

## Merry Christmas

It's the most wonderful time of the year! At Sunland Center, the magic of the holiday season can be seen twinkling in the lights of the Christmas tree, holiday decorations around the Center grounds, in our homes, and especially in the eyes and smiles of residents and staff.

As we observe holiday traditions, we are reminded of the true spirit of Christmas: Love. We see it all around us, with every opportunity to serve, every occasion to celebrate, and in our every day lives. Our residents love us, and we love them. This is life as it should be. Caring for others, giving of ourselves to enrich the lives of those we are privileged to serve.

May your lives be enriched, may your hearts and homes be filled with love, happiness, peace and good health.

## Christmas Tree Lighting Kicks Off Holidays at Sunland!

The annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony officially kicks off the holiday season at Sunland and is one of the most popular holiday activities for residents and staff. On November 30, the beautifully decorated Suntown Mall welcomed Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus, who made a special appearance at this event, taking time to snap photos and accept Christmas wish lists. The Commons, located between the Mall, Centralized Support Services and the Jackson County School program, were quite festive. The Center's Christmas Tree was the focal point, flanked by hand-crafted Snowmen who set the scene for a fabulous winter wonderland! Those in attendance were treated to hot chocolate and delicious fresh baked cookies. A special thanks to organizers of this event, and to the Friends of Sunland, Inc., who provided the cookies.



## Sunland Christmas Parade

There's no doubt Christmas is in the air when the Sunland Christmas Parade kicks off each year! Residents and staff eagerly line the parade route, cheering on all the parade entries, clapping with the bands, jostling to catch lots of candy and, most importantly, get a wave in to Santa Claus.

Special guests for this year's parade included Marianna Police Chief Hayes Baggett, Jackson County Tax Collector Mary Carol Murdock, Retired Tax Collector Betty Hatcher, Marianna Fire Chief Nicky Lovett, and Jackson County School Board Superintendent Larry Moore, along with School Board Members Charlotte Gardner and Tony Pumphrey. They were joined by the bands from Marianna High School and Marianna Middle School, and the Grinch, who made his way throughout the parade and sidewalks, teasing unsuspecting parade participants and observers. All said, it was a fun afternoon!



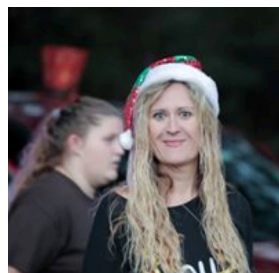
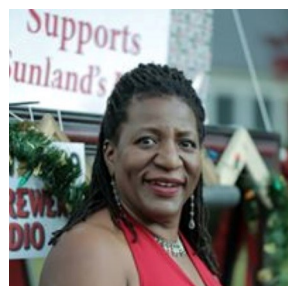
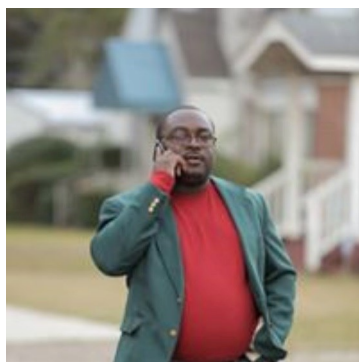
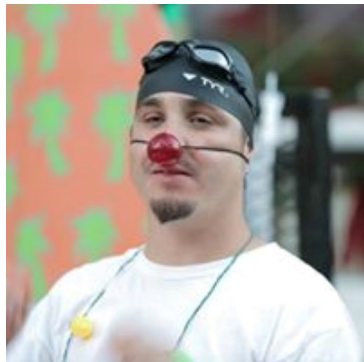
## Marianna Christmas Parade

Sunland was well-represented at the Marianna Christmas Parade this year by Maria Johnson, Volunteer Coordinator, and art instructor for Sunland "Hub" art program, along with staff members Annette Odom, and Robin Snellgrove, and art students Jerry S. and Robert C. The Hub students designed the Sunland float, entitled "SeaSun's Greetings" featuring a tropical Christmas. The float was decorated with lighted palm trees, a large snowman dressed in tropical attire and other tropical props. Congratulations to the Hub students who designed and painted the snowman ~ very well done!

The annual Marianna Christmas Parade draws a huge showing of support from the local community. In addition to the Sunland float, several Sunland staff, retirees, and "Friends of Sunland" were also seen participating in the parade, representing their local churches and other organizations.



### Merry Christmas from Sunland!



## From the Superintendent...

Here we are in December! Another fantastic year! We have so much for which to be grateful. I decided I would not chronicle our events of the past year in this piece, because I will surely miss something. Instead, I decided to applaud you individually and collectively as a body of individuals who are committed to this important work. Publicly, I want to thank you for your individuality, strengths, smiles, kind words, contributions, and hard work at DDDP, RISH Park, and Sunland. I want to encourage your hearts and affirm that we (leadership) see what you do daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Your commitment is unparalleled. And, as a team, you are second to none! When you harness the spirit of teamwork no task is left undone. You bring life to whatever space you occupy!

Stay encouraged knowing that you are making a difference. Borrowing from a few motivational sources to drive this point home. Charles Schwab says, "The way to develop the best that is in a person is by appreciation and encouragement." Tom Rankin advances this further using the words of Maya Angelou, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Michael Mayfield's words similarly resonate, "Our staff members are the best that can be found anywhere!" Tina Weber offers from a regional and DDC perspective that, "We are on the brink of greatness. Thanks to our staff!" Director Palmer gives her heartfelt thanks to staff at every opportunity.

Time reflects that the opportunity to lend support to individuals with intellectual /developmental disabilities in the developmental disabilities centers is undergirded by caring, considerate, compassionate, and dedicated staff. Staff whose commitment is demonstrated by acts of kindness in the embrace of dignity and respect. Daily you continue to teach us more and more about this important work that we are doing. This cannot be found in the halls of academia or a textbook. It is real work and you are making a real impact! I am the richer for serving with you!

Moving forward, building on last year's team challenge of completing and actualizing the theme: The Year of Building, we will begin 2018 answering and operationalizing this question: *Where do you find meaning in your work?* I cannot wait to see what team members do with this. Unleash the creativity! In prior years, we've seen: Madea, Ike and Tina, Sinatra, Family Feud, the church choir, the Glory Train, Redd Fox, the Grinch, Lil' Red Riding Hood, and oh so much more! I was so afraid we would lose some of our wonderful staff to Hollywood. I just knew they would come calling. Truth be told we did lose a wolf to Chipola. The wolf's debut was so phenomenal in Lil' Red Riding Hood that she landed a spot with Chipola's Theater Group. Good news!

Back to the question: *Where do you find meaning in your work?* You can thank one of my professors for this. Professor Christine Letts introduced me to Herman Leonard's Question Zero. Harvard Business School Professor Leonard's Question Zero asks: "What exactly are we trying to accomplish?" In other words, if there is no answer for Question Zero, then in his words, "don't bother with questions 1 through 99." How do you answer Question Zero?

**Happy New Year Wonderful Team – 2018 is going to be a Grand Year!**

Grateful to serve with you,

*Geri Williams*  
Superintendent

# Meaning

## Sunland Hub Art Class Spreads Holiday Cheer!

Pictures of Sunland's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony were shared with Marianna Police Chief Hayes Baggett. He was amazed at the detail and work that the art students were able to display in each snowman to reflect the various characters represented. His interest sparked an idea. The art students wanted to create a Policeman Snowman for the Marianna Police Department. Supplies were donated by an anonymous donor and the project was underway. The Snowman was completed and donated to the Marianna Police Department on Thursday December 7, 2017. It was proudly presented to Chief Baggett by the Hub Art Class.

Contributed by: Maria Johnson



*Merry Christmas  
from the Hub!*



## Sons of Italy Christmas Party

Many years ago, the Sons of Italy in Niceville, Florida began a holiday tradition of hosting annual Christmas parties for Sunland residents. Over the years, lasting friendships have formed between the organization and Sunland; relationships that we value and are grateful for. Following a delicious Italian meal, residents enjoyed visiting with Santa, receiving special gifts just for them, and dancing the afternoon away. Thank you, Sons of Italy for all you do to make the Sunland Christmas Party and wonderful occasion.



## Knights of Columbus Christmas Party

Acts of kindness come in many forms. Each year, the "Knights of Columbus" host a special Christmas party for residents from Grant and Buchanan Homes. This year was especially meaningful. The party, which was originally scheduled for Saturday, December 9, had to be postponed due to inclement weather making travel to Ft. Walton impossible for Sunland. However, members of the organization were not willing to let this year pass by without wishing their friends from Sunland a Merry Christmas. Three members of the group traveled to Marianna on December 13 to host the Christmas Party here at Sunland. Residents were thrilled to see their long-time friends, enjoy the delicious ice cream and cookies, and gifts from Santa Claus. A special thank you to the Knights of Columbus for the kindness you extend to Sunland every year. We appreciate and honor your generosity.





## Riverside Elementary School "Beaver Chorus" Performs at Sunland

Sunland residents and staff enjoyed an entertaining Christmas musical on Wednesday, December 13, performed by the Riverside Elementary School "Beaver Chorus" under the direction of Ms. Flora Davis. The students performed "The Littlest Reindeer" an amusing musical about Christmas preparations at the North Pole. As the story unfolds, the elves and crew are putting the final touches on Santa's sleigh when who should appear but the Littlest Reindeer! All the elves and the other reindeer laugh at her and tell her she's too small, but she comes to the rescue when Santa gets stuck in a too-small chimney. The musical was delightful, drawing lots of laughter and cheers from the audience. To round out their performance, the children's choir sang a variety of Christmas Carols, finishing with "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." Following the event, the children were presented with goodie bags, courtesy of Ms. Tannikka Godwin.

A special thank you to Riverside Elementary, Ms. Davis and the Beaver Chorus for sharing their amazing talents with Sunland!



*"The Littlest Reindeer"*



## 2017 Christmas Fest

Christmas time at Sunland would not be complete without the annual Christmas Fest talent show, which showcases the talent of our residents! This year's show was filled with a variety of entertainment from all three residential Units, and Pathways. A variety of holiday songs and dance numbers proved to be crowd pleasers, with many singing along and clapping with lively applause. Congratulations to each of our performers for a job well done!



# Residential Services

## Unit 1 Staff Appreciation

With the holiday season quickly approaching, it's easy to forget that the holidays are really about love and gratitude; not about gift buying and receiving. It's the time of year to show your appreciation toward others, a time to stop and say THANK YOU! Ms. Felicia Smith, POA, Unit 1 did exactly that for a group of dedicated and hardworking staff. On Wednesday, November 29, Ms. Smith invited all Unit 1 staff to lunch and dinner. The Mixer was reserved, first and second shift, administrative, and nursing staff were invited to a catered smoked chicken meal. Standing at the front of the serving line and serving staff, she could be heard saying "thank you for all you do, we couldn't do it without you." She encouraged them to fill their plates with the desserts that the Unit 1 Residential Services Supervisors (RSS's) and Social Services staff volunteered to provide. Some took their meals and headed back to the homes, while others sat, ate and fellowshiped with each other. Staff members were grateful and really seemed to enjoy the opportunity to sit and eat together. She didn't stop there. Bright and early (5 a.m.) Thursday morning, Ms. Smith and Ms. Corliss McGriff, Residential Services Director for Unit 1, prepared and served breakfast to third shift staff. As she served staff, she told each of them "thank you for holding down third shift; it takes a special person to do so. I know I couldn't do it." Staff were appreciative and took the opportunity to convey their appreciation as well as taking a moment just to talk. Often times, a grand gesture is not needed to convey gratitude, a simple "thank you - I appreciate what you do" will suffice. *"Gratitude is the only lasting motivator of change"* (Bryan Miles, CEO of eaHELP) As we move forward into the new year, and in an attempt to facilitate positive change, let us all take an attitude of gratitude for simple pleasures, small favors, and kind words. Gratitude is infectious - pass it on! Thank you Ms. Smith! We certainly appreciate everything you do!

**THANK YOU & Merry Christmas to our Unit 1 Staff!**



Contributed by: Corliss McGriff

# Residential Services

**Unit 2** - On December 21, Unit 2 Administration hosted a Christmas Tea for their employees in appreciation of the Unit team's hard work and dedication. An assortment of refreshments, cake and punch were served, along with friendly smiles and a time of fellowship.



# Residential Services

## Unit 3 Holiday Celebration

A special holiday celebration was hosted for the staff of Unit 3, in appreciation of their hard-work and dedication to the residents who reside in the Unit 3 homes. Mr. Adrian Abner, Deputy Superintendent and also Acting Unit 3 Program Operations Administrator, along with Unit 3 supervisory staff provided a delicious baked chicken dinner, complete with all the trimmings and home baked desserts. A special thanks to Deron Johnson, who prepared the meal, and those who prepared the delicious desserts. Staff were very appreciative and enjoyed a great time of fellowship with one another.



**Merry Christmas Unit 3 Staff!**



## Holiday Spirit on the Homes!

Throughout the month of December, our residential homes have been enjoying decorating, shopping, outings, and all of the festivities of the season. A couple of the homes shared some of their excitement for the Beacon.

**East Truman House** - The staff of East Truman have been quite busy working like Santa's elves this holiday season, decorating and shopping for our men and their families. All three shifts worked together to make this season a special event. With that being said, our men attended the Marianna Christmas Parade and the Sons of Italy Christmas party in Fort Walton. They also enjoyed a Christmas dinner at Sonny's BBQ, shopping in Marianna and going to see the movie "Stars Wars." Even with all the activities our men have been involved with on-center, they made sure to help decorate our home for the Christmas judging contest. Although we had very many happy moments in this month, we also bid a sad farewell to Michael F., who moved to his new home in Lynn Haven, Florida. He will certainly be missed, but we wish him well in his new season of life. We hope everyone has a safe and Happy Holiday and a BLESSED New Year. Merry Christmas from the East Truman Team!



**Thiel Center** - The residents of the Thiel Center are very excited about the holiday season this year. The home is beautifully decorated, and Christmas is in the air! Packages and gifts have been coming in, which builds the anticipation for Christmas morning. As you can see below, Catherine C. was especially excited to show off her gift package. On December 11, we had a Christmas ornament decorating day, followed with cookies and milk. On December 23, four of our residents enjoyed a special outing for church services at St. Paul AME Church in Campbellton, Florida. Thiel Center loves Christmas!



## Christmas Program

The annual Christmas Program, put on by staff to entertain residents and co-workers, is a highlight of the Christmas season at Sunland. Staff from various departments put together a variety of musical numbers and comical skits, much to the delight of the capacity crowd that gathers to enjoy the show. The old saying "laughter is good for the soul" holds true at Sunland. The Christmas Program certainly draws much laughter and roaring cheers from the audience. A good indication that happiness is in the air!



♥ LAUGHTER  
is  
FOR GOOD  
THE  
SOUL ♥



## Special Olympics Florida State Bowling Championships

Four individuals from Sunland recently traveled to Orlando to take part in the Special Olympics Florida State Bowling Championships. The event took place at the Boardwalk Bowling Center December 8-9, and included over 500 bowlers from around the state. The Sunland contingency of bowlers took to the lanes on Friday afternoon and found themselves competing against some excellent bowlers. Participants bowled two games each and then their scores were combined to produce the final results. When the final tally was in, Sunland's four bowlers had harnessed three medals and one ribbon. Results for the Sunland bowlers were as follows:

Silver Medal – Arnaldo M. & John B.  
Bronze Medal – Cheryl D.  
Fourth Place Ribbon – Eddie T.

Sunland staff that traveled to the State Championships included Johnny Hodges, Sabrina Johnson, Clint Cox and Mary Herring (Nurse). Thanks to all the Departments/Units/Areas that had a hand in making this year's bowling season such a huge success.



Contributed by: Clint Cox



## December Star Awards!

Due to Sunland's busy holiday schedule, Star Awards for the month of December were presented on January 9. Award presentations were made by Deputy Superintendent Adrian Abner, along with Unit 1 POA Felicia Smith, and Operations/Maintenance Director Allen Ward.



**Gold Medal Star Team Award - Unit 1**  
 Vicky Curry & Jackie Williams, Mary Ann Pearson  
 Pictured with: Adrian Abner & Felicia Smith  
 Not pictured: Mary Ann Pearson



**Silver Medal Star Award—Katrena Chaney**  
 Pictured with: Adrian Abner, Felicia Smith, Tondelayo Clemons & Maurice Myrick



**Silver Medal Star Award - Vicky Curry**  
 Pictured with: Adrian Abner & Felicia Smith



**Gold Medal Star Team Award - Unit 2 & Security**  
 Doug Stone, Mary Hatcher, Phil Anderson, Heather Poythress & Lucious Williams  
 Pictured with: Adrian Abner  
 Not pictured: Rebecca Snyder, Jaquana Wright, Ava Neel, Tasha Bellamy, Tracy Johnson, Xavier Perry, Latoya Pollocks, Dominique Murrell, Callie Boyd, Betsy Newman, Ron Richardson & Lawanda Calhoun



**Gold Medal Team Award - Unit 3**  
 Pictured: Adrian Abner, Christina Berrieum & Bart Harrell  
 Not Pictured: Brandy Davis, Jenethal Reed, Laura Brunson, Stacy Reed & Angela Brown



**Gold Medal Star Award - Stephen Smith**  
 Pictured with: Adrian Abner & Allen Ward

## 2017 Sunland Star Department of the Year Award

And the winner is...*Centralized Support Services*! Congratulations to the staff of CSS for being recognized as the 2017 Sunland Star Department of the Year! Overall, CSS had the highest percentage of Star Awards, per staff ratio during 2017, with a 49% rate of staff recognition! Pictured below are Deputy Superintendent Adrian Abner, CSS Director James Godwin and a number of CSS staff who were on-hand for the award ceremony. Way to go CSS!



## Covenant Hospice Bereavement Seminar

Staff from Covenant Hospice partnered with Sunland on Monday, December 18 to provide a bereavement seminar for our staff. Ms. Jaci Bartley, MSW, Bereavement Coordinator with Covenant Care was the speaker for this event. She spoke about "Coping with the Holidays Following a Loss," identifying the phases of grief and provided coping strategies that are helpful during the holidays. The seminar was informative and very much appreciated. Thank you Covenant Hospice for giving of your time and resources to lend support to Sunland Center.



## HUMAN RESOURCES



### Sunland HR Team

Katey Hobbs, Lizzie Holland,  
Nicole Sims & Veronica Mullinax

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

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>



### DDDP HR TEAM

Faith Bentley, Jodi Nesmith, Debra Cone

## "Loans at Work"

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities has partnered with BMG Money to set up the Loans at Work Program for our employees. This is an emergency loan program that is now available to benefits-eligible employees at APD:

- ✓ \$500 - \$5,000 loans available to benefits-eligible employees with at least one year on the job.
- ✓ Benefits Eligible Employees include Career Service, SES, SMS and OPS employees who work at least 30 hours a week.
- ✓ Repayment via automated post-tax payroll deduction over 6-24 months.
- ✓ Fixed annual interest rate of 23.99%

For more information, visit [www.LoansAtWork.com](http://www.LoansAtWork.com) or call BMG at 800-316-8507 for more information.

## NEW EMPLOYEES



Ferron Godwin	Sonia Carter
Latonya Wilson	Bart Harrel
Mercedes Adams	Shedrick Brown
Kimberly Traylor	Jessica Stephens
Vincent Nieves-Paugh	Latoria Lewis
Fiona Bess	Shirley Smith
Katura Montgomery	Erica Goodman
	Lindsey Harrison
	Douglas Shiver

*Welcome Aboard!*



agency for persons with disabilities  
State of Florida

## Project Sunland PRIDE



Beautification Program!

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DESIRABLE ENVIRONMENT

# "Community Spotlight of the Month" CSS Commons



### "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