

Human Writes

STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Winter 2007

Volume 2, Issue 1

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth edition of *Human Writes*, a quarterly newsletter from the State Human Rights Committee (SHRC). The purpose of this newsletter is to share ideas, problems, solutions and other items of mutual interest among the Local Human Rights Committees and the SHRC. Please submit your thoughts and ideas to:

DMHMRSAS
Office of Human Rights
P.O. Box 1797
Richmond, VA 23218
SHRC.newsletter@co.dmhmrzas.virginia.gov

LHRC SPEAK

On Monday November 6th the NOVA Regional LHRC celebrated its third annual Mandatory Meeting. It was a gathering of all nine LHRC Committee Members, the Regional Advocate and 27 programs affiliated with the NOVA Regional LHRC.

The original mandatory meeting was designed to get all affiliated providers in one room and complete the mandatory paperwork all at one time. What a great idea! And guess what.... it worked! All of the paperwork was completed at once! No year long tracking and trying to figure out who paid when and whose was due when. In addition, it provided an opportunity to provide training and information to all of the programs at once. How great is that? All of your programs in one room... a captive audience!

It has now become an annual (and mandatory) event and part of the affiliation agreement. Programs must attend the Mandatory Annual Meeting held the first Monday every November, submit a signed Affiliation Agreement and submit their dues. Programs who fail to attend or provide the necessary paperwork at the meeting (you see you must do all three to be up to date!), must attend follow up LHRC meetings and comply with any corrective action. In addition, programs have the opportunity to provide updated program information to the LHRC through an "application/ renewal" form that each program submits at the annual meeting. It includes basic information like address, contact person name and phone number and email address.

The meeting this past November was held at a local restaurant where appetizers and sodas were provided. Program introductions were made and networking occurred! What a great experience. A wealth of materials were handed out to the programs and training was provided regarding the proposed new regulations. The programs were informed of a few new initiatives the LHRC will undertake in the coming year.

The Mandatory Annual Meeting has become a productive and successful event that we would highly recommend.

-Ann Pascoe

Meet the LHRC Honoree

Each issue will introduce an outstanding LHRC member.

This issue spotlights Stanley Lewis, Chair of the Williamsburg Regional LHRC. Your nominations are welcome.

At age 73, Stanley Lewis is twice retired – from his first career as a Marine jet pilot and his subsequent career with Rockwell International and Boeing. It is little wonder then that a man with this successful background would not choose to retire to his rocking chair on the front porch. His retirement career, in addition to golf, travel, and reading, has focused on the needs of mentally retarded citizens. This focus was inspired by the birth of his only son who was born with Down Syndrome. This is a family of high achievers whom life has treated well. The shock and grief of the reality of his son's birth guided them to participation in parent support groups where he was astounded to learn of the number of fathers who leave their families after the birth of a less-than-perfect child. This revelation was a shock because in his words, "The Marines take care of their own." Among his activities has been support of St. Coletta's School in Arlington, Special Olympics, three years on the Los Angeles Board of Directors of the March of Dimes, service on several work groups for the Department and on interview panels to help in hiring advocates. He served on the committee to review and revise the Rules and Regulations, which he found to be painfully frustrating because of the amount of time it took. He greatly admires the patience of the Commonwealth staff, particularly that of Margaret Walsh, State Human Rights Director, in ensuring that all viewpoints were heard. His own view is that performance and results are more important than strict adherence. His position on the Williamsburg Regional LHRC, in addition to being Chairman, is that of family member and user of services. This category, along with consumers, professionals, health care providers, and those with special knowledge of mental health and substance abuse needs, creates a balance of viewpoints necessary to successful advocacy. The LHRC has never had to conduct a hearing due, in his opinion, to Reggie Daye's ability to achieve satisfactory resolutions before the necessity of an LHRC hearing, plus the dedication of the various service providers to ensuring that their clients always receive proper consideration of their human rights. He thinks that LHRC training, which includes role-playing of an LHRC hearing, is very much needed. As a family, Mr. Lewis believes that they are better people for having lived with the pain of his son's handicap. His son has achieved his own success by being a happy and productive resident and student at the Stewart Home School in Kentucky.

FYI

Are you interested in serving on the State Human Rights Committee? In July 2007, the SHRC will say goodbye to our chairperson, Michael Marsh, and our previous chairperson, Joyce Bozeman, as both will complete their second term at that time. In preparation for their moving on, we are looking for interested individuals to serve on the SHRC. The SHRC meets 8 times per year in locations around the state. Our meetings are held on Fridays and will normally begin at 8:30 a.m. We try to finish the agenda by 2:00 p.m. We are looking for individuals with a commitment to human rights, knowledge of the DMHMRSAS service system and the human rights regulations. If you are interested please complete the attached SHRC application form (you may include a resume if you wish) and forward it to Kli Kinzie at the Office of Human Rights, 1220 Bank Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23218, or send it via fax to 804-371-2308, or via email to SHRC.Newsletter@co.dmhmrsas.virginia.gov. The SHRC will review all applications and possibly conduct interviews before making recommendations to the State Board for appointment. You will find a copy of the Application Form at the end of this issue (Attachment I).

THE SHRC AND STATE BOARD TO HONOR LHRC MEMBERS

Each spring the State MHMRSAS Board holds a Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. This spring the SHRC will

join the State Board in honoring all LHRC's. Regional Advocates are being asked to coordinate the LHRC nominations with the DMHMRSAS Central Office and the Office of Human Rights. They will be able to provide LHRC members more detailed information following the State Board's official announcement of the Spring Luncheon. It is anticipated that the Luncheon will be held in Richmond sometime in April.

Regional Advocates are being asked to assist each LHRC in selecting a member of the LHRC to represent them at the Luncheon and to receive a Certificate of Recognition for the committee.

In order to facilitate a timely response to the State Board's request for information on those to attend the Luncheon, information should be provided in writing the office of Human Rights no later than March 1, 2007. The form to be completed is at the end of this issue (Attachment II).

Update on the Revised Human Rights Regulations

The public comment period on the revised regulations ended in mid-November. We are now in the process of reviewing all of the comments and making further revisions based on some of those comments. We hope to present the final regulations to the State Board at its meeting in April. If all goes as planned, we hope the process will be completed and we can implement the new regulations in the fall of 2007. Stay Tuned!

Chief Justices Commission

Mental health providers, individuals with mental illness and their families, advocates, members of the legal community, and others have joined together on the 26-member Virginia Commission on Mental Health Law Reform established by Virginia Supreme Court Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., to examine the interplay between the state's mental health system and the courts. The Commission, chaired by University of Virginia law professor Richard J. Bonnie, who is also the Director of the University's Institute of Law, Psychiatry and Public Policy, will utilize such things as statistical information, focus groups, information from other states, and feedback from clients and experts in the field to compile a final report by the end of 2007. The purpose of the report is to recommend legislative changes to improve laws impacting mental health care in Virginia, including those pertaining to involuntary civil commitment. The work of the Commission is supported by five task forces focusing on access to services, empowerment of individuals receiving services, involuntary civil commitment, children and adolescents, and the criminal justice system. The Commission held its first meeting on October 12 - 13 in Williamsburg, and its second on December 8 in Charlottesville. The next meeting is scheduled for March 15 - 16, also in Charlottesville.

-Karen Walters

Issues

Update of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The LHRCs and the SHRC are considered "public bodies" as defined in the Code of Virginia, section 2.2 - 3701. As such, the committees must adhere to the FOIA requirements for meetings and records. The following reminders about FOIA requirements should appear in the LHRC by-laws, as well.

Meetings:

- include work sessions
- can be in-person or by telephone or video
- require three members or a quorum, if less than three

FOIA meeting requirements:

- are open to the public unless subject to a specific provision for a closed meeting
- 'public' includes the media

- votes may not be secret or written ballot
- votes may not be taken via telephone or other electronic means without specific statutory authority
- notice of the date, time and location of the meeting must be posted at least 3 days prior to the meeting (exceptions for special or emergency meetings)
- at least one copy of the agenda packet must be available for public inspection
- minutes must include the date, time and location of the meeting, members present and absent, a summary of discussion, and a record of all votes taken
- draft minutes must be posted on the internet within 10 days of the meeting and final approved minutes within 3 days of approval

Hail and Farewell – Office of Human Rights

The Office of Human Rights (OHR) welcomes Carrie Flowers who has joined Jim Bowser's team located on the campus of Central State Hospital (CSH), Hiram Davis Medical Center (HDMC) and Southside Virginia Training Center (SVTC). Ms. Flowers comes to the OHR from District 19 Community Services Board. Prior to that she worked for many years at SVTC. Ms. Flowers is providing advocacy services at CSH, HDMC, and selected community locations.

Hail and Farewell - SHRC

On October 3, 2006, the State MHMRSAS Board appointed Joseph G. Lynch, LCSW, to serve a three-year term on the SHRC. Mr. Lynch, a clinical social worker, has been in private practice in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for over 20 years. He has been quite active in community and professional activities, including serving on the Harrisonburg Rockingham LHRC from 1996 to 2002. During his tenure on the LHRC, he also served as chairperson. Mr. Lynch's broad clinical experience will make him an invaluable asset to the SHRC. His interest in and expertise in evaluating and treating sexual offenders will be especially helpful to the committee as it carries out its responsibilities relative to the Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation. Please help us welcome Joe to the Committee.

Meet The Advocate

Each edition of Human Writes will profile one of the Advocates.

This edition introduces Sherry Miles, Regional Advocate of Region VI

Greetings! I am Sherry Miles and I serve as the Regional Advocate for Region VI. When I received the call that it was my turn to be featured in the SHRC newsletter, I must admit I was at a loss for words. For those people who know me, this is an unusual occurrence!

I have worked for the Commonwealth of Virginia for 18 years and the Office of Human Rights for eight years – two years as Chief Advocate at Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC), and six years as the Regional Advocate. As you can see, I have spent many years in public service – not the most lucrative career choice, but the most rewarding.

I have an Associate of Arts degree from Ferrum College, a Bachelor of Social Work from James Madison University, and a Master of Public Administration from Virginia Tech. I must admit having a HOKIE sticker on my car in Charlottesville has made for some interesting conversations with strangers. Luckily, the 2006 UVA - Virginia Tech rival football game victory went to Virginia Tech! GO HOKIES!

Region VI includes five Community Services Boards and their catchment areas, Central Virginia, Crossroads, Danville/Pittsylvania, Piedmont, and Southside. As well, this region has three facilities: Central Virginia Training Center, Piedmont Geriatric Hospital, and Southern Virginia Mental Health Institute.

Region VI would not function without the wonderful team of people I have the honor to work with and learn from on a daily basis. As you will see, this region has a very experienced staff, which is beneficial to the consumers and to me.

Central Virginia Training Center is the largest facility in the Commonwealth and has two Human Rights Advocate Seniors, Frances Rose and Judy Crews, to provide advocacy services. As well, my office is located at CVTC.

Frances has worked for the Department for over 28 years and over 22 years in the Office of Human Rights. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Education and a Master of Science Degree in Community and College Counseling from Longwood College in Farmville. She currently holds a Commonwealth of Virginia Postgraduate Professional Teachers License.

Judy has worked for the Department for 30 years and over 22 years in the Office of Human Rights. She majored in Psychology at Ferrum College. It is important to note that Judy and Frances have worked at CVTC in some capacity their entire careers with the Department before coming to OHR. The wealth of knowledge they have about consumers and staff at CVTC is invaluable.

Anne Stiles, Human Rights Advocate Senior, has provided advocacy services to consumers at Piedmont Geriatric Hospital for 27 years. For the past three years of her 27-year tenure with the Office of Human Rights, she has provided advocacy services to consumers at Virginia Center for Behavioral Rehabilitation – the sexually violent predator unit. Anne holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Douglass College and a Master of Rehabilitation Counseling degree from the University of Florida.

Stanley Cousins, Human Rights Advocate Senior for Southern Virginia Mental Health Institute, is the "newcomer" to this very experienced team with seven years in the Office of Human Rights. He has a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from West Virginia University and an Associate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from North Carolina A& T State University.

The biggest challenges I face as the Regional Advocate are managing the many tasks without clerical support. The way I meet this challenge on a daily basis is to delegate certain task to the other members of Region VI, to prioritize tasks, to remain flexible to handle any unexpected situations, and to keep as organized as possible.

In closing, I want to thank all the community volunteers who work on the Local Human Rights Committees for giving their time to serve. Region VI has awesome LHRC members!

*"Vision without action is merely a dream, Action without vision just passes time.
Vision with action can change the world." - Joel Barker*

For general information on the SHRC, LHRCs, Human Rights Advocates, and DMHMRSAS, see Volume 1 Issue 1.

Human Writes is a newsletter of the State Human Rights Committee to all Local Human Rights Committees for the purpose of fostering greater news and idea sharing among all of us.

Attachment I - SHRC APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Name: Mr. Ms. _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number Day: (_____) _____ Evening: (_____) _____

If Employed:

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Address: _____

Have you ever been a member of the board of directors of a program operated, licensed or funded by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services?

YES NO

If so, name of program: _____

When? From: _____ / _____ / _____ To: _____ / _____ / _____

Have you ever been employed by, or been the provider of contractual services to a program operated, licensed or funded by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services?

YES NO

If so, name of program: _____

Position(s) held or contractual service(s) provided: _____

When? From: _____ / _____ / _____ To: _____ / _____ / _____

Have you ever been a volunteer in a program operated, licensed or funded by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services?

YES NO

If so, name of program: _____

Volunteer duties: _____

When? From: _____ / _____ / _____ To: _____ / _____ / _____

Your answer to the following question is optional and will be held in strict confidence. This information is important for data collection purposes.

Have you received mental health, mental retardation or substance abuse services within the past five years through the public or private system?

YES NO

SHRC APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

(Continued)

Please describe your past education, training or experience in the area of mental health, mental retardation or substance abuse services, if any.

What is your interest in serving on the State Human Rights Committee?

John was admitted to the hospital with several presenting problems, one of which was his assault on a customer at a small community store. John states that he will never again harm anyone. After three months of treatment, John has begun to stabilize and wants to go outside without staff supervision. The treatment team and Hospital Director continue to deny this request. John feels that he is being denied the right to treatment under the least restrictive conditions and wants the State Human Rights Committee to review the case.

If you were a member of the State Human Rights Committee, what issues and questions would you want addressed prior to making your decision? You may answer in the form of phrases and questions.

Please attach résumé.

Attachment II

State Board Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

Name of LHRC: _____
(this is how the LHRC will appear on the certificate)

Address: _____

Contact Person: _____

Telephone: _____

Person attending luncheon: _____
(this person will be designated to receive the certificate)

Other people attending luncheon: _____

