



# NEWSLETTER

**ADVOCATES FOR PEOPLE WITH  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

AUGUST 2009

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P.O. Box 1692

(914) 493-1318

White Plains, NY 10602

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

**WESTCHESTER RESIDENTS' first phone call should be to The Westchester County Office of Community Mental Health (DCMH) to obtain services for persons with developmental disabilities???**

- Day programs
- Residential opportunities
- Transition services
- Service Coordination
- Residential habilitation
- Respite

Find out how you can obtain these services by registering with the Westchester County DCMH.

Join Commissioner Mitchell Grant, M.D. and the New Second Deputy Commissioner Michael Orth, along with Matthew Faulkner, Transition Planning, and Lesli Cattan, Medicaid Service Coordinator for a lively discussion of present and future services and supports.

## Come to the GROW General Meeting

**Sunday, September 13, 2009**

Brunch: 10:30 a.m. Meeting 11:00 a.m.

At WIHD – Cedarwood Hall

Westchester Medical Center, Valhalla, NY

Parking vouchers available

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

### Annual Report and Then Some.....

The GROW By-Laws require that the President report annually to the membership. (Some revisions to the By-laws are included in this newsletter.) I am pleased to report the following:

We at GROW see our mission as providing information as well as advocacy. Since becoming GROW's President nearly 2 years ago the Board has concentrated on expanding and reinforcing our outreach both to members as well as legislators and other public officials. We have nearly doubled our newsletter mailing list. I know that some of you might be receiving more than one newsletter. While we continually try to eliminate those duplications it might not be possible because we have numerous sources for our mailings. Why don't you give any extras to your family member's caregivers or any other interested person?

Along with expanding our newsletter list we have increased our membership. We have also refined our membership process by sending out a reminder. Because so many of you receive the newsletter, you may think that you are already members. I urge you to look at the label on your newsletter, which should have the date you last joined. I know that there have been some inaccuracies, but our membership chairperson single-handedly has been trying to straighten things out. Thank you for those of you who have joined or rejoined us, as well as those of you who added something extra to your dues.

While we certainly appreciate your support, WE WANT YOU TO BE ACTIVE MEMBERS!! Come to a Board meeting. We generally meet the first Thursday of the month at WIHD at 7:45-9:30 PM. Call our hotline at 914 493-1318 to check the meeting date or if you need a ride.

We have instituted quarterly meetings with HVDDSO and State OMRDD officials, and have been assured of input

*(continued on page 2)*

(“President’s Message” continued from page 1)

regarding how the allocation of State money at the HVDDSO will be spent. At our last meeting we concentrated on the fire that occurred in a State run facility. While it appears that the fire was caused by human action, we are awaiting the final report along with recommendations. We urge all of you who have loved ones in a residence to ask to see the fire drill reports, as well as to alert directors to possible hazards (not enough staff, single means of exit, etc...). We have been informed that the State will provide extra money for fire safety.

We attend monthly County Department of Community Mental Health Meetings; we have requested, and will be receiving, monthly updates on the number of persons on the NYSCares wait list. We are hoping for a further breakdown as to priority needs as well as numbers of those seeking alternative residences. Any parent or person involved with developmental disabilities can attend these meetings, which are usually held the first Wednesday of the month at 112 E. Post Road, White Plains from 10:30AM-12:30 PM. Call to confirm at 914-995-5242.

We continue to attend Family Support Meetings because we are not just concerned with adults with developmental disabilities, but with persons of all ages. Family support is provided for those families whose children still reside at home. They generally meet the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Westchester County Office of HVDDSO on Route 119, Tarrytown. Call Claudia Spaziante at 914-332-8958 for dates.

We have participated in numerous informational and transition fairs, and have also spoken to not-for-profit agencies. We are also available to speak to any group concerned with developmental disabilities.

Our hotline continues to be manned to answer your questions, and we have included an updated contact sheet. We are revising our website which you may visit at [www.grow-ny.org](http://www.grow-ny.org). Also please e-mail us at [info@grow-ny.org](mailto:info@grow-ny.org) to let us know what you think of the new website as well as anything else we do.

On the legislative front, while I know that we have been heard, I wish I could say that we were successful in our endeavors. Unfortunately, even though we have been told that residential development is happening, it has been at a snail’s pace, and we still don’t know who is going to be serviced in the near (think 4 years) future. We continue to explore the possibility of a class action suit to bring about more residential development. We are also continuing our quest to get some legislation to guarantee quarterly meetings with regional and Albany based OMRDD officials, as well as to get the trend factor for direct care workers reinstated. Last fall we had a candidates’ forum, and we have switched our Albany trip to February, before the April 1st budget deadline.

Lastly, you may have noticed that even though this is the President’s Message column I have continually used “we” when speaking of GROW’s accomplishments. From the newsletter, website, by-laws, the helpline, fairs, minutes, treasury, grant, membership, legislations, to the refreshments at the General and the Board meetings – none would have happened without the support and hard work of so many of the Board members. This is a group of dedicated volunteers who contribute time and knowledge. They are getting tired!! Help keep GROW the vital and much needed organization that it is -BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN OUR WORK!!

See you on September 13th.

*Barbara Masur, President of GROW*

### FROM THE EDITOR...

Often taking that first step to obtain services for your family member with developmental disabilities is the hardest. What to do, who to call, where to turn? This edition of the newsletter contains an article on obtaining services as well as a sheet of important telephone numbers. Just having a name and number often spurs you to take that step.

In Westchester the Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) plans, oversees and coordinates services for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance abuse disorders. Heading this Department is Commissioner Grant Mitchell, MD. Michael Orth has been appointed Second Deputy Commissioner at DCMH. He oversees all developmental disabilities services. Both will be at the GROW general meeting along with other staff persons to discuss services and programs in Westchester.

It is important to have as much information as possible, not only about what services and supports are available, but also what are not. What might be new on the horizon, and what might be discontinued? Will your family member be affected? Come to the General Meeting on September 13, 2009 with your questions and stay informed!

*Marilyn Vitale, Editor*

### TONY LUCCARO AWARD

Do you know some one who works directly with persons with developmental disabilities, and who does so in a wonderful and dedicated way? That person might be eligible for GROW’S Tony Luccaro Award. It could be a teacher, an aide, staff in a residence etc...Past recipients include a nurse, a psychologist, a medical assistant, an entire group home, and a direct care person. Please call the hotline (914)-493-1318 and leave a message with your phone number.

**Mary Zingaro, Awards Committee**

## The Process for Obtaining Services in Westchester County

The central point of intake for services for people with developmental disabilities in Westchester County is through the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health, (DCMH). This office is located at 112 East Post Road in White Plains, NY. Anyone interested in obtaining either case management, placement or Medicaid waiver services for a person with developmentally disabilities must apply through DCMH. Families who have a member with developmentally disabilities living at home with them in Westchester County should complete the county registration form and indicate their needs for services and submit it to the county. Documentation of the developmental disability must be provided to the DCMH office in order to confirm eligibility for OMRDD services. For specific questions on intake, registration and the Medicaid Waiver, call **Jose DeJesus at 995-5257**. You can reach Jose by email at [jdj1@westchestergov.com](mailto:jdj1@westchestergov.com).

Prior to age 18, Medicaid is an income based or “means tested” program and can only be obtained if the person is low-income. This type of Medicaid is commonly referred to as “straight” Medicaid. The Medicaid “waiver” is used to obtain Medicaid for persons under 18 without consideration of parental income. Community resources and all state and federal funding as well as private insurance must be utilized prior to requesting funding through the Medicaid waiver. To that end, it is important that families are knowledgeable as to exactly what their health insurance policy covers. Even if there is no other funding source, a requested service can only be approved if finances are available. When a person with a developmentally disability becomes 18 years of age, an application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) should be made at the local Social Security Office. If approved, “straight” Medicaid eligibility is automatic. Additional services such as Medicaid Service Coordination through OMRDD and personal care or consumer directed personal assistance (someone to help in the home) may be obtained through the Department of Social Services (DSS) once the person is Medicaid eligible.

Help in the home through OMRDD Medicaid Waiver is called Respite and Residential Habilitation (Res Hab) Services. These services provide a respite and/or res hab worker in the family home. Respite is intended to give the family or caregiver a break from the care, and res hab is skills training regarding daily living skills (dressing, bathing, grooming, etc.) Families will be asked to appear before a committee at the DDSO to make a formal request for these services. They will be awarded a set number of hours per week, not to exceed 20. The service may be respite, res hab or, for older children, a combination of the two. There is some funding for environmental modifications (“e-mods”)

should a family need to make their home more accessible for individuals with physical challenges. For individuals who are no longer in school, a service called Day Habilitation may be requested for those who need a day program.

Families may directly seek and receive services through the network of Family Support Services programs. These programs are run by various agencies, and include advocacy/case management, in-home care, family training, respite, family reimbursement and recreation. There is a directory of services available for parents to use if they wish to contact appropriate programs. A parent advisory council called the **Family Support Services Consumer Council** assists in evaluating current programs and in developing new programs. For further information, call **Claudia Spaziante at 914-332-8958**.

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## Revision of the GROW By-Laws

The proposed amendments to the 1993 version of the GROW By-Laws reflect the evolution of the organization to be more inclusive and reflective of members’ concerns. Changes were made specifically to section II entitled “Purpose.” It now reads:

The purpose and priorities of this group shall be:

- A. To advocate to enhance the quality of life of persons with Developmental Disabilities.
- B. To provide support and information to parents and families of persons with Developmental Disabilities.
- C. To promote the expansion of community residential opportunities and enhanced services for those living at home.
- D. To advocate for adequate funding necessary to ensure quality of services provided for persons with Developmental Disabilities.

Three other proposed amendments include: 1. The Officer’s slate is revised wherein the Newsletter Editor is deleted as it is not an elected position and the Past Presidents are moved to the Board of Directors. 2. The fiscal year is amended to the calendar year rather than September 1st to August 31st. 3. The process of making amendments is changed from the proposition being “presented in writing to the Recording Secretary, signed by at least fifteen (15) active members” to “presented in writing to the Recording Secretary, and distributed to the membership at least 10 days prior to said meeting.”

These amendments to the By-Laws will be voted upon at the General Meeting on September 13, 2009. Any member in good standing wishing a copy of the By-Laws as well as the proposed revisions is urged to contact the hotline (914)-493-1318. Copies of each will be available to members at the general meeting.

*Raymond Garofano, Chairperson, By-Laws Committee*

**At the next meeting GROW  
will be presenting its proposed slate of  
Officers and Board Members  
for 2009-2010 as follows:**

**Officers:**

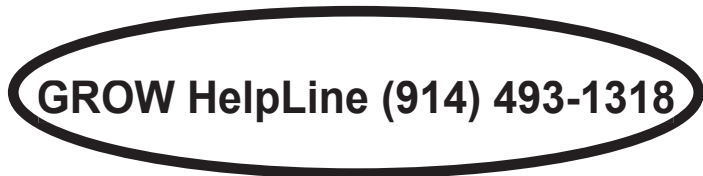
President ..... Barbara Masur  
 1st Vice President ..... Marilyn Vitale  
 2nd Vice President ..... Phyllis Smith  
 Recording Secretary ..... Ray Garofano  
 Corresponding Secretary ..... Rochelle Kessler  
 Membership Secretary ..... Carol Ullman  
 Treasurer ..... Sandy Frank\*

**Board of Directors:**

2010	2011	2012
Sherry Finkelstein	Judy Sugar	Marilyn Hahn
Sharon McDowell	Sharon Gelfand	Noreen Koenig
Judy Frank	Mary Green	Jerrold Shenkman
Sal Cafiero	Rita Ross	Vicki Sickinger
Sheryl Frishman	Anne Steinberg	Paul Mehta
Shelley Kessler	Mary Zingaro	Emily Samuels

*Rochelle Kessler, Chairperson, Nominating Committee*

\*New members



**WHAT'S HAPPENING...**

- OMRDD announced that the Information Line is now available online at [www.omr.state.ny.us](http://www.omr.state.ny.us). In addition to the toll free telephone line 1-866-946-9733 or TTY 1-866-933-4889, OMRDD offers this as another point of contact that individuals with developmental disabilities, families, advocates, providers and the general public can use conveniently 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- WIHD has recently opened The Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center, which is one of 13 Special Education Parent Centers across New York State funded through the NYS Education Dept. The center provides parents of children with disabilities with information, resources, and strategies to understand the special education process and their rights; to promote early resolution of disputes between parents and school districts; and to enhance parents' skills and levels of confidence to communicate effectively and work collaboratively with schools. For further information contact Naomi Brickel at 914-493-7665 or [nbrickel@wihd.org](mailto:nbrickel@wihd.org).

**Directions to Cedarwood Hall - WIHD •  
WESTCHESTER INSTITUTE  
FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

FROM THE SOUTH: Sprain Parkway North to Eastview - 100C - Exit. Go Left.  
 \*\* At Hospital entrance (Second light) go right. Go 4/10 of a mile (passing the county jail) and go left following the sign for All Other Facilities. When you get to the T intersection bear right until the Stop sign. Turn left around oval.  
 FROM THE NORTH: Sprain Parkway South to Eastview 100C exit. Go right. Follow directions from \*\* above.  
 FOR PARKING: Go around circle, pass through parking ticket dispenser and park in lot opposite Cedarwood Hall. Ask for parking voucher at reception desk.

**BUS DIRECTIONS:** Routes 1, 15, and 14 will leave you off at Ellwood Hall, a short distance from Cedarwood Hall. Route 40 will leave you off at Westchester Hospital, a longer walk.

**GROW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION or RENEWAL**

(please print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Application  Renewal

Family (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_ Single Parent/Guardian (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_

Associate (\$15) \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution beyond dues \_\_\_\_\_

GROW, Box 1692, White Plains, N.Y. 10602  
 GROW is a not-for-profit, tax exempt organization

To check your membership status, look at the mailing label. The date listed is the last time you joined GROW. If there is no date you have never been a member!! Please accept our apologies for any inaccuracies, and please inform us of them.