

Hampshire Community Action Commission's First Call for Help

News You Can Use

Volunteer Newsletter

April 2000

"A kind word is like a spring day."---Russian proverb

National Volunteer Appreciation Week: April 9-15 !

Thank you for the generosity of all of our volunteers during the past year. You have contributed 1,977 hours of time during the past year. We appreciate your willingness to be here and to be of assistance. You are a pillar of strength for First Call for Help. We value your commitment and your dedication to the highest quality of service for callers.

Milestones

Congratulations to both Bev and Marjorie for achieving 900 hours of time here at HCAC First Call for Help.

Bev has been doing Information and Referral since the Fall of 1996. Bev is also responsible for updating information in the data base and keeping our New Literature Box (Reading Box) up to date. Bev does a wonderful job with all these tasks. She has excellent problem-solving skills that enable her to both effectively help callers and to do

updating in a careful and thorough way. And she has a great sense of humor as well. Thank you, Bev. We really appreciate all that you do!

Marjorie has been with us since August of 1997. Marjorie has held down the fort on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., answering the phones and providing information and referrals to callers. Marjorie has an extraordinary attendance record. She has rarely missed a shift and we know we can always depend on her to be there. Marjorie has a helpful way

with callers, a warm manner that puts people at ease. In addition, Marjorie updates the support group notebook. JoAnn says that Marjorie keeps her on her toes, correcting indexing (keyword) problems. We really appreciate all that she does. Thank you, Marjorie!

Congratulations to Barb for giving 300 hours of time! Barb is a clerical volunteer who has been helping here at HCAC First Call for Help since Fall of 1996. Barb does typing, envelope stuffing, copying, filing and other sundry tasks that help to keep things organized and running smoothly. Barb really brightens up our day when she's here! Thank you, Barb. We appreciate all you do!

All of us here feel very grateful for the commitment and dedication of volunteers like Barb, Bev and Marjorie. Because we have not had a lot of turnover recently, the volunteers who are here currently can build on their experience and their skills to provide even better services to callers.

Happy Birthday!

All of us wish Marjorie a very happy birthday on April 15th. May you have a wonderful day and may this year be the best ever!

Welcome to Our New Staff!

We extend a warm welcome to our new Administrative Assistant, Shanti! Shanti will be working for both First Call for

Help Information and Referral and the Hampshire County Family Network. She will be here about 22 hours per week with full days on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

A few words from Shanti herself:
"Greetings! I have recently assumed the post of Administrative Assistant and shall briefly inform you of my statistics...I graduated last year from Smith College, Sociology major. I originated in Michigan but refuse to return. I began this job along with another part time position with the Valley Advocate simultaneously, thus I am traveling on a wave of transition. I am most excited about working for an agency that provides necessary services to those who can best utilize them...and I wish to thank all of you whom I have so far met and worked with for being so supportive and inviting...I look forward to working with you all!!!"

HCAC has also hired a new Program Director for First Call for Help Information & Referral and the Hampshire County Family Network. Her name is Fern Selesnick, and she will be joining us beginning Monday, March 27th. It will be great to have a Director again, and we are looking forward to meeting her.

Holiday!

The offices of HCAC First Call for Help will be closed on Monday, April 17th for Patriot's Day. Enjoy the long weekend! Don't forget to look for Kate of Hampshire Health Access on the television coverage of the Boston

Marathon! She will be running the big one. Good Luck, Kate!

Spring Cleaning

It's time to do some spring cleaning. Please go through your volunteer box and weed out all the old newsletters, assignments and meeting announcements. If there is a blank side to the paper, make an X on the side with writing and put it into our recycling pile in the cardboard box to the left of the printer. Otherwise, throw it in the recycling bins (unless it requires shredding).

Please rinse out soda cans or other recyclable items before putting them in the bin under the refrigerator. Thanks!

Lastly, please remember to accurately record your volunteer hours on your time card in the blue box. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

Clerical Volunteers

When you complete an assignment, please mark that it is done and put it in Karen's mailbox, unless requested to do otherwise. This will help to keep better tabs on what has been completed and what remains to be done.

Mass211 Update

On March 1st bills were filed in the House and Senate to further the Mass211 efforts. Senator Majority Leader Linda Melconian filed enabling legislation in the Senate, with 18 Senators signing on

as co-sponsors. Similarly, Representative Frank Hynes filed a bill in the House, which includes a \$1.5 million appropriation for Mass211s start-up and first year of operation. The House bill is co-sponsored by 42 representatives.

Mass211 presented its testimony in support of its petition at an Evidentiary Hearing before the Department of Telecommunications and Energy. In addition to written and oral testimony from several key Task Force members (including representatives from the Council of Massachusetts United Ways), a key witness for Mass211 was Melanie Lowenstein, the Senior Vice President for United Way of Connecticut. Ms. Lowenstein's testimony was particularly important and inspiring, as she attested to the dramatic success of 2-1-1 in Connecticut, the first state to implement 2-1-1 on a statewide basis.

Mass 211 Task Force has received a generous \$5,000 "seed grant" from the Hoche-Scofield Foundation.

Tennessee joins the increasing list of states that have approved 2-1-1 in some form. The other states are Utah, Alabama, North Carolina, Connecticut and Georgia.

Source: Mass211 Update (03/10/00)

News from AIRS

AIRS (Alliance of Information & Referral Systems) has announced a new set of official expectations and guidelines for Information & Referral Services. The new "Standards for

Professional Information and Referral” will provide a blueprint of how information and referral services and systems should operate. The new standards can be seen on the AIRS web site at www.airs.org.

The news from AIRS also includes a look at the impact of technology on the field of Information and Referral. Some consumers are making use of online sites to find the information they need. One cited is *Helping.org*, a creation of the America Online Foundation. “Visitors to the site can search through keyword or geographical search keys to find organizations throughout the over 600,000 non profits listed nationwide with which they can volunteer or donate.” Of course, some people may already be using sites such as these for information and referral purposes. AIRS takes the view “...that such technological offerings are very limited in providing I & R-quality help. No systematic indexing has been done to provide inquirers with a logical schema for finding resources, insufficient detail exists on the listings to assure appropriate matches to needs, and no human beings are available to answer questions or assess needs.” Despite that, though, AIRS feels it is “...important to realize that in this new era of I & R, offering resource information online is an option that I & R's should provide. At the minimum, I & R programs should post their contact information and service scope on a web site, so that Internet-surfers have that as a way of getting to the I & R.”

Did you know that we regularly receive a copy of *Information & Referral: The Journal of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems*? The latest

volume—21, is a special issue titled: *High Tech/High Touch*, and discusses in detail many of the technological issues including the one noted above. If you are interested in looking at this edition, or if you would like to peruse back editions, please let Karen know.

Source: AIRS Newsletter, Vol.XXIV, no.2.

April brings spring showers and I & R requests for:

- Summer Camps
- Tax Help
- Unplanned Pregnancies

When you have a few free minutes, please familiarize yourself with the resources in these areas.

Thank you!

Resource of the Month

Are you familiar with the “Citizen’s Guide to State Services”? Check it out when you have a few moments. It is on the top shelf of the I & R bookcase. Published by the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this guide provides a selective listing of governmental agencies and programs in Massachusetts.

Some of the areas of interest include:

- Business Assistance/Economic Development
- Children
- Consumer

- Education/Arts
- Employment
- Environment/Energy
- Licenses/Permits/Records
- Senior Citizens
- State Administration/Revenue
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Welfare/Social Services

On the first page of each section is a table of contents listing the agencies and programs within that section. At the end of the Guide is a comprehensive index. The Guide also includes a chart of the structure of the state government.

Some examples of agencies or programs listed in this guide are:

- Failure-To-Thrive Program of the Department of Public Health.
- Office of Teacher Certification and Credentialing of the Department of Education.
- State Labor Relations Commission of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.
- Division of Disability Determination Services of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.
- Elevator Inspection Section of the Division of Inspection of the Department of Public Safety.

Hopefully this will whet your appetite for exploring some of the useful and sometimes unusual programs that make up the array of state services.

Also, please be aware that many of these state offices contract with local agencies and programs to offer services at a more local level. But if callers are experiencing problems, nothing beats going to the top for results.

Our Deepest Gratitude

Ann—Thank you for your positive attitude, your kindness toward callers and staff and your down to earth practical approach to this work.

Barb—Thank you for your willingness to do the rote work that needs to be done, for your sense of humor and for your warm-hearted support for First Call for Help.

Bev—Thank you for the great job you do with each of the many hats you wear, your efficient and compassionate way with callers and your unfailing wit that lifts our spirits.

Bobbe—Thank you for your friendly manner, your willingness to be of help and your heartfelt concern for callers.

Catherine—Thank you for your unfailing commitment, your capable and caring approach to callers concerns and your ability to access appropriate resources.

Eileen—Thank you for all the office tasks you do with efficiency, your willingness to be of service and your warm and outgoing nature.

Karen S.—Thank you for your dedication to your work, your excellent ability to do both I & R and updating of resources, and your sensitive and empathetic way with callers.

Kelly—Thank you for your skilled work updating resources, your professional manner and your solid dependability.

Marjorie—Thank you for your dedicated service to First Call for Help, your ability to decipher callers needs and respond in a compassionate way, and your effective use of the resource listings.

Michael—Thank you for your proficient help with our computers, your willingness to share your expertise and your patience in providing instruction.

Peter—Thank you for your quiet competence, your impeccable attention to detail, and the usefulness of your work.

Rebecca—Thank you for your able and productive work on the updating of resources, your responsible manner and your dedication to getting the job done.

Susan—Thank you for your willingness to sort through piles of

papers, to bring forth order from chaos, for your patience with the challenges of some of the tasks, and for your friendly support.

Toni—Thank you for being wonderfully productive, for your amazing competence at so many tasks, and for being so generous of spirit.

Happy Spring!!!