



County honors local Volunteers of America

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Volunteers of America Chesapeake, the local affiliate of one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive human services organizations, received the "Special Recognition Award for Dedicated Service and a 'Can Do' Attitude" from the Prince George's County Government Department of Family Services for two of its programs, during a special luncheon May 27 at the 16th Annual Mental Health Provider Appreciation Luncheon.

Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Prince George's County Mental Health Services and Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Shelter Plus Care program were honored as a result of their significant work with mental health patients throughout Prince George's County. The organization's unique Residential Rehabilitation Program allows patients to live in a healthy and nonrestrictive environment where they are assigned daily tasks and household responsibilities, attend education classes and participate in group activities.

The purpose of the Shelter Plus Care program is to provide permanent housing in connection with supportive services to homeless people with disabilities and their families.

"Though the reimbursement for this program is not a lot, Volunteers of America Chesapeake has maintained their commitment to providing this program for some of the most vulnerable citizens of our County and they have historically done so with excellence," said Karen Burks, Contracts Manager for Prince George's County Government Department of Family Services, who nominated Volunteers of America Chesapeake for the award. "Volunteers of America Chesapeake even managed to stretch the program funding enough to serve two additional families with the funding received."

Prince George's County Mental Health Services works with 67 clients in 16 group homes across the county with help of more than 100 employees. The program focuses on each patient individually, allowing them to reach goals created based on the specific patient's needs. Many of the program's residents have been able to enter into the community's work force on a part-time basis as well as take classes at a local community college. The Shelter Plus Care program currently serves 22 families - including more than 40 children - and eight individuals in its 29 units of supportive permanent housing. In 2009, 97 percent of Shelter Plus Care residents remained in the program six months or longer. Fifty-eight percent of residents remained in the program three years or longer, and 85 percent of the residents experienced an increase in income while they were in the program.

"We are happy that our dedicated staff members' hard work was recognized," said Kyoko Queen, Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Vice President, Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services. "(The work) requires patience, skill, and caring day in and day out."



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