

# The Center Chronicle

May 1, 2009

## Happy Nurse's Week

To all of our nurses...a big THANKS for all you do! **Amanda Smith** (HR) and **Carolina Williams** (HR) put on a fantastic breakfast to "appreciate" our Nurses. Great door prizes were won by **Felecia Williams, Jamesica Perry, Lorri Humphrey, Linda Gainous, Melissa Hinsey, Kelly Griffin, Lelia Williams, Jasmine Lewis, Melanie Mediate, Robin Butler, Cathy Morris, Roger Griffin, Marcia Franklin, Danielle Crowley, Jada Spraggins, Rita Jungman, Anna Degg, Paula Dibenedetto, Tracy Dukes, Krisha Cheatem, Nelia Valenzeula, and Karen Heath.**

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## From the Desk of Dr. Jay...

I'd like to start this column by issuing a warm welcome to all the folks who have joined the Apalachee team recently. Thanks to the work of the HR Department, and particularly **Marlene Parent**, we are closer to having all of our positions filled than we have been in the past several years – at least since I've been here. For those of you who are new to this field as well as to Apalachee, I'd like to give you a particularly warm welcome. As I've written in previous columns, this work can be very challenging no matter what job you have. It can also be extremely rewarding, and I hope that you find your career in this field as satisfying as I have.

In this issue of *The Center Chronicle*, you will find a tribute to John Convertino, who was for many years the Chief Administrative Officer of Apalachee, and who recently passed away after a long struggle with cancer. I only had the privilege of working briefly with John before his illness took him out of the workplace, but those few months were enough to see clearly John's professionalism, skill, and the absolute dedication he brought to Apalachee and to our clients. For those who knew John well, especially his wife Patty, his death is an enormous loss. He will be sorely missed by all of us at Apalachee.

Right now, the Florida legislature is trying to come up with a budget for next year. The final shape of that budget is not yet known, but it will likely impact Apalachee Center. I have been spending most of my time either at the Capitol or on the phone with folks who are connected with what's happening there, trying to make sure that any impact is positive. As soon as the legislature has come up with a concrete direction, and shared that with me, I will communicate that with you.

Speaking of sharing information, I want to share some thoughts about communication. In almost a quarter of a century in this field, I've worked in a lot of large organizations. I've often observed that people in large organizations can develop small groups, or networks, of co-workers with whom they communicate very openly. Now, this is pretty natural – if you're working in Taylor County, for instance, you may go for months without talking to someone who works in Quincy Forensic Residential. People tend to communicate more openly with folks that they work with everyday, and that makes perfect sense.

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## From the Desk of Dr. Jay (cont)

The problem comes when people start *not* communicating with others in the same organization because they are not in the same office, or group, or network. It seems to me that this usually happens when people feel like they've messed up and don't want anyone else to know about it, or when they are "guarding their turf" against perceived threats to their authority. This is all standard human behavior, and I've done it more times than I can count. Unfortunately, it gets in the way of serving our clients. When we start thinking of ourselves *primarily* as "Administration" or "Case Management" or "Billing" or "Training" (I'm not singling those departments out - I could use every department here as an example), rather than "Apalachee", we stop including everyone necessary in the conversation. When that happens, we lose critical time and data in ensuring that our clients get the best care possible. I think the key is how we think about boundaries, and how we think about where we work.

Boundaries are very important in clinical delivery organizations like this one, but that boundary circle should be drawn around the organization as a whole, and not between departments or people who work here. Everyone here is part of the Apalachee team, and within the workplace that's the group that takes precedence over all the others. Being part of the Apalachee team means that we all have access to the resources of a pretty big system. It means that we can all draw on knowledge that ranges all the way from the Billing Department's understanding of Medicaid rules to the Forensic team's understanding of courtroom procedure, in finding ways to better serve our clients. In the end, we're all working for the same goal, and I think that if we all keep ourselves focused on the goal of delivering the best possible care to our clients within our organizational guidelines, and make sure that we keep talking to and listening to each other to make that happen, we can go a long way towards getting our clients the help they need without unnecessary delays.

Thanks for all the work you do for our clients.

## Day Makers

**Nedra Diehm**, Accounting, sends thanks to Apalachee Staff. She writes: There was a day when an email appeared on my laptop or a card arrived in my mailbox to remind me to laugh or to be strong...you telephoned or visited with some delicious treat to feed both my body and my spirit...you contributed to a wonderful notebook and gift to encourage me and to remind me that the love of friends is an invaluable commodity. Each of you...my Apalachee family for the last 22 years...always have and will continue to make each and every day a wonder! Your positive thoughts, prayers and compassion are genuinely appreciated more than you may ever know. THANK YOU! \*\*\* **Clarence Alexander**, Hilltop, wants to send a big thanks to his boss, **Melanie Mediate**, Hilltop. He writes: She is a Day Maker 7 days a week! She exemplifies leadership and works hard to make sure that Hilltop runs efficiently and effectively. Even when she is working long hours, she does it with a smile on her face! \*\*\* **Sergio Francis**, Gadsden Forensic, sends kudos to **Jerry Derrico**, Gadsden Forensic. He writes: he is the glue that holds Gadsden Forensics together! We would be lost without him...very dedicated, always motivated—that's Jerry! \*\*\* **Maria Arrieta**, Administration, wants to thank 2 special staff in building J: **Sonia Regner**, HR, always takes the time to delight us with her sweet smile and wonderful cakes every Friday. **Sharon Poole**, Administration, buys candies every week and refills her candy jar for all who pass by (and they pass by often!). Every week she smiles as she fills up that candy jar again and again....and again!



# Staff Anniversaries

# Strides in Inpatient

## MAY

Marcia Franklin, EPH, 3  
 Ishma Davis, Leon Outpatient, 3  
 Steve Mazimpaka, Forensic Residential, 3  
 Barbara Gainous, Leon Outpatient, 3  
 Marquise Tuff, PATH, 4  
 Jean Nugent, FACT, 6  
 Josephine Madry, Leon Outpatient, 6  
 Catherine Saffo, Jefferson Outpatient, 16  
 Esther Lawrence, Accounting, 22

## JUNE

Shaquana Ivory, Forensic Outpatient, 3  
 LaKera Reddick, Jefferson Outpatient, 5  
 Shelly Jean-Pierre, Detox, 5  
 John Ferrigno, FACT, 8  
 Amy Parks, Insurance, 16  
 Linda Boles, Insurance, 19  
 Jeanne Pope, Forensic Outpatient, 21

## JULY

Melanie Mediate, Hilltop, 4  
 Alfred Goudreau, Maintenance, 5  
 Adeola Bajere, Nursing, 6  
 Eunice Scott, Madison Outpatient, 8  
 Susan Walker, MIS, 8  
 Shirley Brown, PATH, 8  
 Catherine Cruce, Madison Outpatient, 13  
 Guy Johnson, Facilities, 16  
 Ramon Benton, FACT, 19  
 Ron Kirkland, Administration, 33

## Upcoming Training

Look for these trainings in the near future: Dr. Kenneth Minkoff will be presenting on Co-Occurring Disorders on May 21 and Dr. Thomas Joiner will be presenting on Suicide Prevention on June 3. Staff need supervisory approval to register (call x3248).

While the exterior of the inpatient facilities are undergoing construction with significant progress made already, what many do not realize is that internally inpatient programming is under construction as well. Already, with the assistance of **Steve McClendon**, Group Coordinator, and **Al Ganzy**, MHA Training Supervisor, along with many of the MHAs, inpatient is beginning to deliver more individualized care within the Short-term Residential Treatment (SRT) unit. In addition, more groups in terms of number and variety are being offered across EPH and PATH units. Also, the Detox unit has experienced a number of changes since the last newsletter including the resignation of **Agnes Furey**, long time lead nurse for the unit. While she will be missed, ongoing efforts are being pursued to establish a new team with the same vision of commitment to client care. In addition, a new curriculum for group service provision and additional training for staff is underway.

More specifically, an exciting initiative that will enable Apalachee Center to provide services to individuals with both mental health and substance abuse presenting problems is occurring behind the scenes at the inpatient level, which will allow more individuals to receive care that will better meet their individual needs while at inpatient. This movement started earlier in the year at the outpatient level and inpatient is pleased to be joining with outpatient to facilitate this initiative with plans for completion by July of this year. In addition, inpatient recently partnered with outpatient for Florida Suicide Prevention Day at the Capital on April 22, 2009, in an effort to increase awareness regarding this important issue. This is just one example of how various departments within Apalachee are joining forces to enhance mental health awareness and service delivery. Stay tuned for there is more to come...

## In Memoriam

### John Convertino

#### 2/11/54 – 3/26/09

John Convertino, a rich and vital part of Apalachee Center's family and history passed away peacefully in his home after a courageous and valiant battle against mesothelioma. John came to Apalachee in 1980 after graduating with his MSW in Planning and Evaluation from FSU. John served as Chief Administrative Officer until 2007, supervising Human Resources, Medical Records, Education and Training, Performance Improvement, Utilization Review, Infection Control, Safety, Corporate Compliance and Administrative support staff.

John developed the policies, procedures, handbooks and plans which guided our staff in the past, continue to today and will into the future. If something needed to be written, John was the man for it. John had to be the most prolific memo writer Apalachee will ever see. John never agonized over how to word things like most of us; it just seemed to flow from him. Staff from all over the Agency would send John their draft of a project for his review and edit. If it came back to you without any changes you worried that he hadn't actually read or seen it. John earned the nickname "eraser man" because you could always tell where he had been working by the piles of eraser debris he left behind.

Not only was John a great writer, he was a kind, generous, compassionate and supportive supervisor, friend and co-worker. Staff always felt comfortable going to John with a problem because he took the time to listen and help solve it no matter how busy he was. You could always count on John to be there for you, whatever you needed. One Boss's day years ago, one of his staff told him that he was "The Best Boss Ever", we made fun of this every boss's day thereafter, but in our hearts we all knew it was true. Once you got to know John you learned he had a great sense of humor, always surprising you with his funny notes or observations on life and life at Apalachee. Our lives and the Agency were greatly enriched by John throughout the years. John will be missed by all who had the great fortune to know him but he will live on in our hearts and memories forever.

## Staff News



**Jackie Coleman**, Inpatient Billing, has lots to celebrate! She is getting married July 26, 2009, her eldest daughter, **Terrica**, graduates from TCC and her youngest daughter, **Tenesha**, graduates from Leon High School, both in May...congrats on all the good news! **Amy Parks**, Outpatient Billing, is proud that her nephew, **Benjamin**, is graduating from Valdosta State College! **Bobby Thompson**, Residential Forensic, would like to report that our very own **Steve Mazimpaka**, Residential Forensic, came in 7th overall in the Springtime Tallahassee 5K run...and 2nd in his age group... which is????! **Dale Layfield**, Accounting, is celebrating the fact that her daughter, **Mandy**, is graduating with her Master's in Science in Industrial Engineering & Systems Management! And congrats to **Heather Allman**, UR, who had a beautiful baby girl, **McKinley**, on May 4, who weighed in at 5 lbs, 15 oz! And last, but not least, **Marquise Tuff**, PATH, celebrated his son's 1st birthday on April 23...Happy Belated Birthday, **Mekhi**!