



**ANGELS
UNAWARE, INC.**
Residential Care for the Developmentally Disabled.

The Angels Ledger

Volume , Issue I

March 2006

2006

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Spring Clean-up



ATTENTION SERVICE CLUBS!!!!



Earn Community Service Hours



This is the perfect opportunity for your service club to obtain community service hours. It's spring time and many of our homes are in need of spring yard cleaning.



Some of the houses need minor exterior touchup and small repairs.



Please contact our office to inquire about giving us a helping hand and earning some service hours.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

A special thank you to the family of WILLIAM (BILL) HARPER CURLIN JR. who passed away due to a very tragic accident. Mr. Curlin lived next door to a young man that our Executive Director as a teen, taught to swim, and was a counselor to him at summer camps in Ocala. This young man with Downs Syndrome had a profound effect on Mr. Curlin after he came to know him. Sometime after this young man's father died and mom became incapacitated he was placed in an inappropriate situation, and it didn't go well for him. Mr. Curlin said if he ever won the lottery he would build a group home for this young man. Mr. Curlin never won the lottery, but through his death his family made a very generous donation to Angels Unaware, Inc. We will be dedicating one of our homes in memory of Mr. Curlin.

"Never let what you can't do get in the way of what you can do."

Thank you Curlin family.

We know your husband and father is very proud of what you have done for Angels Unaware.

MISSION STATEMENT

Angels Unaware, Inc. is a non-profit corporation operating in Hillsborough County, whose express goal is to provide quality professional residential group-home care for severe and profound developmentally disabled individuals. We currently own and operate nine homes serving fifty-two handicapped residents. Each home is highly specialized to serve the individual needs of its residents. Current training utilizes a behavioral management approach designed to meet the needs of each individual. A Board of Directors made up of parents, concerned professionals and other concerned citizens from the community governs the Corporation.

H.A.L.O.

Update

The H.A.L.O. Foundation supports Angels Unaware, Inc. This year they are setting new and higher goals for 2006. They have been working hard to raise money to support our organization. Please continue to support this organization by sending your check to:

The H.A.L.O. Foundation
c/o Angels Unaware
P.O. Box 270040
Tampa, Florida 33688-0040

The foundation is looking for board members. If you are interested in becoming a board member please contact Ross O'Bannion at 813-961-1159.

H.A.L.O. Donation

In memory of
Katherine Shiro Lodato

Dolan and Rosalyn Buchanan

A Word From Ross

A Word From Ross

Ross O'Banion – Executive Director

Dear Supporters of Angels Unaware, Inc.

As most of you know, this past year has been a real challenge to the survival of Angels Unaware. My motto is "Never let what you can't do get in the way of what you can." We will keep doing, and working to do more to improve the lives of the Developmentally Disabled of Florida, because that is what "we can do."

This year we had two more individuals move from our group home program into their own home, as a team. They are not just surviving but are really growing. When asked if they wanted to move back into the group home both gave a big smile and a resounding firm "no". I'd say that's how we should measure our success!

Our group homes this last year operated in the "red ink" area of the ledger. We have taken this year to build a survival plan to change that fact and are quickly putting that plan into effect. Part of the plan is to fill our vacancies, and that is now happening. Soon we will be able to hang out the "no vacancy" sign again. This has given some folks in our community a much needed placement and an exciting opportunity. We will try to share their stories in future newsletters.

With beginning of spring comes the Legislative Session. While Angels Unaware, Inc. can not make candidate endorsements, we can encourage you to consider wisely the positions and the effects. During the past few years, millions of dollars have been added to the D.S. (now called A.P.D.) budget to meet needs. While this has been a blessing to those on the waiting list, it also carried with it a curse in the form of utilization review. You may have heard of the Maximus organization. This is the hiring of the State that reviews each consumer's needs and decides what is granted and what is in their opinion not necessary. They never meet the person with DD, its all done by paper work. In short, it is the H.M.O. approach to services. The result is that providers are buried in paperwork instead of providing services. These same services that our folks need and are routinely cut each year. We spend countless hours trying to appeal and get the services restored before something tragic happens. The rates have not been adjusted as was recommended by the legislature's own study, We are back to the same problems that was identified by the study. The question is "are we better today than yesterday". Some are, many of our consumers are not.

Sometimes we need a gracious warning that we've veered off the high road. This is where we encourage you to do what "you can do." Write, call, and visit your Legislator, explain to them how the "Giving with one hand, and taking away with the other" has affected you, your child, and organizations like Angels Unaware. Call them frequently and watch how they vote, and then you need to vote. **NOW IS THE TIME!!!**

Ross H. O'Banion Jr. – Executive Director

Letter From the President—Bob Albano

Many thanks to our 2005 board members for their hard work last year. 2005 was full of many tough challenges and I'm sure that 2006 will be no different.

This year we are welcoming Cliff and Cynthia May to our board. Cliff had agreed to serve on the H.A.L.O board and Cynthia will serve on the fundraising committee. ***We need more participation from our members, friends and families.*** The Board of Directors has several committees that need volunteers. Gary Pailthorpe is always looking for help on his fundraising committee. Betsy and Debbie head-up our Auxiliary committee. This committee supports the other committees with man power from other service clubs. Mairanne heads-up our Political Action committee. This committee helps with political issues that concern the mentally disabled. We are also looking for help with public relations and out mailing lists.

Please let me know if you can help.

Why Should I Come to Work Today?

I remember when the group home was meant to be as close to 'home' as possible. Staff was trained to tread carefully on the line of being parental but not to replace the parent. Normalization, back then, meant being who we are without the disability defining us. It meant 'downsizing' the number of people in each house so that we'd be less 'Brady Bunch' and more like the family next door. Our house looked like everyone else's, except that the lawn was better kept.

I remember the State Social Worker adjusting her visit to be around dinner time so that she could eat at the table with the guys. After dinner we would get together and she would ask what was needed and we would plan together and on her next visit we would review to see if the plan worked based on if the person was actually helped. She knew their goals, she knew their challenges: she knew the person.

Then there came the concept of the Independent Support Coordinator. In theory, the person was the advocate for 'the client'. We, in the home, were told that we were just one of many service providers (and an expendable one at that). This new advocate was on the side of the client – as opposed to the State, the family or the home. The hypocrisy of the title soon became apparent. Although 'independent' from the family, the home, the ADT and, functionally, the client, they were not independent from the State. The authority over them and the rules they had to conform to were the State's. Today they are more accurately called Waiver Coordinators to better describe what they do and what they serve.

The way things are today, the 'client' no longer lives in his own home. He lives in a facility receiving services. He is always supposed to be on his way somewhere. He is always working to achieve something. This works for the State as long as what he is achieving and where he is going is cheaper than where he is today. The State has positioned themselves as the sole advocate of record (in spite of their own sterling record). The license or the funding is imperiled if compliance is not met. If 'providers' try to stand up for the people affected or concerned parents organize effectively they are dismissed as having a vested interest.

I have always held that you judge others according to who you are. When we are accused of having a 'vested interest' the State assumes that interest to be monetary. They do so primarily because their interest, in application, seems to be monetary. A 'vested interest', for my part, is freely confessed. But our interest, however, is not financial. We may complain about the available funds. This is only as we see good, qualified staff either take a second job to afford to work with the guys or disappear from the field altogether. Maximus withholds needed funding from reaching the people who show signs of independence while Delmarva takes the funding away if they are not achieving independence. Of more importance, however, is that despite language in the State's rules such as 'person centered' or 'individualized supports' funding issues like 'Behavioral Focused Homes' and the 'Funding Grid' force the issue of homogenous grouping. The infamous 'Cost Containment' memo goes as far as stating that people living in Supported Living can only do so if it can be done cheaper than in a group home. Those of us that have been around awhile remember the Sunland Centers and see the funding shepherding right back there.

We see a medical model being imposed on people that are not 'sick' and aren't our patients. We always saw Mental Retardation as a big boulder that's in the way. In our role as teachers we were to find ways to go around, over or straight through that boulder to help the person live as he chooses to. We never considered them as sick. There was no inherent diminishment of the person. We, of course, acknowledge a 'difference' but not a 'less than' or damaged image of worth as a person.

An 'us versus them' attitude has taken hold. The 'we' being the people who actually work with the guys, the families and the guys themselves and the 'them' being the State and the paid desk monitors. As rules mount up that strip the guys of choices and the punishments become more severe, words that say we're all working for the 'client' (sorry, they're 'recipients' now) ring hollow. The State funds the Group Homes as if the guys disappear when they are not receiving treatment. (an improvement over the previous assumption that they disappear from their own homes every weekend and holiday). The relationship with the State is one of checks and balances and adversarial on issues of choice and rights that require any assistance on the State's part. It has become a full-time job of paper-compliance, an enormous time investment in begging and pleading (justifying) funds, vigilance in defending the rights guaranteed by law but redefined to an ineffectual ideal if inconvenient to the State's budget goals.

So we come to work girded for battle and speak for our guys because their speech therapy has been cut and we remember that institutional care would save the State more money still. We do all that we can to keep a state worker in my office than to allow this invasive stranger into the homes of our charges. We will translate the simple request of one of our guys into a sixty page document package that the State can understand. **We come to work today because even though there are thousands waiting for us to stand up for them there is no waiting list of people to take our place.**

James Epperson

A Special Thanks

Virgil Fabian of Fabian Enterprises has been a great supporter of Angels Unaware, Inc. for many, many years. Once again Virgil has generously donated kitchen supplies that we needed in our group homes as well as a generous cash donation. Thanks once again to Fabian Enterprises and may I encourage you to remember this company for all you commercial kitchen needs.

Thank you Harver Aluminum

Once again, the Harver Aluminum guys came through with our 2005 Christmas Tree ornaments. This fundraiser means so much to our organization and they make it all possible. Thank you all so much!



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UNAWARE, INC.**

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**ANGELS
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A copy of Angels Unaware's official registration and financial information may be obtained from the division of consumer services by calling toll-free 1-800-435-7352 (refer to CH8732) within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

Visit us on the web on the web
www.angelsunaware.com

Wish Lists

Angels 1
Rugs
Baking Pans

Angels 2
Passes to the Theme Parks
Rocking Chair

Angels 3
Bath Mats Dish Towels
Dish Clothes Toaster
Blender Electric Juicer

Angels 5
Throw Rugs
Barbecue Gas Grill

Angels 8
Bath Rugs
Welcome Mat
Blender
Juicer

Angels 4
Wash cloths & Hand towels
4 Twin bed sheets & pillow cases
Comforters or spreads

Angels 6
Busch Gardens Passes
Aquarium Passes

Angels 9
Bath Rugs
Welcome Mat
Blender
Juicer

Angels 7
Bath rugs & Door mats
Bath Towels