

JULY 2007

LifeSpan news and information

Programs in Albemarle, Asheville, Burlington, Charlotte, Concord, Dobson, Greensboro, High Point, Huntersville, Matthews, Monroe, Mt. Airy, Statesville, Troutman, Waynesville, and Wilkesboro

our MISSION

LifeSpan transforms the lives of children and adults with developmental disabilities by providing education, employment, and enrichment opportunities that promote inclusion, choice, family supports, and other best practices.

LifeSpan currently supports over 2,200 individuals in our collection of community programs across North Carolina from Haywood to Alamance counties.

Spotlight a Friend

As program director of a residential home for LifeSpan, I really shouldn't have favorites and I should try to treat all five guys who live in this home the same. But, we all know that often, there is a favorite. Jim Sinclair became part of my life in 2001 when he moved to the group home that I manage. Jim is mostly alone in this world. He has a



Susan & Jim

sister, but he hasn't seen her for years. At holidays and special gatherings, when others have their family or special friends, I always serve the surrogate role for Jim. Somehow, it was a natural transition for me to go from my paid professional role to friend for life.

Jim is a pleaser! He tries every day to do his best at all life's tasks and responsibilities. He loves for me to notice his good work and praise him privately and in front of others. He beams with pride. He has a sweet, gentle spirit that is infectious for others. If he doesn't see me for a couple days, he rushes to me with open arms and tells me that he missed me. It warms my heart to know that we share a common bond in friendship.

Personal appearance is important to Jim. His favorite activities include going to the barbershop to get his tightly cropped style, and shopping at the mall where he is always in search of new shoes. If Jim doesn't have money on one of our shopping trips—he will smile and encourage me to dig in my purse to purchase the shoes (I must admit I have given in on several occasions).

After attending a LifeSpan day program, Jim arrives home in the late afternoon, prepares a snack, and kicks back to watch his favorite television program, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. I am not sure why he has a fascination with the Oprah show—maybe he, like so many of us, is just drawn to Oprah's energy and enthusiasm.

Often in life people cross your path for a reason. It is clear that Jim coming into my life was no accident—he feeds my spirit with his gentle spirit. Jim Sinclair will be a lifelong friend for me.

Susan Bennett
LifeSpan Residential Program Director



Staying Mission Focused During Times of Political Turmoil

In 2001, North Carolina responded to the U. S. Supreme Court's Olmstead Decision to ensure that people with disabilities and mental illness can live in the communities of their choosing. Mental Health Reform, or *system transformation*, called for more local oversight, more input from families and individuals in need of services, and more focus on individuals with the most significant needs.

A system 30 years in the making is not transformed overnight. Community capacity to provide services relies on adequate funding and time for implementing new systems. Community funding has only been increasing through expansion in the use of Medicaid. Communities are now serving twice the number of people with disabilities and mental health needs as 10 years ago with only 11% more State funding. Medicaid pays for about 50% of these services, but only 1 in 5 people qualifies for Medicaid.

In the midst of state-wide system transformation, LifeSpan has moved forward with new, innovative services and programs. In spite of the challenges, LifeSpan has grown, expanded services, developed new programs and businesses, and continued to thrive in these times of political turmoil. Employment programs have transformed as individuals with disabilities have moved into the community. Adults with disabilities are now working in jobs that pay at least minimum wage (over 200 placed), volunteering in their communities (over 300 volunteered a total of 6,345 hours), and taking classes at local community colleges. Enrichment programs have expanded to include drama (The StarSpan Players), a nature center (The Blue Sky Nature Center), photography, horticulture, and therapeutic

horseback riding. Education programs have helped develop and implement cutting edge strategies to teach students with significant disabilities through collaboration and research with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. And our first business enterprise – Just Plain Country – is now operating and shipping orders throughout North America. LifeSpan has grown in numbers as well – now supporting over 2,200 people and operating 21 different services.



Mary Anna Bingham, Ph.D.
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

How has LifeSpan been able to do this? By staying mission-focused, and by being committed to best practices and determined to provide the people we support the opportunity to realize their dreams and live full, productive lives. LifeSpan recently received 4 awards in recognition of the progress made – *RSS's Outstanding Community Partner Award*, the *N. C. Adult Day Services Association's Exceptional Achievement in Activity Programming Award*, the *2007 Greensboro Chamber of Commerce's Business Award* for including people with disabilities in the workplace, and the *N. C. Council of Community Programs' Excellence in Best Practices Award*. There may be turmoil in the state as the system transforms, but LifeSpan continues to transform the lives of people with developmental disabilities every day.



Ralph Adams

The Ever-Changing World of Finance for a Non-Profit

The mental health system has gone through what most entities would define as a near total change over the last few years. We continually ride on the merry-go-round of change related to state cuts in funding to human services. Staff time allocated to documentation and invoice processing for services rendered is tremendous. The areas of significant change that we are dealing with this year include: changes related to how we submit invoices for payment, funding cuts from Medicaid, and new requirements from HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996).

LifeSpan has an accelerated need to purchase and install a sophisticated technology platform that will meet the needs for billing and processing of payments to our multiple funding sources. The complexity is: all of our funding sources have different rules and needs. We have installed new computers at each location. This was a necessity for our electronic billing, to aid with our email capability, and to support payroll processing. By focusing on our technology needs, and due to increased scrutiny of proper billing procedures, similar to hospitals and insurance companies, we unfortunately found we had a 25% error rate in first-time submission to funding providers.

While we are increasing our spending in the computer environment to properly process invoices for payment, our funding levels are changing in two ways. Some are being directly reduced and some are being redefined with new authorization levels, codes, and requirements, with the end result—reduction. Since 2004, LifeSpan has increased the number of individuals served by over 700. However, our annual income level has remained the same, even with the addition of programs in Alamance and Cabarrus.

All this sounds troublesome and impossible, but it's change. It's a change process that affects our financial ability to be strong. LifeSpan is competing effectively, due to one reason: willingness to accept change and map out strategies to implement change in this ever-changing world of finance for non-profits.

Mt. Airy

The third in our series of Philanthropy luncheons was held in Mt. Airy on April 19. The Surry area's chair of the Board of Visitors, Doug Draughn, welcomed 90 guests and kicked off the event. Community leaders learned about LifeSpan's vision for inclusion and building community supports for children and adults. To build understanding of the challenges our families face, John Haynes, Jr., shared his family's story of "Hopes and Dreams." Michelle Clifton told the audience of her community job at Papa John's and helped us all celebrate her empowerment and success! The event generated donations and interest in building further support. The event generated \$7,968 in donations and sponsorships, as well as interest in building further support.

Statesville

LifeSpan's 4th Philanthropy luncheon was held in Statesville on April 26. Highlights from the event were presentations to two local philanthropists: Corporate Philanthropist, BETCO, Inc., and Volunteer Philanthropist, students from the American Renaissance Middle School, both from Statesville. Also presented was LifeSpan's annual, statewide award—*Philanthropist of the Year*. This was the second time a citizen from Iredell County has been recognized. Lisa E. Carver, from Mooresville, received the award for her "love of mankind." As a representative of the National Wildlife Federation, Lisa has been an intricate part in creating LifeSpan's Blue Sky Nature Center in Troutman. The event raised \$14,055.



Concord

The 2007 season of LifeSpan's philanthropy events ended on May 3 with Cabarrus' 2nd event. Highlights of the event included a presentation to Pass & Seymour as the Corporate Philanthropist of the Year and the dedication of a garden bench honoring the memory of local philanthropist Mary Lore Brown. The event raised \$20,310.



Third Annual ARTability in Bloom

The Third Annual ARTability in Bloom event was held in Charlotte on Thursday evening, May 31. Guests enjoyed purchasing pottery and art from the very talented artists of LifeSpan. This year those in attendance were able to visit with artists while making direct purchases or bidding on silent auction pieces.

Five LifeSpan programs participated in the event, which was held at The Charlotte Museum of History. The Law Offices of Porter and Schwartz was the presenting sponsor for the second year. The catering was provided by Morrison Healthcare, a division of the Compass Group.



- OFFICE FURNITURE
- COMPUTER TABLES, CHAIRS
- ARTS AND CRAFTS SUPPLIES
- OFFICE SUPPLIES AND MACHINES
- SNACKS AND BOXED DRINKS
- GARDENING TOOLS AND SUPPLIES
- POTS AND PLANTERS
- SEED PACKETS
- PAINTING CANVASES
- LARGE ART FRAMES
- ACRYLIC AND WATERCOLOR PAINTS
- OUTDOOR BENCHES
- BIRDHOUSES AND BIRDSEED
- BIRDHOUSE STANDS
- CLASSROOM SUPPLIES
- TICKETS AND PASSES TO AREA EVENTS, MOVIES, CONCERTS, MINIATURE GOLF
- SMALL TRACTOR WITH CART
- GOLF CART
- TRACTOR WITH ATTACHED MOWER
- DOUBLE AND SINGLE FILE CABINETS (LOCKING)

VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Become a pen pal with someone from a LifeSpan employment program
- Host a summer picnic
- Teach a dance, art, or music class to children or adults
- Host a supply drive
- Adopt a classroom and get ready for the new school year
- Bring a volunteer group to the Blue Sky Nature Center to clear the brush and begin to create a wonderful landscape for walking trails, etc.
- Host a golf tournament for LifeSpan

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LifeSpan Acquires Local Non-Profit

Joshua's Farm board president, Todd Wolfram, shook hands with LifeSpan's board chair, Dr. Mary Lynne Calhoun, on June 21 and handed over the keys to the buildings at the farm. After close to a year of discussions, LifeSpan agreed to take over running Joshua's Farm, a therapeutic horseback riding facility located at 3701 Kidd Lane in Charlotte. The program will be called LifeSpan at Joshua's Farm and will be open to children and adults with developmental disabilities who are interested in participating in therapeutic riding or visiting the farm. For information on the farm, lessons, or volunteer opportunities, please contact program director Jennifer Frey Sternlieb at 704-393-0333 or jfreysternlieb@lifespanservices.org.

Scholarships Needed at Circle Schools

Early intervention is key to the success of a child with developmental delays. Funding available for pre-K education is tight. LifeSpan struggles financially to meet the needs of the 400 children at our five Circle Schools. It costs approximately \$10,000 per year to educate a typically developing child in pre-K and \$16,000 to educate a child with special needs in our schools. Please consider giving a tax deductible gift for scholarships at one of our five schools. You can designate your gift to help children at a location in your community. Circle Schools are located in Burlington, Charlotte, Mt. Airy (2 schools), and Statesville.

Contact Nancy McEneny at 704-944-5109 or nmceneny@lifespanservices.org if you would like to discuss a special gift in your area.

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