

Tamassee DAR School Partners with DMH

On July 14, 2014, as part of his latest public relations initiative, State Director John H. Magill spoke to the Walhalla Rotary Club about the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) history, scope of operations, blue ribbon programs, and current challenges. Immediately following this speaking engagement, Senator Thomas Alexander, Magill, and Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Community Mental Health Center Director Kevin Hoyle, met with Amy Twitty, CEO of the Tamassee DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) School.

Located in the beautiful foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, on more than 800 acres of donated land, the Tamassee DAR School is a private non-profit children's home and family services organization, which offers a variety of programs to children in crisis and their families.

The Tamassee DAR School's residential program provides a stable, nurturing home-like environment to children while their families work to resolve crisis situations resulting from illness or conflict, school difficulties, financial issues, or marital problems. Children are often placed with the DAR School by a family member or the Department of Social Services. Families are charged a sliding-scale fee based on ability to pay. "There's an interview process, it's a voluntary program, and the children must want to be here to be admitted. We accept children from across the Country, but the majority of the students' families live within a one-hundred mile radius. No one is turned away for inability to pay." said Twitty.

The mission of Tamassee DAR School's on-campus Academy Program is to prepare middle-school children by giving them the educational background and skills necessary to be successful in high school. "Our on-campus school and after-school educational program is critical to our mission. We meet the students where they are academically and provide individualized attention to bring them up to where they need to be," said Twitty. "It's very beneficial for the students increasing their academic and adult success." Tamassee DAR School students in elementary and high school attend the local public schools. Academy Program students are able and encouraged to participate in the school district's extracurricular activities and the neighboring elementary school shares its ball field with the Tamassee DAR School. "It's fortunate to have such a good partnership between Tamassee DAR School and Oconee County School District," said Senator Alexander.

The Tamassee DAR School partners with the Department of Mental Health for the provision of a school-based Counselor. School-based counselors are highly trained mental health professionals who work to intervene at early points in emotional disturbances, provide therapeutic counseling services, and work as a team to assist students, parents, teachers and guidance counselors in developing comprehensive strategies for resolving issues. The counselor's current case load is about 50 children. With plans to open another cottage in the near future, Twitty is negotiating with Hoyle for an additional school-based counselor.



L to R - Senator Alexander, Center Director Hoyle, State Director Magill, and CEO Twitty

Since 1919, the Tamassee DAR School has been supporting children and families in crisis through residential, educational, and outreach services. The South Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution (SCDAR) had a desire to improve the quality of life of rural area children who faced a high probability of a lifetime of poverty and illiteracy due to the lack of educational opportunities. According to legend, in



L to R - Senator Alexander, Magill, Twitty, and Hoyle at the Tamassee DAR School Administration Building

1920, the DAR Vice President General from South Carolina told the Continental Congress about the brave venture of SCDAR. Although at that time there was just one building sitting on a hill in the woods, she drew such a glowing picture of Tamassee that the National Society provided enthusiastic support. Since that time, many buildings and facilities have been built on campus. Tamassee DAR School is now incorporated and operates independently, governed by a Board of Directors. Donations from the Daughters of the American Revolution, as well as local community members, civic groups and businesses support Tamassee DAR School and the children that call Tamassee home.

Twitty has big dreams for expansion. Among other things, she would like to better utilize the existing 400 seat auditorium and gymnasium, construct a family village, a retreat center, and a team building course. An equine therapy program with a riding arena is also top on her expansion wish-list. “The Daughters of the American

Revolution, the greater community, and all those who contribute to Tamassee DAR School are to be commended for

their years of dedication and support. This school is a remarkable community resource with a rich history, an outstanding mission, and huge untapped potential,” said Magill.

*Article and Photographs by Melanie Ferretti
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