

DDD Today

A Publication of the Division of Developmental Disabilities

Chris Christie, Governor
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor

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dddnewsletter@dhs.state.nj.us

Jennifer Velez, Commissioner
Dawn Apgar, Deputy Commissioner

DDD's DEVELOPMENTAL CENTERS OFFER ASSISTANCE AND SHELTER AFTER HURRICANE HITS NEW JERSEY



In anticipation of Hurricane Sandy making landfall, staff at our Developmental Centers began making preparations several days ahead. Efforts included bringing in and securing outside furniture and equipment, renting sump pumps and generators as necessary, and cleaning drains. Employees were also called in and held over the day before the storm to assure proper staffing.

Aside from some minor damage to Green Brook and Woodbridge, we are pleased to say our Developmental Centers made it through the storm safely. The generators also proved invaluable since power was lost at Green Brook, New Lisbon, New Jersey, and Woodbridge.

Because our centers remained operational, many of them were able to offer shelter and/or supplies for those in need. For example:

- Staff from Woodbine worked with County Emergency Management and County Health Department employees to set up a shelter staffed by the Red Cross, which opened that Sunday and closed Thursday. At its highest capacity, Woodbine sheltered 280 people!
- Woodbridge housed 40 volunteers from Southern Baptist Volunteers of North Carolina, who cooked meals at Rutgers for those affected by the hurricane. They stayed at the center Tuesday through Sunday.
- New Lisbon Developmental Center (NLDC) provided food services, housekeeping, and lodging for the 45 member VA-1 DMAT team from Thursday until Sunday. They also sheltered 28 people released from the hospital with no housing to return to on Saturday and Sunday. These individuals were cared for by the DMAT team. Additionally, NLDC housed VisionQuest, which runs a treatment program for adolescents ages 12-18 who have emotional and behavioral health needs, Monday through Saturday. Furthermore, NLDC provided and transported disaster supplies (such as food, adult briefs, disposable wipes, protein bars, and clothing) to Teterboro on Friday.

We wholeheartedly thank all of our staff who went the extra mile during this monumental storm to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents from our centers as well as those from our surrounding communities.

Message to Stakeholders from Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Jennifer Velez

Dear Stakeholder,



In this New Year, it's important to reflect on work we've accomplished together and to extend my thanks on behalf of the Department.

Our work together in support of so many of New Jersey's residents - seniors, people with disabilities, individuals and families in need - is critical, especially as we begin the recovery and rebuilding phase after Hurricane Sandy.

The struggling economy of the last few years and the effects of two severe storms have stretched our resources like never before. We'll continue to need help from all of you – community and faith based agencies and organizations - in 2013.

The past year was challenging, but it also was extremely rewarding. The Department was involved in some great events, launched exciting new programs, integrated new services, and advanced several important initiatives. We've created a [short video](#) to commemorate the year. I hope you all get a chance to view it.

Much of this work will continue in earnest this year, particularly with regard to our healthcare delivery systems for managed long-term services and supports and behavioral health. Our year in review includes the following highlights. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does represent some great accomplishments:

- The launch of e-Child Care, a state of the art, computer-based platform that has replaced outdated, burdensome manual billing and attendance submissions. This system improves transparency, accountability and better serves families participating in the subsidized child care program.
- Obtaining federal approval on our Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver.
- Receiving a bonus award from CMS for CHIP enrollment strategies.
- The signing of a reciprocal agreement with the Dominican Republic to enforce Child Support Orders.
- The Governor's designation of New Jersey as an Employment First state.
- Our participation in breaking the world record for the most number of people blowing bubbles simultaneously – in our case, it was to raise awareness for autism.

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MEET DDD'S STATEWIDE COORDINATOR FOR SELF DIRECTED DAY SERVICES AND SELF DETERMINATION



Tricia Brennan is the Statewide Coordinator for Self Directed Day Services and Self Determination at the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). She first began working at DDD in 1998 as a case manager in the Southern Regional Office as part of her Master of Social Work program requirements at the University of Pennsylvania. After graduating, she returned as an "official" Camden County Case Manager in June of 2000.

Tricia went on to become the Transitional Case Manager for the Governor's Initiative and worked primarily at New Lisbon Developmental Center from 2000-2002, moving folks from the center into the community in the initial phases of the Olmstead initiative. It was 2002, when she finally came to DDD's Central Office to work on the development of self-direction programs. As part of her role, she conducts trainings for families who are preparing for their children to complete their final year of schooling, which means the end of education-based entitlement services.

Many individuals who are in self-directed day services choose to volunteer and make a contribution to their community with the assistance of support staff. Currently, there are people volunteering for the Bonner Society, Meals on Wheels, Catholic Charities, the Elks Club, and at hospitals, assisted living facilities, police stations, and so forth.

Individuals use their budgets to have support staff assist them in finding the right volunteer opportunity or provide supports to them while they are volunteering. This helps build community connections, and it can lead to employment. "I've seen firsthand how a person can move from volunteer to employment services. In fact, one of the strong pieces that I advocate for is individuals volunteering their services in addition to working in hopes of it leading to employment or additional employment," Tricia said.

VOLUNTEER INTO FRIEND

by Tammi Wieger



Tammi Wieger and Marlene Brockington are the creators and co-editors of The Respite Reader. Both are also DDD consumers who attend the Arc Mercer's Aftercare Respite Program.

I met Brandon King (who now works at Arc Mercer) when he was a volunteer at Senior Care of Trenton, NJ for his medical assistant degree for five months. He seemed really nice and became a respite/aftercare manager. I felt safe because if something goes wrong I am not nervous speaking to him because he was always around to help from senior care, and he knows how to calm me down. He also reaches out for the right help or works with me to fix problems.

I've met many volunteers from The College of New Jersey who still stay in contact with me, and Crosting Akermen is another person in my life that stayed my friend before working for an organization. She started as a volunteer and now is family and a friend at work. We also did stuff for circle and best buddies. Her choice to volunteer allowed us to be such good friends to this day.

Message to Stakeholders from Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Jennifer Velez

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- The Governor's Executive Order creating the Interagency Council to End Homelessness, on which we serve as co-Chair. The council is charged with developing a 10 year plan to end homelessness.
- Awarding 12 talented students for their interpretation of good parenting in our annual Teen Media Awards contest. The artwork was incredible and will be featured in the Division of Family Development's 2013 Child Support calendar.
- Collaborating with the Department of Health (DOH) to establish 21 county Aging and Disability Resource Connections (ADRCs).
- The transfer of Aging Services from DOH to DHS in July.
- Highlighting the therapeutic and vocational horticultural opportunities at our state psychiatric hospitals in particular, Greystone and Trenton.
- Closing Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital.
- A ribbon cutting at the Christ Care Unit Missionary Baptist Church in Sicklerville – one of three regional food pantries awarded grant money to renovate their buildings to improve access for individuals using mobility devices.
- Coordinating the shelter and feeding of over 7,000 residents during and after Hurricane Sandy.

In addition, we participated in several hands-on service events in 2012, including collecting and distributing thousands of backpacks, coats and toys to local organizations, and helping harvest produce with the Farm to Fork program in Hunterdon County.

2013 will present new challenges as well as the opportunity for many more achievements. I look forward to working with you as we encounter them together. Wishing you a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year.

SERV CONSUMERS VOLUNTEER AT TASK, MEALS ON WHEELS

Submitted by Ida Doolan, Director of Communications at SERV

Since 1987, SERV Achievement Centers, Inc. has been providing teaching, training and support to individuals with developmental disabilities and youth with behavioral challenges and emotional problems.

At its Progressive Achievement Center (PAC) on Scotch Road in Ewing, where day-program consumers are offered an opportunity to acquire vocational skills, several have additionally chosen to contribute volunteer service to the community.

Each week, four adult consumers and two PAC staff members volunteer two hours at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), where they wrap napkins around a set of plastic flatware to be used by visitors. The following week, a different group of volunteers will perform the same duty. Recently, the volunteers have added another service of packaging full meals for the agency.



SERV Achievement Centers' Vocational Skills Trainer Ray Wallace works with Progressive Achievement Center consumers as they volunteer at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen wrapping flatware.

In addition to volunteering for TASK, PAC consumers ride with SERV Vocational Skills Trainers to deliver lunches and dinners to homebound older adults registered with Meals on Wheels Trenton/Ewing. Currently, they are scheduled on Mondays to make their rounds, but they will often pick up additional deliveries during the week if a Meals on Wheels volunteer calls out.

According to Stephanie Streletz, Senior Coordinator for Vocational Services at PAC, volunteer work helps consumers improve their social skills. They do this by asking Meals on Wheels clients their names and inquiring about their wellbeing.

"They get to know the people they visit," Streletz said. Once, the husband in a couple they were familiar with on their rounds was in the hospital. The volunteers wrote out a get-well card for him and gave it to the wife on their next visit.

Another time, a regular customer did not answer the door and they became concerned. A PAC staff member contacted Meals on Wheels and they sent someone to check on her. It turned out that she was in the hospital and had forgotten to cancel the deliveries.

Streletz said PAC consumers planned to add holiday caroling at area nursing homes this past year as part of their volunteer work. After entertaining staff with seasonal tunes at SERV Behavioral Health System, Inc.'s corporate office in Ewing for the past few years, they looked forward to taking their show on the road.

For more information about SERV Achievement Centers, visit www.servbhs.org

AREA SERVICE PROVIDER RECOUNTS HURRICANE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Submitted by Norman Smith, Associate Executive Director of Project Freedom

Hurricane Sandy affected the tenants of the four Project Freedom complexes differently. Project Freedom is a nonprofit developer of affordable, accessible, and supportive housing. Its newest complex, Freedom Village at Woodstown in Salem County, experienced very little physical distress as Sandy passed by. Project Freedom at Hamilton in Mercer County had a similar experience with the tenants having minor power surges or outages.

Merely a few miles away in Mercer County, however, Project Freedom at Lawrence and Project Freedom in Robbinsville experienced what a hurricane is capable of doing. The Robbinsville's tenants lost their power at 9 PM that Monday night shrouding the complex in

blackness never experienced by many tenants before. Most had prepared with flashlights thanks to Project Freedom's continuous emphasis on preparedness. Still, the raging storm and the deep darkness frayed many nerves. The Robbinsville complex is two stories serviced by two elevators, and without power, tenants who use wheelchairs on the second floor had to stay there until power was restored exactly 24 hours later.

Meanwhile, the tenants of Project Freedom at Lawrence were not that lucky and had a rougher experience. They lost their power too, but power was not restored for five days causing much inconvenience. Since these apartments are on ground level, wheelchair users were not restricted with access, but no

power meant no one could use stoves, microwaves, refrigerators or heaters. Many lost food.

As the days passed, even those tenants who were well prepared felt the strain of not having power and the stress of not knowing when it would be restored. Warm food was a luxury brought in by administrative staff and members of Project Freedom's board of trustees. As temperatures dipped and no relief was in sight, Project Freedom's executive director Tim Doherty rigged a small generator to provide heat to the complex's community center to warm those who gathered. Cots were brought in to allow tenants to sleep in warmth, but power was restored to the area just as the tenants were gathering for their first sleep-in.

STORY IDEAS?

E-MAIL US AT:

DDDnewsletter@dhs.state.nj.us

**We will happily consider
your request!**





HUMAN SERVICES ANNOUNCES NEW HUNTERDON DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER CEO

TRENTON – Department of Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez recently announced that a new CEO took over at Hunterdon Developmental Center (DC) in Clinton Township. Lisa Coscia, a human services and business executive from Califon, began on Monday, December 17.

Ms. Coscia comes to the Department from The Mentor Network – a national system of community-based human service agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities and other challenges. She began there in 1994, and served in various senior management level appointments.

“Lisa has incredible, hands-on organizational experience with the disability community, which gives her a great foundation for managing Hunterdon DC,” said Commissioner Velez. “Her leadership and management skills will serve Hunterdon DC and the Department well.”



During her nearly two decades with The Mentor Network, Ms. Coscia served in four titles, including New Jersey State Director, Executive Director of the New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia region, Vice President of Operations, and Vice President of Development. She has managed more than 1,000 employees and budgets up to \$150 million.

“Hunterdon Developmental Center is a great facility; I’m honored to take on this role,” said Ms. Coscia. “I am looking forward to working with the dedicated and caring staff and families to provide quality services.”

Ms. Coscia has a MA in Psychology from New York University and a BA in Psychology from the College of Staten Island. She has been published in the Journal of Neural Transmissions and served for two years as President for the Board of the New Jersey Association of Community Providers.

Hunterdon Developmental Center opened in 1969 and sits on 102 acres. The facility provides a wide range of behavioral, medical and habilitation services and supports to its estimated 520 residents.

Goodwill Home Medical Equipment Responds to People In Need After Hurricane



After Hurricane Sandy hit, many people were left with medical equipment needs. Fortunately, Goodwill Home Medical Equipment was there to help. Goodwill Home Medical Equipment offers affordable, refurbished medical equipment, such as wheelchairs or walkers.



Among the many served, “I can tell you that Goodwill Home Medical Equipment served at least six people who were evacuees from their homes in the Toms River area,” said Geri LaPlaca, Director of Goodwill Home Medical Equipment. “I know this because we were asking as folks were coming or they were offering their stories at the time because they needed to talk to someone. They had all been evacuated and were staying in Mercer County or nearby with relatives or friends. Each of them had left one or more pieces of mobility equipment behind in their haste to leave. So they were able to replace the items easily and at low cost. Plus, one or two of them picked up extra equipment as well.”

Even today, Goodwill Home Medical Equipment (GHME), which is part of Goodwill Industries of Southern New Jersey and Pennsylvania, is still filling needs as a result of the hurricane. “Last week, we had a man call who said he was referred by FEMA,” LaPlaca said. “His mother's home was seriously damaged by the storm and the mold and mildew was slowly increasing as the weeks went by. He needed to move her out of her home and into his home. He called us, then came to GHME and purchased a beautiful like-new 10 ft. portable ramp, a transport chair and a vision reader/magnifier, hoping to offer his mother an avenue to better read. He was very grateful for such an alternative to assist her and himself.”



WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Marcie Roth, Director of FEMA's Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, would like to share this message regarding extreme cold preparedness resources for people with disabilities:

Now is the time to prepare for winter weather. People with disabilities may need to take additional precautions in order to be ready for expected and unexpected winter weather events. First, get a kit. Make sure your kit includes warm clothing, blankets, food, water, a flashlight, a small shovel, salt or sand, and additional blankets and supplies for service animals and pets. Try to obtain an emergency supply of medications and medical supplies in case travel becomes hazardous.

Remember that cold weather can stress respiratory and circulatory systems, making it more difficult to travel or complete tasks that require physical exertion. Additional winter weather tips for people with disabilities:

- **Ready.gov Winter Storms and Extreme Cold Preparedness**
Tips: <http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- **NDAD Blog – Winter Weather and People with Disabilities:**
<http://ndad.areavoices.com/2012/10/04/winter-weather-checklist-provides-planning-guide-for-people-with-disabilities-health-challenges/>

Happy New Year

2013



Check out our calendar, featuring events hosted by DDD and our service providers.

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**DDD Information and DHS
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1-800-832-9173**

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) was created in response to the need for better and more effective services for state residents with developmental disabilities. Advocates for those services included many parents and other family members who wanted community-based alternatives to the institutional care that had been their only option for many decades.

Today, more than 43,000 individuals are eligible to receive services funded by the division. Most DDD-eligible individuals live in the community, either with family or in a community residence such as a group home or supervised apartment or in a Community Care Residence with a family caregiver. Almost 2,600 individuals reside in one of the seven developmental centers now administered by DDD.

Visit us on the Web at: www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd