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Mentor and Role Model Honored

"He listens to what each of us say, he helps us grow and he supports our dreams . . . and we would like everyone to know the great person he is."

Jeremy Whitmore and William Tracy are talking about their Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Case Manager **Art Nixon**. The two men nominated and then presented Mr. Nixon with the **DDS South Region Lynda T. Cavagnaro Award**. The award is given each year in honor of Ms. Cavagnaro who passed away 10 years ago. The recipient is recognized for their exemplary work serving individuals with developmental disabilities.

Mr. Whitmore and Mr. Tracy live in a DDS transitional home in Waterford where both are recent graduates and work in the community.

"He has taken us on bike rides, helped us get together with friends for dinner and special occasions, listened to our problems and always given us good advice," said Mr. Whitmore and Mr. Tracy. *"He made sure we were able to go to our proms, taken us to basketball and*

football games at our high school and even made recipe cards so we can cook without having to know how to read."

Mr. Whitmore and Mr. Tracy continued *"Art is there for the fun times and the times that are sometimes harder. He is a strong role model, mentor and most of all always treats us with care and respect."*



(left to right) Jeremy Whitmore, Art Nixon, DDS Case Manager and William Tracy

Everyone Needs At Least One Family

Everyone needs at least one family. Some people with developmental disabilities have more than one – their own and the family they live with in a Department of Developmental Services (DDS) licensed **Community Training Home (CTH)**. When circumstances make it impractical for a child or an adult to live in their family home, placement in a CTH is often the best choice. A CTH can provide residential placement closest to family living, yet governed by DDS regulatory standards.



April and Jill both live with Rose, a Community Training Home (CTH) Provider. Pictured, (left to right) April, Rose, Jill, Doug Douford, DDS CTH Coordinator and Colleen Kelly, DDS Case Manager.

Continued on pg. 2



Department of Developmental Services Central Office

460 Capitol Avenue | Hartford, CT 06106 | 860.418.6000

Joan C. Barnish, Director of Communications
(860) 418-6044, joan.barnish@ct.gov

Dianne Gill, Administrative Assistant
(860) 418-6091, dianne.gill@ct.gov

North Region

155 Founders Plaza
255 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108-3223
860.263.2500

South Region

104 South Turnpike Road
Wallingford, CT 06492
203.294.5049

West Region

250 Freight Street
Waterbury, CT 06702
203.805.7400

Southbury Training School

P.O. Box 872
Southbury, CT 06488
203.586.2000

In This Issue

Mentor and Role Model Honored 1
Everyone Needs At Least One Family 1
Safeguarding Consumers and Staff 2
A Message from Commissioner O'Meara 3
Highlights of Changes in the DDS Waiver 4
Finding Support and Making Friends 4
North Region Update 5
South Region Update 6
West Region Update 7
DDS and UCONN Nursing Program 8

Everyone Needs At Least One Family

Continued from pg. 1

Community Training Home licensees accept the responsibility for caring for one, two, or in some instances, as many as three individuals with developmental disabilities. CTH licensees and their family receive orientation, on-going support, and training from DDS. There is also a full-time team of support available to help both the person receiving services as well as the provider, including a case manager, a registered nurse, a behavioral management specialist, a quality monitor and the CTH program regional coordinator. When an individual is referred to the CTH Team, a matching process takes place to ensure the highest probability for successful placement.

One of the most important responsibilities of the CTH licensee is to maintain important relationships, connections, and preferences of the person, while blending into their new "family," neighborhood and community.

Community Training Home licensees receive room & board payment established by Department of Social Services (DSS) and a monthly stipend from DDS to cover additional costs of care for each individual who lives in their home.

If you are interested in becoming a CTH provider PLEASE CONTACT:

- Doug Duford, West Region, 203 806 8750
Kathy Calo, South Region, 203-294-5025
Tim Lavoy, North Region, 860-263-2506

Safeguarding Consumers and Staff

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently received a completed investigation done by the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA) as the result of an untimely death of one of our consumers. Unfortunately, an individual died after being hit by a motor vehicle at the end of his driveway as he prepared to go to work.

As a result of their investigation, OPA made the recommendation that ornamental plantings at homes and program sites be routinely checked to insure that they do not create a visual obstruction for traffic in the area.

DDS takes very seriously ensuring the health and safety of the individuals. We have notified DDS and private agency staff of the importance of this recommendation which could safeguard against consumer or staff injury in the future.

A Message From Commissioner O'Meara



Commissioner
Peter H. O'Meara

The past year was one of growth and accomplishment for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Many consumers and their families have benefitted from these initiatives.

First and foremost, the department successfully completed the fourth year of the five year **Waiting List Initiative**, which has continued due to the ongoing support of **Governor M. Jodi Rell** and legislature. This initiative provides funding each year for people on the residential waiting list and this year new residential supports were provided to 228 individuals. An additional 118 families received enhanced family supports. We are also pleased that funding has continued for students graduating from high school supporting 214 to work or attend adult day programs. The department is in its third year of operating the **Voluntary Services Program** for children who have mental retardation and behavioral health needs. This program expanded to serve 81 new children and their families.

DDS has also worked diligently to improve existing supports and services. We have several **Self Advocacy Coordinators** in the region who assist us to promote self-determination and support consumers to learn about

advocating for themselves. They participate actively in training and make sure the viewpoint of our consumers is represented on committees and workgroups.

We are very aware of the aging of the population we serve. Now, over 2,500 individuals who are part of DDS are over the age of 55. We hired **Siobhan Morgan** as the **Aging Services Coordinator** in February to lead our efforts to develop new service alternatives and to integrate aging consumers into generic elderly programs. The **Legislative Program Review Committee** chose this population for one of its studies this year. Their report will be issued by December, which will help guide our aging initiative.

The **Birth to Three Program** continues to grow receiving over 9,000 referrals this year, which is an increase of 5% over 2007. Birth to Three added five new general programs to meet the growing demand and 10 programs to serve children diagnosed with autism.

As of October 1st, our two waivers were renewed with added services which include health care coordination, adult day health services and live in caregiver.

The ability of the department to expand and provide quality services is only possible because of the strength of the providers who offer residential, employment, respite, and individual and family support services. This year, 31 new providers enrolled to offer **Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver** services or to expand to a new geographic location, bringing the total number of qualified providers to 184. We are fortunate to have funding to serve more people and to have a growing provider community willing and able to provide the needed supports.

While the DDS private sector partnership has had a very successful year expanding services, providers, like all families in Connecticut, face the economic realities of increased utility, transportation, food and insurance costs. This year's budget is very generous in supporting the department to serve more people. However, the falling tax revenues forced difficult decisions to be made, which resulted in no cost of living increases for private agencies. Each agency, as well as DDS, is looking at ways to become more efficient and reduce costs whenever possible. As transportation costs continue to rise, families may see a reduction in trips and more efficient approaches to shopping, errands and medical appointments. If this occurs in a home or program serving your son or daughter, please try to understand. Every provider is adjusting their operations based on rising costs and making reductions where they can be made without jeopardizing health or safety. Each agency is working diligently to live within its budget and maintain the essential services and supports our consumers need.

The department and provider community will continue to work in partnership to contain costs while maintaining the quality our families expect and our consumers deserve.

Highlights of Changes in the DDS Waivers

Effective October 1st, there will be some changes to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Comprehensive and Individual and Family Supports (IFS) Waivers including the addition of new services and the renaming of others.

NEW SERVICES IN BOTH DDS WAIVERS INCLUDE:

- Health Care Coordination
- Adult Day Health Services
- Live In Caregiver

SERVICES THAT HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE ONLY IN THE COMPREHENSIVE WAIVER AND ARE NEWLY AVAILABLE IN THE IFS WAIVER INCLUDE:

- Residential Habilitation CTH
- Individual Directed Goods & Services

SERVICES THAT HAVE BEEN RENAMED ARE:

- **Individualized Home Supports**
previously called Individual Supports (IS) Habilitation or Supported Living (Residential Habilitation)
- **Clinical Behavioral Support Services**
previously called Consultation Services
- **Nutrition**
previously called Consultation Services
- **Independent Support Broker**
previously called Family & Individual Consultation & Support (FICS)

As Individual Plans are developed or updated, individuals enrolled in a Waiver should be aware of the availability of new services and the new names of others.

FOR THE FULL DESCRIPTIONS of these waiver services, please ask your case manager or visit the DDS website at www.ct.gov/dds under [Waiver Information](#) on the Home Page.

Finding Support and Making Friends

Connecting with other families can be an important source of support and information for parents who have children with disabilities.



Parent advocacy and family support groups typically offer information, education, advocacy, discussion groups, parent support, and networking to people who share similar experiences raising a family member who has a disability.

The CT Family Support Network (CTFSN), www.ctfsc.org, is a great resource for families who have children with disabilities and want to connect with other families. The Network was created by the **Connecticut Family Support Council**, a legislatively established partnership of parents and professionals working to improve supports for families of children with disabilities.

In addition to CTFSN, the **United Way of Connecticut** provides a wealth of information at **2-1-1** (In Connecticut, dial 211 or find 2-1-1 on the web at www.infoline.org). 2-1-1 is a great resource to locate local parent advocacy and family support groups and other resources for people with disabilities and their families. Information about these groups may also be available from your physician, school, or local provider agency.

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) also has **Regional Advisory and Planning Councils** where parents can share information about supports in a region. You may also contact your DDS case manager for suggestions of advocacy and family support groups in your local area.

TO CONTACT the Advisory and Planning Councils from your region; please use the following e-mails:

North Region	ddsct.north@ct.gov
South Region	ddsct.south@ct.gov
West Region	ddsct.west@ct.gov

North Region Update

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Guide: Page by Page

For parents who are novices with the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** and **Planning and Placement Team (PPT)** process, or even those parents who may feel well-informed, “**The IEP Guide: Page by Page**” is a very helpful resource to review prior to your child’s next PPT. The guide will walk you through the IEP process and focuses on topics often questioned and/or misunderstood.

This Guide has been designed to educate you on both the IEP document and PPT process and, through shared knowledge, promote close collaborative working relationships between you and the school personnel working with your child. It will also assist you in becoming a more effective participant in the educational process. While it may not answer all your questions, the intent is to simplify, in an organized manner, what is necessary for you to be successful.

The Page-by-Page IEP format was initially created by **Stacy Hultgren**, a parent of a child with autism, and co-founder of the **Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center**. Ms. Hultgren saw the enormous value of a quick and easy reference for families to assist them in understanding the daunting IEP document. With Ms. Hultgren’s consent, a team comprised of parents of children with disabilities, a **Family Support Council** member, a **Council of Developmental Disabilities** member, an attorney, and educational staff from the Department of Developmental Services(DDS) and State Department of Education set out to update this resource. The updated document was completed in the Fall of 2007 and printed for distribution to parents by the **Council of Developmental Disabilities** in February of 2008.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COPY of the “The IEP Guide: Page by Page,” please contact your DDS Case Manager, Educational Liaison, or Transition Coordinator.

North Region Quality Council Initiative

Each DDS Region has a **Quality Council** that functions as a subcommittee of the **Regional Family Advisory and Planning Council**. These local Quality Councils are made up of families, individuals who receive supports and services from DDS, and regional staff. In addition, from time to time others participate in these meetings based on the topic area and expertise needed.

Currently the North Region is recruiting interested families to join with consumers and staff on the **NR**

Quality Council. It is an opportunity for families to have input on quality issues for the department. Your commitment would involve either a monthly or quarterly meeting in the late afternoon or evening. The NR Quality Council is also recruiting individuals from various self-advocacy groups and anticipates starting this Fall.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED in serving in this capacity, or just have a question related to this function, please call Scott Wolfe, North Region Quality Improvement Director, at 860-263-2460, or email Scott Wolfe at: scott.wolfe@ct.gov.

Family Forums

The North Region is hosting three evenings with representatives of the **Bureau of Rehabilitation** to explain how **Social Security** benefits work in relation to employment. They will explain how

benefits are affected by employment, what programs are offered as work incentives, and who you can contact regarding your personal situation for counseling. We hope you will attend one of these informative evenings.

DATE	TIME	LOCATION / ADDRESS
Mon., Oct. 20	6:00 - 8:00 pm	Killingly Public Library – Community Room 25 Westcott Rd., Danielson, CT
Tue., Oct. 21	6:00 - 8:00 pm	Farmington Community Family & Senior Center Recreation Room, 321 New Britain Ave., Unionville, CT
Mon., Oct. 27	6:00 - 8:00 pm	East Hartford Cultural Center - Auditorium 50 Chapman Place, East Hartford, CT

South Region Update

Self Advocates Coordinators Are Here to Help

The **DDS Self Advocate Coordinators** have been working hard to spread the word about self advocacy in the South Region and statewide. As part of their job, each of them is responsible for a specific focus area that is important to people with disabilities.

- **Ms. Genna Lewis, Self Advocate Coordinator** in our New Haven office, focuses on women's issues. She is working on starting a women's group in the Westbrook area and she serves as a source of information for advocates, staff, and families on issues faced by women with disabilities. **Genna can be reached at 203-914-4225 or genna.lewis@ct.gov.**
- **Ms. Joyce Rivers**, who works in the Norwich office, focuses on issues related to aging.

Joyce actively participates on the **DDS Aging Committee** and is looking into issues such as retirement options for seniors. **Joyce can be reached at 860-859-5442 or joyce.rivers@ct.gov.**

- **Ms. Carol Grabbe**, who works in the Wallingford office, focuses on leadership. Carol runs a speaker's bureau to help people with disabilities learn to speak up effectively for themselves, and she serves as a resource in helping self-advocates develop leadership skills. **Carol can be reached at 203-294-5119 or at carol.grabbe@ct.gov.**

The self advocate coordinators provide a valuable resource to individuals and families in the South Region and are eager to assist you in furthering your goals and meeting your needs. Please contact them and learn how you can get involved in self advocacy.

Camp Harkness Looks Forward to 2009 Season

It is not too soon to begin thinking about family vacations next year. **Camp Harkness**, on the beautiful shore in Waterford, CT, will begin accepting reservations for the 2009 season after January 1st. Families and/or individuals must be a Camp Harkness pass holder in order to reserve accommodations at the camp. There is no charge for our camping facilities, which are available for weekends or week-long stays. A variety of winterized and non-winterized cabins, along with six seasonal

beachside tent sites, make camping a year-round option for families across Connecticut whose family member has a disability. While staying at Camp Harkness, cooking facilities are available along with many accessible amenities to be enjoyed in our 102-acre state park. Any Connecticut resident with a disability may apply to receive a free lifetime pass to Camp Harkness by contacting **Olga Valentine** at DDS at **860-859-5428** or **olga.valentine@ct.gov**. Leave your name, address, and request for a Camp Harkness pass application. Pass holders may make camping reservations by calling the camp directly at **860-443-7818**.

National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week

The recent passage by **Congress of US Senate Resolution 613** designates the week of September 8th as the first **National Direct Support Professionals Recognition Week**. In the DDS community we are particularly appreciative of the hard work and dedication of thousands of direct support workers who enable individuals with disabilities to live full and rich lives as a result of their caring support. Nearly 10,000 people are employed in direct support capacities throughout the DDS system. These include the staff of public and private

sector group homes and DDS campuses, supported living workers, respite caregivers, family support workers, community training home providers, and those hired directly by individuals and families. The people who have chosen this profession demonstrate daily that through consistent nurturing care and teaching support, individuals with many challenges will learn, grow, participate, and contribute to community life. Now is the perfect time to recognize and express gratitude to the direct support workers who are assisting your family member. We applaud the direct support professionals among us and value their endless contributions.

West Region Update

National Roster Internship Established In The Music Therapy Department At Southbury Training School

The **West Region Music Therapy Department** is proud to announce approval for a **National Roster Internship by the American Music Therapy Association**. This approval is one of only three in the **New England Region of the American Music Therapy Association**. Having been granted this distinction in April, 2007, the internship is already up and running. An intern has a typical seven-month duration doing full-time direct sessions. The end result is that more clients are having access to music therapy sessions.

Music Therapy is a clinically based health care profession that utilizes music as its major source of healing. A client's physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs are all addressed through the use of Music Therapy. Music therapists work with people of all ages to address various conditions such as mental health needs, developmental and learning disabilities, hospice, Alzheimer's disease, grief and bereavement, substance abuse problems, brain injuries, physical disabilities, and chronic pain.

Music Therapists work in a variety of settings, including schools, psychiatric and medical hospitals, nursing homes, correctional facilities, institutional settings, and private practices.

Music Therapists utilize a wide array of music techniques with their clients. Instrument playing, singing, song writing, music improvisation and expressive movement are all effective ways of reaching the goals that music therapists establish for their clients. It is the job of a music therapist to recognize which techniques and activities are most effective for each person's individual needs and the most successful way to implement each of them. Utilizing music in some of the above-mentioned ways, the Music Therapy Department in the West Region has been an integral part of the life of many individuals who have lived or continue to live at the **Southbury Training School**. Congratulations, Music Therapy Department!

Coming soon . . .

"The Music In Me," a community-based (location to be determined) after school music group for children ages 7-13. If your child might be interested please call the **Music Therapy Department** at **203-586-2144**. Look for more details in the next issue of Direct To Families.

New Self Advocate Coordinator in the West

Vincent Cox is the new **Self-Advocacy Coordinator** for the DDS West Region. Vincent says he took the job because he wants to help other people. It was important enough to him that he came out of retirement. Over the years, Vincent held a variety of jobs, including farm work, pumping gas, and woodworking. He also worked at the **Gate House Café at STS**, serving food and maintaining the stock.

Vincent enjoys talking to people and going out to dinner. He says that he "likes people who are respectful and honest." He likes "people who can keep confidences." Vincent has a sense of humor and enjoys sharing jokes with his friends. He also likes watching

"The Sopranos" on television. Vincent has been very busy attending self-advocate meetings around the state. His office is at **Southbury Training School** in Fleck Hall. **Vincent Cox can be reached at 203-586-2116.**



West Region Self Advocate Vincent Cox

Direct to Families

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DDS and UCONN Nursing Program

It is that time of year again when the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) continues its partnership with the prestigious **University of Connecticut (UCONN) School of Nursing**.

The first of its kind joint venture will train nine junior year nursing students in the specialty field of developmental disability nursing and encourage these students to consider a career within the DDS service system after they graduate and become licensed. Each student is paired with a DDS registered nurse responsible for coordinating health services for DDS consumers living in regional centers, community living arrangements, and day programs and in their own homes.



Seated (left to right); Lyndsey Sonkin, Julieanne Warner, Second row (left to right) Gina Rossy, Carly Zerjav, Kimberly Gentile, Third row (left to right) David Carlow, DDS Director of Health and Clinical Services, Erika Visinski, Erika LaPointe, Christian Stahl, Emily Dronney and DDS Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

Many thanks to the DDS registered nurses who participate in this important partnership and to UCONN and DDS Administrators who coordinate this innovative program.