

## FEEDBACK AND DOCUMENTATION

Mike McElhinney



I want to thank all the employees that attended our recent agency-wide "town hall" meetings.

I find these to be effective communication tools and I hope everyone else agrees and got their questions answered.

I deeply appreciated one question that I received before the meetings—How can all employees help strengthen Michael Dunn Center?

I believe everyone is already doing a very good job providing supports for the people we serve.

However one area that we need to improve upon is documentation of the supports we are providing.

For example, I have seen firsthand interactions between our people and the Director of Roane County Park, but yet when I check the documentation there is little if any reference to this.

The Director happens to be a friend of mine and since assuming this position in recent years he has developed relationships with and an affinity

for many people from Michael Dunn Center. Yet a review of notes would not indicate this.

Many people attend church every Sunday, yet when I review communication notes the entry will simply say "Mike went to church today".

What the documentation fails to indicate are the several conversations that occurred between the person and other church goers. Many of the church members care about the well be-

*(Continued on page 2)*

## CORE VALUES REVISITED

Roger Richmond

When we developed our Mission, Vision, and Values Statements, we were purposeful with intent to keep them alive and in the forefront of decisions and actions.

With much debate, we selected the six that we agreed were most im-

portant and categorized them into "High Ethical Standards" and "High Quality of Services".

We've addressed all the values individually, now it's time to revisit them as a whole. Doing so periodically may serve to keep us focused and

values-oriented.

### High Ethical Standards

In his essay "On the Basis of Morality", philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer suggested that "compassion is the basis of morality".

*(Continued on page 2)*

### DID YOU KNOW?

**For Relias class updates, you must go by the date assigned to you by Zack Becker, not the due date according to Relias.**

### Inside this issue:

Jaywanica Mullins	3
End of an Era	3
PCT Update	4
Transitions	4
My Friend, Jackie	5
Kudos & Congrats	6

## Document, continued

(Continued from page 1)

ing of those attending, including people from Michael Dunn Center, yet the notes give no indication of the natural supports that often exist.

When I shop at Kroger I will often speak to one of the store managers on duty and thank them for the service and support their employees provide to Michael Dunn Center.

Recently one manager replied that they really look forward to

seeing Michael Dunn people shopping and frequently check to see if they are finding everything they need.

He went on to tell in some detail a story about a person he knows by name who always wants to push the grocery cart directly to the produce area and wait for "the rain and the thunder". Again, I wonder if this was recorded anywhere.

In addition to these community interactions I know our staff are assisting people in the restroom

when they get up or covering them in the middle of the night in their homes.

We are helping and teaching people to brush their teeth, tie their shoes and get dressed of a morning. We are showing a person how to dial the phone so they can call a family member of an evening.

We are doing hundreds of things every day to support and serve people. Please take the last, critical step and write them down. Give yourselves credit for all the great things we are doing!

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## Values, continued

(Continued from page 1)

If true, it is fitting that our first stated value is *Compassion*. It is certainly a necessary value in the work we do- not only for the people we support, but for the people with whom we work and associate

Compassion is not to be confused with pity or sympathy; however, it does require empathy. We spend much time trying to discern people's wants and needs- an element of empathy and understanding is essential for good person centered supports.

*Integrity* is doing what is right. Period. Doing the right thing, whether you stand to benefit or not. Doing the right thing whether you get credit or recognition. Sometimes, it's doing the right thing when it's not necessarily in your best interest or the easiest to do, but simply right.

Integrity is a cornerstone of strong values; without it, good values are not likely to follow. Developing a reputation as a per-

son with integrity can take many years to build, but can be lost in a moment.

*Diversity* is about being open and receptive of other people, other races, other cultures and other points of view.

Missed opportunities can often result from being closed to diversity. A lack of diversity can prevent a person or an organization from advancing and continuing to grow and improve. Embrace diversity and do something to promote it every day.

### High Quality of Services

*Professional commitment* is essential not only for the advancement of each employee, but also for the advancement of the agency as a whole.

It becomes even more essential in these days of financial difficulties and budget cuts that we remain professional and mission oriented.

Professional commitment determines how well we interact with people supported and their families, coworkers and other professionals, and the community as a

whole.

*Teamwork* is another essential element for providing quality services. We all have the same mission and the same purpose for our work: improving the lives of people supported.

Sometimes, we need to step back from our own viewpoints, which are often colored by tunnel vision, and look at the big picture. With teamwork, we have more eyes to see and more ideas to consider.

Rather than persistently pushing our own agenda, we may find that others have good ideas and suggestions. Working together for the good of the people supported is the ticket to following our mission.

*Responsiveness* allows us manage the many issues with which we are faced with daily and keeps us progressive and current. The times, they are a changing, and we have to be alert and receptive when they do. Be open to new ideas and ready to act on the good ones. Continue to make this agency an outstanding and progressive service provider.

# JAYWANICA MULLINS WALKS THE TALK

Melinda Johnson and Darlene Trew

Jaywanica is a very compassionate and caring person. She keeps her staff informed of everything related to the individuals they support and she treats everyone with the highest respect.

She goes above and beyond to assure the individuals she serves come first. When she's in the community, Jaywanica conducts herself as a professional, up-lifting person who takes responsibility to its highest level.

She has a great ear for listening to people and she respects input from people supported and staff alike. She is a great leader for Michael Dunn Center and a huge asset to Supported Living.



Jaywanica (left) receives her award from Melinda Johnson

Jaywanica is a Christian lady with a caring heart, who does a great job conducting herself with everyone she comes into contact with. She has very high standards and treats everyone as equals.

She has earned people's respect by treating others respectfully, and she is a very trustworthy person. She works well under pressure and accepts change without question.

Although Jaywanica continues to work a full time schedule, she recently adopted an eight-year old son. She continues to face any challenges that come her way with a smile and a good attitude. We appreciate Jaywanica very much for Walking The Talk and setting a fine example with her outstanding actions and ethics.

## THE END OF AN ERA

Roger Richmond and Vicki Hix

It has been a sad and difficult experience seeing two excellent long-time programs come to an end. To borrow a brand name from our greenhouse days, the Henry Center and the MDC School Program were Proven Winners in the ways that matter to many people.

Hearing the stories from the parent group in their hopes the school could remain open was both a source of pride and of sorrow. One by one, the parents stood and spoke of how significant a difference the Michael Dunn School has made in their lives.

They told of the difficulties their children had in public schools, in their communities, and at their homes and what an impact attending the MDC School has had on their family, when difficult behaviors were reduced.

In at least one case, a student was transferred from the MDC School to a local elementary school. Before the school year was over, the school requested his return because they couldn't manage his behaviors. Our teachers enabled him to minimize his behaviors so that he could interact with others without major problems.

The Henry Center was the model of perfection for integrated developmental child care as well as pre-school services. Children with disabilities sat alongside their typically developing peers and together they participated in activities that were modified by staff to meet each child's individual needs. It was a superb program.

Unfortunately, changes in federal regulations resulted in the provision of services to children with

disabilities in a home based setting rather than a center based environment.

The Henry Center will continue to provide Early Intervention Services and currently provides services to ninety (90) children and their families in seven (7) counties (Roane, Morgan, Knox, Scott, Union, Campbell and Claiborne).

We wish the best for the parents and children and hope the children can maintain the skills they've obtained in our care. We also wish the best for the employees who were offered equal-pay positions but chose not to stay. These employees were dedicated, many were long-term employees, and all were devoted to the students they supported. They made significant differences in people's lives. And that's what it's all about.

# PERSON-CENTERED THINKING: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Tiffany Whittenbarger

We continue to schedule 2-day Person-Centered Thinking (PCT) classes for new employees and house managers. After the training, you can almost see employee's excitement and eagerness to help people have more meaningful lives!

During these PCT meetings, we learned that house managers have not always felt comfortable mentoring and coaching their staff, so we scheduled mentor meetings/trainings to help them feel more comfortable as mentors and coaches.

Person Centered tools are sent to the person supported and to their support staff to complete prior to their annual meeting. These tools are discussed during the meeting to help generate outcomes and identify community activities that might be of interest to the person.

Over the past year, we've been focusing on people's rights and on educating people about their plans and services they receive.

We've seen this focus make a difference in supports provided. Our families and conservators and people supported are more aware of their ability to make choices for themselves and/or for their loved one.

We changed our annual satisfaction survey this year so we can better determine opinions of services. Information is obtained in departmental staff meetings and in house meetings that include both staff and people supported.

We are very excited about some new things that we are doing this year.

1) Our self-advocate at MDC facilitated a Focus Group for her peers in April. The topic was educating people about their rights.

2) Our Residential Habilitation Department assembled a panel of people to help improve the interviewing process for prospective staff. They met with people supported and with staff to come up with questions to ask job applicants.

3) DIDD Protection From Harm staff conducted a training for the people we support to help educate them about Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation and how to report incidents.

Over all, we've seen improvements in the quality of life for the people we support and we continue to hear inspirational success stories. Not only do these stories show that people are happier, but they show that Person Centered Thinking works.

We run into occasional issues and obstacles, but we continue moving forward with Person Centered Thinking resources to help people get where they want to be in life.

As an agency, we expect PCT to continue to make a significant impact on the quality of supports we provide. Our vision, dream and long-term goal is to continue to redefine the things we do and improve the ways in which we provide supports.

## TRANSITIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

Dee Ann Lindsay

The announcement of the closure of Greene Valley Developmental Center (GVDC) prompted many families to seek services in the community for their loved ones. Michael Dunn Center participated in two Provider Fairs, each of which provided an opportunity for MDC to interact with families faced with transitioning their loved ones out of GVDC and into the community.

One fair was held on the Greene Valley Developmental Center campus, the other was in downtown Chattanooga. The families are nervous about moving their loved ones out of Greene Valley into community homes. We were able to talk with them, explain the services we provide and invite them to come and visit us.

We had several families visit with us and they were pleased with what they saw. The closure of Greene Valley may provide an opportunity to place more individuals in MDC homes. We have been working with DIDD to evaluate our options.

## **MY FRIEND, JACKIE**

**Brian Phillips, House Manager**

I first met Akin about three years ago, when he got off the bus at a new home with new faces all around him. He came up to me and asked me who I was. I told him my name and he quickly told me my new name was Bruce Wayne. I said, "like Batman?"; he said, "yes, exactly like Batman". He then went to his new room in his new house and came out wearing a black cape. He told me I needed to get one, too.

As the days went on, Akin struggled. He did not adjust well at first, but I can't say I blame him. He'd lost everything he'd known his whole life and was starting over. He had good days and bad days and we became friends through it all.

He soon promoted me to "The Hulk". So far, I'm the only one he calls that. Jackie has a nickname for all the men that work with him. If he likes you he will give you a superhero name. It sticks and that is what he calls you.

When he first came to Post Oak, we were just opening this new house. He seemed like a young boy because of his imagination, and he was still a school student. He has grown into a young man.

Akin became "Jackie" about a year ago. He came home from school one day and told me he changed his name to Jackie Chan. I just said "OK", thinking it was a joke or a phase, because he calls himself different names a lot. However, I soon found out that this one would stick, too- he refused to be called "Akin" or to answer to it.

When he came to us he wouldn't eat anything except waffles "swimming in syrup", salad smothered in ranch dressing and bacon bits, and sometimes hotdogs cut up with mustard and relish. With trial and error we have found that he enjoys just about anything you cook for him. He will let you know real quick if he doesn't like something, but he usually doesn't complain about meals.

At one point, he refused to go to school and said he was done with it. However, with encouragement at home and at school, he continued to go and he recently graduated from The Michael Dunn Center School Program. Jackie worked very hard and, though there were days we honestly didn't think he would finish and we were told by him several times he was done, he persevered and accomplished a big goal by completing school.

Jackie is in the process of transitioning from school student to graduate to maybe finding a job. Staff are working with him and slowly integrating different types of work for him to try and see what he would like to do. Along with many others, I am very proud of this young man for working through his struggles and getting to where he is today. Jackie will be a lifelong friend to me. It has been a true honor getting to know him and work with him.

# Kudos & Congrats!

*Congrats!*

Matt McClure and Nancy Kuhlman McClure got married on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Donna Laughter and her husband Rocky celebrated 31 years of marriage, May 26<sup>th</sup> and she celebrated her second year at ICF in May.

Dee Ann Lindsay and her husband, Goose, celebrated their 24<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on June 1<sup>st</sup>. When they got married, Dee Ann was working at Webster House.

Holly and Zack Becker celebrated their first wedding anniversary on June 7<sup>th</sup>.

Eric Clarks' twin girls were salutatorians and fourth in their graduating class at Roane County High School.

Kristi Lemons quit smoking on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Debi Puchel quit smoking on September 13<sup>th</sup>.

We like to recognize employees for their dedicated service to people. While all employees deserve recognition, space only allows milestone anniversaries. Michael Dunn Center is fortunate to have 124 employees with one or two years of service! Below are those with 5, 10, 15, 20, or 25 years:

### Five Years

Tammie Dickens  
Larry Harvey  
Lillian Howard  
Jeanine Jones  
Kristi Lemons  
Katie Mead  
Sherry Plemens  
Caleb Sherrod  
Elizabeth Stapleton  
Sarah Stickford  
Courtney Swafford  
Jamie Thompson  
Scott Vallies

### Ten Years

Ramona Trew  
Fifteen Years  
Sheila Carroll  
Jackie Churchwell

Guy Googe  
Cynthia Gregg

Brian Johnson  
Christine Lawson  
Veronica Smith

### Twenty Years

Tracey Taylor

### Twenty-five Years

Dennis Letner

### Promotions and Transitions since January 1

Steven Stewart LPN to QIDP/LPN  
Cynthia Goddard DSP to Assistant House Manager  
Alisha Westmoreland DSP to Medical Appt Coordinator  
Jessica Watson-Anderson DSP to Medical Appt Coordinator  
Jennifer Johnson HR/IT Assistant to House Manager  
Ashley Grant Case Manager to HR/IT Assistant  
Ali Moore RN to RN House Manager  
Katherine Vallies DSP to QA Case Manager  
Holly Becker QA Case Manager to QA Team Leader  
Stacy Boston QA Case Manager to Mental Health Case Manager





629 Gallaher Road  
Kingston, TN 37763  
(865) 376-3416  
[www.michaeldunncenter.org](http://www.michaeldunncenter.org)

May 8, 2015

Dear Family Members of Children Served, Employees and our Roane County Friends,

With deep sadness we are announcing the closure of the Private Pay Preschool portion of the Henry Center and the Michael Dunn School Programs, effective June 30, 2015. These have been excellent programs serving Roane County children for many years but for the past several the enrollments in each has declined significantly, to the point where they are not programmatically or financially viable. In fact for a number of years we have not broken even financially and we cannot continue to spend money we do not have.

It is important to understand the Henry Center consists of two programs, the Private Pay Preschool which is closing, and the Early Childhood Intervention Program (EI), which will continue. The Henry Center was started as a model in the late 1980s to combine children with and without disabilities in the same classrooms so that they could learn from one another. This model was very successful. However, in 2007 the state changed this design and created a new model which we operate today—case workers travel to children's homes throughout east Tennessee and provide in home training for families of children with disabilities for one hour per week. This greatly reduced the number of children in the Henry Center building, housing the Private Pay Preschool Program only.

We are very thankful for the long term grant that we have received from Roane County Government for the Henry Center and hope it will continue as we continue to manage the Henry Center EI Program out of the Michael Dunn offices on Gallaher Road. We also appreciate our United Way funding and hope that it will be allocated in accordance with our most recent grant request to support our in home Early Intervention Program.

As far as the school is concerned, many will remember when most children with a disability in Roane County attended Michael Dunn School and our enrollment was well over 100. Now, after this year's graduating class, we will have only 7 children from Roane and 2 from Morgan counties. Again, it is not programmatically or financially feasible to operate a school program for 9 students. We will work closely with the districts to transition these children back to their home schools.

Unfortunately the hard working and dedicated employees of both the School and Private Pay Preschool will be laid off. We will, however, offer most of these employees the same base pay, benefits, plus shift differentials working in other Michael Dunn Center programs.

These cuts are extremely difficult for all affected but we are hopeful that in the long run they will help insure the continuation of Michael Dunn Center.

Sincerely,

Mike McElhinney, President  
Jim Pinkerton, Board Chairman  
Michael Dunn Center



michael dunn center

*Back issues of Now You Know can be found at  
[www.michaeldunncenter.org](http://www.michaeldunncenter.org)*

***Phone Numbers:***

**Poison Control.....1-800-222-1222**

**Abuse Investigator....1-800-579-0023**

**MDC Engineering On Call....(865) 335-0549**

## **Mission**

***Empowering individuals living with disabilities and challenges  
to gain independence***

## **Vision**

***We strive to be a premier agency providing the  
highest quality of person-centered services with an  
emphasis on positive communication while inspiring people to  
open their minds to acceptance and inclusion.***

## **Values**

***We value a person-centered culture by promoting:***

- **High Ethical Standards**

### **Compassion**

*We value honesty and openness, and treat people with dignity, compassion and mutual respect*

### **Integrity**

*We have a positive reputation in the community and maintain the highest standards  
of professional conduct, ethical behavior and personal responsibility*

### **Diversity**

*We value the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual and  
respect the diversity of opinions, backgrounds and cultures of others*

- **High Quality of Services**

### **Professional Commitment**

*We maintain a disciplined, results-oriented organization reflecting  
the highest professional standards and ethical behavior*

### **Teamwork**

*We strive to develop positive working relationships based on trust and  
respect as we work together to achieve our common goals*

### **Responsiveness**

*We believe that our future is based on our current actions and decisions.  
Remaining open to change will define how we manage the challenges that come our way.*