

Family Focus

A publication for the friends, partners and supporters of Northern Virginia Family Service



NVFS Leads Local Efforts to End Homelessness

Bridging Affordability Linchpin in Fairfax County's Plan to End Homelessness

With homelessness affecting 10 percent of the population in Fairfax County, NVFS continues its efforts in this area to build strong families and even stronger communities. Fairfax County recently awarded the second phase of its Bridging Affordability grant to NVFS, which again will serve as the lead agency of more than a dozen partner nonprofit organizations and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board.

The program provides up to 24 months of rental subsidies to individuals and families, all of whom are homeless or on the County's affordable housing waiting lists. The collaborative agencies involved then provide wrap-around case management for vulnerable populations, including the homeless and disabled. (For a profile on how these services work for a Bridging Affordability client, please see Marlena's story on page 3.)

"Bridging Affordability has become a key component of Fairfax County's approach to affordable housing, and is a testament

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Collaboration Helps Providers

While the solution to homelessness starts with affordable housing, best practice tells us that we cannot stop there. A family's economic viability is their pathway out of poverty, which means affordable child care, financial education, case management, affordable transportation, life skills, legal assistance, and access to critical basic needs such as medical and dental care – are all critical wraparound support options for low-income communities and families.

To this end, NVFS served as the non-profit co-chair of the Housing Support Services Toolkit (HSST) – an effort that included housing clients, Fairfax County agencies, and nonprofits representing health, social services and long-term care missions.

The HSST is a collection of information about services that help individuals and families obtain and maintain housing; and is a planning tool to help providers develop an appropriate mix of service

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Northern Virginia Family Service

Help • Hope • Here

NVFS Early Head Start Rated #1 in Virginia

by Jacqueline Pujol, AmeriCorps VISTA Member

Of more than 300 centers in Virginia, Georgetown South is the first Early Head Start center to earn a five-star rating by the Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI). The center, located in Manassas, is one of six early head start programs of Northern Virginia Family Service. NVFS and Georgetown South have been working together with the Early Childhood Partnership, which oversees the VSQI Star Grant, to provide programs and centers with support during and after the rating process.

Elizabeth Osorio, a mother of two students in the program, proclaims: "Knowing that my daughter is in an early head start program that is number one in the whole state of Virginia makes me feel very confident and proud. I have seen a lot of growth in my two daughters, especially in my older daughter who is now four years old and in preschool."

The star rating indicates the quality of attention given by each center and their

commitment to go beyond the basic expectations and licensing requirements. The initiative was launched to help parents and families find high-quality educational centers for their children. According to VSQI, success in school and life is highly contingent upon the quality of their preschool or child care, and therefore it is very important to wisely choose which center your child is to attend.

To earn the five star rating, Georgetown South underwent an extensive and voluntary review process comprised of documentation review and on-site classroom observations in four standard areas: teacher qualifications, interactions between teachers and students, learning environment, and instructional practices.

Hal Parrish, Mayor of Manassas, praised the teachers of Georgetown South at the celebratory ceremony held on March 28. At the end of his discourse, he stated: "It is a five star program, right? It's better than one, two, three, four. You're also number one in the state, so congratulate yourselves!"



Children's Charities Supports Math, Science and NVFS

NVFS Head Start students and their families will see more emphasis on math and science, thanks to a grant from Children's Charities. In addition to training for classroom teachers, parents will be taught how to identify math and science concepts in every day experiences.

The Children's Charities Foundation (CCF) was founded in 1994 by Peter Teeley, former US Ambassador, and a group of Washington-area business and professional leaders to support area children and youth in need.



CCF raises most of its grant funds with its annual BB&T basketball tournament and gala held in early December. Visit www.cfdc.org for more information.

Bridging Affordability

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to the continued strength of the partnership between the county and the non-profit community," said Paula C. Sampson, Director, Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development.

With the second phase of the Bridging Affordability Program, NVFS and community partners will provide rental subsidies and supportive services to 250 very low-income households. Although Fairfax County announced this spring the freezing of housing vouchers as a result of Sequestration, Bridging Affordability funds are from prior year allocations and are separate from the funds earmarked for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. For more information about this and other efforts in Fairfax County, please visit <http://e-ffordable.org/>.

First Person: Bridging Affordability & Training Futures

NVFS Client Shares Story with Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Hi, my name is Marlena Melendez. I would like to tell you my story and how Training Futures helped me turn my life around.

Three years ago, I did not think I would be alive. When I found the strength to say enough is enough, I escaped a relationship of domestic violence. I took my two boys, who were 3 years old and 3 months old, a trash bag with clothes, and our important documents to a women's shelter in Reston.

I was in the shelter for 45 days, and during that time I received domestic violence counseling and applied for transitional housing through Homestretch. I was put on a wait list because I did not have a car. When I was able to obtain a car, I moved into my own apartment, but then I lost my job with Fairfax County Public Schools. I then spent 3 months looking for work, found a job, but was let go – on my birthday – just 3 months later. Once again, I was job searching with no luck, and had to rely on TANF and Food Stamps to be able to provide for my two children.

At that time, I learned about Training Futures, a program that helps people like me find a career – not just a job. I had always been interested in continuing my education, but without help or support, I did not think this was possible. So I was ECSTATIC about the opportunity and made the commitment to their six month program. I felt ready to succeed.

Week after week at Training Futures, I slowly came out of my shell. I learned more about computers, broadened my knowledge in ARMA (Association of Records Managers and Administrators) filing, and received customer service training. We attended workshops on how to dress for success and participated in Toastmaster groups. I learned more about myself by taking the Myers-Briggs and was motivated by inspiring quotes at the beginning of each class. I completed a three-week internship and received an excellent recommendation letter. We worked on writing resumes and cover letters, participated in job fairs and held mock interviews.

To this day, I still keep in contact with my Training Futures supervisor, who encouraged me even when I wanted to give up.

About one month after I graduated from Training Futures, I was referred to my current employer for a receptionist position. I was just promoted to a wonderful job as Patient Advocate at Healthworks, and I now have my own apartment in Vienna.

In addition to my new job, I continued my education at Northern Virginia Community College, and earned a certificate in Business Information Technology. I was the first in my family to graduate from college.

As you plan Fairfax County's budget, I request that you continue your support for Training Futures and Northern Virginia Family Service. This program empowers individuals to go for their dreams, and their goals, and I am proud to have a job I feel good about. I can sufficiently provide for my family, and contribute to our community. I hope you will enable others to write their own success story like me. Thank you.



Marlena and her sons enjoying the cherry blossoms. She delivered the testimony above to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on April 10, 2013.

NVFS Focuses on Rapid Rehousing

NVFS stabilizes homeless and precariously housed families throughout Northern Virginia through a continuum of housing services and options. The common thread across these services is NVFS' core belief that families will thrive when given access to the proper tools and support. For many, rapid rehousing provides the right opportunity and a stepping stone for families to stabilize and build their economic viability - a critical precursor to long-term family stability.

NVFS owns and manages 15 properties that help low-income homeless and vulnerably-housed families break the cycle of homelessness. These properties are critical throughout our community for families in need of affordable and safe housing. In the past, a dedicated number of NVFS' housing units were for transitional housing, and remainder of the houses were part of NVFS' Affordable Rental Program. NVFS works with Prince William County Office of Housing and Community Development to rent the properties to low-income tenants, who are then able to build rental credentials and a credit history that will help them ultimately leave the program.

According to Stephanie Berkowitz, Senior Vice President. NVFS is moving away from classifying its properties and simply considering them housing. This will allow NVFS more flexibility in its homelessness-relief efforts, so that properties can be used on a case-by-case basis that best fits a particular family in need.

"People can't fix themselves until they have a place to live."

—Thomas Williams, NVFS Deputy Director of Business Services & Facilities

Builder and Contractors Collaborate On Major Housing Rehab for NVFS

Northern Virginia Family Service is the beneficiary of a collaboration bringing together 70 different contractors, who are contributing materials and labor to rehabilitate one of NVFS' housing properties in Prince William County. This is the second NVFS donation overseen by HomeAid, a nonprofit organization that coordinates the homebuilding community to renovate shelters and housing for people in need. Stanley Martin Homes serves as the project manager of the effort, which includes more than 30 business partners who are donating materials and labor.

The contractors will address the structure of the house, as well as interior and exterior projects for function, durability and appearance. The comprehensive list of improvements includes flooring, insulation, HVAC, plumbing, lighting, appliances, electrical, vinyl siding, roof replacement, gutters, doors and security, furniture and landscaping.

The investment made by these companies allows NVFS to direct more of its funds to programs, and pays dividends through lower maintenance costs. When the rehab is completed, many employees personally donate supplies and gift cards so that families move into a house with a fully-stocked kitchen and pantry.

The estimated in-kind donation for the project is \$115,000, and the infrastructure and improvements provided should sustain the property for 15-20 years.

NVFS thanks the community-minded businesses who are making a difference for Northern Virginia families. For a list of contributors to this renovation project, please visit www.nvfs.org/homeaid.

Toolkit Collaboration (con't from page 1)

options, identify critical partners, outreach to new populations, develop strong funding proposals, and otherwise ensure their clients are being effectively served. The Toolkit has been nominated for a Fairfax County Government Team Excellence Award.

Next steps to develop housing services cost data and analyze impact are already being planned. The Toolkit is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/hsst/.



Training Futures Opens New Location In Manassas

Training Futures, NVFS' nationally-acclaimed workforce development program, held a grand opening ceremony at its new location in Manassas on May 30. The program is housed in Northern Virginia Community College's (NOVA) Innovation Park facility at 9485 Innovation Drive.

More than 80 community members including employers, Training Futures alumni, NOVA administrators, Prince William nonprofit organizations, and NVFS board and staff came to commemorate Training Futures' new site and expansion into Manassas. Virginia Senator Charles Colgan, Senator George Barker and Delegate Jackson Miller also were in attendance.

Mary Agee, President and CEO of NVFS, described Training Futures as a win-win for the community: "This program helps businesses," she said, referring to Training Futures' ability to prepare a skilled and motivated entry-level workforce. "But it also brings hope to our trainees, and it happens right within these walls."

"Training Futures is a human services program that works with the entire student," said Carol Jameson, associate CEO of HealthWorks for Northern Virginia. Above and beyond office skills, Carol credited the trainees' work ethic, initiative, and willingness to pitch in and be part of the team that are critical for their



long-term success. HealthWorks currently employs five Training Futures graduates.

Program alumnus Katherine Cross, who was a secretary in her homeland of Trinidad, used Training Futures to help prepare her for joining the workforce in America. She currently works for Home Instead Senior Care, and has returned to Training Futures as an administrative volunteer the last five years. "The expectations are high," she said, "but the program really does prepare you for the future and beyond."

For more information about Training Futures, including how to become a volunteer, internship partner or hiring partner, or for an application form, please visit www.nvfs.org/trainingfutures.

Extra! Extra! Read All About Northern Virginia Family Service



"Enfocan en los padres," *El Tiempo Latino*, April 27, 2013

"Graduate Honored: Robin Falci recognized for volunteer efforts with NVFS," *Herndon Connection*, April 24-30, 2013

"States retreat on preschool as Obama calls for more," *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2013

"Drop Off Diapers and Win 'Mommy and Me' Cupcake Decorating Class at Occasionally Cake," *Old Town Alexandria Patch*, May 8, 2013

"Helping Those Who 'Can't Catch a Break,' Community support for NVFS grows during tough economic times," *Connection Newspapers*, May 9, 2013

"Home visiting programs are preschool in its earliest form," *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2013

"Training Futures program offers free business classes," *Prince William Times*, June 5-11, 2013

NVFS Volunteer “Passionate About the Cause”

Barbara Ratner, Training Futures Volunteer and Road to Independence Gala Auction Co-Chair

Training Futures, NVFS’ nationally-acclaimed workforce development program, has many components: office skills, professional development, college credits, mentoring and internships. But some students come to class early to work with volunteers on their English comprehension and diction. Barbara Ratner has been helping trainees since 2005 and is motivated by their success.

“Our graduates always come back to speak to the new trainees,” says Barbara, who becomes slightly emotional when describing the graduates, their jobs and promotions, their newfound economic stability, and sometimes homeownership. “Their stories are unbelievable. They are from war-torn countries with lots of obstacles to overcome. They are hard working and smart, yet they are in such menial jobs. They just need a chance.”



Barbara Ratner (right), Training Futures Volunteer, also co-chairs NVFS’ Road to Independence Gala auction with Tina Yalen.

trainees to present themselves in an interview so that they are evaluated on their skills, and not their speech.

Susan Craver, Training Futures Training Coordinator, praises Barbara’s commitment to the program – early mornings, twice a week, for 15 weeks – and Barbara’s style that makes the Accent Reduction program work. “Her ability to engage them and make it fun gets our trainees up early for these additional voluntary sessions,” says Susan.

In addition to her work at Training Futures, Barbara also is the co-chair of the silent auction at NVFS’ Road to Independence Gala. Along with Tina Yalen, Barbara solicits and organizes donations, including those popular themed baskets at the event. Under Tina and Barbara’s leadership, the auction has grown in scope – and funds raised.

Barbara describes her activities supporting the auction as a “labor of love.” She routinely scouts products and arrangements at craft fairs and will approach stores for donations. “We’ve roped in some of our friends,” referring to her co-chair, Tina Yalen, who handles the bookkeeping and administrative details of the auction. “We’re very passionate about the cause,” says Barbara, “and plan on volunteering for a long time.”

NVFS also recognized volunteers at its annual meeting on June 13 at Capital One:

Tom Krones, NVFS Presidential Volunteer Award Development Assistant, SERVE Front Desk, Volunteer Council, Special Events & Drives

Jose Oyola, NVFS Impact Award Hispanic Entrepreneurship Program Nx Level Business Course Presenter and Assistant

Sudley United Methodist Church, NVFS Community Champion, SERVE Campus programs

To read about our honorees and nominees, please visit www.nvfs.org/2013volawards.



Good Works Benefit NVFS

Top Left: Creating photo albums for Head Start graduates at Deloitte IMPACT Day

Bottom Left: AOL’s Monster Help Day at the Clock Tower Thrift Shop

All others: CEB employees hosted a fun fair for Head Start students

NVFS Holds Record-Breaking Gala

More than 500 supporters of Northern Virginia Family Service came together on May 3 to honor George Lizama (right), and Earle (below) and June Williams at the NVFS “Road to Independence Gala.” The event, which is NVFS’ largest fundraiser of the year, featured an emotional live appeal, as well as live and silent auctions.



Earle Williams, retired BDM International President and CEO, was honored with his wife, June, as “Legends of Northern Virginia.” Mr. Williams reminded the audience: “Most of us here lead privileged lives. You can and should make a difference in Northern Virginia,” promising an enormous sense of satisfaction for contributing.

Guests were reminded of the very different journeys that NVFS clients take on their Road to Independence. Mary, who was profiled in our testimonial video, benefited from programs with SERVE and also graduated from Training Futures. Overcoming a history of physical abuse, homelessness, and a debilitating injury that eventually led to drug addiction, Mary is not just surviving but thriving. She works full time in a doctor’s office and is economically self-sufficient.



This year’s event broke previous records for sponsorship participation, and the audience’s response to Mary’s story during the live appeal was historic. Attendees publicly affirmed their support for NVFS through pledges of \$100 to \$5,000. The live appeal, combined with the event’s live and silent auctions, raised nearly \$200,000 for the agency in one evening alone. Overall, the event netted \$480,000, which will be used to support NVFS programs that help our most vulnerable community members chart their Road to Independence.

George Lizama, this year’s Community Champion, credited NVFS for helping the innocent, the humble poor, and those “who can’t catch a break.” The local business leader renowned for his marketing accomplishments was instrumental in launching NVFS’ Training Futures program. He summarized Mary’s experience and that of the 30,000 clients that NVFS touches each year: through self-help comes self-esteem, self-worth, and finally, dignity.

Kudos to NVFS Volunteers, Award Winners



Congratulations to **Robin Falci**, who was recognized for her efforts among 21 other nominees to win a Fairfax County Volunteer Service Award. Robin provided critical planning, outreach and logistical support to the Back-to-School drive, Help the Homeless walk-a-thon program and holiday drives.

Margaret Walters from Training Futures and **Bianca Schaedler** from Hispanic Entrepreneurship Program also were nominated for Service Awards. **Vince SESCOE** was recognized for volunteering more than 500 hours.

To become a volunteer for NVFS, visit www.nvfs.org/VolunteerNow

You Are Part of the Solution! Join NVFS in Making a Difference



Foster Parent Training



Saturdays:
July 13, 20 and 27 or
September 14, 21 and 28
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
NVFS Oakton Office
10455 White Granite Drive
Oakton, VA 22124

Can you provide stability, love and support to a child or teen in need? NVFS' Foster Parent Training is the first step to becoming a foster parent or respite care provider. Learn about short-term and long-term foster care and gain knowledge and resources to use when caring for our youth.

For more information on foster parenting, visit www.nvfs.org/fostercare.

500 for \$5,000 Virtual Walk

NVFS is having our first ever VIRTUAL WALK event to Help the Homeless. With the click of a mouse and a \$30 donation (\$20 for youth 25 and under), you can help us meet our goal of registering 500 "participants" by **August 31** to receive a \$5,000 bonus incentive from the Fannie Mae corporation. To donate, visit www.nvfs.org and follow the link from our homepage, or contact Colleen Ross, cross@nvfs.org with questions.

Save the Date: Upcoming NVFS Events

Back-To-School Drive '13

NVFS will help 1,600+ students start the year off right with new backpacks and supplies. Shoppers can drop off donations between Aug. 1-5; drop-off information, commitment forms, shopping lists, and our online donation portal can be accessed at www.nvfs.org/backtoschool, or contact Pam Boyle, pboyle@nvfs.org.

Empty Bowls

The Chapel Springs Assembly of God (11500 New Life Way, Bristow - formerly the Manassas Assembly of God) will host Empty Bowls, with all proceeds raised to benefit SERVE on Friday, Oct. 11, 5-8 p.m. www.nvfs.org/emptybowls.

New BB&T 5K

NVFS is the beneficiary of a new 5K run and walk on Sunday, Oct. 13 at Fairfax Corner. To register, go to www.bbt5k.com.

New Scavenger Hunt!

Teams of five will work together to find treasure in Old Town Manassas on Saturday, Oct. 26, to benefit SERVE. Check www.nvfs.org/scavengerhunt for registration information, or contact Samantha Hunter, shunter@nvfs.org, with questions.

CARE Awards

Join NVFS in honoring companies in Northern Virginia who are leaders in providing innovative and supportive family-friendly policies, programs and services. The breakfast ceremony will be held Thursday, Nov. 14. www.careawards.net.

For the latest donations and volunteer needs, please follow us on twitter or like us on facebook - and join the conversation!



Northern Virginia
Family Service



#8099



#79645

Northern Virginia Family Service is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to helping vulnerable families and children. Each year, NVFS helps nearly 30,000 people through our programs in early childhood services, child placement services, health services, legal services, housing services, intervention and prevention services, and workforce development services.

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