

County of Middlesex

Winter 2011

Department of Human Services

Blanquita B. Valenti, Freeholder

Quarterly

Newsletter

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By

Thomas M. Seilheimer
Middlesex County Department of
Human Services

In the midst of a Buffalo-like cold and snowy winter, heat and light have been generated by the imminent opening of the "All Saints Apartments" in Highland Park. A project that has been coming together since 2008, this housing development for homeless veterans has been strongly supported by the Middlesex County Veterans Advisory Council (MCVAC), a component program of the Department of Human Services' Division of Social Work Services. The project has been supported financially and in spirit by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Numerous dignitaries attended the Veterans Day ribbon cutting in recognition of the contributions and sacrifices made by our nation's veterans.

On a similar note, the annual Point-in-Time Survey of the homeless will be carried out on January 26th, to ascertain the numbers and needs of homeless people in Middlesex

County. On December 21st, a Homeless Person's Memorial Day program was held in Perth Amboy, in concert with a national day recognizing the vicissitudes of homelessness.

In the Division of Social Work Services as well, the Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP), after a statewide "freeze," is now seeking to enroll new participants. Adults who work or attend college will be given priority in regard to acceptance into the program.

On the lighter side, the Office for the Disabled conducted its Annual Holiday Shopping Event at the Brunswick Square Mall in East Brunswick on December 7th. As ever, the day was a pleasure for both shoppers and volunteers. Transportation services provided by Middlesex County Area Transit were greatly appreciated.

The Office of Veterans Services, in the Division of Social Work Services, notes that the Veterans Administration (VA) has begun to pay benefits for new Agent Orange claims. This is the latest step taken by the VA to meet the needs of the aging population of Vietnam Veterans.

The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders has reactivated the Commission on the Status of Women. The Division of Behavioral Health & Children's Services is serving as staff to the Commission, which currently is seeking nominations of women who have truly made a difference in their communities, as "Citizens of the Year."

The Office of Children's Services, through the County Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC), is working to assist schools in ensuring that students who are homeless have equal access to services and resources as other students.

The Middlesex County Commission on Abused and Missing Children, a component of the Office for Children's Services, presented a program for teenage youth on "Teen Dating," exploring domestic violence and healthy relationships. 45 people, including 29 teenagers, actively participated.

In the Division of Addiction Services, the merger of the State Divisions of Addictions and the Division of Mental Health continues to be tracked, stressing wellness and recovery, and an integrated philosophy of treatment and prevention.

The success of the Middlesex County Drug Court, which graduated 22 program participants on December 14th, is also explored.

The observance of the 22nd annual World AIDS Day is recognized in the Division of Addiction Services,

acknowledging the progress that has been made in combating this pandemic, and celebrating the lives of those living with the disease.

Finally, the North Brunswick Township Municipal Alliance extends its gratitude to the Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Middlesex County Municipal Alliance Coordinator for their financial assistance with a program to prevent drug and alcohol abuse, and violence.

These are just some of the initiatives that Middlesex County Department of Human Services staff are engaged in to create significant positive change in the lives of County residents.

On the topic of change: I will take this opportunity to thank our newsletter editor, Barbara Sewell, as she moves on to retirement. Barbara has done excellent work in the preparation and editing of the Middlesex County DHS Newsletter over two decades. She has also been the force behind the timely updates on our Website and e-newsletters. Her professional writing skills will be missed, as will her ghost writing capabilities, since she penned a good portion of my Executive Director columns over the years.

Good health and best wishes Barb!



RIBBON-CUTTING AT HIGHLAND PARK'S ALL

SAINTS APARTMENTS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

By

Bridget Stillwell Kennedy, Director,
Division of Social Work Services

At 3 p.m., on Veterans Day, November 11, 2010, a crowd of people gathered on South Third Avenue, at the corner of Magnolia, in Highland Park, to dedicate and cut the ribbon on a permanent supportive housing project for homeless veterans. This was the culmination of a dream that had begun two years before in the summer of 2008.

During that summer, a two-evening conference was held at the Reformed Church of Highland Park on the subject of homeless veterans. Church members, community people, members of the Middlesex County Veterans Advisory Council (MCVAC), representatives of local, County, State, and federal government came together to discuss the issue and plan a viable response. The project, "Bring Them Home to Homes" was conceived then. It had some growing pains to face.

The first issue was where to locate. In the fall, Rev. Seth Kaper-Dale, pastor of the Highland Park Reformed Church, was out jogging when he noticed that All Saints Episcopal Church had a "For Sale" sign. Pastor Seth called the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey and brokered the sale.

Next began the processes of capital financing, engaging a developer, and acquiring the necessary permits and permissions. The Highland Park

Reformed Church already had its own Affordable Housing Corporation to work on this project. MCVAC members attended all of the Zoning Board and other Borough meetings, reviewing the project to educate the community on the plight of homeless veterans, the "Housing First" philosophy, and the need for this type of supportive permanent housing. Funding was provided by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (HMFA), the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), HOME funding, the Middlesex County Housing First Capital Fund, and corporate and private funding.

HOME funding is administered by the Middlesex County Department of Housing & Community Development and awarded by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The Freeholder Board established the annual \$1 million Housing First Capital Fund in 2009 to assist in the implementation of the County's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Highland Park Reformed Church's "Bring Them to Homes" project was the first beneficiary of this fund. The Housing First Capital Fund is jointly administered by the County Departments of Human Services and Housing & Community Development.

By virtue of being veterans, the residents will be entitled to the services of the Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital in Lyons, NJ. Case management and wrap-around services will be provided on site by University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC) of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ).

The "groundbreaking" for the project took place on Sunday, January 31,

2010. The façade, large stained glass window, and some other windows and wooden archways were preserved. The former church maintains most of its original characteristics. Inside, the church has been transformed into 11 apartments, 10 one bedroom/efficiency units, and one two bedroom unit. Even though it is a rehabilitation job, it is expected to garner at least a “silver” LED rating. No two units are exactly alike, but are spacious and have an abundance of natural lighting. Because of the historic nature of the old church building and the commitment to retain elements of its past, the permanent name of the rehabilitated apartment building is “All Saints Apartments.”

Christine Reese, an Air Force nurse veteran of the first “Gulf War”, and her son, Dan, will move into the two bedroom unit. Christine was the one who cut the ribbon at the ceremony.



In addition to U.S. Representative Rush Holt, many State and local dignitaries attended the ribbon cutting, including Freeholder Director Christopher Rafano; Deputy Freeholder Director Ronald Rios; Freeholder H. James Polos; Freeholder Mildred Scott; and County Clerk Elaine Flynn.

Some finishing touches remain, but spokespeople at the Church expect

that all the veterans will be able to move into their homes by 2011. Most, if not all, will be from Middlesex County.

2011 POINT-IN-TIME/PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

By
Harriet Slonim, Human Services
Planner

The Middlesex County Housing Continuum of Care Committee (MCHC³), Point-in-Time/Project Homeless Connect subcommittee, working jointly with Coming Home of Middlesex County, has been planning for the annual statewide Point in Time Survey/Project Homeless Connect Event since fall 2010. The event is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011.

The membership of the MCHC³ includes non-profit agencies and advocates for the homeless population, along with low income residents. All coordination of services provided to these “at risk” populations is initiated by MCHC³. Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to implementing Middlesex County’s Ten Year Plan.

The Point-in-Time Survey is conducted in compliance with a mandate from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The surveys from the PIT/PHC event reflect information that aids Middlesex County to develop an accurate “snapshot” of homeless residents, support requests for funding for both housing and services for this population, and enables planners to close the gaps and obstacles preventing the

chronically homeless from achieving housing and services.

The last count was performed on January 27, 2010. The Point-in-Time is conducted with both a bilingual paper outreach (survey forms are forwarded in advance to specific designated homeless provider agencies) and a bilingual street outreach (teams are sent to specific localities within Middlesex County to search for homeless residents in the County).

The Point-in-Time/Project Homeless Connect subcommittee schedules Project Homeless Connect on the same date as the Point-in-Time. Project Homeless Connect offers specific sites where homeless individuals can walk in and receive a hot cup of coffee and a snack, complete surveys, and be linked to free community services such as housing, food stamps, etc. Participants also receive "incentives," such as a free blanket, gloves, etc., as a "thank you." Representatives from various government and community agencies are stationed at each location.

This year, two sites have been designated for Project Homeless Connect: Elijah's Soup Kitchen (18 Neilson Street in New Brunswick) will be open from 11 am to 8 pm and The Salvation Army (433 State Street in Perth Amboy) will be open from 11 am to 7 pm.

The street outreach will begin at approximately 8 pm and continue until midnight. In addition, several vans will be available for a mobile street outreach.

Please note that the street outreach and surveys of homeless people are

carried out with the help of volunteers. The "incentives" are donated by organizations and private citizens in Middlesex County. For this reason, the Point-in-Time/Project Homeless Committee greatly appreciates it when organizations agree to conduct "drives," and private citizens donate items such as blankets, scarves, flashlights, etc. The assistance of volunteers to help conduct the surveys is also greatly appreciated.

If you would like to volunteer, whether to hand out surveys, incentives, or putting up flyers etc., or would like to conduct a blanket, sock, glove drive, or even simply donate articles of new or serviceable used clothing, please contact Harriet Slonim at: 732-745-4041. You can also access information through the Web site: www.middlesexpitc2011.com.

Perhaps you missed the 2011 Point-in-Time/Project Homeless Connect event. There is always next year's 2012 Point-in-Time/Project Homeless Connect event!

**NATIONAL HOMELESS
PERSON'S MEMORIAL DAY IS
DECEMBER 21, 2010**

National Homeless Person's Memorial Day has been recognized on the first day of winter since 1990. December 21, the first day of winter, is the longest night of the year. For homeless people, this lengthy interlude of darkness personifies the harsh elements affecting their lives.

On Tuesday, December 21, 2010, a candlelight vigil commenced at 5 pm at the Perth Amboy Train Station Clock. Service providers and advocacy organizations from

throughout Middlesex County joined together both to honor and memorialize all those who have died homeless from exposure to the elements, due to a lack of adequate health care, and as victims of hate crimes and other adversities. The purpose of National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is to provide the community with a sense of awareness that our homeless members die all too frequently from these preventable hardships.

Participants included members of:

- The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
- Middlesex County Human Services Advisory Council
- Middlesex County Housing Continuum of Care Committee
- City of Perth Amboy
- Jewish Renaissance Foundation
- The Cathedral Community Development Corporation
- Congregation Beth Mordecai
- Elijah's Promise
- The Salvation Army

The schedule of events included:

- Public Awareness Education.
- Tribute to Middlesex County homeless individuals who passed away in 2010. Ten people were remembered.
- Poetry Recitations by high school students.
- Musical Arrangements and a homeless witness.
- Interfaith/Intercultural Readings.
- Tribute to Frank Cury and George Berry (homeless advocates who recently passed away).
- Refreshments.
- A Community Commitment to End Homelessness.

The events continued at the Cathedral on Smith Street in Perth

Amboy following the candlelight vigil. Light refreshments were provided courtesy of Elijah's Promise. Special thanks to Natasha James-Weldon, Jewish Renaissance Foundation, for organizing the memorial.

It should be noted that while December 21, 2010 is acknowledged as the longest night of the year, for those without a home, every night is the longest night of the year.



PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES PROGRAM (PASP) OPENS ENROLLMENT

By

Debbie Hehir, PASP Coordinator

The Middlesex County Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP) has limited openings for eligible county residents in need of home care services. The PASP program provides personal care services such as bathing, meal preparation, light housekeeping, laundry, chores and transportation assistance for individuals who are physically disabled and self-directing.

The program has been under a statewide "freeze" since January

2010 and has just received the green light to accept applicants based on funding availability. The priority for enrollment will be adults who are working or attending college. Individuals eligible for Medicaid must seek enrollment on their PCA program and apply to PASP only if they are denied by Medicaid.

The program is credited with enabling many County residents with physical disabilities to work and live independently in the community. The program has a sliding fee cost-share scale.

Participants must attend training to help them manage their care needs.

If you are interested in learning more about PASP, please contact Debbie Hehir, PASP Coordinator at 732-745-2587. Debbie is also available to come to organizations to discuss the program and answer individual questions.

PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER WHEN UTILIZING HOME CARE SERVICES

The winter months present challenges when ensuring safety for both persons with disabilities utilizing home care services, as well as, the home care workers.

In addition to stockpiling extra supplies, food, and equipment, such as batteries and flashlights, develop plans should your personal care aide be unable to travel to your home due to weather.

Back-up plans can include the following: contact neighbors to see if they are able and willing to assist you if your aide can not come over; have the names and numbers of

these individuals in a designated area. Call these folks the night before bad weather is expected and remind them of your needs. If you do not have neighbors willing to help out, can you stay with friends or family if bad weather is predicted? If so, consider how you will get there and what supplies you will need to bring with you. Contact the agency that sends your current homecare worker and see if they have another worker who lives locally that can get to you. Another option might be to ask a friend or possibly your personal assistant if they are willing to stay over if bad weather is expected, and of course, you are comfortable with this and have appropriate space available.

To ensure the safety of your personal assistant, be sure the walk is cleared. Contact your local schools/religious organizations and see if they have youths available that will commit to shoveling your walk during snow emergencies. Make sure you have the names and numbers of at least two or three individuals willing to do this, and call them the night before bad weather is anticipated to remind them of your needs. Be sure to have cash on hand to pay for snow removal unless other arrangements have been made.

Contact your local Office of Emergency Management and register as a person with a special need. Explain that you rely on a homecare worker and it is imperative that your street is promptly plowed if possible. Further, you want to be sure they know about your needs in case of a power failure.

Remember to make sure your cell phone battery is charged, as well as, batteries for wheelchairs and other necessary equipment.

Post all emergency related numbers in a handy place and prepare an emergency “go bag” that includes medication and essentials should you need to evacuate.

Finally, thank all of those personal assistants profusely who travel through snow, sleet and hail to get to your home. Consider sending a letter to the agency they work for recognizing their hard work and commitment to your care.

Be safe and best wishes in the New Year.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY SHOPPING

By
Judy Cusumano, Director, Office for the Disabled

The Annual Holiday Shopping Day for persons with disabilities was held on Tuesday, December 7, 2010, at the Brunswick Square Mall in East Brunswick. Twelve shoppers were assisted by several volunteers, including the former Director of the Office for the Disabled, Larry Rivera.

This event is a yearly activity that offers the disabled community the opportunity to shop for the holidays and assisted with shopping and wrapping by our intrepid volunteers.



The Brunswick Square Mall has always been very supportive and accommodating with this activity. We also are very grateful to Middlesex County Area Transit for providing transportation services.

SNOW REMOVAL LAW UPDATE

In 1999, Las P.L. Chapter 182, (N.J.S.A.39:4-207.9), also known as the “Snow Removal Law,” was signed into law. It requires owners and operators of parking lots to remove snow, ice and other obstructions from accessible parking spaces, accessible aisles, ramps, and other improvements designed to provide accessibility for persons with disabilities. The owners and operators must remove the snow and ice within 24 hours of occurrence or be fined \$1000.

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities and various disability advocacy groups were instrumental in the Snow Removal Law. They are informing businesses and the municipalities where they are located of their enhanced obligations to ensure persons with disabilities accessibility to and from parking spaces, curb cuts, and ramps.

As in years past, the Middlesex County Office for the Disabled will send out letters to local municipalities reminding them of the Snow Removal Law and asking for monitoring of parking lots and curb cuts.

VA BEGINS TO PAY BENEFITS FOR NEW AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS

By

**Doug Breen, Veterans Services
Coordinator**

The Veterans Administration (VA) has begun distributing disability benefits to Vietnam Veterans who qualify for compensation under recently liberalized rules for Agent Orange Exposure.

Under new "presumption" rules for Agent Orange, up to 200,000 additional Vietnam Veterans are potentially eligible to receive disability compensation for medical conditions recently found to be associated with Agent Orange. The expansion of coverage involves B-cell Leukemia, Parkinson's Disease, and Ischemic Heart Disease. Officials acknowledge that these new patients may add additional strains to a compensation system that is already hard pressed to keep up with demand, but have pledged to modernize the process for handling claims with technological enhancements that ensure faster processing and awarding of claims.

This new ruling is the latest in a series of steps that the VA has taken in recent years to meet the needs of aging Vietnam Veterans. In 1978, it offered veterans suffering from Agent Orange exposure special access to health care, and priority medical care since 1981. It has been providing disability compensation to veterans for medical problems related to Agent Orange since 1985. Now, veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness do not have to prove an association between their illness and military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits, and takes the burden off the veteran to show proof of exposure.

Along with the three new illnesses, other recognized illnesses under the "presumption" rule for Agent Orange are:

- Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- Chloracne
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- Diabetes Mellitus(Type 2)
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma(other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's Sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)
- AL Amyloidosis

For more information on how to apply for disability compensation under this new ruling, contact the VA at 1-800 827-1000, or Doug Breen, Middlesex County Veterans Services Coordinator, at 732-745-4051

**LOCAL EAGLE SCOUT AWARDS
MCVAC MEMBER**

Eagle Scout Candidate Tommy Grant, of Boy Scout Troop 90, South Brunswick, presented Middlesex County Veterans Advisory Council (MCVAC) member and Air Force TSgt Dawn Firsing-Paris with an award thanking her for outstanding support of his Eagle Scout Project at the group's December meeting.

Grant, a South Brunswick High School Senior, raised more than 900 dollars and collected over 1,700 hygiene articles in support of MCVAC'S ongoing collection drive for deployed troops. The drive,

entering its second year, is a joint effort between the Council and the 514th AMDS at McGuire AFB. Items are collected from a bin located at the Middlesex County Department of Human Services on the 5th floor of the Middlesex County Administration building. They are sorted by Firsing-Paris who brings them to a American Red Cross representative at McGuire. From there they are sent to troops currently deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.



At the completion of his month long project, Grant and his troop were treated to a tour of the Air Force facility by TSgt Firsing-Paris. He came away very impressed, with an even deeper respect for the job that our service personnel perform on a daily basis to ensure our security. Grant, who plans to attend college next year ultimately hopes to join the Marine Corps as an officer upon graduation.

For more information about MCVAC'S ongoing item drive, please contact Doug Breen, Middlesex County Veteran's Services Coordinator, at 732-745-4051.

**REACTIVATED
COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN
SEEKS NOMINATIONS
FOR "CITIZENS OF THE
YEAR"**

By

*Anne Lori Dillon, Director, Division
of Behavioral Health & Children's
Services*

The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders has formally appointed a Commission on the Status of Women, charged with advocating for all women in Middlesex County. The Commission will provide an effective forum to identify and address key women's issues.

The purpose of the Middlesex County Commission on the Status of Women is to afford a permanent, effective voice for women across Middlesex County. The Commission will serve as a resource and advisory group to the Board of Chosen Freeholders to:

- Recommend policies, programs and services to improve the status of women in Middlesex County;
- Identify existing services and resources available that may be of interest to women residents of Middlesex County;
- Assess the potential needs of women residents of Middlesex County;
- Provide liaison and promote networking opportunities among existing organizations that are working toward improvement of the status of women in Middlesex County;
- Develop a greater public awareness of women's issues by sponsoring information exchanges that enhance the quality of life for everyone;

Serving on the Commission
Blanquita B. Valenti, Freeholder;
Paulette Crabel Wahler, Chair; Nancy
Nicola, Vice Chair; Andrea
Mackaronis; Chanelle McCullum;

Catherine Nicola, North Brunswick Councilwoman; Elizabeth Raspa; Linda Van Derveer; and Debbie Wisniewski. Staff support is provided by the Middlesex County Department of Human Services.

The Commission will sponsor an annual "Citizens of the Year" event in March, *Women's History Month*, celebrating Middlesex County women who have made outstanding accomplishments to the community. The Commission also will sponsor a scholarship award to female graduating seniors who exemplify superior or exceptional characteristics that contribute to the specific criteria of academic achievement, work experience, community service, honors and awards, leadership and extracurricular activities.

The Commission has announced their first annual "Citizens of the Year" Award Dinner, to be held on March 23, 2011, at the Pines Manor in Edison. Several distinguished women residents of Middlesex County will be honored for their contributions in the following areas: Arts/Entertainment, Business, Education, Health/Medicine, Government, Law/Public Safety, Social Services and Volunteerism.

The Commission is accepting nominations for women who have truly made a difference. Nomination forms must be received no later than January 7, 2011. For information on the Commission or to access a nomination form, please contact Lori Dillon at 732-745-4518 or e-mail lori.dillon@co.middlesex.nj.us.

Additional information and nomination forms also are available on the Middlesex County Department of Human Services Web site at:

<http://co.middlesex.nj.us/humanservices/index.asp> .



DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEWS 2010

By

Penny Grande, Program
Development Specialist, &
A. Lori Dillon, Director, Division of
Behavioral Health & Children's
Services

The Middlesex County Division of Behavioral Health & Children's Services serves as the County's comprehensive behavioral health and children's services planning entity, recommending and monitoring the allocation of Federal, State and County funds. Working closely with the Middlesex County Mental Health Board and the Professional Advisory Committee, the Division identifies needs and barriers within the behavioral health care continuum, advocates for accessible, consumer focused mental health services, and functions as a clearinghouse for information about important available resources.

In 2010, the Middlesex County Division of Behavioral Health & Children's Services, despite significant cuts in State funding, redoubled our efforts to enhance the wellness and recovery opportunities available to Middlesex County residents, affected by mental illness, and to ending stigma. With our best wishes for a happy, healthy and

productive New Year, here are a few highlights of our year in review.

Middlesex County Mental Health Board

The Middlesex County Mental Health Board is dedicated to consumer empowerment, cultural competence, ending stigma and to raising mental health awareness. The Mental Health Board meets monthly to provide oversight for the mental health services continuum of care. The Board's fiscal responsibilities include review, recommendation and on site monitoring of all State and County funded mental health services. The Board also reviews consumer grievances.

Throughout the year, the Board shared valuable resource information with its membership to raise awareness about key issues. In 2010, notable initiatives and presentations before the Board included:

- Education strategies to end stigma with programming available to elementary through high schools, presented by NAMI NJ
- Jail Diversion Task Force reports and analysis of issues affecting people with mental illness in the criminal justice system
- Pros and cons of Involuntary Outpatient Commitment and other passed and pending legislation affecting people with mental illness
- The acute care system, with a special focus on the designated screening center at UBHC, medical clearance at area hospitals and related issues which require Board waiver or

recommendation, including the use of telepsychiatry

- UMDNJ UBHC FIRST Program (*Fostering Individual Recovery Through Supportive Treatment*), the first inpatient unit in New Jersey dedicated solely to the treatment of young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- The complementary UBHC RAISE (Recovery After Initial Schizophrenia Episode) Project and outpatient services program for individuals experiencing their first psychotic episode
- NAMI-NJ culturally competent outreach services to respond to the dynamic diversity of Middlesex County
- Detailed information on case management, outpatient, partial care, residential and other services to support community tenure available to County residents
- The proposed plan to close Hagedorn Psychiatric Hospital
- Proposed Self Help Center at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital

The Mental Health Professional Advisory Committee (PAC)

In partnership with the Board, the PAC advocates to provide quality, accessible care to individuals and families affected by mental illness in Middlesex County. Agencies that receive State or County funding to deliver mental health services are required to attend PAC monthly meetings, which serve as a forum to share information on policy, training and other resources. Recent highlights include:

- Educational resources available to consumers in Middlesex County from Bridgeway LEARN /

Supported Education Services to assist consumers to reach their academic goals. LEARN is available to consumers in Middlesex, Union, Hudson and Essex counties.

- Community Health Law Project mental health law update on psychiatric hospital liens and other barriers / issues affecting consumers.
- Disability Rights-NJ update on Involuntary Outpatient Commitment.
- Moving Forward Self Help Center/UMDNJ Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation on Wellness Coaching
- Middlesex County Transportation Coordination for Mental Health Consumers
- Provider compliance with Psychiatric Advanced Directives

Co-Occurring Task Force

The Co-Occurring Task Force comprises mental health and addiction service providers, consumers and County staff dedicated to improving:

- Services for people with co-occurring diagnoses of psychiatric/substance use disorder
- Coordination across systems
- Training for agencies

The *Co-Occurring Task Force* supports integrated programming through sharing best practice information, resource inventory and cross training. Earlier this year, the Task Force sponsored a resource sharing and networking event for Mental Health Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) and Professional Advisory Committee on Alcoholism

and Drug Abuse (PACADA) members.

This highly successful event drew more than 50 participants. Given our difficult economic times, this was an important opportunity for agencies to gather together to better understand how to access available resources and was especially timely given the merging of the NJ Division of Mental Health Services and Division of Addiction Services.

Also in response to the State merger, the Middlesex County Department of Human Services convened a special meeting of the PAC and the PACADA to offer recommendations to the State. The special meeting agenda included: future County planning and the role of County government; State contracting; State licensure; State-required protocols for client assessment; State standards of care; cross-training, and conceptual and philosophical perspectives - framework and vision. The meeting summary concluded that all merger decisions, efforts, and planning must lead to a unified vision of wellness and recovery, and ending stigma. The merger is an opportunity to operationalize this vision.

Disaster Liaison Grant Award & Related Activities

The Division of Behavioral Health & Children's Services also serves as the local coordinator of the NJ Division of Mental Health & Addictions Services' mental health response, in the event of a declared disaster or community incident, and is responsible for the deployment of local certified disaster response crisis counselors.

A Best Practices Forum for Disaster Response Crisis Counselors (DRCC's) was held in 2010 at the

Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville, in partnership with the NJ Division of Mental Health Services Disaster and Terrorism Branch and the Mental Health Association in NJ. The forum provided refreshers on Psychological First Aid, an evidence-informed approach to assist children, adolescents, adults and families in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and the Incident Command System, which allows personnel from a variety of agencies to rapidly meld into a common management structure in the event of a disaster or large scale emergency. A drill exercise took place in the afternoon with a review of safety and wellness practices. Throughout the day, photo ID's were taken and distributed to nearly 40 new DRCC's.

Several other specialized trainings were offered throughout the year for our DRCC workforce. All trainings were free of charge, fulfilled the requirements for DRCC certification, and were approved for continuing education credits.

Within 48 hours of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, a skilled cadre of certified counselors were activated to outreach to the Haitian community in Middlesex County and to offer assistance. In order to be ready for such terrible events, the Division underwrites training workshops and conferences throughout the year to ensure that local responders are certified and appropriately credentialed to respond to the needs of the community.

For the fourth year in a row, Middlesex County was selected to receive a special Disaster Liaison Grant by the Mental Health Association in NJ through a grant

from the NJ Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Disaster & Terrorism Branch. The Disaster Liaison Grant is for the purpose of maintaining and credentialing a volunteer Disaster Response Crisis Counselor (DRCC) workforce, assisting in the coordination of disaster and crisis response, planning and coordinating DRCC trainings, and other activities associated with supporting DRCC credentialing within our County. The Middlesex County Mental Health Administration continues to support these disaster preparedness and credentialing efforts and is pleased to have received this most generous grant.

MCKINNEY-VENTO AWARDS TRI-COUNTY RESOURCE GRANT FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

By

*Wanda Dillon, Office of Children's
Services Administrator*

Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean Counties received a second year of funding to assist schools with ensuring that students who are homeless have access to the same services and resources as other students. In 2009, the Brick Township Public School District submitted an application to the State Department of Education to serve as the Stewart B. McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless and Youth program's lead agency for a tri-county partnership involving Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean Counties. For the 2009 - 2010 school year, the project was awarded \$143,982 for the three counties. The funding for 2010-2011 was increased to \$163,395.

A report released by First Focus and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), "A Critical Moment: Child & Youth Homelessness in Our Nation's Schools," named New Jersey as the State with the fifth highest increase in the number of homeless children and youth identified in public schools. A 2008 -2009 survey indicated that there were 6,397 homeless students in New Jersey. Middlesex County had 800 homeless students, the highest in the State.

Funds for the project are distributed through a referral process from the designated School Homeless Liaisons to the Project Director, Alan Ferraro, and the County Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC) Coordinator. Funds are available for:

1. *School Supplies*
2. *Emergent Child Study Team Evaluation*
3. *Tutoring*
4. *Counseling*
5. *Medical Evaluation*
6. *Excess Cost of Transportation (Pro-rated-amount)*

Each County CIACC will continue to provide information on local County and community-based services. School Building and District Homeless Liaisons have been identified in Middlesex County for participation in the project and trainings. The overall focus of the project is to enhance communication among school personnel, behavioral health and child protective agencies, and other system partners regarding resources for homeless youth and their families.

During the current school year, four trainings remain for Middlesex school personnel and local child serving partners. Topics will include: 1) Available Homeless Support Funds; 2) New Jersey Department of Education Compliance Indicators/Monitoring; 3) Homeless Service Requirements; 4) Homeless State Law & Code; and 5) Educational Subcommittee. A manual consisting of reference materials, required referral forms, and local resources will be available to attendees. In addition, an online version of the manual has been created. The remaining trainings have been scheduled at Middlesex County College on the following dates: 1/28/11, 2/25/11, and 4/1/11.

For more information on the project and trainings in Middlesex County, please contact Lakeasha Malvo-Carter, Middlesex County CIACC Coordinator, at: 732-745- 3732. To read more and to access data on Homeless Students by County and School District, please visit: <http://monarchhousing.org/2010/10/27/6397-homeless-students/>



COMMISSION ON ABUSED AND MISSING CHILDREN PRESENTS

TEEN DATING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM

By
Mary Tarant, Multi-Disciplinary Team
Coordinator

On December 6, 2010, The Middlesex County Commission on Abused and Missing Children presented an evening program for teenage youth, "Teen Dating: Domestic Violence and Healthy Relationships - What You Need to Know." The program was held at The Middlesex County Vo-Tech in East Brunswick; approximately 45 people were present, including 29 teenagers.

The first part of the program entailed an interactive information session with Kathy Indevglia from Women Aware, who discussed the characteristics of domestic violence and its cyclic nature.

The premise throughout the session was no matter what one does, domestic violence is not acceptable, and victims are never at fault. Domestic violence is about power and control over someone else. Abuse can be experienced by any gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and within all different types of relationships, whether heterosexual relationships, homosexual relationships, between mother and daughter, and father and son, to name a few. Different options were addressed to help domestic violence victims, including letting an adult, counselor, parent or professional know that a friend is being abused.

The second part of the program comprised Scream Theater students from Rutgers University who acted

out a skit showing the different types of abuse and how friends react differently to the victim. The students stayed in character during the question and answer session, and later introduced themselves with a caveat about domestic violence abuse, such as everyone has the right to a healthy relationship free from abuse.

The program was well received by the teenagers who participated throughout the entire program, often asking questions and sharing comments. The Commission looks forward to presenting additional informative programs in 2011.

To learn more about the Commission on Abused and Missing Children, please contact Mary Tarrant at: 732-745-3655 or mary.tarant@co.middlesex.nj.us.

YOU CAN PAY IT FORWARD

By
Lakeasha D. Malvo Carter, Program
Development Specialist

Many of us have heard or have used the phrase, "Pay it forward," to express their sentiments about performing and receiving good deeds. Actually, paying it forward is what community service and volunteerism is about. As we reflect on the passing holiday season, and the way our lives were touched by kind gestures and gifts to one another and to those we don't have a personal relationship with, January presents a time to continue paying it forward.

The 3rd Monday of January is recognized as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (MLK Day) honoring and recognizing the legacy of Reverend

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. January 17, 2011 will mark the 25th year that MLK Day will be observed as a Federal holiday. Because Dr. King was a man who believed in individual and community actions to promote social change, nationally, organizations and volunteers are pledging to participate in the MLK Day of Service: <http://mlkday.gov/>.

The MLK Day of Service is a part of United We Serve, the President's call for people to participate in service initiatives across the country. As stated on the United We Serve Website: <http://www.serve.gov>, the President is calling on all Americans to participate in our nation's recovery and renewal by serving in our communities. There are many ways to get involved.



Dr. King's statement, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?" reminds us that it does not have to be a specific time of year or certain day to lend a helping hand to one another. The MLK Day of Service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, creates solutions to social problems, and moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community." So if you are eager to get involved, there are many organizations and community-based agencies within Middlesex County that could use your helping hand.

ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH MERGER PROCESS CONTINUES

By
Elliot White, Director, Division
of Addiction Services

The merger of the State Divisions of Addictions and the Division of Mental Health Services continues to progress. As has been noted previously, Governor Chris Christie's transition team made several recommendations concerning treatment, mental health and associated services during the campaign and after the election.

The merger between Addictions and Mental Health, though a logical association, is the most ambitious proposal, and the most difficult to achieve. This effort requires the cooperation and co-ordination of virtually every department of State government, as well as, adjustments in operations of the County offices of Addictions and Mental Health, in clinical settings, in our colleges and universities and with other states with which we have reciprocal treatment understandings.

Each State division has a blue ribbon team of stakeholders assisting the department commissioners in the development of protocols and standards by which the new merged division will operate. The teams consist of persons representing the fields mentioned above along with other interested individuals. Presently before the group is a paper submitted by representatives of the NJ Association of County Mental Health Administrators and the NJ Association of County Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Directors discussing the merger.

The document summarizes the group's belief that the mission, values and vision of the new office should include a vision of wellness

and recovery that supports an integrated philosophy of treatment and prevention, views addictions as the chronic disease that it is, and incorporates a “no wrong door” approach. The ultimate goal of this planned merger is to create a service system for Addictions and Mental Health that is simplified, uniform and consistent. Future newsletters will outline the progress of the merger as common issues and areas become clearer.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY DRUG COURT PROGRAM DEMONSTRATES SUCCESS!

By
Shelly Joseph Thoms, Addiction
Services Planner

Maintaining lives that are free from drug and alcohol addiction may be a lifelong battle for many in our society. In Middlesex County, ongoing addictions programs and services remain critical to a substance abuser’s quest to become a healthy, responsible, and productive member of the community. Additionally, program development and service provision, based on proven effective means of addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery support, continue to be key objectives of our local judicial and human services systems.

One of these programs was developed by the Middlesex County Drug Court in 2004, and has yielded over 60 graduates to date, with over two hundred individuals currently working toward achieving their program goals. On Tuesday, December 14, 2010, at 10 a.m.,

members of the Middlesex County Drug Court presented their Fourth Graduation Ceremony since the program’s inception. Twenty-two program graduates were honored, many of them with over three years of sobriety.

The Middlesex County Drug Court Team uses a system of intensive supervision, random drug testing, the risk of imprisonment, and assistance with vocational/support services to maintain participant compliance with program goals. The Team comprises justices, law clerks and other judicial staff, County prosecutors and public defenders, and several probation officers.

The graduation program was held in the Middlesex County Administration Building, in the Freeholders Conference Room, in the presence of a crowd of approximately one hundred and fifty. Middlesex County officials present included Freeholder Ronald Rios and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, Justice Barry T. Albin. Honorable Justices Travis L. Francis, Lorraine Pullen, and Dennis Nieves also participated in the morning’s program. Justice Albin, who delivered the keynote address, shared his dismay about the numbers of individuals incarcerated through the criminal justice system in the State. He acknowledged his hopefulness on a day such as this, when the criminal justice system recognizes the graduating men and women for the tremendous work they have accomplished in their efforts to change course.

A number of program graduates mentioned the program’s intensity as one of the main reasons they remained adherent, while others credited the commitment and support

expressed by their assigned probation officers, sponsors, and family members. However, as they accepted their awards and shared excerpts of their struggles with the audience, it was clear that undeniable factors in these graduates' success were their courage and determination to change their lives.

In closing, Justice Nieves advised program graduates to build upon their recovery and achievements while in the program, and to keep moving forward on their paths to success.

As Addiction Services Planner for Middlesex County, it is my sincere hope that program graduates heed this advice, and utilizing the tools provided and supports available to them, remain in recovery for many years to come.

If you know someone who needs assistance with obtaining treatment for substance abuse, or if you would like more information about drug and alcohol programs and services, please call Shelly Joseph Thoms in the Middlesex County Division of Addictions Services at: 732) 745-4094.

CELEBRATING LIFE

By

*Lucy Aladeselu-Counts, Ryan White
Program Coordinator*

Webster's Dictionary defines celebrate as "to observe (a day) or commemorate (an event) with

ceremonies or festivities." On December 1, 2010, over 100 dedicated individuals came together at the Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, in New Brunswick, to observe and commemorate World AIDS Day. Despite the rainy, windy day and the blistering cold that blanketed the Central Jersey area as the sun began to set, these individuals gathered to *celebrate life*. The celebration was a very uplifting and emotional event.



This year marked the 22nd observance of annual World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day was

created as a way to raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic, which is caused by the spread of HIV infection.

The 2010 World AIDS Day (WAD) Observance, "Celebration of Life," at Hyacinth, was planned by the WAD Committee of the Middlesex-Somerset-Hunterdon HIV Health Services Planning Council and the Our Voices Client's Caucus. The Committee comprised consumers as well as professionals in the field who wanted to increase awareness and acceptance of those who live with HIV/AIDS and to involve the community in the provision of services. This year's celebration was dedicated to those living with HIV/AIDS as well as those who have been lost to the disease.

Event highlights included free HIV Testing and Counseling; a candlelight vigil; an art exhibit by people living with HIV/AIDS; and a performance by a gospel choir.

The HIV Testing and Counseling was offered to all who were interested in knowing their status. The candlelight

vigil at Monument Square Park paid tribute to those who have passed on from the disease and those who are still with us today. The art exhibit showcased paintings, drawings, sketches, poetry and other writings. Finally, the performance by the gospel choir provided an uplifting conclusion to the celebration.

Rather than being a solemn event, the 2010 World AIDS Celebration allowed the opportunity for reflection, tribute and celebration of how far we have come and where we would like to be.

THANKS FROM NORTH BRUNSWICK MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE

By

Lou Ann Benson, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Municipal Alliance Coordinator, Township of North Brunswick (From Roulla Castanos-Beaton, Middlesex County Municipal Alliance Coordinator)

The North Brunswick Township Municipal Alliance Committee would like to extend their gratitude to Freeholder Director, Christopher D. Rafano, Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders; Roulla Georgiou, County Municipal Alliance Coordinator; and the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drugs, for awarding a \$5,000 competitive grant to the Township of North Brunswick's Municipal Alliance Committee. The funds were used for a middle school Dodge Ball League Prevention Program consisting of sixth, seventh and eighth graders. The program was conducted at Linwood Middle School on Friday evenings from 7 pm – 9 pm.

Mayor Francis "Mac" Womack and Township Council Members, along with the North Brunswick Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Heritage Day Committee, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Fire Company # 3, North Brunswick Rescue Squad, North Brunswick Public Library, North Brunswick Police Department, and the Humane Association united together to share how important healthy lifestyle activities are, and stressed the importance of good decision making with the students. A special thank you to Superintendent, Brian Zychowski; Principal, Pete Clark, North Brunswick Township High School; and Principal Brian Brotschul, of Linwood Middle School, for their support to the students and Municipal Alliance Committee. Thank you to staff members Amanda and Pam Applegate, and Jimmy and Alyson Tracey, for their efforts in creating a drug and alcohol free environment for our students.



"North Brunswick, a community that strives for a drug and alcohol free environment"

The students of the Dodge Ball League Prevention Program will volunteer hours to the organizations and committees that participated in the Dodge Ball League Prevention Program to enhance the quality of life in the North Brunswick community. The student participants joined together with Mayor Francis Mayor III

to say “No to Drugs, Alcohol and Violence”.

On behalf of Mayor Francis Womack III and the North Brunswick Municipal Alliance Committee, we extend a holiday wish to all for a successful 2011 year.

Info Line

Info Line of Middlesex County is the comprehensive, confidential County-wide Information & Referral system for health and human services. Info Line’s staff will help you to find available services through their extensive database. For information and referral, call 1/888/908-4636; or go to the Web site: www.infoline-org.

The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Middlesex County Department of
Human Services

Barbara J. Sewell
Editor, Quarterly Newsletter

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Administration.....732-745-4186
Addiction Services...732-745-4190
Behavioral Health & Children’s
Services.....732-745-3290
Social Work Services.....732-745-4086

Department of Senior Services

732-745-3295

NJ EASE 1-877-222-3737 (toll free)

Middlesex County Administration
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75 Bayard Street, Fifth Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

MIDDLESEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES WEB SITE

<http://co.middlesex.nj.us>