APRIL 2024 VOLUME 3

VALLEY VOICE

The official newsletter of Valley CSB

Valley's Own JEDIs

The Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (JEDI) at Valley is composed of individuals coming together to tap into the power of their namesakes - the "force" for spreading - well - justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Committee has been busy over the last couple of months coordinating the generous spirit of VCSB staff.

In December, the Agency of Change and Giving Tree was set up in the breakroom to celebrate persons bringing positive change to their world and giving staff chances to buy Christmas gifts for approximately 40 children in the area.

In January, Sara Catterton, Prevention Specialist, worked with Neighbor Bridge and Bear Creek Outdoor Living to build a Little Free Food Pantry located at Valley's front entrance.

Catterton decided to take on the project when she crossed paths with a man with a question, "Do you have anything I could eat?"

"I do not have a meal I can provide, but I do have a few snacks I could give you," Catterton told him. He agreed to take her snacks and she said he was grateful to have food to eat while waiting for his appointment. After this interaction, she shared her experience and the idea of an outdoor food pantry box with with her supervisor.

Packages for local children await delivery under the Giving Tree at the VCSB office (left). Sara Catterton, Prevention Specialist, shows off Valley's new Little Free Food Pantry.

She contacted The Neighbor Bridge, which has a Little Free Food Pantry project ongoing in the area. They have a partnership with Bear Creek Outdoor living to build six pantries. To learn more about it, go to www.theneighborbridge.org/littlepantries.

Valley staff are donating shelf-stable food and the pantry has been filled and emptied several times since the first half of January. Helping to keep the pantry stocked are members of the Day Support program who come to Sanger's Lane three times each week.

By the end of March, more than 500 pounds of food had been distributed.

From the Executive Director

Dr. Kimberly McClanahan

While this edition of the Valley Voice is being distributed after the first quarter of the new year, it is not too late to express my very best wishes to everyone for a happy and productive 2024. A new year usually brings with it plans for changes and enhancements in how we live our lives. Additionally, in the first quarter of the calendar year, we celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Black History Month, Valentine's Day, Women's History Month, Ramadan, Easter, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, National Irish-American Heritage Month, and National Deaf History Month (March 13-April 15). My apologies in advance for acknowledgements of respect I may have missed. All of these celebrations are mentioned to remind us of the myriad of events and causes we champion throughout the year, many of which are very diverse in origin and intent. At VCSB, we have a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (JEDI) whose function is to help us embrace as an agency the beauty of our differences and the unifying qualities of our similarities. The committee is highlighted in this quarter's newsletter. We also bring you information about our Mental Health Skill Building program and an update regarding Emergency Services. We hope you find this edition of Valley Voice informative and useful.

Learning the Skills of Daily Life with Serious Mental Illness

Roy (not his real name) was recently released from the hospital. He has dealt with severe depression and anxiety most of his adult life. With help from the VCSB housing program, he moved into a small apartment, but with his new home came new stressors.

He was completely responsible for himself and the apartment; cleaning and keeping a neat space, especially with regular inspections from the landlord; preparing meals and keeping up with laundry were only a few of what could be overwhelming tasks.

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Skills

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His case manager at VCSB referred him to the Mental Health Skill-building (MHSS) program.

Whitney McCoy, MHSS Supervisor, said it is common that individuals with mental health or substance use disorders haven't always learned the skills for successfully completing day-to-day activities. Along with caretaking duties to manage their home, some people have no experience with things like making a budget, managing doctor appointments, and making healthy food choices.

MHSS specialists may guide individuals with how to manage medications or craft a meal plan that uses the groceries they've purchased.

The visit from the specialist may last one to three hours once or twice per week. It may take place in the person's home or a doctor's office.

Eligibility for the program is based upon specific criteria. The individual must have Medicaid or be self-paying. They must be 18 years old or older, have a Serious Mental Illness diagnosis, have been hospitalized or had a stay in a crisis stabilization unit, and be on prescription medications.

MHSS has four specialists who serve 30 or more individuals.

Daily activities are not all MHSS will help with. The effects of the Pandemic caused many to self-isolate, and MHSS specialists encourage individuals to return to hobbies and interests they held before the shut-down.

"We don't realize how self-isolation affects us," McCoy said. "It increases depression and anxiety and gives us too much time to ruminate."

Also, sleep schedules may be off. If program participants are unemployed or disabled, they may have lost all kinds of structure in their daily life.

While some participants are already in therapy, their MHSS specialist may encourage them to get involved in a treatment or support group. Groups help individuals deal with issues such as grief and may offer general emotional support from peers with similar life experiences.

Self-isolation can also affect individuals living in Assisted Living Facilities, where Covid-19 often struck hardest. McCoy said that the remedy is the same, and MHSS helps older adults access groups or individual therapy as needed. Other than isolation, the Skill-building staff may also help older adults manage their doctor appointments, personal hygiene, and dental care.

In the end, Mental Health Skill-building is all about building healthy support systems, whether a person lives alone in an apartment or in a care facility.

For more information about the Mental Health Skill-building program, Valley clients may contact their case manager or healthcare provider. Others may call 540-887-3200 or come into the Valley office at 85 Sanger's Lane, Staunton to begin the intake process.

Valley Update

Emergency Services

Step by step the standalone Crisis Intervention Therapeutic Assessment Site (CITAC) in the Sangers Lane ES office suite area is becoming a reality.

Each of three rooms offer trauma informed design aspects including safety upgrades, paint color and comfortable seating. The redesign also includes a space for law enforcement to monitor individual's safety.

Stosh Kalinsky, LPC, Manager of Crisis Continuum Services, plans to create a mobile resource cabinet with reading material and other hand-held items for individuals to use to assist with reducing stress while at the CITAC.

Stosh Kalinsky, shows one of three updated rooms soon to be available to individuals in crisis.

Sponsored Residential Families Needed

There's no greater impact on a person's life then when you open your home and become a sponsor with Valley Community Services Board (VCSB) Sponsored Residential Services!

Families are needed in Staunton, Waynesboro, Harrisonburg, Augusta County, Highland County and Rockingham County. You have the power to give a person a home and family where their abilities can shine. For over 20 years VCSB has matched compassionate sponsors with eager individuals.

VCSB is also looking for Relief Sponsors to provide essential breaks to our full-time Sponsors.

E-mail VCSB at sponsoredresidential@vcsb.org or call 540-887-3200. You can also find lots more information, including applications, at https://www.vcsbsponsoredresidential.org/.