



The Agency Supports Persons with Developmental Disabilities in Living, Learning, and Working in their Communities

## Spring is in the Air!

Spring is always a wonderful and much welcomed time of year. It is during this season that the 500+ acres which make up the community of Sunland come alive with nature's beauty. New, fresh growth can be seen everywhere. Trees begin to fill out with tender, yet vivid green leaves. Colorful flowers bloom, and if you pause, you can catch their aroma wafting through the air. Spanish moss dangles from the Center's majestic oaks, waving in the gentle breeze, beckoning passersby to come relish in their shade. Ahh, it's Spring once again! New life and new energy is in the air. And, yet there is more. Springtime activities abound all across the Center. It's a happy time of year. The engaging laughter and joy of the people we are privileged to support and serve is priceless. You notice a bounce in their steps and happy smiles on their faces. Oh, something is definitely in the air. *It is happiness and it is beautiful.* The beauty of Sunland is all around you. Yes, you will find it in nature, and even more so in the lives of those we serve. Stop and savor a moment, bask in the bliss of life and nature at her finest ... and be blessed.





# Sunland Celebrates Volunteers!

On April 17, Volunteer Services hosted its 2018 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at the Mixer. The beautifully decorated Mixer echoed the theme of this year's event, "Volunteers Plant Seeds of Kindness." During a special awards program, the Ft. Walton Knights of Columbus were named as the 2018 Volunteer Group of the Year, and Ms. Rose Ancrum was awarded the 2018 Volunteer of the Year. Forty-eight guests were treated to delicious lunch, prepared and served by students enrolled in the Culinary program.

*Sunland Center is proud of, and grateful for, the volunteers that assist and support our residents.*

Contributed by: Maria Johnson





## Woodridge House Luncheon

The Mixer hosted a beautiful luncheon for the ladies of Woodridge House and the Optimist Club of Jackson County on Friday, April 20. The meal was quite delicious, and was prepared and served by the Mixer students. Guests of honor enjoyed stuffed pork loin, green beans, sweet potato souffle, chef salad, rolls and sugar free parfaits. Hats off to Wayne Winkle, Vocational Instructor, and the culinary students for an excellent meal and event!



## From the Superintendent...

Rish Park Manager Victor Rowland received a very moving letter from a recent visitor from out of state. The visitor encountered some challenges while there. Mr. Rowland and his family graciously sprang into action when the unexpected happened. In his words, the writer shares,

My name is Scott Andrews. I'm a C-5/6 quadriplegic from Waterford, Wisconsin. Recently while searching the web, I came across a park in Florida that was developed specifically for the disabled community and their families to enjoy nature, the beach, and the Gulf of Mexico, barrier-free. I immediately began making plans to make the trek to Rish Park.

Being a quadriplegic, I require help in multiple ways. I use a power wheelchair and don't drive, so I enlisted the help of my longtime caregiver and friend Jayme to join me, as she has traveled with me in the past.

Coming from Wisconsin, we're not used to the strength of the Florida sun, especially after a long Wisconsin winter. After spending part of the day lying on the beach, my caregiver began feeling the effects of too much sunshine and became sick. We went back to our cabin to cool off, but she was getting worse. I was afraid because we were so far from home and there was no one there familiar with the type of care I require.

That night, the park manager Victor Rowland stopped by our cabin to see how we were doing. Jayme was now extremely sick. Victor offered to get us some take-out food, as neither of us had eaten and it was late. It was also quite evident that Jayme was too weak to help me into bed. Victor then said, "Tell me what to do, Scott. I'll help you." I'm not an easy transfer, especially for someone who is not trained for it. Victor transferred me from my wheelchair to the bed, made sure I was comfortable, and promised to check on us in the morning.

Jayme had a rough night, still unable to keep anything down. Victor came by early to help me into my wheelchair (another difficult transfer) to get me ready, and then to check on Jayme. It was clear she needed medical attention. Victor called someone he knows who is a firefighter/EMT, who then called for a rescue squad, since it was clear it was more than overexposure to the sun. The rescue squad took her to the local clinic. Victor's wife, Lisa, accompanied her, and when Lisa returned without Jayme, I knew it was bad. She told me my friend and caregiver was being transferred to the Medical Center in Panama City.

Jayme was admitted into the ICU with multiple problems. Jayme is a type 1 diabetic, and she had developed diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) due to problems with her blood sugar. She also needed IV antibiotics for an infection. She was very sick and would be in the ICU for the next five days.

After getting the news, I immediately called home to let our families know what was happening. I knew I needed someone who was qualified to care for me. My mom paid for another of my caregivers to fly down to the nearest airport to Rish Park from Milwaukee, which was around 70 miles away. My hero Victor offered to go pick up my caregiver Jessica, who didn't arrive until after midnight. He wouldn't accept any money for the trip.



As a quadriplegic, I try to be as independent as possible, but there are a lot of things I can't do. I had already asked for so much help, and I didn't want to put anyone else out. I hadn't eaten anything all day, but Victor and Lisa invited me to join them for a meal. Lisa asked me if I liked spaghetti. It was such a wonderful gesture, particularly because I DO like spaghetti. I enjoyed the meal immensely, especially dining with such kind and interesting new friends. I told Victor that I didn't know how I could ever repay him and Lisa for everything they had done. His response was something that still makes me emotional writing this; I'll never forget what he said: "Y'all are family now."

After my friend/caregiver Jessica arrived, it was like a huge weight had been lifted from me. Although Jayme was still in the hospital, I could go see her and reassure her that we were going to wait until she got released. Victor informed me that his supervisor had approved a medical extension for us to stay at Rish Park through the weekend and beyond if we needed it. Jayme was released from the hospital after spending five days in the ICU.

We both have so many people to thank. First and foremost would be Victor and Lisa Rowland. Without their kindness and generosity, I'm not sure how this would have turned out. Next on the list are our cabin neighbors Randy and Jackie Abel, along with their family, who checked in on me frequently to make sure I was OK. Of course, I must include my caregiver Jessica, who dropped everything to fly down at a moment's notice to help me, no questions asked. Additionally, I want to thank my mom, who paid the airfare for Jessica, and finally, the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, for providing such a beautiful park and allowing us to extend our stay until my friend was well enough to travel.

It's hard to describe on paper the full range of emotions that I went through. I am so grateful to have crossed paths with someone who exudes altruism to the highest degree, a rarity in many cases today. I know that I will never be able to return the kindness I received from Victor and Lisa, but I will never forget it. A sincerest thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

This is one of the most heartfelt letters I have ever read. Mr. Andrews, caregivers, and family expressed deep appreciation to Mr. Rowland, his wife Lisa, and family. We join the Andrews family in applauding Victor, Lisa, their family, Mark Knapfke of the South Gulf County Volunteer Fire Department and first responders for keen observations, rapid response, acts of kindness, and genuine care. This is another fine example of excellence in customer service for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and evidence of what the results of strong partnerships can yield. Thank you so very much, Victor!

Grateful,

*Geri Williams*  
Superintendent



## Unit 2 Residents Excel

Congratulations are in order for the many accomplishments of our residents in Unit 2. Recently, seven residents graduated from the "Thinking for a Change" program. This cognitive behavioral program equips students in cognitive self-change, social skills, and problem-solving skills. Congratulations to Richard R., Joshua B., Jimmy A., Jonathan R., Eugene L., Latarsha G., and James G. for their hard work and dedication to complete this course!

Also, five residents recently graduated from the Footprints Program. This is a 16-step educational program, based on Cognitive Behavioral Techniques. These individuals have been dedicated students, working hard to complete this challenging class. Congratulations to James G., Eugene L., Steven K., Richard R., and Herman J. for this accomplishment!



Contributed by: Cathy McWaters

## Chaplaincy Services



### Pathways Chapel Service

On Sunday, April 15, residents from Pathways attended services at the Chapel. The gentlemen conducted the entire service and did a wonderful job. We really appreciate Pathways staff and residents for coming to bless us once again.

Contributed by: Chaplain Ruthie Moore



## Sunland Participates in SportsAbility

Each year, the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association, headquartered in Tallahassee, hosts its annual "SportsAbility" Festival. According to FDOA, this two-day premier event promotes quality of life and highlights adaptable leisure and recreational activities for people of all abilities. In essence, SportsAbility is a celebration of life that features a resource expo complete with music, art, dance and other sports and leisure activities and clinics. The FDOA and its partners provide the festival free of charge for participants, families and friends. During the festival, participants of all abilities learn about the value of recreation and active leisure for everyone, especially people with disabilities. Here, they discover the latest in adaptable equipment, trends, and resources. SportsAbility provides a wonderful opportunity for people to network with people with disabilities, resource providers, and community organizations. Sunland residents and staff were thrilled to have the opportunity to participate once again this year. Mark your calendars! Next year's event will take place April 11-13, 2019. It's an event you won't want to miss!



## Developmental Disabilities Defendant Program



The Special Olympics Florida Law Enforcement Torch Run was held April 9. Representing DDDP were Christina Elliott, William "Bird" Owens, Nicki Reed and Bobby Johnson. The run started at Gadsden Correctional Institution in Gretna, and ended at the Piggly Wiggly parking lot in Quincy, where the local school children were met and refreshments were given. The run then continued to the Quincy Rec Center where lunch was served. All participants and children had a great time. A huge shout out to APD/DDDP Security who raised \$870 for Special Olympics Florida in tee shirt and hat sales! Way to go Team DDDP!

Contributed by: Christina Elliott

The staff and residents of DDDP recently bid a fond farewell to Susan Turner, RNS. Ms. Turner retired with 34 years of state service. She will certainly be missed!

Contributed by: Richard Cook





## Character Matters...



**Attentiveness** ~ The action of paying close attention to someone or something, politeness or courtesy. When you are attentive, you show the worth of a person or task by giving your undivided attention. These actions demonstrate consideration and thoughtfulness of others. Example: A key ingredient to creating a daily "Wow customer service experience" for our residents involves the ability to be attentive and to actively engage through the use of strong listening skills. We must be attentive during EVERY interaction with our residents, otherwise there will be a disconnect between what they are saying, both verbally and nonverbally, and what we are doing. We must give our residents our complete attention so we can truly understand what is being said; simply listening to and hearing what residents say is not enough. The words being spoken are just the beginning. Remember to pay attention to all of the extra, little things. Things to consider: tone of voice, delivery pace, mood, body language and eye contact. Keying in to all of these, and responding appropriately, is what being attentive is all about. By doing so, you we'll have the ability to exceed our residents expressed and unexpressed wishes and to find solutions to their desires or problems. Ultimately, we will be able to actively engage in more meaningful conversations, and know how to efficiently respond to the needs of the people we are privileged to serve.

### ATTENTIVENESS

Showing the worth of a person or task by giving your undivided attention.

### DETERMINATION

Purposing to accomplish the right goals at the right time.



**Determination** ~ Being determined is a positive character trait that strengthens your intent for attaining a goal. Determination is like climbing a mountain. You have to know what you want to achieve, then put one foot in front of the other until you reach the top. Climbing a mountain takes a lot of effort. It is tempting to quit and turn back when you feel tired or discouraged. But determination means pressing on, pushing forward, and not giving up. Determination makes you a winner, not a quitter! Individuals who are motivated to succeed are know for getting tasks done and accomplishing goals.

**Attentiveness & Determination - two important character traits. Let's aspire to attain them!**

## April Star Awards!



**Silver Star Team ~ Quality Management & Maintenance**  
 Pictured L-R: Adrian Abner, Stacy Collins, Mary Gallagher, Heather Traylor & Willie Stevens. Not pictured: Velma Tensley, Michael Padgett, Bobby Peeler, Steven Price, Josh Carr



**Silver Star Team Award ~ East Washington House, 2nd Shift**  
 Pictured L-R: Bart Harrell, Eva Brown, Zina Coleman, Dollette Everett, Leola Ming & Adrian Abner



**Silver Star Award ~ Tracy Curry**  
 Pictured L-R: Felicia Smith, Tracy Curry & Adrian Abner



**Silver Star Award ~ Alesia Holland**  
 Pictured L-R: Phil Anderson, Alesia Holland & Adrian Abner



**Gold Star Award ~ Voncille Williams**  
 Pictured L-R: Phil Anderson, Voncille Williams & Adrian Abner



**Silver Star Award ~ Virgil Johnson**  
 Pictured L-R: Phil Anderson & Adrian Abner  
 Not Pictured: Virgil Johnson



**Gold Star Award ~ Tabatha Baker**  
 Pictured L-R: Bart Harrell, Tabatha Baker & Adrian Abner



**Silver Star Award ~ Henry Sherrod**  
 Pictured L-R: Bart Harrell, Henry Sherrod & Adrian Abner



## Direct Care Graduates



Twenty-three staff recently graduated from the Direct Care Core Services Course. Congratulations to: Vickie Curry, Sharon Pollock, Katelynn Ballard, Sarah Foster, Ava Neel, Sheila Spencer, Melody Green, Barry Vickson, Rayburn Rehburg, Howard Cotton, Heather Hollis, Janice Mack, Shantrell Brown, Brennan Blackmon, Tabitha Worthington, Latonia Wilson, Precious Bradwell, Taylor Merritt, Mercedes Adams, Georgianna Ingram, Anthony Lay, Daniel Jackson and

Contributed by: Velma Tensley

## Kindness Goes a Long Way!



I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Ms. Sandy Helms for providing our Sunland Maintenance Department with a catered breakfast on April 11. This act of generosity has immediately impacted the overall attitude and temperament of our department. I personally will not soon forget how a warm biscuit and thank you promotes a better atmosphere and work environment! Again, thank you Ms. Helms on behalf of our entire Maintenance Department.

Contributed by: Allen Ward

## HUMAN RESOURCES

For any personnel needs, please contact Veronica Mullinax, Katey Hobbs, Lizzie Holland, Nicole Sims and Robin Morris at Sunland, and Debra Cone, Faith Bentley and Jodi Nesmith at DDDP. The HR Team is always happy to serve you!

For more information regarding personnel matters, the Sunland Human Resources Department can be reached at 482-9230 or \*04. The DDDP Human Resource Team may be reached at 663-7738.

Information regarding vacancies can be obtained at the People First website at: <https://peoplefirst.myflorida.com>

## NEW EMPLOYEES



Cessna Folsom	Tessa Wedderburn
Angela Smith	Maria Bouie
Alexandria Diggs	Amanda Bauldree
Kentral Baker	Robert Olsen
T'Kerra Jackson	Joseph Bahillo
Susan Harris	Bridget Jordan
Desquan Johnson	

## Retirees

# Bon Voyage!

Belinda Lord



agency for persons with disabilities  
State of Florida

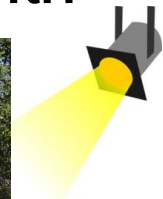
## Project Sunland PRIDE



Beautification Program!

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DESIRABLE ENVIRONMENT

### "Community Spotlight of the Month"



## Unit 1 Buchanan House

### "The Sunland Beacon" - Newsletter Committee

*Suggestions and/or news article submissions are welcome; please contact any committee member:*

Beth Basford, Administration - Editor; Clint Cox, CSS/Recreation - Co-Editor; Stephanie Parker, CSS/Print Shop; Renee Perry, Unit 1; LaWanda Calhoun, Unit 2; Allison Jones, Unit 3; Juanita Alford, Pathways; Joni Laramore, Administration; Mary Gallagher, Quality Management; Suzanne Laramore, RN/Nursing-Medical