



Boswell Regional Center Bulletin

MARCH 2018

A Publication for Employees, Family and Friends of BRC

Creating beauty for decades...



The old Japanese Magnolia tree has provided a scenic view for hundreds of employees, TB patients and now, individuals of Boswell Regional Center, for many years. Now, it offers a canopy of vibrant fuchsia flowers for staff as they enjoy their lunch al fresco outside the building known as "The Big Kitchen." A carpet of petals was formed on the ground following the first strong wind, but the old tree still maintained its beauty.

IDD Awareness Month highlights connection with individuals, local communities

By **Diana Mikula**
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Mental Health



Each year, March is recognized across the country as Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Awareness Month. In Mississippi, more than 47,000 people have intellectual or developmental disability. In special recognition this year, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (BIDD) Advisory Council, comprised of service providers and advocacy organizations, are launching an IDD awareness campaign to acknowledge March as IDD Awareness Month. The campaign titled, "Celebrating Mississippians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities," is the first of its kind for Mississippi, and highlights the connection between people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their communities.

"Celebrating Mississippians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities" will feature videos, stories, posters, and graphics about people with intellectual or developmental disabilities that are embracing choices and enriching their lives through employment, home ownership, entrepreneurship, physical fitness and a variety of other methods. "Celebrating Mississippians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities" promotes awareness about IDD, and illustrates that people with disabilities have the ability to contribute significantly to their schools, families, relationships, neighborhoods, faith communities, and the workforce.

The term intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) may refer to a broad range of characteristics or conditions. An intellectual disability is characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and difficulties in everyday social and practical skills. A developmental disability is attributed to a cognitive or physical impairment that results in limitations in area such as self-care, language, and mobility.

While these conditions are often misunderstood, there is one thing that should never be in doubt. All people have the fundamental and inherent right to be respected, valued, and accepted for the contributions they make to their families, their schools, their relationships, and their communities. People living with an IDD have the same goals and desires everyone else has. They want to receive a good education, have a meaningful job, and live an independent life in the community of their choice. They deserve the support, respect, and acceptance of everyone in our state.

This month, I would encourage all of my fellow Mississippians to recognize the strengths and contributions of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who make our state a better place to live for everyone. Our goal as a state should include supporting a better tomorrow for them, one person a time. That's what our goal is at the Department of Mental Health. We are working to transition people to the community, secure meaningful employment opportunities, and support independent living for those served at our IDD programs around the state. I hope you will visit www.dmh.ms.gov to learn more about the campaign.

Up the Ladder

The following employees were recognized at the February Directors' Meeting for their selection as January Employees of the Month:



Greg Grantham, above left, a supervisor in Residential Living, was named Employee of the Month. Right, Katie Page, pictured on left, a DCA at Pinelake, was recognized for outstanding job performance. Both received their awards from Director Clint Ashley.



Sharon Sumrall, above left, was named Employee of the Month for her excellent work as a direct care worker at the Wesson Group Home.

Mission Statement

Boswell Regional Center offers Specialized program options to Mississippians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. These programs are designed to identify the necessary supports for successful community transition. With collaboration between the individual, family, and community, dreams can become reality.

Where Dreams Can Become Reality

Clint Ashley, Director

Mini

March 2 was Dr. Seuss' birthday, National Reading Day

BRC staff give back to the community, area schools

Boswell Regional Center employees visited area elementary school to read their favorite Dr. Seuss stories on the famed children's author's birthday, nationally-known as Read Across America Day.

Suzie Wilder, Human Resources Director for BRC, read "Green Eggs and Ham" to Mrs. Wester's first grade class at Simpson County Academy dressed as her favorite Dr. Seuss character, "Cat in the Hat." She was assisted by her daughter, Regan, dressed as "Thing 1." After reading to the students, the two distributed green eggs filled with candy.

Reading "Happy Birthday to You" to third grade classes at SCA was Kara



Mrs. Wester's first grade class at Simpson County Academy enjoyed being read to on Dr. Seuss Day by Suzie Wilder, back row, far left, BRC's Director of Human Resources. Her daughter Regan, back row, far right, assisted her. Granddaughter Olivia Wilder, front row, far left, enjoyed the surprise visit.

Kimbrough, Director of Public Relations.

Lashina Keyes and Charlotte Luckey read to students at Magee Elementary. Keyes, a residential living supervisor, read "Cat in the Hat" to her twins Alexis and Andreah Alexander's second grade class. Keyes and her husband, Charles, have two other girls in elementary school and one in middle school for a total of...yes...five daughters!

Luckey, a personnel officer in HR, read "Green Eggs and Ham" to Mrs. Wyatt's kindergarten class. Milton King (not pictured), a recreation therapist, read to students at Mendenhall Elementary School.



Lashina Keyes, back row, center, loved reading to her twins Alexis and Andreah Alexander, front, second graders at Magee Elementary School.



As the wife of an educator, Charlotte Luckey knows the value of reading to children. Luckey is the wife of Magee Middle School principal Terrell Luckey.

Governor's Service Award recipients

Two employees received Governor's Service Awards recently for employment anniversaries at BRC and the

State of Mississippi. Certificates were awarded at the February Directors' Meeting.

Schynies Williamson, pictured on the left, received a Governor's Service Award from Director Clint Ashley for reaching the 10-year mark with the State of Mississippi. Williamson works as a DCA in Residential Living.



Lottie Keyes, far left, celebrated 10 years of service to the State of Mississippi and received a certificate from Director Clint Ashley in February. Keyes works in Nutrition Services and was chosen as BRC's "Employee of the Year" in 2015.

Pastor's Corner



Bro. Rudy Jackson
BRC Patient
Advocate/Chaplain

'The tomb was empty'

Little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday School class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences, according to an article in leadership magazine. But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully.

The Sunday after Easter, the teacher brought L'eggs pantyhose containers, the kind that looks like large eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life, and put it in the egg-like container. Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion.

After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table. Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would "ooh and ahh."

Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment." Philip spoke up, "That's mine."

"Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the student retorted. "There's nothing there!"

"I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. the tomb was empty!"

Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class. He died not long afterward from an infection most normal children would have shrugged off. At the funeral this class of eight-year-olds marched up to the altar not with flowers, but with their Sunday school teacher, each to lay on it an empty pantyhose egg.

**GOOD
FRIDAY**



**Everyone is invited to a
Good Friday program**

**Scheduled for Friday,
March 30**

**Auditorium
10 a.m.**

**Bro. Rudy will present a
Good Friday message and
the BRC Choir will provide
special music.**

'Joni and Friends' already blessing BRC after chance meeting with director

Most everyone is familiar with the story of Joni Eareckson Tada, the 17-year-old girl who was paralyzed from the neck down after a tragic diving accident. Joni persevered despite her disability and became a celebrated artist after learning to paint holding a brush between her teeth. She is also a radio host, has written several books and created "Joni and Friends," a non-profit organization that works to enhance the lives of those with disabilities in much the same way her life has prospered after her life-altering accident.

The primary mission of Joni and Friends is to train, disciple and mentor people affected by disability to exercise their gifts in service to their churches and communities.

Marti Quasny, area director of Joni and Friends Mississippi, stopped by BRC unexpectedly in January and asked to meet with director Clint Ashley. The meeting led to a tour of BRC's

campus and community programs, along with a growing recognition of the value of a partnership on some level.

For starters, Joni and Friends donated Bibles created for those with disabilities and their caregivers entitled, "Beyond Suffering." Besides the Scriptures, it is filled with Joni's devotions geared to caregivers and those with disabilities. BRC and MAC individuals have also been invited to participate in a dodgeball tournament for those with disabilities and an upcoming barn dance.

In short, Quasny's decision to "drop by" BRC was not an accident. It resulted in a special friendship through which BRC's individuals and staff will reap new opportunities and blessings.



One of BRC's friendliest individuals, Dorothy, center, instantly won over Joni and Friends volunteers Myra Penn, far left and Shannah Kittrell, right. Dorothy hopes to be able to attend Joni and Friends' upcoming barn dance.



Alex, one of BRC's retirees, loves nothing more than to read his Bible around the clock. In fact, it's his favorite pastime. Receiving one of Joni and Friends' Bibles created specifically for those with disabilities brought him joy. He immediately sat down and began searching for favorite passages with a smile on his face.

How to Contact Your Legislator

The 2018 Legislative Session began on January 2, 2018. The Department of Mental Health would like to make sure all of its employees are aware of the legislative process and are as involved as they would like to be. Remember that it is your right as a citizen to speak to your legislators and let them know your opinions and your feelings about the directions our state government is going.

We have had employees ask in the past how they can identify and reach out to their legislators. There are a few ways you can do this:

If you happen to know who your legislators are, you can find their contact information at the Mississippi Legislature web site at www.legislature.ms.gov. You'll see a menu near the top of the page that has a button labeled "Legislators." You can hover over that to find your senators and your representatives.

If you do not know who your legislators are, there are some online tools that can help you identify them:

Visit www.openstates.org. You can enter your address in a text box at the top of the page or browse by state. Entering your address will show you who your legislators are. Clicking their names will also give you their contact information.

Empower Mississippi is another site that will identify your legislators. You can reach it by using your computer to visit www.empowerms.org/do-you-know-your-legislators/. Once again, you can simply enter your address to identify and get contact information for your legislators.

The Electric Power Associations of Mississippi have a legislative roster available on their web site and as a smartphone app. Search for "Mississippi Legislative Roster" in your phone's app store or visit ecm.coop/roster on a web browser for their guide.

With the 2018 Legislative Session here, it is important to know how to effectively communicate with your legislators if you do decide to contact them.

During session, legislators are very busy and often don't have time for long phone calls or in person conversations. The best way to contact them is through letters or email. If you choose to contact your legislator this session be sure that you are contacting the legislator who represents the district you live or work in.

When you contact legislators be sure to clearly tell them what you want them to know, but be brief with your message and make sure you are prepared before you send it. Always be honest, accurate and timely with the information you send a legislator.

One thing to remember is that you should not use any state time or resources if you do reach out to your legislators. You will need to contact them on your own time, on your own phone, and through your own personal email address or stationery. While we appreciate our employees' willingness to get involved, it must be done as a private citizen, not as a representative of any state agency.

One final thing to remember is something to remember in all of our professional interactions – always remain polite and courteous. Both state employees and legislators are public servants, and the Legislature has been supportive of our agency's community expansion efforts over the past several years. Please make sure to thank any legislator you speak to for their support, and for taking the time to hear your concerns.