

# PERSPECTIVES

*Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*

November 2014



**NHS**  
HUMAN SERVICES

## NEW PROGRAM UPDATES

Through generous support from the community, NHS Allegheny Valley School (NHS/AVS) has been able to enhance its programming to better serve the individuals in its care. During the past three years, funding has been secured for NHS/AVS to develop innovative programs that are expanding consumer options and greatly benefitting the children and adults that we serve. **Highlights from 2014 include:**

### Memory Care Program

Sixteen (16) individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) moved into our first Memory Care Unit during the summer. In the home, consumers have a more relaxed schedule and most programming is provided on-site for those who function better with fewer transitions throughout the day. Physical features that respond to the needs of those with Alzheimer's disease (AD) and dementia (D) include: an enclosed outdoor area where residents can wander freely without the risk of getting lost (see below); memory aids and visual cues to enhance the consumers' ability to find their way; and seamless, solid-surface flooring to reduce the risk of falls and anxiety caused by visual disturbances.

Researching and developing the program has been underway since 2011 when NHS/AVS received a grant from Polk Foundation to address the needs of its aging population. Those with I/DD experience AD/D at the same rate as the general population, with the exception of those with Down Syndrome who are at a higher risk. Concerned about the impact of AD/D on our consumers, their families and employees who provide care, NHS/AVS was eager to develop its Memory Care Program. The program development and home renovation have been underwritten by AVS Foundation, Babcock Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, Polk Foundation, The Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and other contributions to the AVS Capital Development Fund.



During the development of the Memory Care Program, NHS/AVS connected with the National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia Practices (NTG). The NTG is a coalition of interested persons and organizations working toward ensuring that the needs and interests of adults with I/DD who are affected by AD/D – as well as their families and friends – are taken into account as part of the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease ([www.aadmd.org/NTG](http://www.aadmd.org/NTG)). This fall, NHS/AVS hosted a pilot of the caregiver training that has been developed by the NTG. Approximately 70 people representing 10 agencies attended the two-day training held at NHS/AVS's Pittsburgh Campus.

# Assistive Technology

NHS Human Services is undertaking a number of assistive technology projects, including two that are being led out of NHS/AVS.

### SMART HOME

George, Michael, Tony, and Mike moved into NHS/AVS's first Smart Home in July. The "green" featured home utilizes innovative technologies that improve the residents' quality of life and independence. Unique design elements of the home include: motorized kitchen cabinetry, an adjustable height sink and induction cook-top, and refrigerator and dishwasher drawers. The main living areas offer remote monitored heating and cooling systems, iPad controlled window blinds, and a Smart TV, which provide residents with independence not found in traditional homes. The Smart Home was underwritten by Laughlin Memorial, Polk Foundation, The Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust, and other contributions to the AVS Capital Development Fund.

*"It has been a wonderful experience to be a part of the opening of the new Smart Home,"* comments House Manager Michelle Schmidt. *"Being an NHS/AVS employee for 24 years, it brings me much joy and satisfaction to see the clients doing things we could have never imagined. I see a remarkable change in their independence and happiness and I am excited to see what the future holds."* When asked what the innovations in his home mean to him, Mike paused and said, *"Everything! I can do so much now. I am very proud of myself and impressed with all the things I am doing."*



House Manager Michelle Schmidt with (from left) George, Michael, Tony, and Mike

### COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

NHS/AVS is in the implementation stage of the Communication Technology Demonstration Project that is designed to improve the quality of life for its consumers by helping them leverage the internet to stay in touch with family and friends, communicate with members of their support services team, acquire basic computer skills, and explore other interests. We have partnered with AbleLink Technologies, a company that specializes in software development for individuals with developmental disabilities. Training for a group of dedicated NHS/AVS staff members (our "Super Trainers") was held on-site in August. Since then, All-in-One computers, laptops, and tablets equipped with AbleLink software have been distributed to the two program centers and five community group homes participating in the demonstration. In addition to acquiring new equipment, we are providing ongoing training to staff, families and the consumers.

NHS/AVS remains committed to ensuring that the technology is used effectively and safely. The NHS/AVS core group for this project will continue to assess the project for its effectiveness and success, and to determine future replication. The Communications Technology program is being underwritten by AVS Foundation, Jack Buncher Foundation, and Polk Foundation.



Anna enjoys working with the new technology with assistance from staff member Karen Miller.

### Dental Sensory

Through a grant from FISA Foundation, NHS/AVS has developed a dental sensory program that is aimed at reducing consumer anxiety during the dental process, and improving oral health. Using video analysis, vital signs and electrodermal resistance as data points, we have concluded that there was a decrease in negative behaviors when consumers received care in the Sensory Adapted Dental Environment.

This study was presented at the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) conference in Orlando, Florida in June and will be submitted for publication. Future plans for the project include expanding access to the sensory adapted dental environment, based on each individual's sensory preferences. Plans also include adding sensory equipment to the medical waiting area at the Pittsburgh Campus and expanding the program to other NHS/AVS sites.

## MORE NHS/AVS HIGHLIGHTS

### Slippery Rock Program Center's Accessible Pathway

We have launched an effort to raise funds to construct an accessible pathway around the Slippery Rock Program Center for the individuals to enjoy the outdoors year-round. The pathway will provide more opportunities for the consumers to exercise, experience outdoor learning and enjoy time with their friends and family members. To date, we have received nearly \$7,000 toward our \$15,000 goal. If you would like to support this project, please contact Amy Rocini at 412-299-2229.

### Many Faces of NHS



NHS/AVS consumer Elizabeth with her House Manager Pattie Tress

The second Many Faces of NHS – Bridging Partnerships was held in April at the Sewickley Heights home of Laura and Claude Kronk. Attendees were greeted by NHS Chairman and CEO Senator M. Joseph Rocks and NHS Human Services Foundation Board Member Dorothy Pollon to learn more about services provided throughout Western Pennsylvania.

Consumer participation at the gathering included: a performance by the NHS/AVS Pittsburgh Campus Choir, a poem by Elizabeth from NHS/AVS and testimonials from Andrea and David who are supported by NHS programs in Western PA.

### NHS/AVS Video

In early 2015, a new video will be available that highlights the innovative programs of NHS/AVS, including the new initiatives that have launched in 2014. Watch for these on the NHS/AVS website, NHS facebook page and on NHS's YouTube channel.

#### Connect with us!

Websites: [avs.nhsonline.org](http://avs.nhsonline.org) & [nhsonline.org](http://nhsonline.org)

 [facebook.com/nhshumanservices](https://facebook.com/nhshumanservices)

 [twitter.com/nhshumanservice](https://twitter.com/nhshumanservice)

 [youtube.com/nhshumanservices](https://youtube.com/nhshumanservices)

### Friends of NHS Allegheny Valley School Golf Open

The 2014 Friends of NHS/AVS Golf Open was held on August 6 at Cranberry Highlands Golf Course. Golfers gathered on a beautiful day to enjoy a golf scramble and to honor the Parents Associations of NHS/AVS as the 2014 AVS CHAMPion. Support from sponsors, golfers, underwriters, donors and auction participants resulted in proceeds of more than \$110,000! Net proceeds from the event support the Capital Development Fund.

Before golfers took to the course, members of NHS/AVS Pittsburgh Campus Choir gave a special performance of the National Anthem. Throughout the day, guests participated in auctions as well as contests on the course. During dinner, consumer Megan shared her thoughts on how NHS/AVS has impacted her life and Chairperson Skip Katich expressed his commitment to our mission.

*"I was delighted to serve as the Chairperson of the golf event," commented Skip Katich of HAR-KEL, Inc. Medical Specialties. "I am always inspired by the abilities of the individuals at NHS/AVS and the compassion exhibited by the amazing staff members and the life changing experiences they give to the residents."*



Senator Rocks is joined by the NHS/AVS Pittsburgh Campus Choir and their accompanying staff members.

The 2014 AVS CHAMPion Award was presented to the NHS/AVS Parents Associations for their commitment to and support of the individuals that we serve. Senator Rocks presented the award to Allegheny Valley School Parents Association President Tom McGrail, and NHS/AVS Chief Development Officer Dorothy Hunter Gordon, accepting the honor on behalf of the Combined Parents Association in Eastern PA.

**SAVE THE DATE! Tuesday, August 4, 2015 at the Cranberry Highlands Golf Course**

### Day of Giving Benefits NHS/AVS

Seventy-three (73) donors contributed to NHS/AVS's Capital Development Fund through The Pittsburgh Foundation's sixth annual Day of Giving in May. Including a 17% match, NHS/AVS received \$10,047 through this one-day campaign, which was part of Give Local America, the national day for community foundations across the country. NHS/AVS is grateful to be a part of the effort which generated \$5.7 million in support for Pittsburgh area non-profits.

## MORE NHS/AVS HIGHLIGHTS

# Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

Activities surrounding the 32nd annual Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix (PVGP), presented by the Greater Pittsburgh Automobile Dealers Foundation, ran from July 11-20. The 10-day festival of events was filled with car shows, parades, a gala, concerts, vintage races, and more.

Race weekend drew spectators to the City of Pittsburgh's Schenley Park. New this year was the Media Challenge, coordinated by NHS Human Services Foundation Board Member Timyka Artist. Timyka, representing WPXI, along with KDKA's Brenda Waters and WTAE's Marcie Cipriani had a friendly "race" in their professionally driven MINI race cars.

*"The idea behind the Media Challenge was to get some of my news colleagues personally involved in the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, as well as spread the word about this amazing event which helps raise money for NHS/AVS," commented Timyka Artist. "The experience of being a passenger in the MINI on the racetrack was like no other. We had a great time, and all for an amazing cause."*

Since its founding in 1983, the annual race has raised more than \$3.5 million for its beneficiaries, NHS/AVS and the Autism Society of Pittsburgh.

The check presentation for the 2014 event will be held at the Pittsburgh International Auto Show Red CARpet Charity Premiere on February 12, 2015. For more information and to buy tickets, visit [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org).



PVGP Ambassadors Brandon and Anita



NHS Foundation Board Members Dorothy Pollon and Timyka Artist (center) are joined by Ben Pollon and Brenda Waters at the 2014 event.

# Super Hero T-shirt Fundraiser



Students from Philadelphia Public School's J.G. Blaine Elementary held a Super Hero T-shirt Fundraiser to support NHS/AVS. Under the leadership of Special Education/Autistic Support Teacher Jacqueline Serra, 3-5th graders from the North Philadelphia school developed a business plan and a website, coordinated with local businesses, reached out to the media, and raised a total of \$2,185 for NHS/AVS.

The students chose to support NHS/AVS as family members of both Mrs. Serra and Classroom Assistant Mrs. Munson-Jones have benefited from NHS/AVS.

The Super Heroes present the proceeds from their fundraiser to William, a consumer at NHS/AVS in Philadelphia.

### Allegheny Valley School Parents Association

The Allegheny Valley School Parents Association presented \$10,000 to the Capital Development Fund during its semi-annual meeting in October. Senator Rocks accepted the donation on behalf of NHS/AVS. During the fall meeting, the Parents Association also honored Senator Rocks for his years of service as he steps down from the role of CEO. Parents Association Treasurer Diane Barna announced that a fountain will be placed in the LHAS Sensory Garden at the Pittsburgh Campus in honor of Senator Rocks.



Pictured above (from left) NHS Sr. Vice President Eastern Region/Corporate Director of IDD Services Terrence McNellis, Parents Association Treasurer Diane Barna, Parents Association Vice President Penny Wedmore, NHS Executive Vice President of Central/Western Region Carl Clark and NHS Chairman & CEO Senator M. Joseph Rocks

### Did You Know?

The Allegheny Valley School Parents Association and the Combined Parents Association are groups comprised of more than 200 family members of NHS/AVS consumers. If you are not already a member, we hope you will consider joining an Association.

For more information contact:  
**Thomas McGrail** (Western PA President)  
phone: 412-875-5527  
email: barbtom1@comcast.net  
**Ellen Afflerbach** (Eastern PA President)  
phone: 215-542-8947  
email: ellenafflerbach@yahoo.com

### Nicoden Fund

Through a grant received from the Walter F. and Ellen H. Nicoden Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, funding is available to support recreational activities and programs for NHS/AVS consumers and their accompanying staff members. During 2014, numerous opportunities have been funded through the grant including:

- Overnight camping trips for 20 individuals
- Therapeutic horseback riding and equestrian therapy for 23 individuals
- A lunch cruise on the Spirit of Philadelphia for 250 consumers and their accompanying staff members
- Annual memberships to the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, and Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
- Participation for 61 consumers in the spring and fall seasons of the Miracle League of Western PA
- Art therapy classes for the residents of the Memory Care Unit
- Outdoor furnishings for Byberry, Evergreen, and the Hummelstown Campus
- Trips to Lancaster, Splash Lagoon, Cedar Point, and Disney
- A garden at the Philadelphia Campus
- Dances and more!

We are grateful for the bequest of Walter F. and Ellen H. Nicoden that is providing enriching opportunities for the children and adults in NHS/AVS's care.