

# Staying in Touch

May 2009

## Message from the Director

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Dear DMH Employee,

DMH is participating in a number of activities this month as part of Mental Health Month. May was first celebrated as "Mental Health Month" by Mental Health America (formerly the National Mental Health Association) 50 years ago to raise awareness about mental illness and to promote programs that work. It has been recognized officially by Congress since

1949. SAMHSA in 2006 started National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day to coincide with Mental Health Month. For the second year, Mayor Fenty issued a proclamation recognizing the day. This is a perfect opportunity to talk about initiatives in support of children and youth, and their families.

Barbara J. Parks, clinical program administrator, participated in a discussion about the future of school-based mental health services during the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of the Mental Health Association of the District of Columbia. DMH is now in 58 schools and the feedback from all areas continues to be very positive.

I congratulate **Marie Morilus-Black**, children and youth services director, and **Laurie Ellington**, system of care practice manager, for their work in support of a conference on building a system of care organized by Positive Nature. I participated on a morning panel and was very impressed that the conference communicated a sense of hope and direction.

Also, the new community and school based wrap around programs are showing early promise. I am confident that we can make a difference in this area.

As always, I welcome your comments or suggestions at [steve.baron@dc.gov](mailto:steve.baron@dc.gov).

*Steve*

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**Mayor Fenty Recognizes  
National Children's  
Mental Health  
Awareness Day  
May 7, 2009**

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## Children's Mental Health Awareness Day Activities

For the second year in a row, the Mayor issued a proclamation declaring National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day in the District to raise awareness of effective programs for children's mental health needs.

Director Baron presented the resolution during a national event on May 7 that featured performances by youth from across the country living with mental health challenges.

In conjunction with national activities, DMH supported an all day conference on May 8 entitled "Towards a True System of Care".

Sponsored by Positive Nature, the conference showcased mental and behavioral health practices, programs and services for young people and their families that demonstrate how children's mental health initiatives promote positive youth development, recovery, and resilience. **Marie Morilus-Black**, children and youth services director, and **Laurie Ellington**, system of care practice manager, actively supported the conference.

It is estimated that 14 to 20 percent of all children have some type of emotional or behavioral disorders. More than 3,000 receive services through DMH's prevention, early

## DMH Teams with MPD to Hold Crisis Intervention Officer Training *first class graduation on May 1*



*courtesy of MPD*

First graduating class of Crisis Intervention Officers shown with **Jennifer Prince**, CIO training coordinator, 1<sup>st</sup> row, 2<sup>nd</sup> left, next to **Luis Vasquez**, and **Steve Baron** 2<sup>nd</sup> row, 2<sup>nd</sup> right, and NAMI representatives Mercia Bowser and Mary Jean DiPietro. NAMI played a major role in the training and held the closing reception.

intervention and clinical services. In addition, DMH's school mental health program operates in 58 public schools, and the new mobile crisis intervention services has added a critical component to our ability to serve children and their families when they need it.

## News from Human Resources

**Habla Espanol? 你識唔識講廣東話呀?**

**Unazungumza kiSwahili?** *Interested in learning a foreign language but can't find the time?*

The DC Department of Human Resources announced recently the opening of the Workforce Development Administration Language Laboratory that provides computer-based learning and online instruction in foreign languages. The Language Lab promotes foreign language development through Rosetta Stone and computer based instruction through the District's online e-learning, portal-MindLeaders.

The Language Lab is open to all government employees by appointment only. Two sessions are

held each day—from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and again from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, you can call the DC HR Workforce Development Administration on 727.1523.

**Reminder: Summer Youth Program** starts June 18. This year DMH will host 100 youth. HR will be meeting with managers over the next few weeks to assign the summer workers and to review supervisory requirements. Also, HR will attempt to match the skills and interests of each youth to program areas. We want this to be a meaningful learning experience.

Remember each supervisor must have a completed criminal background check on file. If you have questions, contact Naomi Campbell at 673-3656 or [Naomi.campbell@dc.gov](mailto:Naomi.campbell@dc.gov).

## Employee Spotlight: Shirley Quarles, Lewis Mayo and Laverne Plater

The greatest concentration of the 100 Extra Ordinary Nurses in the entire metropolitan area may be at Saint Elizabeths Hospital according to the Sigma Theta Tau Nursing Honor Society. **Shirley Quarles, Laverne Plater, and Lewis Mayo** were recognized as an “Extra Ordinary Nurse” at a recent ceremony at Howard University.

**Shirley Quarles** is a nurse consultant working primarily in the field of psychiatric nursing. She is creative in designing and presenting educational offerings and one-on-one training. Shirley recently developed a nurse preceptor program and spends considerable time leading case conferences with other registered nurses to enhance their critical thinking skills. A graduate of Howard University’s School of Nursing, **Shirley** is pursuing her doctorate degree at Catholic University.

**Laverne Plater** also is a nurse consultant and has had a varied and successful nursing career. She started as a nursing assistant at an early age and has worked in several nurse specialties including the intensive care unit, oncology, and the emergency room. She obtained an associates degree from the Prince Georges Community College and a bachelor’s degree from the University of the District of Columbia. With her excellent physical assessment and communication skills, **Laverne** is able to provide consultation and leadership to all levels of clinical staff.

**Lewis Mayo** worked his way through the ranks from a nursing assistant to interim director of staff



Shirley Quarles, Lewis Mayo and Laverne Plater Show off certificates of recognition.

development to his current position as a nurse educator. He has extensive experience in psychiatric nursing with a special interest in providing employment opportunities in the community for individuals with mental illness.

A retired National Guardsman, **Lewis** has been deployed many times in the Nurse Corps throughout the United States and internationally. He continues to provide health care teaching to community groups and volunteers his services to large local events. **Congratulations!**

*contributed by **Tamil Perry***

## DMH Panel is a Big Hit at Children’s Health Conference

DMH senior officials participated on a panel on services and supports for teens with mental health needs at a recent conference held by the Children’s Health Project of DC.

**Dr. Tedla Giorgis**, language access coordinator and director of multicultural services; **Leola Jenkins**, DC CSA program manager; **Lynne Person**, administrator of the RTC re-investment program, **Ana M. Veria**, policy support director in the Planning Office, examined critical issues relating to adolescent mental health, discussed DMH services, and strongly recommended collaborative directions toward integrated services and total wellness.

The presentations were well received by participants including social workers, medical doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists—many of whom met with the panelists to get more information and to make personal connections.

*Panel Highlights:* **Leola Jenkins** talked about family focused services; **Lynne Person** discussed how her programs fit within a coordinated system of care that is culturally and linguistically competent, family-driven, and youth-guided; **Dr. Tedla Giorgis** ignited interest about population changes in the District and the absolute need for cultural competence, and **Ana Veria** elaborated on person-centered planning.

*contributed by **Ana Veria***

## Reminder of American with Disabilities Act Requirements

### *Reasonable Accommodations Must be Made*

Training recently was held recently for employees to know their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Specific training also was held for supervisors on their responsibilities if an employee requests accommodations under the ADA. *It is against the law to retaliate, threaten or interfere with anyone who is exercising his or her rights under the ADA or anyone helping that person to do so.*

**Mary Campbell**, risk manager and ADA coordinator, wrote the following article summarizing our responsibilities. She will be scheduling new training dates. Meanwhile, you can contact her if you have any questions or for a training CD at [mary.campbell@dc.gov](mailto:mary.campbell@dc.gov).

The Americans With Disabilities Act is a civil rights law that protects people with various kinds of disabilities from discrimination in all aspects of social life. To be protected, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The person must also be qualified to participate in the job, program, or activity at issue.

Title II of the ADA requires that all programs offered through the District must be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

### Upcoming Events

*To include your upcoming event, please contact [phyllis.jones@dc.gov](mailto:phyllis.jones@dc.gov)*

Adult CSRs **May 5-15**

Court Monitor's Supplemental Report **May 15**

Court Status Conference  
Re Supplemental Report **May 16**

8<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health Conference **June 22**  
contact [Juanita.Reaves@dc.gov](mailto:Juanita.Reaves@dc.gov)  
for more information.

District policy requires that people with disabilities have equal access to all District services, activities, and benefits.

The most important rights the ADA provides are:

- **No Exclusion**—all activities must be accessible regardless of impairment.
- **Communication Access**—This includes providing such services as large print, taped text, electronic documents or Braille (for people with impairments); ASL interpreters or captioning (for people with hearing impairments); communicating via TTY for people with speech or hearing disabilities.
- **Programmatic Access**—Examples include: assistance in filling out forms; explaining materials or procedures in simpler language so that individuals with cognitive, learning or some psychiatric disabilities can easily understand them; allowing a person with a disability to apply for services over the phone if the disability prevents him or her from coming to the office.
- **Architectural/Facility Access**—All service areas, including bathrooms, public telephones, drinking fountains, etc., must be architecturally accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Employment**—Employment discrimination against qualified people with disabilities is prohibited. Further, the ADA requires that reasonable accommodations must be provided to employees with disabilities. This could include an accessible desk for a person who can't use a standard desk or screen-reading software for a person with a learning or vision disability.

To request accommodations, please contact **Mary Campbell** on (202) 673-7690 or [mary.campbell@dc.gov](mailto:mary.campbell@dc.gov).