

VINFEN voice



FROM | THE PRESIDENT

This year, Vinfen celebrates 30 years of providing hope and opportunity to thousands of Massachusetts' most vulnerable populations: children and their families, individuals with mental health and mental retardation disabilities, and homeless individuals. In late 2006, former Governor Romney decided that these populations did not matter and cut \$425 million from programs that make a profound impact in the lives of those with disabilities.

For the first time in 16 years, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts elected a Democrat to the Governor's Office. As the first African-American Governor of Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick campaigned on the theme of "Together We Can."

As a leading provider of human services, Vinfen's mission is built around a similar theme of helping to transform lives for the more than 5,000 individuals we serve. We look forward to actively working with the new administration in Massachusetts—starting with the reversal of former Governor Romney's drastic and unnecessary cuts to human services.

Individuals with disabilities deserve the chance to live their lives to the fullest potential. We hope that Governor Patrick's "Together We Can" slogan will translate into adequate funding and respect for individuals with disabilities and human service employees.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Lamson

Passion for Psychiatric Nursing drives Lisa Cappuccilli

Lisa Cappuccilli, RN, was hired as Vinfen's Director of Nursing in early 2006. She brings more than 20 years of nursing and management experience to the organization, having held management positions at Commonwealth Communities, Inc., Golden Pond Assisted Living, University of Massachusetts Medical Center, HRI Hospital, and Bradley Hospital.

What attracted you to Vinfen? Psychiatric nursing is my passion and continues to drive me in my career. Individuals with either psychiatric or developmental disabilities require high-quality nursing treatment as part of their continuum of care. In my previous roles, I was getting further away from direct nursing care. When I read Vinfen's Director of Nursing "Help Wanted" ad, I jumped at the chance. During the interview process, I felt the passion and dedication and I knew that I wanted to be part of the team.

As the New Year begins, what has the Nursing Division accomplished in 2006? We have implemented several new initiatives. PowerPoint presentations on medical and lifestyle issues such as Diabetes, Sexuality, and Hepatitis were created to educate both individuals served and staff about some of the high-risk diagnoses encountered in our population. In December we started a health and wellness study. Five nurses are piloting a 12-week psychoeducational program, meeting weekly with residents at four group homes to discuss topics such as medication management, exercise and healthy food choices. The objective is to help persons served take charge of their health and make positive changes in their daily routines. Our recruitment and retention have greatly improved thanks to new staff programs such as the preceptor program for all new hires.

What is your foremost challenge for 2007? Many of the individuals served by Vinfen have complex medical, developmental, and psychiatric diagnoses with a long and irregular history of care. The Nursing Division will work with Dr. Ken Duckworth, Vinfen's Medical Director, to address each individual's specific medical needs. Our nurses will work in collaboration with the person served, the program, the clinical team, and the primary care physician to be more effective in the implementation of appropriate individualized care needs.

What is your philosophy of nursing care for our population? As a society, we must look beyond the labels of mental illness and developmental disabilities and realize that individuals with disabilities deserve proper and respectful access to services and supports. If someone from your family was diagnosed with a disability, wouldn't you want him or her to receive adequately-funded services and support and not be stigmatized for their disability? I would.



"Vinfen's nursing staff is a very talented group of professionals. This past year, I've been working to grow the nursing team to effectively meet the needs of our diverse population," says Director of Nursing Lisa Cappuccilli.

2006 Elections: The Power of Hope

by Maureen Drouin

As Director of Planning, I monitor major trends that affect human services, Vinfen, and those we serve. I watch political trends because what government does really matters. They are our primary funders, and policy decisions made at the state and federal levels can determine which issues get attention, from who receives which services to salary levels for those providing care. This election may significantly alter trends by changing the political party in power.

The 2006 results indicate that Americans overwhelmingly voted for change at all levels of government. For various reasons, many voters crossed party lines to vote out Republican incumbents. The power balance in Congress shifted to the Democrats, and we elected our first Democratic Governor in 16 years.

What do these changes mean? Realistically, Democrats still lack the two-thirds majority needed to pass legislation without risking a presidential veto. However, our representatives will play important roles on critical committees that help define the nation's policy agenda. As Bush's last term winds down, they may be able to prevent Republicans from cutting funding in areas such as housing and Medicaid. The 2008 Presidential election will decide what is possible going forward. At the state level, Governor-elect Patrick can influence human services policy by filling key Cabinet positions such as Secretary of the Executive Office of Health & Human Services, and the Commissioners of key agencies.

Other emerging trends: more wealthy voters chose Democrats than ever in recent history; Democrats got 18% more independent voters — the largest margin in 25 years; and 60% of under-30 voters supported House Democrats. "Bush has been the formative political experience for the youngest generation of voters, those 18 to 30. Studies of voting preferences show that the experience imprinted on a generation in its 20s largely determines its future political complexion. This generation is the most Democratic generation ever — more Democratic than the youngest voting generations of the New Deal and the 1960s," notes Sidney Blumenthal*. I believe these are welcome trends for those who receive and provide human services after decades of budget cuts and political neglect.

I also believe it's healthy that Massachusetts supported the candidate who talked about hope. In our field, we know all about the power of hope. Deval Patrick also seeks to engage our compassion, common sense, collaboration and commitment to the community. My response? I'm hopeful.

* *Generation Dem* by Sidney Blumenthal, Salon.com, Nov. 30, 2006.

SPOTLIGHT

HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS RALLY TO RESTORE FUNDING CUTS

More than 1,500 human service workers from across Massachusetts joined together on December 6 to protest Governor Romney's axe-wielding budget cuts affecting the state's most vulnerable populations and the direct care workers who provide services. Hundreds of Vinfen employees participated in the rally as well.

Four years ago, Gov. Romney vowed to never target the state's neediest residents — citizens affected by poverty, disabilities, homelessness, or aging. Sadly, he went back on his public vow and without warning used his emergency fiscal powers to cut \$425 million from state programs for this population. Included in his cuts was \$28 million from the Salary Reserve for human service employees. The Salary Reserve would have provided a much needed, yet minimal, pay raise to thousands of direct care workers throughout Massachusetts.

"It feels like we've been let down again. We always have to advocate not only for ourselves but those we serve. I hope that with this rally legislators will see the importance of what we do and make sure that we are financially viable," says Donald Rankins, Outreach Worker at a Vinfen Supported Housing and Psychiatric Rehabilitation program in Boston.

Michael Weekes, President of the Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, the state's largest human service trade association, energized the rally supporters with a passionate speech about the impact of the cuts on those with disabilities. "This is not a joke ... abused children, homeless families, people with mental and physical disabilities — they are not pork, they are people."

Other organizations participating in the rally as part of the newly-created Campaign for Public Responsibility included the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts, the Boston Center for Independent Living, Health Care for All, Homes for Families, Lynn Health Task Force, the Mass. Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Neighbor to Neighbor, Parent/Professional Advocacy League, the Public Policy Institute, and Stavros Center for Independent Living.

Vinfen Program Director Almeda Colby summed up the reason for the rally by saying, "We feel discouraged in a field that requires an abundance of courage and compassion. The work we do doesn't count for Governor Romney. But the truth is you won't find better people than the staff who work in the human service field. They are the every day heroes. Basically, we were all told 'Let them eat cake!'"

Epilogue

On December 28 Governor-elect Deval Patrick announced that he would restore all the cuts including the \$28 million from the Salary Reserve for human service employees. Our collective voice has made a difference but stay engaged as new reports project a \$1 billion deficit for 2007. Contact your state legislators and ask them to support those with disabilities. To know who your legislator is, go to www.mass.gov/legis/citytown.htm.



Braving the cold, Pinckney St. Residence Program Director Jacquie Burgess and Residential Counselor Jean Limoze kept their spirits up while protesting Romney's budget cuts at the Mass. State House on Dec. 6.



Seven Artists from Vinfen's Webster House and Gateway Arts Programs were featured this fall at the Watertown Arsenal Center for the Arts. Artist Torrianno DaRoza poses here in front of his work during the 'Meet the Artists' reception on October 26.

FINDING HIS WAY AT WEBSTER HOUSE

"I feel happy about my artwork. Before it was a little sketchy but now it's getting better," says Torrianno DaRoza while contemplating *TABLETOP*, an oil pastel painting he created at Vinfen's Webster House program in Brookline, MA. Webster House is a day rehabilitation program that helps more than 170 adults with persistent psychiatric disabilities live and work more independently. Converted into a clubhouse in 1991, it is organized into seven units co-run by staff and members and focused on orientation, advocacy, arts, communication, education, nutrition, and employment.

Torrianno became a Webster House member five years ago. He first joined Vinfen's Webster II program in 1994 where he worked on self medication skills, in the catering crew and the peer support group, and began making art. After participating in several art shows at the Webster House gallery, he decided to become a Webster House member with support from Webster II Nurse and Expressive Art Therapist Elizabeth Benham so that "he could focus more on his artwork in an artists' studio environment."

When he was a teenager, Torrianno experienced numerous seizures. He recalls feeling upset and wondering "why me?" when he was finally diagnosed with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy. "TLE is a condition arising from recurrent seizures originating from the temporal lobe with or without loss of awareness. It can manifest numerous psychiatric symptoms and co-occur with other disorders," explains Dr. Ken Duckworth, Vinfen's Medical Director. Medication compliance is a key factor for individuals with TLE to live fulfilling lives without seizures. To this day, Torrianno still works hard on his self medication skills with Benham and his mother, who he says is very supportive.

At the clubhouse, Torrianno gives enthusiastic tours to new members, participates in the production of the newsletter, and prepares lunches with the food unit. "Seeing people, having a schedule, and doing day-to-day tasks is really helping me. The artwork also helps me cope with changes," notes Torrianno. And visiting museums like Boston's Museum of Fine Arts with the Webster House Social Club "helps me in my artistic research. It's amazing to see how artists move on and evolve in their technique and style with time," he adds.

Since joining Vinfen's Webster House, Torrianno has participated in dozens of exhibits at local venues including the program's gallery. Recently, he was one of seven Vinfen artists featured at *On Equal Ground*, an outsider art show for artists with disabilities presented at the Arsenal Center for the Arts in Watertown. Torrianno says his parents were not sure at first if the clubhouse would be a good fit for him. "But now they tell me I have improved and are proud of what I do," he concludes.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

LECTURE AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY SARGENT COLLEGE

On November 8, Vinfen Occupational Therapist Cindy Barrows gave a 2-hour lecture at Boston University's Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences on Occupational Therapy interventions for individuals with substance abuse disorders. Barrows invited Substance Abuse Counselor Lavard Blanche from Vinfen Webster II Day Rehabilitation program and Webster II Recovery Bound sobriety support group members Denise Hall, Fred Holmes, and George Stimson to participate in a panel discussion.

THANKSGIVING LUNCH

On November 22, individuals served from Vinfen's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Division Metro-Boston area were invited to join a Thanksgiving Lunch organized by The Friends of Metro Boston and State Senator Jack Hart at Florian Hall in Dorchester.



Dudley Inn Program Director Mauri Mollan is flanked by Residents Paula Etsell and Calvin Gorth who enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving meal.

FULLER CONSUMER AWARDS BANQUET

Vinfen's Fuller Residential Network hosted its 12th Annual Consumer Awards Banquet on November 16 at the Russell Auditorium in Dorchester, MA. Several individuals served received Special Achievement Awards, and a new video celebrating the Fuller Network and featuring individuals served and their families, and staff, premiered at the event.



Gregory Cooper (l) proudly receives a Special Achievement Award presented by Vinfen Director of Service Chuck Tuplin.

