

SCDMH: A *TRADITION* OF GIVING



It's not always easy, especially when times are tough, your work is sometimes stressful, and so many things seem uncertain, to see how you touch people's lives. But the staff of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) are exceptionally caring and giving, no matter the economic climate or time of year. For SCDMH employees, there is no "season" of giving; doing so is a *tradition*.

Beyond what our staff members do each and every day to make the SCDMH system work for the people of this state, they are helping South Carolina in numerous other ways, holding and participating in walks and drives, and raising awareness about important issues.

What better way to kick off 2012 than by reflecting on SCDMH's staff members' generosity in 2011? This issue is dedicated to SCDMH's staff, who far surpass what's considered part of "a day's work" throughout the year.

Above: Columbia Area staff members Jennifer Butler (New Solutions) and Greg Oates (Lower Richland Clinic/New Horizons) took part in the 2010 NAMI Mid Carolina walk.

Sharing: Looking Out for Neighbors in Need

Did you know that SCDMH remains number ONE among state agencies in giving to the United Way? In the 2010 drive, employees pledged \$42,353 (we can't wait to see the 2011 totals). This is just one of the many ways Agency staff help others; employees across the state have come up with creative ideas to help others raise funds, supplies, and awareness.

During the month of November, 2011, Waccamaw Center for Mental Health collected canned food and cleaning supplies for the local food pantry in Conway. The donations enabled the Shepherds Table Food Pantry to feed approximately 100 homeless and less fortunate individuals and families during the Thanksgiving Season.

In its late summer 2011 food drive, SCDMH Central Office and Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (DAODAS) staff donated more than 500

pounds of food to the Harvest Hope food bank for needy families in the Midlands.

Coastal Empire CMHC staffer Carola Eldridge and volunteer John Aiello took part in two "Homeless Day Giveaway" events, in January and September of 2011, manning a booth that distributed information as well as nonperishable food items to homeless individuals and families in Beaufort County. The Center coordinated with the Human Service Alliance program of Beaufort County to make the event possible.

Beckman Center for Mental Health Services' Elaine Fontana, director of Quality Improvement, reports that staff at the Center "start about mid-November and work to the end of the year" taking on a variety of projects: donating items for the local food bank, supplies for the Humane Society, wishlist items for

the local Hospice House, and gift bags for seniors in the community who receive Meals on Wheels. “Each project has its own cheerleaders,” said Fontana. “Our office has 21 staff members, and everyone takes part in at least one of the projects. It’s great for our neighbors *and* for team building!”

The Division of Administrative Services’ Office of Network and Information Technology (ONIT) came up with a great new idea to help those in need, reports Applications Analyst Kimberly Washington. During ONIT’s holiday lunch on December 5th, employees were given the opportunity to donate money and enter in a drawing to determine the winning charity, from a list which included Carolina Children’s Home, Epworth Children’s Home, Harvest Hope Food Bank, the Humane Society of Columbia, NAMI – SC, Oliver Gospel Mission, Pets, Incorporated, the SC Red Cross, Sistercare, and the United Way. ONIT Director Herb Drucker drew the winner, Palmetto Place Children’s Emergency Shelter, which provides temporary emergency shelter, medical and mental health care, counseling, food, and clothing to children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, abandonment, and/or neglect. Since the shelter opened in 1977, more than 6,700 at-risk children from newborn to age 17 have benefited from this care.



ONIT staff were happy to give a \$100 holiday donation to Palmetto Place, and thank IT Manager Teresa Ammons for coming up with this creative philanthropic idea. “Thank you to each employee who contributed,” said Washington. “This just may become an annual ONIT tradition!”

Columbia Area Mental Health Center (CAMHC) had a very busy year! “We established a ‘library’ at Transitions Homeless Recovery Center by having a book drive,” reports Sheila Arnold, CAMHC Public Affairs/Community liaison. After hauling a ton of books and magazines to Transitions, some of the Richland City Library staff volunteered to set up and run the library, and CAMHC staff continue to donate. “One of our staff, Hannah Harris in Fairfield, got one of her client groups to take on a book drive as a project, and they brought over several boxes,” Arnold said.

But that’s not all! CAMHC also collected supplies like bath cloths for the Winter Shelter, and blankets for its Homeless Outreach coordinator to give to homeless folks she encountered in Columbia.



Central Office staff launched its first ever Hygiene Packs drive, to benefit SCDMH clients in residential care. Staff donated toiletries as part of its Mental Health Month activities. “Clients in CRCFs receive \$57 per month allowance, which must pay for their medication co-pays, medical co-pays, clothing, snacks, and toiletries,” reported CRCF & PASARR Coordinator Vicki McGahee. “Many clients, after medication co-pays have \$20 for an entire month.” The collected toiletries were given to CRCF liaisons in several mental health centers and have been distributed to clients. Recently, McGahee met a woman at one CRCF that had no toothpaste or shampoo. She was thrilled to get a new set of toiletries and proudly displayed them on her dresser.

SCDMH staffers have a long history of giving when it comes to the Red Cross. Since 2009, Central Office has hosted seven drives, donating more than 200 units of blood to help save people in need. The Red Cross recently asked Central Office staff to assist with an emergency drive; employees answered the call, giving 18 units.

*Left: Teresa Ammons and Herb Drucker are shown with the ONIT donation to Palmetto Place.
Above: Toiletries collected for CRCF clients*

Walking the Talk –Raising Funds and Awareness

SCDMH front line employees know what it’s like to go an entire day without stopping or sitting down! But did you know that staff across the state can often be found spending their weekends taking part in community walks, helping worthwhile organizations raise awareness and funds to improve their communities?

In March of 2011, the children and staff at William S. Hall Psychiatric Institute (WSHPI) participated in the Midlands’ American Heart Walk. Patients and staff took part in this event, gathering helpful information about how to have a healthy heart for themselves and their parents. Some patients expressed interest in participating in this event annually. Patients interacted with University of South Carolina mascot Cocky and learned about the importance of exercising for good health.

This was only one in a series of events at WSHPI to raise awareness about hearth health, however, reports Human Services Coordinator Johana Watson-Harris. Just two days before, WSHPI had held its own Heart Walk, with nearly 60 staff and patients participating. In February, staff at WSHPI participated in National Wear Red Day to show support and raise awareness in the fight against heart disease in women.

Staff at WSHPI weren’t done! They gathered together again in the spring for the 2011 NAMI Mid Carolina NAMIWalk. WSHPI’s 12 member team raised \$228 for NAMI and wishes to thank Dr. Phyllis Bryant-Mobley for her generous donation.

Joining the SCDMH family in supporting the Mid Carolina walk, as both team members and event planners and volunteers, were staff from CAMHC and Central Office. The 2011 Central Office Recovery Trailblazers team boasted 30 members and raised a total of \$3,305 to support NAMI.

Not to be outdone, Coastal Empire Community Mental Health Center (CEMHC) staff and clients participated in the Hilton Head NAMIWalk in October, with a 15 member team, Administrative Assistant Yvonne Park proudly reported.

Top: William S. Hall Psychiatric Institute’s NAMI Walk team raised \$228.

Middle: Columbia Area’s Sara Frierson, Proctor Rogers, and Christy Chavis, all from the CAF office

Bottom: The Recovery Trailblazers pose with Cocky.



CAMHC, Morris Village, and Central Office staff also joined more than 90 runners and walkers at Sims Park in Columbia to participate in the 7th annual FAVOR Dry Run 5k walk/run in the fall of 2011. Faces and Voices of Recovery South Carolina (FAVOR-SC) is a grassroots advocacy and services organization, which promotes long-term recovery from addiction through education, advocacy, and recovery support services, resulting in healthier individuals, families, and communities. 16 SCDMH employees represented the Agency. State Director John H. Magill was one of the featured speakers, along with DAODAS Director Bob Toomey and others.



SCDMH staff from across the Midlands also took part in the 2011 Out of the Darkness Walk, a fundraiser of the South Carolina Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP-SC), at Riverfront Park in Columbia. The event, which aims to raise funds for AFSP-SC suicide prevention efforts, increase awareness about depression and suicide, and provide support to survivors of suicide loss, included more than 25 SCDMH participants.



One SCDMH staffer really raised the bar at the 2011 Out of the Darkness Walk. Administrative Assistant Jennifer Rucker, of Quality Management, formed

her own team, Team Hendrix, and far surpassed her personal fundraising goal, raising nearly \$900. “My team was named in memory of my brother, Mike Hendrix, who committed suicide November 30 of 2010,” she said. “We had seven walkers, including my niece and nephew, their mother, and three officers from the Columbia Police Department, where Mike had retired from. The officer that took his position when he retired also walked in his honor, with his own team.” Team Hendrix raised more than \$1,440 for the AFSP-SC, funds which will be used to support numerous programs and services across our state.

Lexington County Community Mental Health Center (LCCMHC) staff took up a very special cause in October of 2011, said Jenifer Sharpe, Community Relations director.

They were proud to take part in the Palmetto Health Foundation’s Walk for Life/5K Race, in memory of CAF Clinic Supervisor Chelse Elliott and in honor of Mimi Meyer and Kay Jordan, both breast cancer survivors.



CAF staff wore custom tee shirts designed by CAF staff member Amy Wessinger and printed by CAF staffer Meredith Koss's husband, Rusty Koss, that said, "Walk Right for Chelse," the message delivered by the pastor at Chelse's funeral service in May. CAF Clinic Supervisor Beth DuRant noted that “it was a truly moving experience, and we all felt honored to have been able to participate, as well as to raise funds for breast cancer research.”

Top left: Midlands SCDMH staff took part in the 2011 FAVOR Dry Run. Bottom left: Team DMH and Team Hendrix leader Jennifer Rucker (far left), walked in the Out of the Darkness Community Walk in Columbia. Above: LCCMHC staffers were proud to walk in the Palmetto Health Walk for Life.

Last, but certainly not least, as part of its Mental Health Month Activities, Pee Dee MHC (PDMHC) held its own Mental Health Awareness Walk in May. Participants were greeted by Florence Mayor Stephen Wukela, and celebrated in Maple Park.

The Walk was only one of several awareness activities PDMHC held this year. The Center showcased the works of its talented client artists with an *Art of Expression* exhibit, held at the Center, and also featured at Just for Women Ministries at the First Baptist Church in Darlington. Mental Health Commission Chair Alison Evans, Psy.D, was one of the event’s featured speakers.

Staff also participated in awareness activities events throughout the year, said Rosemary Barile, Human Services specialist, including the Hartsville YMCA Health Fair. In October, PDMHC Center Director Stuart Shields “did time” as part of the Florence Muscular Dystrophy Association's Jail-a-Thon, raising approximately \$600 for the organization!



Pee Dee Center Director Stuart Shields shows the “warrant” for his arrest in the Florence MDA 2011 Jail-a-Thon.

Making Seasons Bright

The generosity of SCDMH staff makes the holidays much brighter for many of our neighbors in need. Here are just a few of the Agency’s holiday events that helped make the season warmer for others. Thank you.

LCCMHC’s Administration staff adopted a family from Families Helping Families. In 2011, staff decided not to buy presents for one another, but to spend that money to help a family in need instead. The family LCCMHC received has three small children. Staff bought presents for each family member, and supplied non-perishable food items, ending up with a stack of gifts and six boxes of food!

The Center has many other people and organizations to thank for helping to make the 2011 holiday season a happy one for many of its clients. Clinicians completed 86 applications for clients and

their families for Palmetto Project’s Families Helping Families holiday program. All 86 were adopted and received presents; Woodmen of the World #1276 and #279 provided gifts for four Center families and food boxes for five; Saluda River Baptist Church’s Mel Clarke Sunday School Class provided gifts for the 15 residents at the LCCMHC’s Brook Pine CRCF; Saxe Gotha Presbyterian Church provided gifts for 12 CRCF clients; Publix Super Markets

donated a \$200 gift card to provide Assisted Living Program clients with a holiday dinner; the West Columbia AARP donated \$100 for client needs; the Livingston Circle of Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church donated \$110 to purchase CRCF clients gifts; LCCMHC Board Member Janet Padalino donated \$300 for clients’ needs; and, US Food Service’s Employee Committee donated \$200 for clients’ needs.

Below: Some of the gifts LCCMHC staff donated to their adopted family



“It looks like Santa’s workshop at CDMHC!” said Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center (CDMHC) Director Debbie Blalock. “Santa’s Helpers, a group of our staff, have been busily raising funds and toy donations to make sure that each of the 1,800 children we serve will find something under the tree on December 25th!”



Over the past 17 years, the Center’s “Santa’s Helpers” group has gained a loyal following of local churches, businesses, individuals, and social groups who donate to the kids during the holidays. “Many who donate are employees, relatives, churches, or friends of employees,” said Mental Health Supervisor Stacy Cody. “Case managers select their neediest families, who then submit their wish lists (the Helpers serve both child clients and the children of adult clients).



All children in the family are given gifts, whether there is one child in the family or ten, whether six years old or sixteen.” This year, CDMHC served served at least 200 children - staff members are still counting!

Staff from the Waccamaw Center for Mental Health (WCMH) were also granting wishes during the holidays! Staff and clients at the Georgetown clinic were involved

with the planning and giving of gifts to 25 children by St. Peters Lutheran Church in Pawleys Island, through an Angel Tree.

The WCMH TLC Program celebrated its Annual Christmas Program on December 16 at the Williamsburg County Recreation Center in Kingstree. The program included all TLC clients and providers from Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg counties. More than 150 were in attendance, including family members of some of the clients, who really enjoyed themselves. Each county TLC client group provided entertainment during the program. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal, which was prepared by staff and providers.

After getting in the spirit of giving, during the month of December, WCMH became an official drop-off site for Toys for Tots in Horry County. Staff donated new, unwrapped toys, which were distributed to needy children throughout Horry County. Serving as an official drop-off site also allowed citizens from the community to donate items through WCMH as well!

Coastal Empire CMHC staff collected gifts for homeless families at the Center’s holiday meeting and luncheon, hosted by the Jasper County Clinic staff. The Beaufort Clinic collected essential non-food items to distribute to clients and their families, whose budgets are stretched so thin during the holidays. These items cannot be purchased using food stamps, so staff chose this way of being helpful. The Beaufort Office CAF staff held its Annual Christmas drop-in for approximately 40 child and adolescent clients and their families. Children had the opportunity to meet with Santa Claus, receive a gift from and a special photo (with parent permission) with Santa, and enjoy a

meal of hotdogs, chili, chips, and dessert. Staff received a toy donation from a local couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Lewis, and CAF staff also contributed for the gifts for the children.

SCDMH’s Central Office has been the home of the Sharing Tree for more than 20 years. For the past several years, the tags on the tree have been for the children and adolescents at WSHPI and the adults at the CAMHC Fairfield Clinic.



Every year, ALL OF THE TAGS are taken. Last year’s Sharing Tree granted wishes to 25 children and adolescents and 25 adults.

In addition to the Sharing Tree, SCDMH Midlands employees give their time to raise money for the Salvation Army by “Ring the Bell” as part of the Red Kettle Campaign. Participants serve two hour shifts, and must give annual leave time to participate. The 2011 event was DMH’s 12th year, and, as usual, all slots were filled, helping the Salvation Army raise \$275. Susan Luthren, administrative assistant in the Office of the Director at WSHPI, has taken part every year!

Left: Gifts line the hallways at CDMHC, awaiting delivery. Above: Community Resource Developer Sue Perry and Fiscal Analyst Noelle Wriston prepare the gifts from the DOAS Sharing tree for delivery.

In addition to giving tangible items to help others in need, SCDMH Employees donate their TIME to help others, giving their free time and annual leave to take part in projects like supply drives, fundraisers, delivering items for those in need, or ringing the bell for Red Kettle. They give their weekends to participate in events like NAMI Walks, the FAVOR Dry Run, the Out of the Darkness Suicide Walks, Children’s Mental Health Day, and much more. Though it would be relatively easy to tally the money given, pints of blood donated, miles walked, wishes granted, and pounds of food donated, it is impossible to put a value on your time. Our employees are in this field because they are dedicated to giving back, to helping others. Thank you for being part of SCDMH.

Of course this special edition featuring charitable activities of SCDMH staff is not exhaustive, but it is an impressive illustration of employees’ caring spirit. If your activities were not listed here, please be sure to [send in information](#) about any events, fundraisers, programs, or accomplishments at your center, hospital, or component so we can spotlight you in future editions of *Mental Health Matters*!

Mental Health Matters is a newsletter of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (DMH). Produced by the Office of Public Affairs, it aims to bring items of interest within the DMH system to the attention of Agency personnel, the Mental Health Commission, mental health advocates, and other stakeholders.

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