

CRSA

An alliance of
service providers
supporting
people with
developmental
disabilities



news

Special Thanks to Legislators

Achieving a meaningful wage increase for employees of community residential programs for persons with developmental disabilities has been the legislative priority of CRSA for the past three years. This year the Association's hard work and dedication paid off!

CRSA members worked from the grass roots level all the way to the Legislature, educating key decision makers on the necessity for paying caregivers a fair and just wage. Even in this very tight budget year, legislators responded favorably by taking action to ensure at least a 50 cent per hour increase for employees earning \$10.00 per hour or less. This represents a significant down payment on the long-term goal of a wage amount equal to 80% parity with the level paid to state employees who perform the same service.

CRSA joined forces with the Long-Term Care Alliance on a campaign to draft legislation (HB 1637) with Representative Eileen Cody (D-District 11) and Representative Carolyn Edmonds (D-District 32) that would provide for a \$1.00 an hour wage increase each year in the biennium. Later in the session, Senators Jeanne Kohl-Welles (D-District 36) and Alex Deccio (R-District 14) introduced SB 5281 that would provide \$1.00 per hour for the biennium. These

measures provided the momentum for the fiscal committees to address this critical wage issue in the General Fund Budget.

For the upcoming 2002 session, CRSA has laid out these goals:

- Continue advocating for enhanced wages. Continue educating legislators about desire for 80% wage parity with state employees.
- Work on affordable housing issues so that more consumers in community residential programs have long term, affordable housing options.
- Address issue of consumers who are under-served in community residential programs due to old rates and/or aging issues.
- Continue to support a B & O tax exemption for for-profit providers.

Even in this very tight budget year, Legislators responded favorably by taking action to ensure at least a 50 cent per hour increase for employees earning \$10.00 per hour or less.

- Follow the new bill to be introduced during 2002 session to insure it meets consumer need, yet is workable for residential providers.
- Continue to work closely with the statewide Advocacy Coalition on bills and issues of mutual interest that will benefit people with developmental disabilities.

A Great Life, A Great Future

By Eric Portnoff, Executive Director, Residence East and Chair-Elect for CRSA

Jenny Whitmore is an attractive, 29-year-old woman who lives with three housemates in a beautiful home near Crossroads Mall in Bellevue. During her free time, Jenny enjoys bowling, eating out, and going to baseball games. Her aspirations include “helping people with their health problems”, so she would like to begin studying nursing as soon as possible. Does this sound like a personal ad? Don't be too surprised! Jenny would also like to find a nice boyfriend.

Jenny's three male housemates, Kyle, Joe and Lee, apparently won't fit the bill. “They're all nice,” says Jenny. “I like the way they treat me sometimes.” But Jenny doesn't like to be teased. “One of the things that is difficult for me is getting along with my roommates.” For that reason, Jenny planned to move into her own apartment in October.

Her housemates are not the only people Jenny has to get along with in her house. Because she and her housemates are developmentally disabled, paid support professionals are present in the house at all times. The DSHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) funds this Supported Living program, which is administered by Residence East, a nonprofit agency based in Bellevue. Residence East staff need exceptional skills and sensitivity to carefully support individuals who sometimes have significant mental health challenges as well as a developmental disability. The quality, skills and personalities of these staff members-most of whom earn only ten dollars per hour-have a dramatic impact on Jenny's happiness and well-being.

“When I have good staff working with me, it works out good. When I have bad staff working, I just don't talk to them. There was a bad staff person that got into arguments (with me) and stuff. She was not very nice to me. I like nice staff like Charlotte

and Suzie and Jesse and Billy-they're all nice people. They help me out with my problems, and stuff like that.”

High levels of staff turnover also have a negative impact on her quality of life. Jenny likes to know the staff that work with her. Well-established relationships engender feelings of security and trust. Jenny's favorite staff person, Suzie, has worked with her for over a year. Jenny says Suzie is her favorite staff person “because we talk to each other. We don't get into arguments and stuff like that.”

Obviously, earning a living wage is the only way for caring, skilled individuals like Suzie to stay in this line of work. For that reason, steps taken by the legislature to raise the effective minimum wage for caregivers will only have a positive impact on Jenny's life. With consistent staff support, she will be able to live in her own apartment, and pursue her dreams of taking health classes, going to Las Vegas and Disneyland, and living a fulfilling and independent life.

As Jenny says, “The best thing about having staff in my life is they're really nice to me, and stuff like that. They treat me with respect.”

Investing in the system that provides such supportive assistance to people like Jenny ensures that these positive results will be maintained into the future.



*“The best thng about having staff in my life is they're really nice to me, they treat me with respect.”
says Jenny Whitmore*

Rewarding Work Pays Off Despite Low Wages

By Lily and Ross Kolditz, Brighton Enterprises, Inc.

Joanne Gill is approaching her tenth year as an employee of Brighton Enterprises in Vancouver, Washington. Joanne serves 38 clients in her role as a care provider.

Joanne started as a part-time employee filling in shifts for the regular staff. Working at Brighton was her second job. She soon grew to love her clients and the work that she did. One day she decided to quit her first job. Despite the low wages, she became a full-time employee at Brighton.

"I wanted to do something where I could be a direct influence on someone else's life. I chose this line of work because of the satisfaction I get when I see a client happy with who they are, where they live and the things they accomplish," says Joanne.

During the past ten years, Joanne has had to make some tough decisions. Several times, Joanne had to take inventory of her life and re-address the issues of her wages. The pay that she earned in this type of work was lower than what she could make doing something else. Each time, Joanne decided that the non-monetary rewards were sticking around for.

"My job is rewarding because I help the clients realize that as an individual, and a member of the community, they have choices."

Joanne remains dedicated to those she serves and can now reap more than just the personal benefit she gets from her job. She finally has a little extra spending money to participate in some of the community activities that she enjoys thanks to the wage increase passed by the state Legislature this past year and her growth at Brighton.



Joanne says, "My job is rewarding because I help clients realize they have choices."

Members

Region 1

- ARC Residential Services, Spokane, WA
- Partners for Community Living, Spokane, WA
- RISE, Inc., Spokane, WA
- S. L. Start & Associates, Inc., Spokane, WA
- Spectra Community Services, Spokane, WA

Region 2

- Community Living, Inc., Yakima, WA
- Community Living, Inc., Sunnyside, WA
- Elmview Residential, Ellensburg, WA
- S. L. Start & Associates, Grandview, WA
- Tri-Cities Residential, Kennewick, WA
- Valley Residential Services, Walla Walla, WA

Region 3

- Hampton Heights GH, Inc., Bellingham, WA
- Holly Community Services, Bellingham, WA
- PROVAIL, Lynnwood, WA
- Quilceda House, Marysville, WA
- REHABCO Skagit, Inc., Mt. Vernon, WA
- RISE, Inc., Lynnwood, WA
- Soundview Association, Stanwood, WA
- Soundview ITS, Mt. Vernon, WA
- Sunrise Services, Inc., Sunrise Community Living, Everett, WA

Region 4

- Alpha Spring Meadow Homes, Seattle, WA
- Alternative for Residential Opportunity, Inc., Shoreline, WA
- Banchero Friends Services, Shoreline, WA
- Camelot Society, Seattle, WA
- Centerpoint Services, Shoreline, WA
- Community Living, Inc., Bellevue, WA
- Community Living, Inc., Kent, WA
- Dolphin ITS, Shoreline, WA
- Evergreen Community Tenant Support, Tukwila, WA
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Homes, Renton, WA
- Greenwood Home, Seattle, WA
- Inglewood Residential and Community Services, Kenmore, WA
- Integrated Living Services, Kent, WA
- Mentor, Federal Way, WA

- Nellie Goodhue Group Homes, Seattle, WA
- NW Group Home for the Deaf, Seattle, WA
- Parkview Services, Shoreline, WA
- PROVAIL, Seattle, WA
- Puget Sound Residential Services, Renton, WA
- Res-Care Washington, Inc., dba Creative Living Services, Seattle, WA
- Residence East, Bellevue, WA
- Residence East, Issaquah, WA
- Seattle Specialized Residential Supports, Seattle, WA
- State Operated Living Alternatives (SOLA) Region IV, Seattle, WA
- S. L. Start & Associates, Seattle, WA
- United Friends Group Home, Seattle, WA
- United Friends Lincoln Park Group Home, Seattle, WA

Region 5

- C.A.P.A., Tacoma, WA
- Gig Harbor Group Home, Gig Harbor, WA
- Kitsap Tenant Support Services, Bremerton, WA
- L'Arche Tahoma Hope Community, Tacoma, WA
- Options Unlimited, Inc., Puyallup, WA
- Puget Sound Assisted Living, Lakewood, WA
- Res-Care Washington, Inc., dba: Creative Living Services, Puyallup, WA
- Valley Supported Living, Sumner, WA

Region 6

- Arc of Clark County, Vancouver, WA
- Brighton Enterprises, Inc., Battle Ground, WA
- Cedar Apartments, Inc., Montesano, WA
- Clallam County Hosteleries, Port Angeles, WA
- Frichette Associates, Port Angeles, WA
- Homes for Community Living, Vancouver, WA
- Kimberly Group Home, Aberdeen, WA
- Lauridsen Residential Services, Port Angeles, WA
- My Family, Olympia, WA
- Relationship/Care NW, Inc., Vancouver, WA
- Residential Opportunities & Activities Representatives, Vancouver, WA
- Residential Resources Association, Longview, WA
- Solo ITS, Inc., Vancouver, WA

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Legislators rarely receive enough “thanks” for the work they do. CRSA truly appreciates the efforts of Representatives Eileen Cody, Carolyn Edmonds, Mary Skinner, Speaker Frank Chopp, and Senators Alex Deccio, Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Lisa Brown and Pat Thibaudeau on the caregiver wage issue and looks forward to working with them in the coming years to better the lives of all in the community residential system. They deserve special recognition for their leadership and commitment to this cause.



For more information on our organization and its members, visit our website at www.crsa-wa.com

What's Happening

King County DD Legislative Forum

Monday, November 19, 2001

7:00 p.m.

Double Tree Guest Suites
16500 Southcenter Parkway, Tukwila

CRSA Membership Meeting

Tuesday, November 20, 2001

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Clarion Hotel, Seatac
3000 S. 176th

CRSA Membership Meeting

Tuesday, January 15, 2001

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Clarion Hotel, Seatac
3000 S. 176th

Legislative session begins

Monday, January 14, 2002

For questions on CRSA's legislative agenda, please contact:
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or Sharon Case at (360) 943-5489 or slcase@home.com



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CRSA is a non-profit organization of advocates and certified community-based providers for people with developmental disabilities in Washington State. Our commitment is to help create an enhanced quality of life for people we work for through the provision of safe and healthy community residential environments.



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