

# Transitions News!

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## Highlighting Community Sites...

### The Nandy House

by Fran Toth, SDDC, Transitions North

**T**he Nandy House is located in the former Michigan School for the Blind. This building houses the North Network Center which offers a variety of services and activities for people living on the north side of Lansing.

Transitions North has been participating in activities at the Nandy House for several years in both leisure and volunteer capacities.

Consumers purchase their lunches there and enjoy games or activities following the meal. Two consumers volunteer their services which include wiping the tables after lunch and vacuuming the floor. These activities offer consumers the opportunity to socialize and work on skill building activities, such as making lunch choices, paying for items, and various cleaning tasks.

Twenty consumers participate in an aerobics class at this site. While others organize donated clothing for the Clothing Bank. They straighten and fold items, and hang clothing.

Nandy House has offered volunteer opportunities to consumers, including a role at the recent Race and Diversity Multi-cultural Children's Festival, which was held on August 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Consumers from Transitions North value the friendships made at the Nandy House, as well as the many community linkages it provides.

### Eaton County Hospice

by Jean Stroesenreuther, DDC and Carol Kron, SDDC, Charlotte Satellite

**F**our years ago Cheryl began volunteering at Eaton County Hospice. She does office work which includes stuffing envelopes, running the copy machine, and assisting with mailings. Until 2003, this was done in an office building in downtown Charlotte.

In the Spring of 2003, Margaret Kyser, the Executive Director of Hospice, approached the Charlotte Satellite staff about the possibility of adding volunteers to do janitorial tasks for the new facility they were building. The office transferred to this new facility in July of 2003. Upon it's opening, eight consumers from the Charlotte Satellite began cleaning for them. The staff at Hospice have welcomed them all. The office and residential building opened with 3 bedrooms and are finishing up 2 more. To date the Charlotte Satellite consumers are the sole cleaning source for the facility.

More recently Cheryl has begun visiting with some of the people receiving Hospice services, after completing her office jobs. This enriches both her life and the lives of several fellow community members.

In July 2004, Hospice opened a Thrift Shop and are now, again, in need of volunteers. This will be yet another great opportunity for the

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Charlotte Satellite consumers to give back to their community.

## YMCA of Lansing

by Michael Mahoney, Coordinator, Transitions Central

**T**he YMCA provides programs for people of all ages, to improve the physical, social and spiritual well being of the community. They currently are community partners with over 45 non-profit organizations, schools and churches.

During the past 15 years, Transitions and the YMCA have worked closely together, collectively responding to the wishes and needs of consumers. Many individuals have taken advantage of recreational and fitness opportunities at both the Oak Park and Parkwood Branches, as well as what is now the Downtown Wellness Center. People have benefitted from swimming programs, the weight and exercise rooms, and of course the hot tubs and saunas. Some individuals have developed Personal Workout Routines and have been very consistent in following those routines.

Several consumers have been able to give back to the YMCA through volunteering in their “Y-Care” program, at the Oak Park Branch. These opportunities have been rewarding for all involved.

Through the generosity of the YMCA of Lansing, financial assistance has been provided for a number of consumers who might otherwise lack the resources to afford the membership fees. Frequently the consumer, the YMCA, and Transitions work in concert to cover the costs of an individual to participate.

As YMCA members, many consumers have had the opportunity to develop friendships. Both staff and members have been very supportive of consumers during more difficult times in their lives. Y staffers, have been quite sensitive and

flexible in accommodating the varied range of personal consumer needs. Throughout the years they have worked hand-in-hand with members of the Transitions Team, to better insure that consumers had the best community experiences possible.

## Closing the Digital Gap and The Black Child and Family Institute

by Terri Henton, Vocational Counselor, Vocational Services

**T**he CSDD Vocational Services unit has developed a relationship with 2 community organizations that have supported and provided non-traditional vocational opportunities for consumers with developmental disabilities.

Closing the Digital Gap (CTDG) is a non-profit 501 ©)3 economic development initiative supported by various public and private resources.

The Black Child & Family Institute (BCFI) is a non-profit 501©)3 organization designed to assist and strengthen children & families through mutual respect and responsibility. Programs and services are designed to address needs in the areas of family , stability, physical and mental health, education and economic development.

CTDG is housed at BCFI which is located at 835 W. Genesee St, in Lansing. More than 40 consumers from CMH have experienced some type of vocational training at one or both of the programs, since 2001.

This relationship began when CSDD staff was invited to visit CTDG by Marcus Jefferson, the director. Mr. Jefferson explained the purpose of the CTDG program with Vocational Services staff. Through this interaction, needs of consumers were matched with program

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resources. Things as simple as desensitizing consumers to computer time clocks were addressed by the programs' teachers.

Many consumers learned to "tech" computers, how to install floppys, modems, etc. Software programs were purchased such as Reader Rabbit, math and spelling software, Hooked on Phonics, etc. This experience has led to other community jobs that before may not have been realized.

Additional programs were developed through this relationship. A proposal was written which created a program for CSDD consumers to work in the lunch room as lunch assistants. A 5 week training program was developed whereby the consumers were paid by the Michigan Department of Career Development. As a result of this, eight consumers were hired into the Lansing School District the first year, as "Substitute Lunch Assistants". Two were later hired as "regular" Lunch Assistants and one person is still working there after four years.

A consumer from the Mason Satellite has worked at BCFI since 2001. This man is severely and multiply impaired with Cerebral Palsy, and relies on adaptive equipment to complete tasks. Staff at CTDG understood that his physical impairments as well as his "perceived" cognitive functioning, significantly impacted his ability to acquire employment in the community. BCFI ergonomically designed an area on their main floor for this fellow. A computer and work area were equipped for him to search for drivers online plus he assists with the program's silent auction and has developed and maintains an e-mail list of program applicants and participants.

Consumers have also trained and/or worked at CTDG & BCFI in the areas of clerical support, teachers aides, and as a tutor.

The relationship with CTDG & BCFI has been very positive. Consumers have developed

friendships, confidence, and a broader knowledge of computers and their importance in the vocational realm.

## Holt-Delhi Public Library

by Carol Kron, SDDC, Mason Satellite

Since February of 2000 Transitions South has assisted consumers with visiting the Holt-Delhi Library. This primarily consisted of individuals with reading skills that wished to check out books, others who wished to check out tapes and CDs and some who enjoyed reading magazines on site. Sometimes small groups of non-readers would join in on the weekly story times offered by the library. Although this was greatly enjoyed by those who attended it was not the best fit as it was geared toward very small children.

From the day consumers began participating at the library every staff person encountered was both supportive and encouraging. Interactions were always friendly and dignified, with emphasis on individual independence. Due to the open and helpful atmosphere, the Transitions staff felt comfortable in approaching the Head Librarian, Cheryl Lyons, about a new idea. It was suggested that a non-reader "book club" be started, similar to the "story time" for the small children. However, this new group would discuss topics specifically of interest to those attending and would include an adult approach to the discussion. Ms. Lyons was enthusiastic from the start, asked for topics and began the group within a few weeks.

The "book club" has now been meeting every other Wednesday, since early March 2004. 10-20 consumers from Transitions South, the Mason Satellite, and occasionally, the Charlotte Satellite, have been participating. The group has asked to read about and discuss, Valentine's Day (it's origin), St. Patrick's Day, Spring, and various animals. Ms. Lyons always has books

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available for people to look through, on the topic at hand. She explores with the consumers, topics of interest, as well as exploring with staff the best way for people to learn and understand what she is presenting each time. The open and accepting environment exuded at the Holt-Delhi Library is what would be hoped for throughout the community at large.

## Miller Road Community Center

by Deb Voss, Coordinator, Transitions South

**M**oving away from friends and familiar routines is threatening unless you are meeting new people at Lansing Parks and Recreation's Miller Road Community Center, in Lansing. Consumers from Transitions South have participated in the Senior Nutrition lunches at that location for several years.

Activities at the center are planned by Iva Wilson, the Activity Leader. Ms. Wilson advocated persistently to increase the number of consumers as well as the number of days they attended. Lunch and Bingo prizes were the initial rewards for going to the Miller Road Center. Because of that quest for food and prizes, consumers returned and bonds of friendship became the reinforcement to return.

Line dancing, billiards, scripture studies, pet visits and discussing the past are built into the three visits per week that consumers currently enjoy. The Seniors attending from the community look forward to spending time with their new friends from Transitions South. Alice, a Senior, said, "I believe it is both pleasant and important for physically and/or mentally challenged people to interact with seniors who not only enjoy their company, but also have the years of experience and concern for others that is very uplifting to each individual." Consumers experience a welcoming community at the Miller Road Center. They are part of the gang

there—fully integrated in the program versus just being included.

## Giving Tree Farm

by Michelle Whitcomb, DDC, Clinton County Satellite

**G**iving Tree Farm is an organic farm located in Dewitt and has been in operation since 1991. Weekly groups of consumers from the Clinton County Satellite volunteer in their gardens and greenhouses. They include washing, filling, and planting containers, as well as transplanting seedlings, watering, trimming and harvesting. The favorite crop to harvest is popcorn, which can later be eaten for snacks. They also enjoy taking care of rabbits and the farm cat.

Volunteers enjoy the interactions with the farm's supervisor, Joe. Joe is a patient person, guiding volunteers through the various tasks needing completion each week. John, in particular, enjoys spending time with Joe and Satellite staff have watched as he has blossomed.

When asked what I should report about Giving Tree Farm, one of the volunteers responded, "It's fun!". She said that her favorite parts are, "doing the work and riding the tractor."

The farm has provided consumers with the opportunity to spend time outdoors, watching things grow and working together as a team. It is hoped that the partnership between the Satellite and Giving Tree Farm will continue for many years to come.

## Apologies from the last issue:

- i For misspelling Transitions!!!
- i For not acknowledging Kristin Setchfield as the author of the TC article.

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