



Allegheny Valley School PERSPECTIVES

Vol. 23 No. 1

Spring/Summer 2009

Providing community residential environments and therapeutic programs throughout Pennsylvania for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

ALLEGHENY VALLEY SCHOOL NEWS

Acquisition Update

May 30 marked the one year anniversary of Allegheny Valley School (AVS) becoming a member of the NHS Human Services Family of Companies (NHS). As it has been reported in past issues of *Perspectives*, to those on the outside looking in, the acquisition has not changed the way we operate or the care and services that are provided to the more than 900 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are clients of AVS.

Within the organization there has been some consolidation. Most notably, working together, representatives from NHS and AVS have been evaluating and integrating best practices from both organizations in order to enhance the services provided to our clients and to better equip employees with the most up to date practices in the disability field. On a monthly basis, the AVS and NHS senior management team meets to review the overall integration plan and reports on progress made or changes to the effort. Functional areas meet throughout the month to determine how to optimally combine the two organizations. Throughout the entire process, maintaining and improving the care and services provided to the clients remains the focus for AVS.

The NHS Integrity Program will be implemented throughout AVS during the summer months. The program is a commitment to personal and corporate integrity. Its aim is to ensure that everyone throughout the entire organization maintains the highest standards of performance and quality of care, complies with laws and regulations, and establishes and maintains appropriate business ethics. AVS' commitment to integrity and quality will fit well into *The NHS Integrity Program*.

Now entering year two of the combined company, AVS and NHS will continue to work together to integrate systems and collaborate, with the focus remaining on delivering quality services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Friends of AVS Golf Open

We are delighted that Heritage Agency, Inc. will again be the Presenting Sponsor for the Friends of AVS Golf Open. The event will be held on **Monday, August 10 at Churchill Valley Country Club** and will be a tribute to the life of **Guy A. Squillante, Jr.** who supported AVS in so many ways during the last quarter century. As of June 1, sponsorships and underwriting commitments have been received from AVS Foundation, Brucker Schneider & Porter and Cindy and Regis Champ. Proceeds from the event will be contributed to the Capital Development Fund to help maintain and improve the services AVS provides to more than 900 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information or to register for the event please call Amy Harvilla at (412) 299-2229 or visit our website at www.avs.net.

Honoring Guy A. Squillante, Jr.

Long time friend to and Board member of AVS **Guy A. Squillante, Jr.** passed away on April 8, 2009. Guy was the owner and president of Heritage Agency, Inc. He was a generous benefactor to AVS for more than 25 years and served as a Board member for the past 12 years.



Guy's support of AVS included hosting an annual golf outing for nine years where all the proceeds benefitted AVS. In 2004, Guy combined his golf outing with AVS' and became the Presenting Sponsor of Allegheny Valley School's *Friends of AVS Golf Open*. Guy, his wife **Rhea** and daughter and son-in-law, **Lisa and David Keefer**, served as ambassadors and have generously supported our special events including most recently, *Celebration 2008 Featuring Terry Fator*. Guy was an avid collector and builder of model train displays. He was also a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather.

Allegheny Valley School's 18th annual *Friends of AVS Golf Open* will be held on Monday, August 10, 2009, at Churchill Valley Country Club. This year's event is being held at Guy's golf club and will honor his wonderful life.

"Guy's connection to Allegheny Valley School went far beyond business and Board membership – he was as much a part of Allegheny Valley School as anyone could be," states President and Chief Executive Officer **Regis G. Champ**. "We have lost a committed friend, strong and dependable advocate, generous benefactor, and a good person. Guy never sought recognition for his philanthropy, but he delighted in knowing that his generosity significantly helped improve the lives of hundreds of severely disabled people at Allegheny Valley School." Guy is deeply missed by so many.

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Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

The Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix (PVGP) presented by Shop 'n Save is gearing-up for its 27th year. The PVGP will present 10 days of vintage sports car racing, car shows and motorsport activities to delight the quarter million fans during the July 10-19 Race Week.

Proceeds from the Grand Prix help to purchase much needed equipment, improve facilities, and expand programming at Allegheny Valley School and provides a comprehensive array of autism-specific information, referral and advocacy services to families and professionals at the Autism Society of Pittsburgh.

For more information on the 2009 events please visit www.pvgp.org.

Pittsburgh Campus Activities

Christmas Spectacular

The Pittsburgh Campus resident choir performed a wonderful Christmas concert and play this past December. The choir sang and bell choir played Christmas carols under the direction of Music Therapist **Denise Noel**. Also participating in the concert were students from Pine Richland Middle School. Many parents and friends came to watch the show and stayed for refreshments and to visit.



Ann plays the bells and sings along to Christmas carols.

Pittsburgh Symphony Quartet

On February 19, a quartet from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) came to Pittsburgh Campus and performed for Classroom A. Everyone from the class enjoyed this private performance. On March 10, the Symphony came back to the Campus and performed for more than 90 residents.



Ed and Tom are joined by members of the Symphony.

Through its Education and Community Engagement program, the PSO has visited AVS at least twice a year. We are most grateful to the musicians and the PSO organization for their commitment to those we serve.

Steelers Pep Rally

To celebrate the Steelers trip to the Super Bowl XLIII®, residents held a Steelers pep rally. Residents from the entire Campus cheered on the team with fight songs and skits. A sea of Terrible Towels® filled the gym and awards were given for the best dressed. Congratulations to **Mark** and **Sharon** for showing the most Steelers spirit with their outfits.



Pittsburgh Campus residents cheer on the Steelers.

Baseball Fundraiser to Benefit AVS

The Upper St. Clair Founders Fund held its 5th Annual JBJ Father's Day Baseball Classic on Saturday, June 20. The event took place at the new Boyce/Mayview fields. With their entry fee, each player received a uniform t-shirt, equipment for the day and a gift certificate to StonePepper Grill or Pizzaz in the South Hills. For more information about the day's events or to get a team together for next year, please contact **Mike Fornear** at (412) 726-7206 or mgf108@comcast.net. A portion of the proceeds from the event will be contributed to Allegheny Valley School.

AVS Women Join the Red Hat Society

AVS recently launched several local chapters of the Red Hat Society, and now female residents throughout the state are enjoying social activities with their peers. The social club is part of a national society of woman aged 50 years or older who get together for outings and community projects. Women dress-up in red hats and purple accessories while enjoying a social gathering. Those who are under 50 years old are known as "pink ladies."

The Western PA ladies call themselves the *Allegheny Valley School Divas* and are led by Social Service Supervisor **Rita Christner**. This chapter consists of residents from the Kennedy Program Center, Edward J. Zapp Program Center, Pittsburgh Campus and Slippery Rock Program Center (SRPC). Each site is responsible for planning its own events.

Nineteen (19) ladies from Kennedy had their first event this past February. They got together for coffee, snacks and a craft. After socializing over refreshments, they each made a heart shaped pillow to take home. Since then they've had a few more gatherings including a 50's Day.



Clara and Theresa with their pillow craft project.

The 32 Red Hat ladies at Zapp have participated in numerous activities including social gatherings, a Red Hat walk throughout the building and DIVA Bingo. They also celebrated Red Hat Society Day in April with a special dessert.

Red Hatters from Pittsburgh Campus and Kennedy Program Center attended the Shrine Circus on April 3. Everyone had fun watching the circus animals and clowns, and especially liked being dressed in their red hats.

In March, the group from SRPC got together for a craft project where they decorated their red hats. They also had a social gathering in April to discuss ideas for the group and future events they would like to attend.

For more Red Hat activities at AVS see *Red Hat Society in Eastern PA* article on page 5.

AVS Cheers on the Pens!

On January 14, residents from Becks Run, Fox, Harmony and Hookstown cheered on the Pittsburgh Penguins from The Crosby Suite at Mellon Arena. The Penguins donated ten tickets in the suite to be used by residents and their accompanying staff. Everyone



AVS residents and staff with Penguins mascot Iceburgh.

enjoyed complimentary refreshments and had their picture taken with **Iceburgh**, the Penguins mascot. Each attendee also left with a goodie bag. Many thanks to **Sidney Crosby** and the Pittsburgh Penguins for making this opportunity available to our residents.

Nyetimber is Going Green

The residents and staff at Nyetimber are trying to make their home more environmentally friendly.

First, they replaced the light bulbs in the house with more energy efficient bulbs. Inside and out, the house is now using energy efficient bulbs. Though they are more expensive, the bulbs don't need to be replaced as often. They have also created a recycling station in the garage where they separate recyclables that can be placed curbside and others that need to be taken to recycling stations around town. They are now averaging three bins of recyclables each week and only one can of garbage.

They are also going green by taking re-useable grocery bags to the store, using water collected in a rain barrel for watering plants and collecting and composting kitchen waste that will be used in the outdoor gardens.

"If you implement one step at a time and let everyone get comfortable with the new plan before going on to another step, then the staff and residents are willing to take on each challenge," says Nyetimber House Manager **Arlene Selser**. "Implementing a plan all at once can become too difficult and overwhelming to accomplish."

Residents and staff are working on other ways to conserve resources such as turning off lights when they are not needed, reducing the time the refrigerator door is open, using reusable cloth towels instead of paper towels and reducing the time water is left running in the sinks. Residents and staff at Nyetimber are encouraging everyone to try to become greener.



Nathan enjoys using the recycling center at Nyetimber.

Slippery Rock Activities

Men's Outing

On March 16, a number of residents from Branchton, Butler CLA and Harmony attended a Rambo Day at First United Methodist Church of Slippery Rock. The guys enjoyed a picnic lunch and participated in science experiments with the volunteers. They learned how to turn a pop bottle into a rocket launcher and how to change the color of a candle flame. A good time was had by all.

Easter Dinner

On March 21, residents from the Slippery Rock area attended an Easter Celebration at First United Methodist Church of Slippery Rock. They were treated to a delicious meal, participated in Easter activities and visited with the Easter Bunny. This was the fifth event that residents have attended with the church and everyone is enjoying getting to know each other better.

SRPC Fund Raisers

Residents and staff at Slippery Rock Program Center (SRPC) have been busy with fund raisers this year. Proceeds have been contributed to the SRPC Activity Account and will be used to purchase recreational equipment, and to participate in community outings or activities at the SRPC.

In April, they held their second annual silent auction raising almost \$400. Staff and friends bid on items from amusement park tickets to gift baskets. In March, they participated in the Angels Attic children's consignment sale. Staff donated gently used children's items including clothing, toys and other baby essentials. Thank you to everyone who helped make these fund raisers a success.

See more "Western Pennsylvania News" on pages 8, 9 and 11.

Let's Go Bucs!

Allegheny Valley School received 259 tickets to cheer on the Pittsburgh Pirates to victory versus the St. Louis Cardinals on May 12 and 13. Residents and staff and their families were guests of the Pirates through a special program through the Commissioner's office. The Pirates were generous with the tickets – and were able to provide needed wheelchair seating for 25 clients.

The clients and accompanying staff are also fortunate to receive tickets to attend Pirates games through the *Tickets for Kids Charities*. With more than 500 residents throughout Western PA, we are most appreciative to all who help make it possible for the clients to attend at least one game during the baseball season.

PA Game Commission's Bluebird Program

Dwayne, David, Roger, Brian and **Kenton** from West Sunbury and **James** and **Ryan** from Butler CLA, along with staff members and friends, participated in the PA Game Commission's Bluebird Nest Box Building Program. Wildlife Conservation Officer **Chip Brunst** visited West Sunbury and gave a presentation on the bluebird, its struggle and its fate. His presentation included instruction on how to help the species by building and installing bluebird nest boxes. Each participant was given a bluebird nest box kit and, with the help of Officer Brunst, they completed the boxes. Thank you to Officer Brunst and the PA Game Commission for this wonderful program.



Officer Brunst (center) with AVS clients participating in the bluebird box program.

Renovations at the Hummelstown Campus

AVS recently completed renovations to update the programming and residential areas of the Hummelstown Campus. New carpeting was placed in the hallways, bedrooms and family rooms. Protective carpeting half way up the walls and an oak chair rail have also been installed in the hallways.

The hallway and common area walls which are made of cement block have been smoothed out and covered with plaster. The ceilings were lowered in the central corridor and family rooms, and new lighting was added in the hallways. The updates were completed with new furnishings for the family rooms and central corridor.

The facility improvements were made possible through gifts and grants to the Capital Development Fund.



Noreen shows the new carpeted walls.

Central PA Activities

840 Middletown

The ladies of 840 Middletown are enjoying the tweet-tweet of two cute parakeets. They enjoy listening to the parakeets sing, and each morning they sit near the cage to watch the yellow and blue birds flutter around. They have truly benefited from their new found feathered friends.

Cedar Crest

The Cedar Crest ladies chased away the winter blues with some great outings. They tested their luck at the Hollywood Casino, went bowling at Cedar Lanes, attended a Harlem Globetrotters game and toured the Sturgis Pretzel Factory in Lititz, PA. Everyone is looking forward to new adventures this summer.

Church

The gentlemen and staff of Church had a wonderful time celebrating the winter months. A trip through the Hershey Sweet Lights was the highlight of the season. They also enjoyed the excitement and action of a Hershey Bears Hockey game.

South 61st

Jeremy, Jimmy and Shaun of South 61st chased the winter blues away by taking an outing to the local bowling alley and challenging each other and staff to a few games. They also visited Color-Me-Mine several times and painted pottery. They recently painted Easter eggs to decorate the house for the holiday. The guys are now enjoying the baseball season by cheering on their local Harrisburg Senators and singing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

South Hills

The residents at South Hills have had a full schedule during the past several months. They attended movies, ate at area restaurants, attended holiday socials at a local church, made holiday crafts, saw the Hershey Bears play hockey and saw *Sesame Street Live* at the Giant Center. Once the weather warmed up they enjoyed a picnic outdoors. They are looking forward to a great summer.

Spring Garden

The residents of Spring Garden spent the winter cheering on the Pittsburgh Steelers and had a fantastic Super Bowl party to support their favorite football team. They also took a group outing to the Giant Center to see the Harlem Globetrotters in action.

Wilshire

Over the past few months, the Wilshire gentlemen have enjoyed several great outings including a trip to the Sight and Sound Theater in Strasburg, PA to see *Behold the Lamb*, their first Hershey Bears hockey game and *Disney on Ice* at the Hershey Giant Center. The guys are anticipating more outings this summer.

Woodbine



To celebrate his 60th birthday, Lester, a resident at Woodbine, was joined by friends at Hoss's Steakhouse in Hummelstown.

See more "Central Pennsylvania News" on page 11.

NAFL Minor League Football Event to Benefit AVS



On July 11, the National American Football League (NAFL) will start its 2009 minor league football season with a Pennsylvania Division Kickoff Classic in Harrisburg. The League has chosen AVS as its charity this year and will donate a portion of the proceeds from this event to the Hummelstown Campus. Two minor league games will be played at Susquehanna Township High School throughout the day. Other events include a silent auction, bouncy castle for kids and custom face painting. NAFL merchandise and concessions will be available throughout the day.

"I am very pleased to be involved with coordinating and promoting this ground-breaking football event," comments NAFL General Manager **Dave Kmiecik**. "Football fans and the Harrisburg community will be able to enjoy two quality minor league football games on one day at the same venue, and also be able to donate funds to Allegheny Valley School."

For more information about this event, please contact Dave Kmiecik at (717) 627-0368 or GM@nafl.org or visit the NAFL website at www.nafl.org.

View employment opportunities and apply online at www.avs.net.

Eastern PA Activities

Byberry

The individuals at Byberry enjoyed getting out during the winter months. Their favorite activities included trying to outscore each other in bowling at Dave and Buster's, going to dances and movies at the Carousel House and going out to dinner at area restaurants. They also had a fantastic Super Bowl party where they helped staff prepare delicious food and cheered on the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Elmwood

The residents of Elmwood had a busy winter and spring celebrating birthdays, going out to dinner and visiting with family and friends. They also took several trips to the movies and went on outings to Chester Casino and Philadelphia Park Casino.

Valley

Everyone at Valley was busy with activities all over the city of Philadelphia. They went to dances at the Carousel House and Philadelphia Disabilities Developmental Corporation, visited the Please Touch Museum, and attended the Philadelphia Flower Show and Harlem Globetrotters game. They also enjoyed dinner and dessert at many of their favorite restaurants.

AVS Celebrates Earth Day

Residents from South Broad and Valley spent Earth Day touring some of Philadelphia's vibrant gardens through donated and discounted admission passes from Art-Reach. South Broad received free admission to Highlands Mansion and Gardens and enjoyed an afternoon of touring the beautiful gardens that surround the house. They had the chance to explore the many rooms in the mansion and learn about what each previous owner contributed to the grounds. Residents and staff also commented on how neat it was to see the old fixtures, like the stove and furnace that are still in the mansion.

The group from Valley received discounted passes to Longwood Gardens. The ladies from the home commented on the colorful gardens and expressed great appreciation for being there. Thank you to Art-Reach for making these wonderful



The ladies from Valley at Longwood Gardens.

opportunities available to our residents in Eastern PA. Art-Reach is a Delaware Valley nonprofit cultural service organization that helps underserved audiences to experience arts and cultural programming, and that serves as a community resource by increasing accessibility to cultural venues and events.

Music Fest

On May 15, clients at the Philadelphia Program Center (PPC) celebrated a Music Fest. Music was provided by the Sanctuary Christian Academy Chapel Singers and Praise Dancers, Upper Moreland Middle School Jazz Ensemble and the Youth Arts Forum of Cultural Expressionz. Residents from the PPC clapped their hands and danced along to the music provided by these wonderful groups. Everyone is hoping this will become an annual event.



The Sanctuary Christian Academy Chapel Singers perform at the Music Fest.

Red Hat Society in Eastern PA

In November, 23 ladies formed a chapter of the Red Hat Society in Eastern PA. Ladies from Buxmont, Lindbergh, South 5th and Yardley make up the founding members of the chapter; they are hoping to add more members in the future. Their first Red Hat event was held in November and was called the *Pioneer Red Hat Event*. This event not only represented the first chapter meeting, but also it centered around the Thanksgiving holiday. The ladies had dinner, worked on a Thanksgiving craft and decorated their red and pink hats. They also enjoyed music, dancing, snacks and prizes. The event was a great success and was enjoyed by all.

The ladies met again in February for a *Valentine's Day Bingo Bash*. This event included dinner and bingo games with a chance to win Valentine's Day prizes. Everyone made Valentine's arts and crafts and took home a gift bag. Once again, the gathering was a hit.

For more Red Hat activities at AVS, see *AVS Women Join the Red Hat Society* on page 2.



Ana, Natasha and Yardley House Manager Aesha Al'Hakeem-Miller (center) play BINGO.

See more "Eastern Pennsylvania News" on page 11.

Other Ways to Help Allegheny Valley School

GoodSearch/GoodShop

Support AVS while searching and shopping on the internet with GoodSearch.com. The money raised will be contributed to the Capital Development Fund. Use www.GoodSearch.com like any other search engine – the site is powered by Yahoo! Designate Allegheny Valley School as your charity of choice and click “Verify.” From then on, each time you use GoodSearch, \$.01 will be contributed to AVS.

GoodSearch.com also includes GoodShop, an online shopping mall. Each purchase made via the GoodShop mall results in a donation to the user’s designated charity – averaging 3% of the sale, but going up to 20% or more. Please be sure to designate Allegheny Valley School as your designated charity!

From November 2006 to April 2009, AVS has received \$289.85 from GoodSearch/GoodShop. The more people who search the internet using GoodSearch or shop with GoodShop, the larger that number will be!

Gordon Food Service



Support AVS while shopping at Gordon Food Service (GFS) stores. AVS has signed up for GFS’ *Partnership and Savings Program*. There is no membership fee or card to join. Simply shop and indicate to the cashier that you are shopping to support Allegheny Valley School. GFS will track your purchases and each purchase made will result in a contribution to AVS. The money raised will be contributed to the Capital Development Fund. Since joining this program in May 2008, AVS has earned \$131.28.

Recycling cell phones and ink cartridges



Please send your used printer, fax and copier cartridges, as well as old cell phones to Kelly Gremba at the Corporate Center. AVS earns money for the Capital Development Fund simply by recycling these used cartridges and cell phones that were destined for the trash. (Please note that we cannot accept Epson cartridges or cartridges that have already been recycled.) Since 2003, AVS has received \$3,114.93 from recycling these products!

Please forward used ink cartridges and cell phones to Kelly Gremba, Allegheny Valley School, Corporate Center, 1996 Ewings Mill Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108.

Shopping at Target



Use your REDcard (Target® VISA® Credit Card, Target Credit Card and Target Check Card) to shop at Target, Target.com and elsewhere and Target will donate a portion of the purchases to Allegheny Valley School. To apply for a REDcard, please visit your nearest Target store or apply online at www.target.com/redcard. Designate AVS’ school ID # 126464 by calling 1-800-316-6142, using the store kiosk or visiting www.target.com/tcoe. This program helps to raise money for AVS’ Capital Development Fund. A total of 7 people have signed up for this program which has raised \$287.93 for AVS to date.

Support AVS at Special Events

AVS will benefit from these coming events:

Sunset Riders Motorcycle Club Charity Poker Run

Saturday, June 20
Zanotti Motor Company, Inc.
Butler, PA

Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Cocktails & Tail Pipes

Saturday, July 11
Fox Chapel Golf Club
Fox Chapel, PA

Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Race Weekend

Saturday, July 18 - Sunday, July 19
Schenley Park
Pittsburgh, PA

Friends of AVS Golf Open Presented by Heritage Agency, Inc.

Monday, August 10
Churchill Valley Country Club
Pittsburgh, PA

For information about participating in any of these events please contact the Development Office at (412) 299-7777.

Visit our photo gallery at
www.avs.net.

Contract with AVS

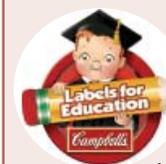
By engaging the clients of Allegheny Valley School to complete your projects you can avoid hiring temporary help or adding to your existing workloads. We have a work force that is ready and eager to meet your business needs. All of our contracts are completed under the careful supervision of our staff in the workshop and according to your specifications. Our clients can complete many types of jobs including but not limited to, clerical work, mailing services, packaging, product assembly and shredding services. By hiring AVS clients, you also help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to experience a sense of accomplishment, gain self-worth and earn a valuable paycheck. If you are interested in discussing how AVS can help your company or organization continue to succeed, please call:

Western PA (412) 262-1553

Central PA (717) 566-3267

Eastern PA (215) 364-1750

Campbell’s Labels for Education Program



Help AVS acquire classroom equipment and accessories by saving and sending in your Campbell’s labels. The equipment received through the program helps to enhance the programming we provide to the individuals at AVS. Simply save your Campbell’s proofs of purchase with the *Labels for Education* logo and send them to Kelly Gremba at the Corporate Center.

Sensory News

Since engaging Sensory Consultant **Cindy Potter** in 2003, Allegheny Valley School has developed a leading sensory program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Important to the success of the program is continued learning by those involved with the AVS program and the sharing ideas, challenges and successes with others providing care to similar populations. To assist with this educational component, a quarterly sensory discussion group was established in 2005 that continues to meet today.

The January meeting of the AVS Sensory Discussion Group was held at the Day School at the Children's Institute in Pittsburgh. Occupational Therapist **Michele Stein** discussed the Day School renovations that provided space for new classrooms for autistic children. As part of this renovation, a new multisensory room was added. Attendees had the opportunity to tour the room and test the equipment.

Amy Smith and **Tom DiCesare** from the Enrichment Center for the Belmont County Board of MR/DD also presented at the meeting. They discussed the development of their Enrichment Center which includes a multisensory room, physical therapy room, cognitive room and social room to meet the needs of individuals beyond the typical workshop setting. The Enrichment Center has been in place since August 2005, and continues to grow. They presented two cases of individuals with profound intellectual and developmental disabilities whose overall functioning has improved as a result of using the multisensory room. The group wrapped-up by discussing various types of equipment used to provide sensory input and the issue of providing age appropriate programs.

The March meeting took place at the multisensory room at Slippery Rock University. Located in the Jack C. Dinger Special

Education Building, the sensory room is primarily used by the special education faculty and students. The large, well-equipped space was funded through a grant from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust. The room provides an on-campus laboratory for students to learn the use of multisensory equipment and other technology. The meeting attendees enthusiastically tested the equipment which included a waterbed with fiber optic waterfall, special tunnel, sound-activated light panels, bubble columns, different types of reflective surfaces and soft play forms.

Also during the meeting, Cindy Potter provided a brief update describing current trends in research on the use of multisensory environments and sensory stimulation techniques with various populations. Use of multisensory environments has increased in the U.S. over the past decade and a broad range of professionals are now using multisensory environments and sensory techniques. These include nurses, therapeutic recreation specialists, physical and occupational therapists and special educators. Research designed to investigate the effectiveness of multisensory environments has also steadily improved. Cindy also provided an overview of whole body vibration and the positive physical effects that have been associated with its use, including helping to maintain bone and muscle strength and improving circulation. AVS' Slippery Rock Program Center has obtained a whole body vibration platform which will be used primarily with individuals who are not able to participate in traditional exercise programs.

In addition to the quarterly discussion groups, Cindy Potter and AVS' Director of Training **Carol Erzen** held two sensory trainings in Philadelphia for AVS house managers and programming staff. The next sensory discussion meeting will be held this fall. For more information contact Cindy Potter at (724) 312-7813 or cpotter@avs.net.

Grant News

We are most grateful for each and every contribution AVS receives. Every gift is put to good use to help improve the quality of life of the individuals in our care. Since November 1, 2008, we have received numerous grants to our Capital Development Fund that are supporting efforts to enhance our programs and facilities to better meet the needs of our clients. Thank you to the following trusts, foundations, companies and organizations for their support of Allegheny Valley School's Capital Development Fund:

- AVS Foundation
- Dominion Foundation
- Highmark Foundation
- James F. McCandless Charitable Trust through the PNC Charitable Trust Grant Review Committee
- Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix
- Polk Foundation
- R. P. Simmons Family Charitable Trust of The Pittsburgh Foundation
- Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust
- United States Steel Foundation

Grants of \$5,000 or more received November 1, 2008 - April 30, 2009.

AVS in the News

As many people know, The Terrible Towel® was created by the late Steelers broadcaster Myron Cope to inspire fan involvement. Thirty-four years later, The Terrible Towel® remains a Steelers fan essential. And for the past 13 years, the sale of any The Terrible Towel® product has benefited the residents at AVS. This story inspired the national media leading up to and after Super Bowl XLIII®. Stories about Myron and his family, The Terrible Towel® and AVS were featured in **The New York Times*, on Showtime's *Inside the NFL*, on **ESPN.com* and on ESPN's *NFL Countdown with Chris Berman* the morning of the Super Bowl. The Cope family was named Persons of the Week on **ABC's World News with Charles Gibson* and news segments were aired on several local and national stations.

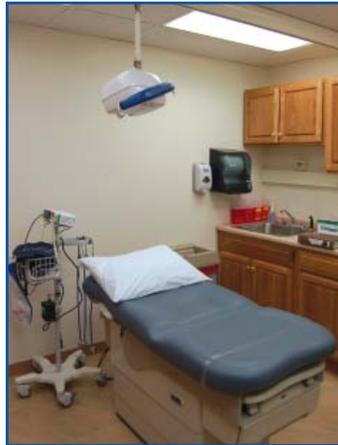
Myron's generosity has guaranteed that each and every single day The Terrible Towel® helps to improve the lives of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Indicates a link to the article/news segment from AVS' website, www.avs.net.*

**View employment opportunities and apply
online at www.avs.net.**

Pittsburgh Campus Medical Suite

During the week of May 11, a brand new medical suite opened at the Pittsburgh Campus. The suite was relocated from Building 2 to Building 1 and expanded to include an exam room with adjoining office for the medical director, a dental office, offices for the nurse coordinators, group home nurses, nurse case managers, health service supervisors and medical suite secretary, a chart area, storage and a waiting room. In addition, a multi-purpose conference room was added that includes a room divider that adds two much needed meeting spaces. In the expanded and renovated medical suite there is a new accessible and adjustable exam table and dental chair that will ease transfers and make examinations more comfortable and safe for both residents and staff. New medical and dental equipment has replaced older outdated tools that were not always reliable.



A new exam table, lights and tools are a part of the medical suite improvement.

The 184 residents at the Campus and residents living in community group homes in Allegheny and Beaver County utilize the suite.

The previous suite was outdated and the exam room was not

large enough to easily accommodate residents in wheelchairs. The medical director did not have an office and there was no work or storage area for the respiratory therapists, a nursing coordinator and potential future position that will address medical reporting needs. Medical charts were housed in another area of Campus and needed to be transferred to the medical suite as needed. Finally, the conference room in the prior suite was doubling as a waiting room. The former medical suite is now being renovated into a training room as well as work space for the residential services department, psychology department and staff development personnel.

This new medical suite was made possible by gifts to the Capital Development Fund from individuals, corporations and foundations.

Grants supporting this project were received from: FISA Foundation, Highmark Foundation, Polk Foundation, Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and United States Steel Foundation.

PHMC Improvements

Patricia Hillman Miller Campus (PHMC) has seen a great deal of modernization during the past year. Major projects undertaken include new carpeting, bathing systems, an elevator, and dental and sensory equipment.

The entire building has been re-carpeted, replacing the well worn carpet that was installed more than 15 years ago. In addition, throughout the hallways, there were repairs made to the walls and carpeting and a chair rail have been installed half way up the wall. The carpeting project has made the entire building more homelike and comfortable for the residents and staff.

Three new specialized bathing systems have been installed in each apartment of PHMC. These new tubs have a power raising function, a disinfection system, therapeutic whirlpool jets and provide a longer, wider and deeper area for bathing. The new bathing systems replaced tubs that were old and no longer able to be repaired. The new tubs are safer and more comfortable for both residents and staff.

During 2008, a new elevator was installed at PHMC. The elevator provides a smooth ride between the four floors of the

building. Safety features include a ten second delay on door closures and an emergency call button linked to the PHMC reception area and Marshall Elevator Company.

The PHMC sensory program is receiving new equipment to enhance its offerings throughout the building. Items being acquired include: a motion table, a giant interactive bubble column, a therapeutic waterbed with music speakers, a fiber optic waterfall and more.

Another major and important project, the modernization of the PHMC dental room, is discussed on page 9.

These major projects and several other smaller projects have been made possible through the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations to the Capital Development Fund. Grants supporting these projects have been received from: PNC Bank Trustee of William F. and Lynn D. Gauss Foundation, Highmark Foundation, James F. McCandless Charitable Trust through the PNC Charitable Trust Grant Review Committee, Polk Foundation, Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and the Robert and Mary Weisbrod Foundation.

PHMC Communication Club

The Communication and Residential Departments at PHMC have joined together to create an exciting new club. The Communication Club meets twice a week to discuss all types of topics and learn new skills. They also take educational trips to put their new skills to work. Communications Specialist **Daya Turner** and Goal Plan Specialist **Gloria Wertz** have led the group on trips to the National Aviary, Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Shrine Circus and Theresa's Bakery. During club meetings residents **Jim** and **Robbie** usually lead the group in picking topics for discussion while **Brooke** is in charge of picking the club's snacks. **Bill**, the club's newest member, delights the group with his songs. The club is looking forward to many more adventures.



Jim feeds the birds during a trip to the Aviary.

Highmark Foundation Supports Dental Services at Allegheny Valley School

In December 2008, AVS received a \$40,000 grant from the Highmark Foundation to support its dental services program. The grant has enabled AVS to acquire new dental equipment and tools for its Pittsburgh and Patricia Hillman Miller Campuses.

The grant was awarded through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, *Improving Access to Oral Health and Dental Care for Underserved Populations*. The RFP was created to assist safety-net providers [such as Federally Qualified Health Centers, Community Health Clinics, Free Clinics, health departments, Rural Health Clinics, and hospitals with dental clinics] increase the capacity to provide services to those most in need which resulted in AVS receiving a grant to help with capacity building to serve individuals with special needs. "AVS has provided dental services for decades and the equipment used was outdated and often malfunctioned," comments AVS' Director of Professional Services René Pastin. "Replacing the equipment requires support of our Capital Development Fund and the Highmark Foundation grant has made it possible for us to improve the tools used in our dental program."

"This grant demonstrates Allegheny Valley School's commitment to make dental care more accessible to those most in need," said Yvonne Cook, president of the Highmark Foundation. "The ultimate goal is to significantly improve oral health care patient care with the addition of new technology."

The focus of the RFP is to support programs for underserved populations, including the uninsured, underinsured and those with special needs. Proposals addressed one of the following strategies: (1) Challenge grants to improve coordination and build capacity; (2) Regional strategy to support the expansion of services; and (3) Expand or improve existing dental equipment. The goal of the RFP is to increase availability and access to oral health and dental care.

Studies show that oral hygiene plays a major role in promoting overall health. Individuals with developmental disabilities are at greater risk for dental malformations and disease that require specialized oral health treatments. There are challenges in providing oral health care to individuals with special needs, including sensitivities that could affect their participation in oral health and dental care programs.

Because of the close relationship between oral health and overall health, AVS' medical director was interested in finding innovative strategies to improve the oral health of individuals in our care. In 2007, AVS convened an oral hygiene committee that meets monthly at PHMC where some of the most medically fragile individuals reside. The purpose of the committee is to monitor each client's oral hygiene, including implementing proper procedures, educating facility staff, increasing awareness, identifying concerns, and providing solutions. In addition, oral hygiene audits are performed on the clients. These audits provide information regarding a client's tolerance of oral hygiene, and staff procedures necessary to provide dental care.

For 20 years, James Barbuto, DMD has worked with AVS' clients. Dr. Barbuto maintains a private practice in the Aliquippa area and

treats clients in the dental rooms at the Pittsburgh and Patricia Hillman Miller Campuses providing routine dental exams, tooth scaling, and cleaning. These services are provided to 247 residents of the campuses; and are available to 185 individuals from AVS' community group homes in Allegheny and Beaver counties. The equipment used by Dr. Barbuto was outdated and unpredictable. It was not unusual for the equipment to fail during the exam, resulting in disruption of services. In addition, the dental chairs were older and not easily accommodating for individuals with special needs or physical challenges. Recognizing the need for functioning dental equipment necessary to modernize the dental suites at both Campuses, AVS responded by securing funding to enhance the dental equipment which would make a dental visit less stressful for the client. The Pittsburgh Campus medical suite project was already underway (see article on page 8) and included improvements for the dental room. The PHMC project was easy to define, as much of its equipment was unpredictable and/or decades old.

In December, AVS was notified that the proposal was approved and \$40,000 would be awarded to assist with expanding and/or improving dental equipment. Since receiving notice of the funding, we have moved forward with acquiring the new dental equipment and tools including, accessible dental chairs, exam tools, lights, cleaning and sterilization instruments.

A dental form has been created to track oral hygiene status, recommendations resulting from the exam, the type of services provided, and whether the exam was interrupted in any way. Since implementing the form, hundreds of reports have been generated and will be analyzed to monitor changes in oral health status in addition to equipment use and reliability. In addition, for the dental grant, Highmark Foundation has engaged a program evaluator to assess AVS' prior dental services and those delivered with the new equipment. The goal of the evaluation is to measure whether the new equipment significantly influenced service delivery and access to care.

As of this writing, the new equipment has been acquired and installed at the Pittsburgh Campus; the new medical suite was opened the week of May 11. The PHMC room was up and running in early June.

The project is expected to improve the quality of the dental care provided at the Campuses. The new equipment and tools will allow the dentist to better accommodate individuals in our care, to provide a more thorough and comfortable exam, and to more fully utilize his skills when providing services. At AVS we strive to provide environments that are safe, efficient and well maintained; the new state-of-the-art equipment will help AVS to better, more safely and comfortably serve those entrusted to its care.

The Highmark Foundation, created in 2000 as an affiliate of Highmark Inc., is a charitable organization and a private foundation that supports initiatives and programs aimed at improving community health. The Foundation's mission is to improve the health, well-being and quality of life for individuals who reside in the Pennsylvania communities served by Highmark, Inc.

The mission of Allegheny Valley School is to provide quality programs and facilities to help the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities entrusted to our care to live with purpose and dignity, and to provide opportunities and choices for our clients to grow and function at their full potential as independently as possible.

AVS Seeks Ticket Donations

Allegheny Valley School is seeking ticket donations to sporting and arts & cultural events, animal shows, family entertainment and more! Your ticket donation will be used by AVS' clients and their accompanying staff. Please send your ticket donations to Amy Harvilla at Allegheny Valley School's Corporate Center.



Getting married? Now you can support Allegheny Valley School by registering with the I Do Foundation. From honeymoons to invitations to wedding gifts to charitable wedding favors, the I Do Foundation allows couples and their guests to make wedding-related purchases that generate donations for charity. The I Do Foundation's Charity Registry service also makes it easy for guests to make donations in lieu of gifts. All of the services are available free of cost at www.IDoFoundation.org. To date, AVS has received \$275 through the I Do Foundation.

Make AVS Your Favorite Charity

By remembering AVS in your will you can help assure our continued financial strength and our ability to provide superior care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To ensure proper application of your planned gift, please designate it for AVS' Capital Development Fund. For more information on how to designate AVS in your will, please call the Development Department at (412) 299-7777. Also, please let us know that you've named AVS in your will so we can thank you.

Did you know?

The Pension Protection Act provides an exclusion from gross income for otherwise taxable IRA distributions of up to \$100,000 a year. In order to qualify for tax free treatment, the distribution must be made from traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs to a qualified charity such as Allegheny Valley School. Owners of ineligible plans may consider rolling plan assets into an IRA in order to avail themselves of this provision. The IRA distribution must be made by a plan owner aged 70-1/2 or older on the date of the distribution. As of this writing, this opportunity has been extended through **December 31, 2009**. For more information call the Development Department at (412) 299-7777.

Myron Cope Special Equipment Fund

The Myron Cope Special Equipment Fund was established in 2008 to raise funds to help purchase specialized equipment that aids in the clients' therapies, enhances their independence, fosters their interaction with others and so much more. AVS is grateful that the community has contributed more than \$11,000 to this effort in the past year. To make a donation to the Fund, visit the donor page on www.avs.net (specify that your gift is for this fund) or send your contribution to 1996 Ewings Mill Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108, attn: Development Department. Checks can be made payable to Allegheny Valley School—Myron Cope Special Equipment Fund.

Matching Gifts Program

You may be able to double or even triple your donation to Allegheny Valley School through a Matching Gifts Program. Many corporations offer such programs to their employees and retirees. Check with your employer to find out if it offers a Matching Gifts Program that will enable you to greatly increase your support of AVS.

More Ways to Donate

Your gift to the United Way, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) or through the State Employee Combined Appeal (SECA) can be directed to Allegheny Valley School. Unless donors specifically indicate AVS, no funds will come to us.

To designate AVS, simply locate the section on the pledge form that allows you to name a specific agency to receive your contribution. Write in Allegheny Valley School's name and agency code in the space provided.

Allegheny Valley School's Agency Codes

United Way of Allegheny County (Southwestern PA) 373	Central Pennsylvania Combined Federal Campaign 15451
United Way of Southeastern PA 9076	3 Rivers Combined Federal Campaign, Pittsburgh 15451
United Way of the Capital Region 3026	Combined Federal Campaign, Philadelphia 15451
	State Employee Combined Appeal (SECA). 4601-0045

We ask that you authorize the release of your name to us so we can acknowledge your generosity. Please spread the word about this opportunity to your co-workers, family and friends.

Your contribution will be applied to our Capital Development Fund to help cover important expenditures including much needed equipment, program expansions, and renovations and improvements to our more than 125 facilities.

Memorial and Honorary Giving

The Memorial and Honorary Giving Program offers you a meaningful way to extend condolences or congratulations to friends and family members and also help Allegheny Valley School.

If you would like to receive one of AVS' Memorial and Honorary Giving Program packets, please contact the Development Department at (412) 299-7777.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA NEWS

Attention Giant Eagle Shoppers!



Thank you to the 443 registrants that participated in the 2008-2009 *Apples for the Students* program. We are delighted that 9 new participants registered this year! Through the program, which concluded on March 18, AVS received a DVD player, educational software, computer equipment, playground balls, an inflatable solar system and more. Thank you to all who participated.

If you are currently signed up with the *Apples for the Students*

program for AVS, you are already registered for the 2009-2010 program. If you are interested in becoming part of the program, please call Amy Harvilla at (412) 299-7777. Details for the 2009-2010 program will be published in the December 2009 issue of *Perspectives*.

Since purchases are tracked electronically, names of participants are not provided to us. Please let us know that you're participating by calling the Development Department at (412) 299-7777. Thank you!

CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA NEWS

Joe's 70th Birthday Celebration

Hummelstown Campus resident **Joe** celebrated his 70th birthday in November with a thrilling ride in the sidecar of a motorcycle. One of Joe's biggest passions is motorcycle racing and he often spoke about riding on a motorcycle. On his birthday his dream came true! Phone calls were placed to area Harley Davidson dealers by Joe's family and a Harley owner with a sidecar generously agreed to give Joe the ride of a lifetime. He was first presented with his own Harley helmet to wear and was then accompanied by a number of other riders, including family members and staff from the Hummelstown Campus. A group of residents and staff were there to see Joe off on his ride and shared cake and ice cream upon his return.

Joe celebrates his birthday with a motorcycle ride.



EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA NEWS

Philadelphia Campus Apartment Update

Two new apartment-style living areas are now opened at AVS' Philadelphia Campus. The units include bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen, sitting area and large bathroom. One apartment is occupied by 10 men and the other by 8 women.

The men have been in their apartment for more than a year and are really enjoying their new home. They have a place to relax and watch movies, play games and help with meal preparations. The women settled in this past fall and have made the apartment their own. They've filled their rooms with stuffed animals and pictures, and have created a home-like atmosphere.

The transition into the apartments has been a wonderful experience for everyone involved. It is our hope that this type of remodeling can continue throughout the building.



The bedrooms are decorated with beautiful new furniture and bedding, and each resident adds their own special touch with pictures and belongings.



The kitchen allows plenty of room for residents utilizing a wheelchair to assist during meal preparation.



The spacious living room in apartment 1 gives residents a chance to relax and enjoy their delightful new surroundings.



The apartment 2 living/dining room areas are decorated with colorful accents to make the room feel comfortable and warm.

AVS Website

Please visit AVS' website at www.avs.net. Features include employment opportunities, descriptions of programs and services, a photo gallery and much more. You can also apply for a job online, make a donation through a secured page or submit an online question or comment. If you have any suggestions for our website, please call the Development Department at (412) 299-7777 or submit a comment in the *Contact Us* section.



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Life-long opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

ALLEGHENY VALLEY SCHOOL
PERSPECTIVES is published by Allegheny Valley School, a private, non-profit organization providing residential and therapeutic programs for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, most who also have multiple physical disabilities, extensive medical complications and some who have behavioral management needs. Allegheny Valley School is a member of NHS Human Services Family of Companies. Please send comments and suggestions to:

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