

communityconnections

The Newsletter of St. John's Community Services



From left: Mark Gold, Board of Trustees Chairman; Genni Sasnett, COO; Donna Duncan, Pillow Lee Recipient; Heather Nolan, Founders Board Co-President; and Thomas Wilds, President/CEO

pillow lee award

Honoring Donna Duncan of SJCS-DC

On May 11, 2011, St. John's Community Services (SJCS) presented Donna Duncan with the 23rd Annual Pillow Lee Award at the historic St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, DC. The award recognizes a staff or board member who has shown long-term dedication to our mission, people with disabilities, and the courage to champion our cause.

Senior Warden Paul Barkett welcomed SJCS home to the place of its founding in 1868 by church parishioners who cared for the sick and abandoned after the Civil War. Mark Gold, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, recognized past recipients and our heritage and commitments that remain today. Heather Nolan, Co-President of the Founders Board, acknowledged the Ladies Aid Society, forerunners of today's Founders Board, which supports children and adults with disabilities in the District of Columbia through outreach and fundraising events (see p. 3). Tom Wilds, President/CEO, spoke of the growth of the organization from its origins as the oldest charity in the District into a comprehensive, multi-state and advocacy organization.

In introducing Donna, Genni Sasnett, Chief Operating Officer, cited her as the first Direct Support Professional to receive the award. "In Donna's 25 years with SJCS, she always keeps the ball rolling. Everyone—parents, other teachers, students,

continued on page 4

» Our Thanks to St. John's Episcopal Church

We often speak about St. John's Episcopal Church as the historic place of our founding. But the church is more than a bridge to our past. Guided by Reverend Luis León, the church staff and parishioners support our work year round. Just this year, the church hosted St. John's Sunday and the Pillow Lee Award Ceremony, and donated holiday gifts to our students. Thank you St. John's Church for your endless generosity and for remaining that vital link between our past, present and future.

» Find Us on Facebook!

SJCS is now on Facebook! Join the latest conversation on disability rights, legislation, special events and community activities with self-advocates, family members, providers, associations and advocates just like you!

Find us on Facebook by logging onto www.sjcs.org and clicking the Facebook icon. Come join and support SJCS on Facebook! Your involvement is essential for our success in expanding our SJCS reach via social media.

INSIDE

Charlie's Story

Tom's Message | Legislative Update

61st Annual Spring Party | Board of Trustees



*advancing community
 support and opportunities
 for people living
 with disabilities*

serving the community

Charlie Makes a Difference Through Volunteering and Working

Charlie was one of the first participants supported by SJCS-PA in Philadelphia. After leaving the Pennhurst State Institution and spending over thirty years in a sheltered workshop, Charlie attained his first community-based

Charlie enjoyed volunteering and forming friendships but continued to have an interest in a job.

job at Applebee's Restaurant with the support of SJCS-PA staff. Charlie enjoyed his job but unfortunately was laid off after five years as part of the economic downturn.

SJCS-PA Employment Specialists were challenged to find Charlie a job that best matched his skills and interests. Thus, in 2009 when SJCS-PA launched Community Participation (CP), a day "pro-

gram without walls," Charlie had the opportunity to build skills and contribute to the community while continuing his pursuit of a new job. Charlie attended CP several days a week where he volunteered at Aid for Friends and The Broad Street Ministry preparing and delivering food; The Gift of Life packaging organ donor metals; and Garden Run maintaining the garden co-op. Charlie enjoyed volunteering and form-

ing friendships but continued to have an interest in a job.

During this time, Charlie was supported by John, an SJCS-PA Employment Specialist. Charlie and John made a perfect team. Charlie secured a part-time job at Sears during the holiday season as a Merchandising Assistant while continuing to attend CP during the remainder of the

continued on next page



Thomas F. Wilds, President/CEO

Tom's Message

This has been a busy, at times taxing, yet an overwhelmingly rewarding time for SJCS. We have worked through numerous financial challenges, including government funding cuts, yet have continued our quality of services and maintained a positive budget position. Staff training in Therap, our state of the art data management system, has been completed in DC and PA, and soon to be in VA and TN in the next fiscal year. We anticipate that DC will earn CARF accreditation in the fall, joining our other locations. We've enhanced our use of electronic media via e-newsletters, invitations and updates, as well as joining social media with Facebook.

Led by the TN Board, now planning its 2nd Annual Golf Tournament, all state Boards are planning an annual fundraising event. Our three most prestigious events were accomplished seamlessly. St. John's Sunday recognized our historic link to St. John's Church; the Annual Spring Party at the Embassy of the Czech Republic was once again a wonderful evening and fundraising event thanks to the tireless work of the Founders Board; and the Pillow Lee Award Ceremony honored Donna Duncan who has devoted herself to the advancement of students in the SJCS school program for 25 years.

I can't thank you enough for your support at the events mentioned above and in so many other ways. With a devoted staff, tireless volunteers and our donors, we continue to support children and adults with disabilities so that they may live the life we are so privileged to enjoy.



spring party

The Founders Board Hosts the 61st Annual Spring Party at the Embassy of the Czech Republic

On May 10, 2011, the Founders Board of St. John's Community Services hosted its 61st Annual Spring Party at the Embassy of the Czech Republic. Over 180 guests in attendance were graciously welcomed by Jiri Ellinger, the First Secretary and Head of the Political Section on behalf of Daniel Kostoval, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy for the Czech Republic. He praised the important work of St. John's in the DC community and its other locations (VA, TN, PA) and the Founders Board members for their leadership in supporting such a worthy cause. The Spring Party raises funds to support children and adults with disabilities in Washington, DC, and is a highlight of Washington's spring social season.

The Spring Cocktail Party dates back to 1901 when the Ladies Aid Society (predecessors of the Founders Board) held their first fundraising event at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel to benefit the St. John's Orphanage. In keeping with the tradition, today's Founders Board Spring Cocktail Party includes community leaders, social entrepreneurs, donors, and St. John's families, Board members and staff to share in this special evening.

This year, The Founders Board



Over 180 people attended the 61st Annual Spring Party at the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

Spring Party highlighted the fascinating culture and cuisine of the beautiful Embassy of the Czech Republic. In addition to Mr. Ellinger's remarks, Founders Board Co-Chair Heather Nolan thanked the Embassy, including Mr. Martin Pluhar, the Attaché, for its generosity and recognized her Co-Chair, Anne Baldwin, and the Spring Party Co-Chairs Gigi Rasmussen and Marjorie Miller, as well as Terrell McDermid, for their tireless efforts to make the event such a success.

Through its major fundraising

activities—the others being an Annual Appeal and Washington Winter Antique show—the Founders Board has for many years been the major philanthropic donor to SJCS. SJCS wishes to extend our gratitude to the Founders Board members who carry forward the proud traditions established by their predecessors at St. John's Church over 100 years ago.

serving the community

continued from previous page

week. Charlie had a full week and life!

Now feeling good about himself, Charlie wanted to earn more money, so John developed a search process for Charlie to find a second job. Soon thereafter, a second job was identified as a good fit for Charlie, who is now working

three days a week as an Associate at Staples, earning a paycheck he is proud of. And he fully enjoys being out in the community socializing with others. As Charlie increases his job knowledge, skill set and independence, John assumes a less involved role. Charlie attributes his

finding and maintaining a job that he enjoys to participating in both SJCS-PA Community Participation and Employment services. He is proud of his accomplishments, and SJCS-PA staff is proud of him.

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state budgets

The Impact on Services for People with Disabilities

Throughout our locations, state governments have been struggling to balance and finalize their budgets for FY 2012. Significant cutbacks affecting social service programs were made this 2011 fiscal year. To balance their budgets, a number of states proposed reducing the funding to one of the most underserved populations—people with intellectual and other disabilities—creating considerable reductions in service. Fortunately, most of the states in which we operate were able to maintain the current level of funding, except for Virginia which decreased funding by one percent. This one percent reduction, set to be implemented July 1, 2011, was attained only after intense lobbying efforts in response to a proposed five percent reduction in the reimbursement for residential services. Tennessee and the District of Columbia are deliberating on reductions in funding, but no final decisions have been made.

In response to continued proposed funding cuts, SJCS State Directors from VA, PA and TN ventured to the nation's Capitol on May 12 to meet with

their legislators to brief them on current issues affecting people with disabilities and raise awareness of St. John's Community Services.

Thomas Johnson, VA State Director, met with the staff of Congressman Gerry Connolly; Nicole Buckley, PA State Director, met with the staff of Congressman Chaka Fattah; and Julia Bratcher, TN State Director, met with the staff of Senators Coker and Alexander. Discussions focused on state budgets, especially in regard to Medicaid and people with disabilities. The previous month, Arthur Ginsberg, DC State Director and Chief Government Affairs and Advocacy Officer, and Board members of DC's Developmental Disabilities Council met with the staff of Delegate Eleanor Holmes-Norton.

These visits are an important part of SJCS' legislative advocacy and complement activities implemented at the state and local level. For more information, please contact Arthur M. Ginsberg, Chief Government Affairs and Advocacy Officer, at aginsberg@sjcs.org.

pillow lee award

continued from cover

and myself—looks to her for guidance.” Donna expressed her gratitude for this recognition. She spoke about the joy of working with young people and doing whatever has to be done to move them forward to become productive citizens.

Donna joined SJCS in 1986 in the first Early Intervention Program and of the then St. John's Child Development Center. Later, Donna helped establish SJCS classes for children with disabilities in the DC Public Schools, the first such program in the District. Today, Donna is an Education Specialist at the SJCS classroom in Eastern High School.

The Pillow Lee Award was created in 1987 to honor its first recipient, Mrs. Frederick B. (Pillow) Lee, a long-time member of the Ladies Aid Society and the Board of Trustees. Mrs. Lee led the agency's transformation from an orphanage into the first community-based alternative to the institutionalization of children with disabilities.

Congratulations to Donna for her dedication and carrying on the tradition of meritorious service.

fundraising trends

Development Department Studies Industry Trends

As all organizations have had to reassess their fundraising activities during years of economic uncertainty, the SJCS Development staff has researched the most salient trends within the United States in nonprofit fundraising today. As part of the research, the staff reviewed a sample of like-kind organizations to SJCS in size and scope. What became apparent was that the disability field is lagging behind in fundraising, and because SJCS is so unique—the only agency that is 100% community-based in service delivery—it is difficult to compare it to other organizations supporting people with disabilities.

Following are some of the key trends representing the latest studies of fundraising professionals, non-profit organizations and fundraiser trend aggregators.

Board Role: Every board member needs to be actively involved in the organization, primarily by participating in fundraising, cultivating relationships, recruiting new board members, and being organizational ambassadors. This has become a stronger message/trend, noted by 74% of this year's survey respondents compared to 62% for the previous year (*Retriever Development Counsel, Nonprofit Fundraising Trends 2010; the Center for Nonprofit Excellence*).

Management: Donors are more likely to give to organizations that have experienced staff members and reasonable overhead costs. St. John's has retained more direct care staff as well as long term managers than most comparable human service agencies. Staff and those in leadership roles in particular

must make an effort to personally connect with potential donors and become the face in the community. Given a choice, the respondents preferred organizations that hire top-quality managers, even with higher salaries, over hiring less experienced managers and spending fewer dollars on salaries (*Association of Fundraising Professionals*).

Fundraising Activities: A major trend is that organizations that have invested time and effort into major gifts and bequests/planned giving are starting to see the benefits. A related issue regards donor retention—the need for more fundraising to be focused on cultivating relationships with donors for long-term retention. Having a clear, clean online giving option is extremely important in today's philanthropic community (*Retriever Development Counsel*).

Communicating with Donors: Development staff needs to make face-to-face contact to attract donors. Though social networking is becoming a part of an integrated marketing strategy, it is not a major donation platform. Even people ages 20 to 40 associated with high-tech communications say that when it comes to requests for their time or money, they put high value on face-to-face communication (*Association of Fundraising Professionals*).

Accountability: Donors have become increasingly interested in how their money is spent. Lack of accountability from organizations has made donors consider not giving or shifting their donations elsewhere. These donors are particularly interested in accountability before they donate a second time. They want to know specifically where their

donations go, how gifts are used and what impact they make (*Guidestar and Fundraising Success Magazine*).

The trends are consistent with the latest thinking of SJCS leadership and emerging outcomes of strategic planning. These include increasing Board and senior leadership participation, applying resources to donor development and cultivation, exploring the untapped potential of planned giving and continuing to provide strong social accountability for funds raised.



TN Golf Tournament

On October 3, 2011, SJCS-TN's Board of Directors will hold the Second Annual *Swinging for a Cause Golf Tournament* at Quail Ridge Golf Course. This Tournament offers golf enthusiasts the opportunity to win fantastic prizes and enjoy a day on the beautiful Quail Ridge course while raising funds to support people with disabilities in Tennessee. Registration and sponsorship opportunities for the tournament will open in late June and will be featured on the SJCS website.



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