

Housing Choices

A Newsletter for Mental Health Professionals

April 2003

Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

People with Disabilities Thrive in Communities of Faith

By Peggy Robertson

It is extremely heartening to meet with people who are part of an international organization whose primary mission is to create a warm and welcoming home for people with developmental disabilities. L'Arche USA is part of the International Federation of L'Arche communities in which people with disabilities and assistants choose to live and work together. And although this model is primarily for people with Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, there are important elements of L'Arche that can be applied to Mental Health housing models.

L'Arche International

L'Arche began in France in 1964 when Jean Vanier and Father Thomas Philippe, a Dominican, invited two men with disabilities, Raphael Simi and Philippe Seux to come share their lives together in Trosly-Breuil. Having first met them in an institution, Jean and Father Thomas believed that a warm and loving home would have a significant impact on the lives of these two men. Their desire was to create a home with them in the spirit of the Gospel and of the Beatitudes. With that desire, but no formal knowledge or training of people with disabilities, Jean, Father Thomas, Raphael and Philippe began their journey together. Soon they all learned that sharing life together in a simple way had a mutual and significant impact

Inside This Edition...

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Delaware County LHOT.....</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Reducing Recidivism.....</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>First LHOT Coordinator Hired.....</i> | <i>9</i> |
| <i>Housing Specialist Meeting.....</i> | <i>10</i> |

Celebrating a birthday at Harmony Home: Frank Kremenik (Core Member for 28 years), Matt Jones (Head of Harmony Home) and Lon Whitman, (L'Arche Erie Community Leader)

on each of them - "a transformation of the heart."

In the spirit of its founders, L'Arche continues to respond to the distress of those who are too often rejected, giving them a valid place in society that reveals the particular gifts, unique value and vocation of people with disabilities. According to the L'Arche vision "Homes are created in which faithful relationships of mutuality based on forgiveness and celebration are nurtured. L'Arche seeks to reveal to the world how people of differing intellectual capacity, social origin, religion and culture can come together in unity, faithfulness and reconciliation."

From L'Arche's humble beginnings of the desire of two people with disabilities to have a home

(Continued on page 2)

(L'Arche continued from page 1)

and share life with Jean and Father Thomas, L'Arche has grown into an international network of communities. Today, there are over 110 L'Arche communities in 30 countries throughout the world. The International Federation of L'Arche provides spiritual, emotional and educational support to individual community members through its international structures.

L'Arche USA

There are 13 L'Arche communities that are geographically spread throughout the United States, each with its own unique identity. L'Arche USA is the structure that provides support to these 13 communities. L'Arche USA's work is in three key areas:

1. to help communities live the mission of L'Arche through support of regional structures,
2. to provide technical assistance that will enhance the internal capacity of each community, and
3. to assist each community in quality assurance to ensure an excellent quality of life in each L'Arche home in the United States.

L'Arche Erie

L'Arche Erie, the first L'Arche community in the United States, was founded in 1972. Today there are eight homes

L'Arche Erie Community Picnic: Eric Perron (Assistant from Montreal, Canada), Dorothy Lepkowski (Core Member, 13 years), and Teresa Welch (Head of Bethany Home)

and three apartments where people with disabilities and assistants live together. L'Arche Erie is a non-profit organization that receives funding from private and public sources including the federal and state government. L'Arche Erie owns all of their homes and each home is inspected annually by the Office of Mental Retardation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Individuals living in the homes usually receive Medicaid waiver services and some receive Social Security Income.

Lon Whitman, Executive Director of L'Arche Erie, explained, "L'Arche is a community – a family where people with disabilities (the "core" people) and assistants live together in a spirit of sharing and simplicity. L'Arche's philosophy is based on being together because

together is better. The homes in L'Arche are distinct from institutions, hospitals and other residential centers in that the assistants live in the house and share in all its aspects with the people with disabilities who are at the heart of the life. There is also a sense of total community with all of the homes and apartments."

Mr. Whitman continued, "L'Arche encourages self-determination because all members of our society should have equal rights as well as stability and permanency in where they live. In Erie we often try to welcome people from institutions that have had no other housing options. Currently in L'Arche Erie there are 35 people with disabilities living in the community and some of these people have come from institutions. Generally speaking, there are no more

(Continued on page 3)

(L'Arche continued from page 2)

than four core people living in a home. After individuals are placed in homes, L'Arche works to insure that the family environment is maintained. One way we do this is by giving individuals annual life reviews to make sure their needs are being met. Other evaluations are done as needed."

Daily Life

Assistants live in almost all of the homes and help with the daily activities in which everyone participates. All of the chores such as cooking, grocery shopping, laundry and home maintenance are shared by everyone living in the home. Mr. Whitman noted, "Meals, which are usually quite lengthy, are a very important part of the homes because they are a time together where everyone can share their day. In the evening the core people relax together – listen to music, go for walks, play games, maybe even go out to dinner or to a movie. Assistants also provide daily activities for some of the people with disabilities who no longer go to day work programs. The Barber Center provides workshops for vocational training and some of the core people also work there."

Mr. Whitman further explained, "The assistants are fully qualified and have medical and crisis training.

The head of the house in each home makes sure that everything is running smoothly."

Mr. Whitman said, "We live with our people. That's how we are different from a group home. We have a spiritual-based life with people with disabilities. We don't always know if all the people will get along in a home but we want to create unity through our differences. We do create a good environment that provides people with self-worth. We are trying to promote healthy mutual-based relationships and promote healthy, balanced lives."

Mr. Whitman added, "L'Arche also encourages volunteers to come and participate in our life. Often these volunteers are college students who provide relief assistance. We have had very positive experiences for

both L'Arche and the college students who were able to volunteer their services."

Above all, the members of the group take time to build relationships with each other. This can be challenging – sharing life with people of different ages, cultures, faiths and intellectual abilities. It is here that the gift of differences is discovered and relationships of mutual trust and respect are built. All of this is lived in the spirit of the Gospel, and prayer forms an essential part of daily life.

L'Arche also recognizes the important role that family members play. "Families of the core people are encouraged to be around and L'Arche works with family members to help them understand the L'Arche mission and vision. We encourage family members

(Continued on page 4)

Prayer and
Forgiveness:
Cornerstones of
the L'Arche
Mission:
Marc Worner
(L'Arche Erie
Assistant for 6
years) and
Steve Haumesser
(Core Member
for 24 years)

(L'Arche continued from page 3)

to attend meetings and work to insure that their sibling or child lives a healthy life and grows within a comfortable environment. People with disabilities who come to L'Arche are welcomed into a home for life; if a person becomes a member of L'Arche, they are accompanied throughout their life if this is what they want. Mutuality is a fundamental part of the

membership and in the relationships of L'Arche.”

After visiting with the people who work at L'Arche, one is struck by the aura of human compassion that exists. L'Arche's vision of welcome, sharing and simplicity created in a union with God has provided inspiration for the L'Arche community. Perhaps this is best illustrated by Bob, who moved from an Institution

into a L'Arche home. Bob has a severe disability, he uses a wheel chair and needs assistance in all activities of daily life. After 54 years in institutions, Bob's 2 ½ years in L'Arche have given him a source of life and dignity and he is thriving. Bob and other L'Arche residents are living reminders of the essential values that join people together to lead a life of growth, healing and unity.

Delaware County Making Housing Options Available

By Peggy Robertson

Background

People with disabilities, like all members of our community, have the right to choose where and how they want to live. However, they often need special support and reasonable accommodations to access these opportunities. As funding from both the private and public sector dwindles, resources have become limited and people with disabilities have been affected.

The Delaware County Local Housing Option Team was specifically formed to address the issue of limited resources for people with disabilities in the community. Prominent organizations in the disability and housing industries came together to combine their existing resources to more effectively serve the community.

Mission

The mission of the *Delaware County Local Housing Option Team* (LHOT) is to assist people with disabilities to coordinate a comprehensive array of services and resources essential to reaching their individual housing goals.

Participating Agencies

The Delaware County LHOT evolved from the Team Building Session at the Housing Choices '01

Conference. It was formed to increase affordable, accessible housing opportunities, and to successfully house people with disabilities in Delaware County. The participating agencies planned on doing this through creative problem solving and by having access to each others resources. The member agencies represent both the housing and disability communities in Delaware County and they meet every other month. Members include:

- The ARC of Delaware County
- Chester Community Improvement Project
- Chester Housing Authority
- Community Action Agency of Delaware County (CAADC)
- Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging (COSA)
- Delaware County Office of Behavioral Health
- Delaware County Housing Authority
- Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)
- Delaware County Office of Mental Retardation
- Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia

- Freedom Valley Disability Center
- Liberty Resources, Inc.
- Residential Living Options, Inc.

LHOT Activities

The first thing the LHOT did as a group was educate each other about their individual agencies and their "language". Through this process the members became more knowledgeable about the housing and support service needs for people with disabilities in Delaware County. They came to a greater understanding about the issues they were facing, and then assessed the resources that they, as a group, would be able to pool in order to find housing solutions.

The education process was taken a step further when the LHOT presented training to the staff of all the local agencies. OHCD, CIL and the Fair Housing Council presented a joint training on the Pennsylvania Access Grant, a new home modification grant program for people with disabilities. In addition, the Housing Authority presented a training on Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. The next step was for the LHOT to start researching existing resources in the community, both from

(Continued on page 6)

(Options Available continued from page 5)

the disability and housing organizations, to support people moving into independent living arrangements.

Increasing Opportunities

Once the members were educated and resources identified the LHOT turned to developing specific new initiatives. The first was a pilot project that involved creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Housing Authority and the participating agencies. The Housing Authority agreed to set aside Housing Choice Vouchers and the agencies defined the support services that would be available for consumers from each participating organization. The Housing Authority also agreed to inform the LHOT when subsidized accessible housing would become available.

At each LHOT meeting the agencies refer applicants for housing who have supports of their choice in place and who are eligible for a housing voucher through the Housing Authority. To qualify, a person must have a permanent disability and presently be receiving services from a referring LHOT member organization. Their needs are discussed and if necessary, additional resources are obtained. Once all supports are in place, the candidates are referred to the Housing Authority for a set-aside

voucher specifically for this program. Once the individual is issued the voucher, the referring agency assists him/her in finding the apartment and when necessary, assists with security deposits, furniture, moving assistance, etc. The referring agency may also be available to the landlord, along with a representative from the Housing Authority, to address any questions by phone or through a personal meeting.

As of April 2003, 15 people have secured housing with Vouchers, 7 people are going through the process with Vouchers, and 4 people have secured subsidized housing. Through this process, the LHOT has been successful in combining all of the existing resources on both the housing and the disability side.

Working Together

Sue Crossley, Executive Director of Residential Living Options (RLO), noted, "The LHOT is a wonderful group of people who are genuinely engaged. Approximately 80% of the participants show up at every meeting. There are agencies working together that were aware of one another but had not combined resources before. Now we are all working together to do intake for our applicants."

Ms. Crossley added, "The LHOT has also been involved

in other activities to expand housing opportunities for people with disabilities. The Housing Authority has a list of public housing units that are accessible. The LHOT has recently begun a running list of people who need accessible housing. In addition, the LHOT has begun outreach and education to landlords about people with disabilities and Section 8, and encouraging them to provide Section 8 housing for people with disabilities. There is a subcommittee formed that educates LHOT participants on how to approach new landlords. A representative from Section 8 and from the LHOT then meet with landlords providing one-on-one assistance as requested."

RLO serves as the facilitator and coordinator of the Delaware County LHOT, receiving funding from the Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development.

The Delaware County LHOT has been exemplary in its ability to build partnerships and create new housing opportunities for people with disabilities. The leadership from RLO has enabled the LHOT to build an organization that has a broad pool of resources from which individuals can draw to reach their individual housing goals.

Early Intervention and Permanent Housing Reduce Recidivism

By Peggy Robertson

One issue that Housing Specialists in Pennsylvania are grappling with is finding housing that meets the needs of individuals with mental illness who have been released from prison.

Consequently the PA Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services invited Marian Bland to the March 11th Housing Specialist meeting to discuss how Maryland is successfully providing permanent housing for offenders who are homeless and have a mental illness.

Ms. Bland is the Director of the Shelter Plus Care Housing and PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) programs for the Clinical Division of Special Needs Populations for Maryland's Mental Hygiene Administration. She works in conjunction with the Maryland Community Criminal Justice Treatment Program (MCCJTP), which was started in 1992 in 4 local detention centers to provide comprehensive services to individuals with special needs who are involved with the criminal justice system.

Maryland Community Criminal Justice Treatment Program

The Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) Shelter Plus Care Housing Program serves individuals and families who meet three criteria: they must be homeless as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), have a

serious mental illness, and be served by the MCCJTP. In 1995, MHA submitted a grant proposal to HUD for S+C Housing to expand the program to target homeless families and individuals who have a serious mental illness and are incarcerated for misdemeanor charges at a local detention center. MHA was awarded a \$5.5 million, five-year S+C Housing grant to serve 165 individuals in 14 counties. Since that time the program has grown and currently serves 22 detention centers and communities.

The goal of the S+C program is to break the cycle of recidivism for individuals who end up in the criminal justice system as a result of being mentally ill and homeless. The HUD definition of homelessness that Maryland uses is "a person being evicted within one week from a private dwelling unit or *being discharged from an institution, having no subsequent residence identified and lacking the resources and support networks needed to obtain access to housing.*" MHA uses the Tenant-Based and Sponsor-Based S+C programs. (See page 9 of this newsletter for a description of the four types of S+C programs.)

Eligibility for MCCJTP

The S+C Housing Program serves individuals who have been recently released from

prison (maximum 2-year period), who are on the intensive caseloads of parole and probation, a participant of the Trauma Addictions Mental Health and Recovery Program, or families who are homeless as a result of trauma. MHA also considers applicants who have nonviolent felony charges and meet the other criteria of the program.

MHA reviews all applications and authorizes placement approval or denial. Case managers negotiate leases and assist consumers with locating housing units, obtaining furniture, applying for entitlements, working with parole and probation officers and other community agencies. MHA partners with local Mental Health Authorities, which administer the funds for their jurisdictions and screen applicants for the program. To be eligible, applicants must be at least 18 years of age, must receive less than the median income for that jurisdiction and have a copy of the release papers for submission to MHA prior to housing placement. Once accepted into the program, each participant must have a service plan and may receive case management as well as a variety of other supportive services and planned activities. In order to retain HUD S+C assistance, the individual must comply with the aftercare plan developed by MCCJTP.

(Continued on page 8)

(MCCJTP continued from page 7)

Overall Program

Accomplishments (1995–2002)

Under the 1995 grant, the program has served 449 single individuals, 233 families and 199 children. The program has been successful in breaking the cycle of recidivism and reuniting families, particularly women with children. During 2002, an impressive 96% of the participants maintained permanent housing. During that same year only 4% of the participants were re-arrested or re-incarcerated, and 2% were hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.

In August 2002, MHA conducted a consumer satisfaction survey of S+C clients and participants were asked to list the changes they had experienced since being placed in the program. Responses were as follows:

- My life is more stable, secure
- I've acquired a job
- My life is more balanced – financially, emotionally, spiritually
- I'm still clean and sober
- My self-esteem improved and I have a more stable environment for my daughter and myself
- I've gained custody of my children
- I feel like I have been given a second chance

Perspectives on Success

From a consumer perspective, the S+C Program is successful for several reasons. It provides a permanent, safe and clean place to live. The consumer has a choice

in his or her housing and can go with the case manager and pick his or her own apartment. There is program flexibility in that the consumer can move from county to county. In addition, rents will be paid for up to 90 days if the consumer is hospitalized.

From the systems perspective, one of the major reasons the program has been so successful is because of the partnerships formed between mental health, criminal justice, homeless and housing providers. At least one staff member per county from MHA works in the jail with the clients. This leads to early identification of potential program participants inside of the treatment center followed by individual assessment.

Coordinated treatment and support services - mental health substance abuse, medical, educational, entitlements and housing – start in the treatment center and follow the consumer after they leave. Community-based care and housing is obtained for the consumer along with intensive aftercare and case management and monitoring to insure compliance with treatment.

MHA meets quarterly with PATH and S+C providers and provides them training on working with consumers as to how to best meet their housing and support needs. Also, the State Mental Health Authority has designated that this population is a priority population for housing.

Ms. Bland suggested several steps for others wishing to develop a successful permanent supportive housing program.

- Work with other partnering agencies to provide training and education whenever possible - For example, MHA has worked with the Maryland Correctional Training Commission to develop a curriculum on mental health. Mental health is also included as a part of the training for correctional officers, and some counties are providing training to the local police.
- Research State's Policy regarding Discharge Planning – This is important because it may vary from state to state. MHA has found that the HUD Field offices that they work with in Washington D.C. and Baltimore are very supportive, as long as the S+C program is not the only resource for housing.
- Research the need
- Create a continuum of care built around permanent housing
- Submit a proposal to HUD through your Continuum of Care Planning Group or other funding source.
- Develop a positive relationship with your local landlords – Landlords know that if a problem develops after a client gets housing there is someone they can call who will respond immediately.

(Continued on page 9)

(MCCJTP continued from page 8)

The Maryland Community Criminal Justice Treatment Program exemplifies how to successfully provide permanent supportive housing to an at-risk population. To learn more about the program contact Marian Bland at 410-724-3237 or email her at blandm@dhmh.state.md.us.

Important Note:

Under the HUD definition of homelessness, McKinney funds cannot serve individuals coming from institutions in which the state or locality requires discharge planning. In Maryland the local detention centers do not require a discharge plan and therefore people coming out of these facilities are eligible for the S+C programs if they meet the other criteria for being homeless. In Pennsylvania, people leaving state correctional facilities are required to have a discharge plan and therefore McKinney-funded programs cannot serve this population. If you are interested in using S+C or other McKinney funds to serve people leaving a local prison or detention center you must first determine their policy with regard to discharge planning.

Shelter Plus Care

Shelter Plus Care (S+C) Housing is a rental assistance program for homeless persons who have a disability that is funded by HUD under the McKinney –Vento Continuum of Care Program. S+C funds must be matched with an equal amount of money spent on supportive services for the population/s served. Each participant must pay up to 30% of his/her income towards rent and/or utilities and the S+C program makes the remaining rental payment to the landlord on behalf of the participant. The objectives of the program as required by HUD are to assist participants to obtain/remain in permanent housing; to increase skills and/or income of participants; and to help participants achieve greater self-determination.

There are four different types of S+C Programs, each of which can be renewed on an annual basis after the initial grant period:

1. **Tenant-Based** funding is initially provided for 5 years. Participants choose their own housing and the lease is in the consumer's name.
2. **Sponsor-Based** funding is also initially 5 years. A sponsor agency or non-profit agency owns or leases the property and leases to the consumer.
3. **Project-Based** is rental assistance provided to the owner of an existing structure. Rental subsidies are provided to the owner for 5 years or 10 years if the property is rehabilitated. Participants are not guaranteed rental assistance if they move out of the assisted unit.
4. **Single Room Occupancy** provides 10 years of assistance in connection with the moderate rehabilitation of single room occupancy housing units.

First LHOT Coordinator Hired

The Dauphin County Local Housing Option Team (LHOT) is pleased to announce the hiring of Lynn Stewart as their first LHOT Coordinator. Lynn began her job on April 7, 2003. Her office is located within the Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania at 207 House Avenue, Suite 107, Camp Hill, PA.

Lynn's phone number is 717-371-1900, extension 27 and her e-mail address is LHOT@cilcp.org.

As Dauphin County LHOT Coordinator, Lynn will identify innovative housing resources and practices, act as a liaison between the LHOT team and existing housing providers/developers and formulate and complete a housing needs assessment to identify housing needs of persons with disabilities.

Lynn will also act as a resource for persons with disabilities, landlords and service providers, provide information for the development of training programs for homeownership, home modification, and a mentoring program for homeownership.

This position is funded through the Dauphin County Community Development Block Grant.

Upcoming OMHSAS Housing Specialist Meeting

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, June 18, 2003 - 12:00 - 5:00 P.M. and

Thursday, June 19, 2003 - 8:30 A.M. - 1:30 P.M.

Toftrees, State College, PA

Tentative Agenda Topics:

New Keys Program at Horizon House

Elderly: Who are They and What are their Housing Needs and Options?

Updates on:

Substance Abuse Services and MISA Pilot Program

LHOTs

More information will be forthcoming.

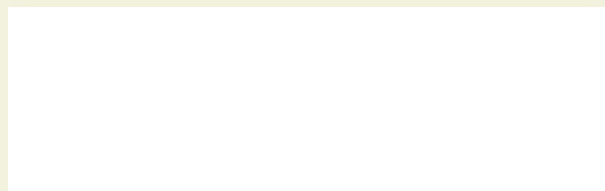
Visit the HARP Website www.harpopfa.org

Housing Choices is published by: Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc.
and sponsored by the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

Project Director: Diana T. Myers Newsletter Editor: Peggy Robertson

We welcome your submissions, ideas for articles, and information on related housing efforts and projects. If you have information about a related project or would like more information about a project described here, please contact us at the following address: Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc., 6 South Easton Road, Glenside, PA, 19038.

Telephone: (215) 576-7270 Fax: (215) 576-8650



FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GLENSIDE, PA
PERMIT NO. 916

Housing Choices c/o
Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc.
6 South Easton Road
Glenside, PA 19038