

BHDDH Bulletin

CRAIG S. STENNING
DIRECTOR

NOVEMBER 2011

ISSUE 1

From the Director

Welcome to the first issue of BHDDH's newsletter, which will contain general information, news from the Department and internal staff news. Our goal is to continue to improve communication with staff at all levels, and we hope that this newsletter will be one method of achieving this objective.

I encourage you to submit any items that may be of interest to our readers by e-mail or fax to Deb Varga (e-mail: dvarga@bhddh.ri.gov, fax: 401-462-3204). Examples might include information about events and accomplishments related to grants you may be working on or successes related to your work with our clients.

I am pleased to introduce this newsletter and hope that everyone will contribute to future issues. We intend to keep these brief, interesting and informative.

Rhode Island Law Enforcement Agencies Took Back Expired and Unused Prescription Drugs on October 29

On October 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Office of Attorney General, in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), the Rhode Island State Police and the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association, gave Rhode Islanders another opportunity to prevent prescription drug abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs.

"Prescription drug abuse is quickly becoming a major epidemic in Rhode Island and across the nation. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more Rhode Islanders die from accidental prescription drug overdose than any other cause of death. And, the number of individuals - especially teenagers - who abuse prescription medication is growing," said Attorney General Kilmartin.

Last April, Americans turned in 376,593 pounds—188 tons—of prescription drugs. This year, Rhode Islanders turned in more than 1,200 pounds of outdated and unused prescription drugs at 36 locations state-wide.

"The Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals is proud to be a part of this important initiative," said Craig Stenning, Director of BHDDH. "According to ThePartnershipAtDrugfree.Org, every day, 2500 teenagers use prescription drugs to get high for the first time. As a strong advocate and resource for people recovering from substance use issues, our organization understands that it is crucial to take every opportunity to eliminate access to these medications."

Four days after the first Take-Back event in September 2010, Congress passed the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010, which amends the Controlled Substances Act to allow an "ultimate user" of controlled substance medications to dispose of them by delivering them to entities authorized to accept them by the Attorney General. The Act also allows the Attorney General to authorize long term care facilities to dispose of their residents' controlled substances in certain instances. The DEA has begun drafting regulations to implement the Act, a process that can take as long as 24 months. Until new regulations are in place, local law enforcement agencies and the DEA will continue to hold prescription drug take-back events every few months.

Director Stenning attends the 16th Annual State-wide Advocacy Conference to Visit with Many of the Attendees

Rhode Island's 16th Annual Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference for individuals in the developmental disabilities community was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick on Thursday, October 20. The event was hosted by Advocates in Action, Rhode Island's Statewide Self-Advocacy organization helping people with disabilities learn to speak up about the issues that are important to them and to others who have developmental disabilities.

The day included several conference workshops, an awards luncheon, arts and crafts, games and face painting. Dinner and a costume dance party were held in the evening for those who wanted to attend. BHDDH was one of the supporters of the conference and Director Stenning visited with many of the attendees during the luncheon. "Going out and seeing the real work that benefits people is always something that I enjoy," said Director Stenning. "In addition to helping these individuals, it is important for all of us working in the field to listen to them."



OpenDoors Ribbon-cutting Celebrates new Rental Homes for Rhode Islanders Returning to the Community after Incarceration.

Mayor Angel Taveras, OpenDoors board members and partners gathered to cut the ribbon to celebrate safe, healthy and affordable rental homes for Rhode Islanders who are returning to the community after incarceration. Andrew Horwitz, OpenDoors Chairman of the Board of Directors for OpenDoors, Sol Rodriguez, Executive Director of OpenDoors along with Director Stenning and representatives from the EPA, HUD, Department of Corrections, Office of Housing and Community Development/Housing Resources Commission, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Rhode Island Housing and other partners participated in the event.

The non-profit, OpenDoors, provides the ex-offender population with human and social services such as employment training, financial literacy, mentoring, computer classes, case management, support groups, tax preparation assistance and counseling.

"OpenDoors uses a holistic approach to support offenders as they prepare to leave prison, return home, and stabilize in the community", said Sol Rodriguez, Executive Director of OpenDoors. "Our new facility will allow us to better promote economic self-sufficiency of the formerly incarcerated by addressing barriers to successful re-entry."

"One of the most important ways that we can help individuals with mental illness is to provide a safe roof over their heads and a decent job, said Director Stenning. "Supportive Housing does more than just improve the lives of those receiving services; a key goal is to reduce the need for costly public services such as emergency room utilization, inpatient hospitalization, and criminal justice system involvement. I am pleased that this Department was able to allocate Threshold funds for this new housing opportunity."

The renovated building, in the former Sealtest factory building, includes 19 new rental homes (five one-bedroom apartments; the remainder are studio apartments) as well as new office space for OpenDoors.



Outstanding Athlete Award Given to Brian Salvagna at the 27th Annual Special Olympics Awards Ceremony.

Brian Salvagna, a resident of College Park (a RICLAS facility) for 7 years, received the Outstanding Athlete Award at the Special Olympics of Rhode Island's 27th Annual Awards Banquet.

The Special Olympics Rhode Island program is one of the world's most dynamic, providing over 1,400 year-round sports training and athletic competitions for more than 2,700 athletes and hosting over 40 local, regional, and state-wide tournaments and competitions each year in 25 official and demonstration sports.

Special Olympics Rhode Island's innovative programs also include the Unified Sports Program for athletes with and without intellectual disabilities, the Motor Activities Training Program for athletes with profound disabilities, Young Athletes Program, Healthy Athletes Program and the Global Messenger Program for athletes who serve as spokespeople for Special Olympics.

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