaid funding, Sandy brings to the Board an encouraging level of understanding about a complex and often mystifying maze of regulations and processes.

## FaithWorks Builds a Bridge



Church members Nancy and Jeff dig the garden at North Bend.



Shadymist residents, church project director, Dave Willmore, with another volunteer

The members of White Oak Christian Church express their faith not only within the congregation of their church, but well beyond the walls of the church. Three years ago, the church established a program called FaithWorks, whose mission is to “build bridges into our community by serving the people in the community.”

A few months ago Lee Brack, Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disabilities, called Michael DeFrancesco and mentioned that he had received a call from a gentleman from the White Oak Christian Church, who was seeking agencies for outreach ministry projects. That fortuitous call from Lee led to an introduction to **Don Woodburn**, a vivacious church project coordinator and a man with deep convictions for his church and beliefs.

Don outlined the basics of the program: members of the church “adopt” a particular community service. Over a two- to three-year period—members continue to improve their original work. Previous projects have included painting school classrooms/houses, landscaping various service organizations, and assisting with local food drives.

Don asked how his teams might “be of service” to OVRs. Michael DeFrancesco suggested three projects. Don visited each and concluded that the North Bend and Shadymist sites would best fit within the sphere of the church’s membership.

After Don met with the larger church group, he presented to DeFrancesco two OVRs projects: 1) landscaping, sealing the driveway, and some exterior painting at the North Bend apartments; and 2) landscaping and painting at the Shadymist apartments.

The size of projects vary; 10–35 participants, depending on the workload. Don estimated 15 members would be needed for each site.

The projects are set for specific weekend. This year May 1–3 was selected. Unfortunately, rain intruded on the party. Due to a rain forecast throughout the weekend, the church members decided to focus on landscaping only. They arrived at North Bend in a big way: stump grinder, picks, shovels, and plenty of mulch. They planted six small bushes and some grasses. One couple thought roses at the front steps would enhance the site and said they would stop during the week and plant them. And so they did.

Work at Shadymist was a bit more pesky. The landscaping was completed on Sunday. The larger painting effort has been plagued weekly by threat of rain. Since this work requires scaffolding, painting has been delayed. Don said the church is committed to the projects and will see them through.

Among the teams who took part in the work: Bill, who took out a tree stump; Nancy and Jeff who planted the roses at North Bend; Ed, his wife, and children who returned to North Bend more than once for garden maintenance; and Dave Williams, who was the supervisor of the Shadymist project.

### Why Are You Doing This?

The following brief and “throw away” anecdote that Don Woodburn recounted, captures his faith, philosophy, and practice. One day, he invited an obviously hungry, disheveled “street guy” into a local restaurant for a meal. The restaurant hostess looked at this person, and asked Don, “Why are you doing this? He’s a con job.”

Don replied, “Just for the love of Christ.” The hostess simply rolled her eyes.

OVRs is delighted and grateful in the manner in which Don and his fellow members of the White Oak Christian Church are choosing to express their faith.

## FaithWorks Builds a Bridge — continued



Church team members work the ground and plant bushes and grasses.



North Bend's entire church project team—with children. Don Woodburn (kneeling on left). Man sitting on step is smiling because all he did was talk.

### The Wellness Czar Report

Czars have taken on a new popularity in the nation, and OVRs, not to be left behind. **Roseanne Dickerson** has been elevated to Czar of the Wellness program. The days of gentle chiding about calories, diet, sugar, salt, and high fructose corn syrup are over. With her new muscle, Roseanne is taking charge and scoffs at lame excuses. Czar Dickerson posts the results, often muttering things like, "My god, look at that."

In a rare sensitive moment, she reports the following:

- We now have mileage charts posted in the office. Many homes are up and running and racking up the miles—15 minutes of any form of exercise = 1 mile.
- We had 20+ employees signed up for the biggest loser contest.
- We have a new "healthy hump" day (Wednesday is over the hump day) where we put out a healthy menu selection for all employees/residents to try once a week.
- In the office, we have the "why weight for the elevator" contest—use the stairs! Several office and group home staff are participating.
- We have staff members who are submitting recipes they enjoy. We even had one staff member, Catherine Lowe from Carmel Terrace, bring us several low-calorie main dishes to try.

If you ever want to spot light an employee who is gung ho on the wellness program, **Catherine Lowe** from Carmel Terrace is an excellent candidate. She gets residents very involved. She is extremely proud of their progress and involvement.

### Political Standoff in Ohio

Citizens of Ohio are witnessing a political standoff in Columbus; the result of which no service in the state will be exempt from the ramifications of the revenue shortfall. Also, it appears there is not yet any braking to the declining monthly income from taxes.

Anyone who uses any service with state dollars will feel its impact. It is all the more pressing on the local level—Hamilton County—for a successful levy campaign this year to continue the services and supports for a growing population of developmentally disabled. Of the Board's \$95,000,000 annual expenditures, 70% is generated from a single levy, which comes to the voters every five years. These are precarious times.



This is George's rendition of the Victory Parkway building from across the street—capturing the director's blue Honda Element and a large photo of George himself.

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Community Services Supporting  
Individuals with Developmental  
Disabilities in the Home, Community,  
and in Everyday Choices

For information about employment or housing availability, please visit [www.ovrs.org](http://www.ovrs.org)



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