

Tacachale Tribune

October 2007



Tacachale is a Residential Center of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and a Community of Excellence

Florida Legislators Learn About Tacachale from Families and Staff

While only on campus for two and one-half hour tour, **Senator Steve Oelrich** and **Representative Larry Cretul** took an opportunity to talk with two family members of residents, **Superintendent Don Thomas** and staff members and residents throughout the facility.

Neither the Legislators nor their aides had ever had a tour of a developmental services residential facility. The "tour and talk" included the history of Tacachale, the special needs of our residents, our staffing requirements, and funding issues.

Mrs. Connie Howard, Chair of the Tacachale Advisory Board and mother of a long time Tacachale resident, told the Legislators services here at Tacachale are a needed resource for individuals with developmental disabilities. **Ms. Paula Welch**, also a member of the Tacachale Advisory Board spoke about the high quality of her sister's life on campus.



From Left: Rep. Cretul, Superintendent Thomas, and Sen. Oelrich after the tour.

The tour included stops at one of the secure homes for men committed to the forensic program, a home for persons requiring around the clock nursing care, the dental clinic and a worksite. Both Legislators appreciated the opportunity to see and talk with direct care staff and residents. They were surprised and impressed by the size of the campus and the range of services at Tacachale.

Senator Oelrich wrote to Superintendent Don Thomas, "I was very impressed with the care and treatment your residents receive in a caring environment. You all play a vital role in our community and I look forward to working

with you to ensure your needs at Tacachale are met."

In a separate visit, **Rep. Charles "Chuck" Chestnut**, was on campus to participate in the Length of Service Recognition Ceremony. He is on campus often and familiar with many staff members and Tacachale's services.

Judge and Mrs. "Doc" Burgess accompanied Mr. Thomas on a visit to see **Rep. Aaron Bean**. Rep. Bean has not had an opportunity to see Tacachale and was interested to hear about the positive experience the Burgess's have had. Both the Judge and Mrs. Burgess were excellent advocates for Tacachale on behalf of their child.

The Tacachale Calendar

- * Family and Friends Meeting on 11/14 at 10:30 at Staff Development
- * Christmas Parade on Thursday, 12/6 at 10am
- * Tree Lighting Ceremony, Tuesday, 12/4 at 6:30pm

Our new look!

Let us know what you think. We know from our family survey (read about the results on page 3) that our readers like to keep up with our news in the Tacachale Tribune. Our plan is to send you this three times a year.

We also started a newsletter just for our employees, so The Tacachale Tribune can focus on information for family members, guardians, our volunteers and the public.

Comments? Call Holli Rutledge at 352-955-5652 or email Holli_Rutledge@apd.state.fl.us or write to Community Relations, Tacachale, 1621 NE Waldo Road, Gainesville, FL 32609

Fall Meeting for Family and Friends of Tacachale

Can you plan to come join us on Wednesday, November 14th? It will be the second meeting of our newly energized Family & Friends of Tacachale Group. It's in the Staff Development Center on campus from 10:30 to Noon.

The meeting will have a

panel of our medical staff to talk about their work and how care is provided when a resident has to be hospitalized.

Dr. Boyd Kellett, Tacachale Medical Director and Trish King, Nursing Director, will also be able to answer questions you have. After the

meeting, we hope you can plan to stay for a box lunch. Please call to let us know if you're coming (352-955-5853) and if you plan to eat lunch. (Lunch is \$5.)

We also want to know if more people could come if the meetings are on a Saturday?

Friends of Tacachale Fund— A Successful Launch



From Left: Superintendent Thomas, Mrs. Connie Howard, Mrs. & Mr. James Surratt. Smiles all around at the launching of the Fund.

James and Liz Surratt made a wonderful donation to put the new fund in operation. In September they presented a check to Superintendent Thomas and Mrs. Connie Howard, Chair of the Family and Friends of Tacachale.

The Fund was started this summer as a new way for all members of the public, as well as family members and guardians to contribute to programs on campus to promote quality services to residents.

**Friends of Tacachale Fund c/o
Gainesville Community Fund
2622 N.W. 43rd Street, Suite B3
Gainesville, FL 32606-7428**

Family Day

The Fourth Annual Family and Friends Day for Facility 1 and 7 was fun, says Kelly Mangum, the Program Operations Administrator for the facilities. "My management staff enjoys hosting the annual event. Each year, invitations are sent out to the family members and friends of all the residents in the ten homes that are part of the facilities. The idea is to create a welcoming event that residents could enjoy with their families on a visit to campus."

This year's party included a spaghetti dinner on the patio at the Ray Greene Center and music. Each family had their picture taken at the party and it was printed out on the spot, to take home. Residents are welcomed at the party, even if their family members are unable to make the trip to Gainesville, so it's a festive day for everyone.



Annual Inspections of All of Tacachale's Homes & Services by AHCA

Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has the responsibility for inspecting all Intermediate Care Facilities for Developmentally Disabled. Through annual inspections they see if homes are in compliance with state and federal regulations.

There are almost 500 standards of care that can be reviewed. The review includes investigation of any consumer complaints; management and administration; nursing ser-

vices; social services; dietary services; laboratory services; compliance with state and federal fire safety codes.

They want to be sure that care plans are followed and that activities and services that are needed are provided.

After the review, AHCA checks back to be sure that any problems they may have noticed have been corrected. It is an intense inspection that staff take very seriously.

The facilities work hard all

year long to ensure optimal care is given to each and every resident. As a result Tacachale has had very successful AHCA audits this past year. All facilities but one have completed and cleared their annual Agency for Health Care Administration audit (AHCA). The last AHCA audit is due in December.

Staff members are proud of their good record of performance meeting AHCA standards.

Growing Opportunities on Campus

In the last issue we reported the increase in work, recreational and alternative activities on campus. We can now offer activities until 7:30 pm, and many weekend opportunities as well. We now have six program choices and extended hours.

Residents are enjoying themselves and for the months of July and August we had 2,998 visits to these alternative sites on our campus.

We needed more opportunities for residents who work, or have other obligations during the day or who are just not morning people.

We recently opened a Ceramics Program and plan other new activity choices in the coming months.

It is our creative staff and volunteers who help make our programs work. We are always looking for new ideas and support if you have some ideas to suggest to us! You can contact Justina McDonald, TIPS at 352-955-5528.

Special Olympic Teams for Tacachale Athletes

Recently 83 Tacachale residents competed in the County Special Olympics Bowling games. The, 67 bowled in the six-county Area Special Olympics Games.

Now Tacachale is proud to send 12 of our best bowlers to the State Special Olympics November 2nd and 3rd in Kissimmee, Florida. Twelve staff members, including a nurse will accompany the team. Ms. Rosa Williams, Volunteer Coordinator, who has overseen

Special Olympics for Tacachale for a number of years, has seen the resident involvement and their enjoyment of the games grow.

Ms. Williams says that, "I'm happy to get more community people involved with our residents and that happens through Special Olympics."

Basketball practice has started for competitions that will begin in December. In the Spring, Ms. Williams plans to start golf and bocce ball team.

To Our Families and Guardians—from Superintendent Thomas

I just concluded a series of town meetings with our staff, with give and take on a variety of issues. A significant topic of discussion was the state budget situation. At Tacachale, we received a reduction in salary dollars in the normal state budget process and a 4% reduction when state revenues were less than expected.

A hiring freeze was imposed statewide in August. The medical and direct care positions that serve our people were exempted from the freeze. To save dollars, we have worked to reduce overtime and have asked management staff to roll up their sleeves and work several shifts in homes every week. This has also helped them become reacquainted with the people that we serve, and improve communication with staff.

Recently, the Florida Legislature had a special session to re-

consider the state budget. Our leadership at APD did a great job working with the committees and it appears that the prior 4% budget reduction will be restored.

During these difficult financial times, our focus has been on maintaining the quality of life for the people living at Tacachale. While we have cut administrative travel, our athletes have still continued to travel for the Special Olympics and our Aktion Club members attended their statewide convention.

While our management and administrative staff is smaller, with increased expectations, our medical, nursing, and home care staff still are at full force, working daily with the people who live in our center, doing all that they can to improve their quality of life. Maximizing quality of life is critical to our mission.

Family & Guardian Survey Yielded Positive Results

This summer family members, guardians and guardian advocates were asked to rate services on campus and the quality of life for residents.

149 surveys have been returned and almost half of the people wrote comments about the high quality of care their family member or friend receives here at Tacachale.

"Mostly, I appreciate that my brother is safe and well cared for in a protected environment where people seem to care. Also I like that there is good communication between staff and family. Thank you all for caring." wrote one family member.

In fact, 97% of people

agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of life he/she has at Tacachale." 95% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The staff members on the homes are caring and careful with residents."

One person wrote to us that "Tacachale is an amazing place."

These comments written on the surveys tell us in another, more personal way, that family members and guardians are overwhelmingly appreciative of the high level of care and the quality of life that is possible for residents:

"I wouldn't have my sister

anywhere else. ...I trust Tacachale with all my heart for her care,"

"Each staff member takes pride in things that are above and beyond their duty. Sunland, now Tacachale, has really changed over the years. Just keep up the good work."

If family members pointed out some problems, our staff members followed up on each issue. The survey told our staff their hard work is appreciated and noticed. All the written comments were shared with staff members, but without revealing names of the person returning the survey.



Sensations Program

Based on a method with a funny name, **SNOEZELEN**, the Sensations Program is pictured above and below this article.

The rooms have low, twinkling lights, soft sounds, good smells, varied things to touch, and moving images. There are soft places to sit down or lie down and be gently moved or rocked. It provides a recreational alternative for our residents. It is a setting for deep relaxation as well as sensory stimulation that is calming and enjoyable. The benefits include stress reduction, choice-making, reduction in problem behaviors and enriched interactions with others.

Currently 51 persons with varying disabilities, including those who have low levels of responding, or are medically fragile, have sensory impairments, and some with autism participate. Referrals to Sensations are made by the Inter-Disciplinary Team. More information? Call Megan Williams at 352-955-5587.



A Note about the Holidays at Tacachale



The Holidays are a great time on campus. Residents and staff members enjoy the preparations, the holiday parties and special programs.

During the holidays, many

family members also look for ways to show special attention to staff members. This is a gentle reminder that our staff members cannot legally accept any gifts or any money from you for the work they do. State law prohibits this and we ask that you not put our staff members in an uncomfortable position.

On the positive side, a card expressing your appreciation is always welcome and valued

by our staff. They are proud of the work they do and it is nice when people notice.

Here's another idea. One of the goals for the Friends of Tacachale Fund is to promote quality care. Many people who have been able to make a contribution to this new Fund, have said they want to support center wide staff appreciation events. On page 2, are the details about making a contribution. Thank you!

Tacachale

1621 NE Waldo Road
Gainesville, FL 32609

Phone: 352-955-5000



Hope Chapel News - Linda Ballard, Chaplain

Each year since 1986, a group from our community has attended the Lake Yale Special Education Retreat sponsored by the Florida Baptist Convention. Attendance has grown with each year and this year 150 residents went to the Lake Yale retreat on June 15 & 16. This year's theme "Game Day Central: Where Heroes Are Made." Our cheer: "Run the race keeping our eyes on Jesus" from Hebrews 12:1-2. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and worship.

The Fellowship of Developmental Disabilities Ministries (FDDM) met in Atlanta in September. The theme was the "Seasons of Our Lives." Tacachale staff presented two of

the eight workshops. Ken McDonald, Tacachale Assistant Superintendent, spoke on "A Biblical Perspective of Applied Behavior Analysis", while Luz Matos and myself, spoke on "Helping People with Developmental Disabilities Deal with Grief."

The 2008 conference is scheduled for Gainesville and Ms. Matos and I will be making the arrangements. If any of you would like to be a part and help host the FDDM Workshop next year, contact me at 352-955-5752.

October is a special month for Spiritual Emphasis at Hope Chapel. Community groups will join us in leading worship. October 29 is our Annual Faith Walk and following the

"Walk," we will gather in the chapel for our Fifth Monday Praisefest. We will walk past the chapel around Central Park and back to the chapel. In the morning join us at 9 AM at the Auditorium and in the evening, we will meet 6:45 PM. Thanks to our Screen Printing crew: Craig Hill, JoAnn Woods and Gail Jackson we have beautiful, Navy blue shirts with gold lettering that provide a wonderful message of God's involvement in our lives. ***"Your vibrant beauty has gotten inside us- You've been so good to us! We're walking on air! All we are and have we owe to God, Holy God of Israel, our King!"*** from Psalms 89:17-18,

We're on the Web

apd.myflorida.com/tacachale

If you have a computer, we hope you get on the internet and take a look. Our site is under construction and it will change as information is added.

You can see a slide show about "Mark's Life at Tacachale," that was created with the authorization of Mark's family. The goal was to make the public aware of the quality of services offered to residents here at Tacachale and to learn more about the facility.

What you would like to see included? Click on the "contact us" tab to send your idea.