

Somerset County Department of Human Services

Making Vibrant Connections with our Residents

The mission of the Somerset County Department of Human Services is to improve the life of all county residents by promoting the economic, social, emotional, physical and mental well-being and safety of residents and communities.

Michael J. Frost, LCSW, ACSW- Director of Human Services
Julie DeSimone, LSW- Assistant to the Director

Thoughts From the Director : "Loss, Resilience and Survival"

"Loss, Resilience and Survival"

"... And here am I, budding among the ruins with only sorrow to bite on,
as if weeping were a seed and I the earth's only furrow."

-Pablo Neruda, "Lightless Suburb"

"Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before."

--Elizabeth Edwards

"You don't ask people with knives in their stomachs what would make them happy; happiness is no longer the point. It's all about survival; it's all about whether you pull the knife out and bleed to death or keep it in..."

- Nick Hornby, How to Be Good

In this past two months I have experienced pieces of all of this, both in my immediate circle and then again in the larger circle in which we all co-exist.

On Christmas Eve, my father's love of many years died, leaving gaping holes in the hearts and minds of our families and, most especially in the heart of my dad. Just as the reality of life is that we are born and then eventually, we die, the pendulum of national public will swings with each election cycle, usually leaving approximately half of the electorate feeling disenfranchised and anxious about the future.

In January, a new administration took office in Washington, an administration with an agenda decidedly aggressive, and a draconian design with respect to the federal agencies and policies that help sustain many of less fortunate citizens of our country, state and county. This is not a political statement-it is a statement of fact, and not fact of an "alternative" nature. From my vantage point as Human Services Director I am clear that the safety net upon which many Somerset County residents rely is (if stated plans are endorsed and become policy) about to grow a hole as big as the one in my father's heart.

Much of the work done by the Human Services Department is funded by federal dollars which are "passed through" to county systems, either directly or through the state. In particular this is true for our Aging and Disability, Community Development, One Stop Career Center and Community Mental Health Divisions. To be sure, there are additional state dollars (although these have shrunk dramatically over the last decade) and the county itself provides additional funding that allows programs that would otherwise be skeletal to provide *quality* services for the residents of Somerset County. In addition, we are in the midst of an entire systemic change directed by the State Department of Human Services via the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Division (I/DDDD) - a transition from up front service contracts passed to provider agencies from the state - to a "fee for service" program (providers seek to get paid for what they bill for, after the fact) - soon to be entering its final phase. This system is entirely built on the back of Medicaid expansion, which many states, including ours, accepted from the feds as a way of

(Continued on page 2)



Thoughts From the Director : "Loss, Resilience and Survival"

(Continued from page 1)

funding needed services without additional strain on state or county budgets. That expansion, along with the parallel growth of the Affordable Care Act (both within the Medicaid and private exchange markets) has resulted in significantly increased - although modest - insurance coverage for many of our citizens. The current federal administration's intention, however, is to undo Medicaid expansion and to replace it with "block grants" which have only general requirements for funding services desperately needed by our neediest citizens (unlike the expansion which requires specific funding). Although this is being framed as "allowing local control" (in the same way the repeal of the ACA is being touted as "allowing Americans more choice,") the fact of the matter is that if Medicaid expansion is undone and the ACA is repealed without an effective replacement many, many people will get hurt - and badly.

There is nothing wrong with the desire for change, nor for wanting to improve systems that are distinctly imperfect and in need of tweaking. What *is* wrong- ethically, morally and pragmatically, in my humble opinion - is pursuing change by fiat, or decree without consultation, communication, inclusion or, frankly common courtesy. It is a recipe for disaster. Having worked in a particularly well operated county government for many years I know how many good things can happen when people work together - and seek common ground. *Good government* is not the enemy. It is the very foundation of our democracy.

I know many very decent people who remain fascinated with the "reality show" playing out in Washington and who are vicariously enjoying watching long standing processes blown up and taken down. I get that. Bureaucratic processes are often frustrating and circuitous, and I understand some of the excitement at "getting rid of business as usual." Unfortunately however, this is not reality television and sound social policy isn't developed in sound bites or 140 characters. Our constitution provides a framework for the pursuit of change and ignoring it puts us all at risk. Again, this is not a "conservative vs. liberal" paradigm; it is about reasonableness, legality and decency.

The provision of a safety net of human services is our core mission here at SCDHS. I have never before seen cabinet heads nominated at a federal level whose chief area of commonality (not all, but many) is their desire to dismantle and countermand the missions of the very agencies they are being nominated to run. My reading of the tea leaves tells me we are in real danger of tearing a hole in the net so wide that even in "better off than most" Somerset County the consequences will be significant, and will affect far more people than the service recipients themselves, potentially affecting their families as well. Like everything else in this universal pond, the ripples often displace more than just the water itself as the concentric circles widen (that is to say anything previously kept afloat, still and calm on the surface).

Loss? Yes, of the love of our fellow human beings and our sense of community, compassion and connection to others - as the Pope has commented - the replacement of bridges with walls. Resilience? I guess we will find out. Our democracy has survived tremendous challenges over the years but, perhaps, none quite as potentially explosive as the challenge currently before us. Survival? Well, that's essential. As I've said in previous columns: do your homework, pay attention, get involved. You don't have to agree with me (and to be sure, some of you reading this and some of my colleagues - elected officials and otherwise don't). You should care, however. It's part of democracy in action.

As I write this, the hole in my father's heart has been partially filled up over the past 5 weeks with love and connection to other human beings and with a desire to find faith in the future, in spite of how hard it is somedays just to get out of bed and face "life after." I can only hope the looming hole in the heart of our nation finds replenishment, repair and renewed faith in the future.

It matters.



Community Partner Highlight: Family and Community Services

Provided by Family and Community Services



Since 1960, Family and Community Services of Somerset County (FCSSC), located in Bound Brook, New Jersey, has specialized in providing professional mental health services, addiction services, and community based programs to children, adolescents, adults, and families in need. FCSSC employs State-licensed, highly qualified therapists and certified drug and alcohol counselors who provide confidential, professional services to individuals and families who live and/or work in Somerset County or the surrounding communities. In order to meet an increasing need in the community, FCSSC currently employs many Spanish speaking staff who help foster a comfortable environment for the Spanish speaking clients who come to FCSSC for help.

Mental Health Program

The Individual and Family/Mental Health Program is FCSSC's largest program and it is licensed by the State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services Office of Licensing.

Issues addressed in the mental health program include but are not limited to:

- * Depression/Anxiety/Other Emotional Difficulties
- * Divorce/Separation/Being a Single Parent
- * Domestic/Family Violence
- * Marital/Relationship Problems
- * Behavioral/School Problems/Bullying

Services provided include:

- * Individual Counseling
- * Group Counseling
- * Psychiatric Consultations (for clients engaged in services at FCSSC)
- * Anger Management Skills
- * Parent-Child Conflicts/Parenting Skills

Addictions Program

The Addictions Program of FCSSC is a multi-faceted program that addresses many addictive behaviors including alcohol and other drug abuse. The program is licensed by the State of New Jersey, Department of Addiction Services (DAS).

Issues addressed in the addictions program include but are not limited to:

- * Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
- * Driving Under the Influence (DUI)
- * Co-dependency

Services provided include:

- * Comprehensive Assessments for Adults and Adolescent
- * Individual Counseling
- * Urinalysis Drug Screening
- * Referrals as Needed

Services to Business

FCSSC is committed to providing services to all sectors of our community and this includes local businesses. We are able to offer small and large businesses a customized Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that will meet their needs.

Typical EAP contracts include 2 to 6 sessions for employees and their families. These are provided at either no cost to the employee or a discounted shared cost. Services include assessment, treatment, and referrals for the following:

- * Anxiety and Depression
- * Personal Problems
- * Relationship Difficulties
- * Substance Abuse Issues
- * Work-Related Problems

Community Based Consortium Programs

Franklin Youth Prevention and Empowerment Program (FYPEP)

Linkages Program (school based counselors at Somerset County Vocational and Technical School)

21st Century Afterschool Programs in Bound Brook (Middle Earth lead agency)

Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP)

Many couples are either unable to identify or are in denial when the abuse is about "control". Control is one of the most destructive forms of abuse and is the reason that so many abusive situations end in murder/suicide.

Our trained staff are certified instructors in the RESPECT program and are here to help support those individuals currently identified as a "batterer" in his or her journey to shed the label of a "batterer" and engage in healthy and respectful relationships. Please call 732-356-1082 for more details.

For more information on any of the programs mentioned or if you have any questions regarding the additional services that FCSSC offers, please contact us by phone 732-356-1082 or email rschumann@fcssomerset.org.

Self Compassion for the New Year

Lida Hartfiel, Director of Psychosocial Rehabilitation RHCMHC

Thinking about where I've been, where I am, how I am going to get where I want to be usually takes a back burner to the everyday here and now. Of course, this changes a bit with the New Year when everyone talks about resolutions, expectations, goals, 5 year plans....mostly, this is way too much for me as I enjoy living in the here and now and too much emphasis on the future takes away from the joy of each day.

As the New Year is upon us, my brief contemplation is this - being in the helping profession is hard. I know - not much for a big revelation but that's what I came up with. It's not just sitting with the suffering of others and trying to help others help themselves but it is hard to feel like you are doing as much as you can yet want to do some much more but have neither the resources or the time to do so. It would be great to have the boundless energy and time to meet all of the "coulds" and "shoulds" not only at work but in your personal life also. Taking care of other is what feeds your soul - that's the bottom line for most of us in the helping profession and why we are here. Unfortunately, it's hard not to feel like you are short changing someone when there is always a list of demands. Also, it is hard not to beat yourself up for not meeting everyone's expectations because hey, you are supposed to be a helper, right? So, get helping already - no pressure!!

Some of you may have heard of Brene Brown and her "CourageWorks" course. The course is based on her work as a social researcher who studies vulnerability, courage, worthiness, and shame. I took the course last year because her work speaks of much of the pain I see daily through my work at the mental health center and as a helper who needs to know how to manage my own self view in a way that allows me to be compassionate to my own failings. This is a topic that I am especially interested in as failure is the enemy of hope in mental health recovery. As I see in my work as a clinician and a supervisor, the internalization of negativity and the inability to accept that failure is a part of life can be debilitating. I have seen so many people who walk in shame and self define their failure as shameful instead of something that is human and can be learned from and let go. As I worked through this part of the course, the idea of self-compassion was introduced. Something I have spent little time contemplating for myself.

The course introduced self-compassion in the form of a test to determine how you assess your own self-compassion skillset (<http://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>). It was eye opening! How do I look at myself? How do I judge myself and my shortcomings? How do I perceive things differently from others? As a result of this test, I went on to take a class online about Self Compassion by the author of the test, Dr. Kristin Neff. Here is what I learned:

Self-Compassion is being kind to yourself when confronted by your human failings. What is your self-talk? What are your super human expectations of yourself that no else you know has to live up to? Are you ruthless in your self-judgment and criticism? Do you self-shame or perhaps self-guilt? Or do you acknowledge how difficult your circumstances are and give yourself permission to suffer, fail and be imperfect just like you do for the people you provide services to? Or that you love?

Dr. Neff talks about self-compassion having three elements - self kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation and mindfulness vs. over identification. Self-kindness equates to being warm and understanding of our inadequacies instead of ignoring our pain or beating ourselves down with harsh self-criticism and judgement. Common humanity is the understanding that suffering and inadequacy is something that all human being relate to - it is a shared experience in which just by being human you experience - versus the overwhelming isolation of our own experience born out of frustration and circumstance. Lastly, it is developing mindfulness of our emotions, observing our thoughts and feeling and finding balance of the positive and negative so as not to be over identifying with the negative to our detriment.

It took a while and some further reading to understand that self compassion is not to be confused with self-esteem and the idea that we are overinflating ourselves up to judge others as lesser, indulging in self-pity or being self-indulgent. This is about taking care of yourself from a perspective of balance and knowledge that you have feelings that need to be attended to kindly and mindfully. This is about allowing yourself to be imperfect and human, deserving of compassion for that reason alone.

As a caregiver, I understand it is important to make sure that you care for yourself both off and on the job. It can be the little things, done daily, that can have the biggest impact. Make the time to take care of yourself - you can do it both in thought and action. Give yourself soothing and supportive self talk - "I know this is hard and it is only natural to feel stressed. ". Another idea is to give yourself a hug - Sometimes a quick hug is all you need, while other times you might want a lingering, gentle hug. Hugging yourself can actually release oxytocin and help calm and soothe you during stressful times. Keep squeezing until you feel a sense of calmness. Repeat as necessary. Leave little

(Continued from page 4)

messages around your house to boost your mood when you need it the most. Spoil yourself with a movie and some ice cream, a few extra minutes in the car singing along to the radio at the top of your lungs, call someone who loves you or indulge with your favorite candy bar just because you work hard and you need to remember to take care of you. Take a self-compassion break – just 5-10 minutes to relax, refresh and rejuvenate yourself before you face the next crisis or stressful activity.

As I relate this to my work, the work of the staff at the Mental Health Center and in Human Services Department, I think 2017 can be a year in which we can start practicing self-compassion in many ways. We can utilize our self-compassion to recognize the pain that comes along with our work, we can mindfully accept that the pain exists and we can respond to our pain with kindness and care of ourselves while acknowledging our imperfection. As Dr. Neff writes "this allows us to hold ourselves in love and connection, giving ourselves the support and comfort needed to bear the pain, while providing the optimal conditions for growth and transformation."

Have a wonderful New Year and I hope 2017 can be a year of self compassion for us all.

Free Income Tax Preparation for 2017

Provided by our Office of Volunteer Services

The IRS and the New Jersey State Tax Department through the AARP has organized a Free Income Tax Preparation service. In Somerset County this program is offered through our office. The program is available at 6 sites located around the County



We recruit and train volunteers to prepare the actual tax returns for our clients. While there are no income restrictions on this program our volunteers are trained to prepare basic income tax returns and do not prepare complex returns containing rental properties, stock transactions etc.

Our office in addition to arranging the training, training site and instructors, also have volunteers manning phones to accept calls for this service, contact volunteer preparers to arrange appointment, obtain necessary equipment and supplies, maintain records and volunteer hours for submission to the sponsors and overall general support.

The program presently has 75 counselors, and annually prepare 3,000 returns for our clients. This saves our clients in excess of 2 million dollars a year by not having to use paid preparers. In addition by avoiding the cost of a paid preparer, which many of our clients cannot afford, the program brings approximately Two Million, One Hundred and Eighty Two dollars (\$2,182, 000) in usable income to the local community.

To schedule your free tax preparation appointment or more information about this program please contact the Office of Volunteer Services at 908-541-5710.

Psychiatric Emergency Screening Service is Transitioning

Pam Mastro, LSW- Mental Health Administrator

Since the inception of the New Jersey Screening Law Somerset County has been proud to offer Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services to the residents of Somerset County. This program has provided emergency services to more than 82,000 residents from the very young to the frail elderly. The work was often tragic necessitating the staff to work past their scheduled hours to ensure the best result for our patients.

The screening service never closes and so staff would travel to the hospital during blizzards, hurricanes, floods, and of course on September 11, 2001. The staff were often "stranded" at the hospital and worked for days on end sleeping on the floor of the staff workroom.

There is no way to adequately describe my gratitude to the staff that in my opinion is the finest anywhere.

However the needs of the community have changed which requires more attention to outreach and preventative services. It was decided that Somerset County Government would relinquish the NJ DMHAS contract while providing some much needed transition funds to the new provider.

On December 30, 2016 Bridgeway Rehabilitation, Inc. was awarded the contract to provide Psychiatric Emergency Screening Services to the people of Somerset County by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Bridgeway Rehabilitation has been a provider of mental health services since 1970 and at the present time the agency provides a full array of psychiatric rehabilitation and recovers oriented services in 11 counties. These services include crisis intervention services Programs of Assertive community Treatment, Partial Care, Supported Housing Residential Intensive Support Teams and Early Intervention Support/Crisis Intervention services.

For the last 20 years Bridgeway has played a leadership role in the New Jersey recovery transformation. Bridgeway 's innovative Crisis Intervention Service program provides short term recovery focused psychiatric crisis intervention services for adults in Hudson County as an alternative to emergency room based crisis services. This program provides rapid access to short term, evidence based wellness and recovery oriented crisis intervention, brief treatment and stabilization services for people with serious mental illness and people with co-occurring mental illness, medical and substance abuse disorders. The program has incorporated a "living room" style environment where people serve feel comfortable and supported. This program has enjoyed outstanding success according to the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Bridgeway intends to bring this same innovative approach along side intense outreach evaluation services to the Somerset County PESS program and to realign the Somerset PESS to move from a hospital based service to community based rehabilitation model of proactive care. It is believed that this proactive approach may result in reduced involuntary and voluntary hospitalizations to the benefit of Somerset County residents.

Currently the SC PESS program evaluates more than 1,000 minors each year most of whom do not need to be treated in the emergency department of the hospital. The trauma experienced by children as young as 5 and adolescents is extreme therefore any innovation that reduces the impact of this trauma is welcomed and long overdue.

Beginning on March 1, 2017 children, adolescents and adults will have an opportunity to have their needs met while remaining in the community without the stigma and revolving door that currently exists.

The new PESS program will be open on March 1, 2017 with a staff of screeners who are transitioning from Somerset County Government to Bridgeway Inc.

Look for more information regarding this transition in the March Newsletter!



WE WANT YOU!

Rutgers Master Gardener Class of 2018

Sponsored by Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County

Master Gardeners are volunteers who support Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County in its educational mission to provide research-based horticultural information to the public. All Rutgers Master Gardeners give back to the community by volunteering in a variety of events & activities.

To register go to: somerset.njaes.rutgers.edu/garden or
Facebook: [@Rutgers Master Gardeners of Somerset County, NJ](https://www.facebook.com/RutgersMasterGardenersofSomersetCountyNJ)

- ♦ Open to all residents of Somerset County, NJ
- ♦ Interested in gardening & volunteering
- ♦ Email & texting access required. Facebook (recommended)
- ♦ \$250 registration fee includes: Rutgers Master Gardener Handbook, soil test kit & 60+ hours of training

Coursework includes:

Plant propagation, soils & fertilizers, botany, plant identification, invasive plants & native substitutes, diagnostics, pest management, pruning, lawn care, annuals & perennials, trees & shrubs care, fruits & berries, vegetable gardens & much more.

Registration Deadline: June 2, 2017

Classes: Tues. 9:30 am-1pm, Sept. 2017 — March 2018

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County, 310 Milltown Rd., Bridgewater

Email us at awhite@co.somerset.nj.us



Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.



Funding Opportunities

Provided by our Community Development Office

The Community Development Office will release the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME and Homelessness Trust Fund (HTF) Requests for Proposals (RFPs) in the next few weeks. In addition to the income limits that are included below, CDBG and HOME funds can also be used for projects that principally benefit abused children, Elderly persons (62 and over), Homeless persons, Migrant farm workers, Illiterate persons, Disabled adults (disabled children do not automatically qualify under this criteria), Persons with AIDS, and Battered spouses.

The Community Development Office has administrative responsibility for these grant programs and in that capacity, manages the application and fund allocation processes. To simplify the application process and because they are both housing programs, the HOME and HTF Programs use the same RFP document. Once grant funds are awarded by committees that meet in April and May, staff will work with grant recipients to ensure that funds are spent in compliance with the respective guidelines. As your organization considers submitting a grant application, please keep the following information in mind.

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>80% AMI</u>	<u>Household Size</u>	<u>80%AMI</u>
1	\$58,200	5	\$ 89,700
2	\$66,500	6	\$ 96,400
3	\$74,800	7	\$103,000
4	\$83,100	8	\$109,700

The CDBG Program is a federal grant to Somerset County from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Grant funds must be used toward non-profit and municipally-sponsored construction and housing projects and human service programs that principally benefit low and moderate income families or individuals.

The HOME Investment Partnership Program is also a federal grant to Somerset County from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Grant funds must be used to expand the supply of decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for low and moderate income families or individuals. It is also important to note that HOME funds have an Affordability Period that that can range from 5-20 years, depending on the amount of assistance and the nature of the project. During this time, the assisted units must be occupied by income-eligible residents and Community Development Office staff will come out to inspect the property and review client files.

The Homelessness Trust Fund is a dedicated fund that accrues from the collection of a \$3 surcharge on the fee to record or release documents that are processed by the County Clerk's Office. Funds must be used to create permanent affordable housing and/or provide services or rental assistance vouchers for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. Housing that is assisted by the Homelessness Trust Fund is subject to a thirty-year Affordability Period, during which the assisted units must be occupied by income-eligible residents and Community Development Office staff will come out to inspect the property and review client files.

If you have questions about any of these grant programs or eligibility for a proposed project, please contact the Community Development Office at 908-541-5756.

Our Data at Work

Provided by our Office of Youth Services

In 1987, in an effort to gather data about the state of juvenile crime in Somerset County, the Somerset County Youth Services Commission decided to conduct a survey of county residents. The Commission staff office was located next to the jury waiting room so the jurors, while waiting to be picked for a jury, were asked if they would be willing to participate in a survey. Noting the results were based on perception, the Commission learned that citizens believed that juvenile crime was rampant in Somerset County and that the youth were murderers and rapists. Fortunately, when looking at data produced by the local police department, it was discovered that Somerset County youth were not committing heinous crimes but they were finding their way into the juvenile justice system. The Commission realized there was a need for current, unduplicated data on all the youth who were accessing the juvenile justice system or who were at risk of being involved so that any planning for services would be based on "real" data and not perceptions as well as the data would be produced that would provide a profile of the youth and their family.

A Subcommittee was formed to create an instrument that would provide a true measure of client needs and the system's ability to respond to those needs. Once the Adolescent Information Form (AIF) was developed, the NJ Administrative Office of the Courts provided technical support for the computerization of the results. In 1991, the Commission was one of twenty-five government bodies nationwide to receive the prestigious Exemplary State and Local (EXSL) Award for the AIF. In the same year, the AIF got an "artificial intelligence program" that allowed the system to look through the database, set the parameters and develop reports on those parameters. The database was eventually transferred to an Access database program in 2003 and continued to provide unduplicated aggregate information on children and their families. Numerous Somerset County programs/agencies have completed the form at the time of intake and have forwarded it to the Office of Youth Services for data input. Approximately 4,000 forms have been processed each year providing the county with valuable information such as the ages of the youth who need services, the types of services needed, the contributing factors for referral, the family composition and past history. The unduplicated data has been used for planning as well as for supporting documentation when agencies are seeking grants.

In 2016, at the urging of a Division of Child Protection and Permanency employee, the AIF has now been converted to an electronic format. The Office of Youth Services has successfully partnered with the Somerset County IT Department and the form is now available in electronic form. Office staff has been visiting the different programs and agencies to help them learn how to access and complete it. A copy is available on the County Website which allows the agencies to complete it and submit it with relative ease.

For more information on the process, you can contact Gretchen Craig at 908-704-6333.

Understanding the Caregiver Shortage

Alyce Brophy, RN, BSN, MPH-CEO, Community Visiting Nurse Association

So many elderly, so few caregivers. Home Health care in New Jersey is in trouble. Home care in crisis. These are just a few of the multitude of articles being written about the shortage of home health aides or direct care workers in New Jersey, as well as across the entire nation.

Nurse aides, home health aides and personal care attendants are classified as direct care workers. They are paraprofessionals who are trained to assist the elderly and disabled with ADL's, activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing, and assistance with ambulation or transfers, and IADL's, instrumental activities of daily living which can include things like meal preparation, laundry and grocery shopping as needed. In addition they provide companionship, a gentle touch and support to patients in need. These workers are the backbone of services delivered in the community and essential to provide necessary care and safety to patients in their homes.

So why is there such a shortage, and what can we do about it?

There are two main reasons for the shortage. The first is increased need. With the expansion of care delivery settings in the community there are more job opportunities available and therefore increased demand. We are currently also in a tight job market and with the added competition of non-health care related jobs, it puts recruitment at an even greater disadvantage. In addition, we are at the beginning of the aging of the baby boomer generation and as they continue to age, the need for direct care workers will increase. It is estimated that direct care worker jobs will grow five times faster than all other occupations and that by 2020 we will need 50% more aides than the number in the present workforce. And remember, we are already experiencing a shortage.

The second reason for the shortage is the decreased number of caregivers. Demographic shifts have reduced the number of caregivers. Today, fewer families are living in the same household or even the same community and women, who have traditionally cared for their parents, are now more likely to be in the workforce, decreasing time they are available to assist in care. The increased demand has outpaced the labor-pool growth. The average age of a home health aide is reported to be around 50, with 75% being female. The number of women ages 25 to 54, the main labor pool for the job, is projected to increase by only 2 percent in the decade ending in 2020. What emerges is a huge care gap or an increased ratio between the numbers of elderly in need compared to the number of available home care workers. The national care gap ratio is 9 seniors to 1 caregiver, although the gap varies by state. In Florida, a state with a high percentage of elderly, it is already at a 35-1 ratio, the highest care gap in the country.

So what can we do about it? The challenge is to make the job, caregiving, attractive as a profession and still make it affordable. About 75% of home care services are paid for with public dollars, Medicare or Medicaid, 15% is paid by private insurance or managed care and the rest by consumers out of pocket. Financial pressures on Medicare and Medicaid, as well as private insurance and managed care make it unlikely that significant wage increases will occur. Because of this the traditional supply and demand theory does not apply. So, while we continue to advocate for increased reimbursement to be able to increase wages, we must look to other areas to provide a quality job to attract the workforce.

Job satisfaction and job retention begin with recruitment, education, support and leadership. It is well documented that workers who feel well supported and who are provided the tools and support needed to do their jobs are better satisfied, more engaged and more likely to stay in their profession. It is up to us as providers to ensure that occurs. Here, at Community VNA, our home health aides are part of our health care team. We strive to let them know how important they are in the care we provide to our patients and to us. It can be a tough job, but it's also extremely rewarding, knowing you've helped your patients remain in their homes and brightened up their day. Here are just a few comments from our Home Health Aide staff about the work they do.

"I love my job, it's wonderful to be able to help someone and feel so appreciated by them"

"It's a special calling; I love to see their eyes light up when I arrive"

For anyone who may be interested in providing this type of care Community VNA has openings for full time, part time, per diem or as needed home health aides. You can work as few as two hours two days a week or as much as full time 7.5 hours a day, five days a week. We also provide a wide array of benefits to part and full time workers including sick, vacation and holiday time as well as health coverage, pension and tuition reimbursement. To become a home health aide an individual must complete a 75 hour training course. Community VNA will assist in finding and reimbursing training with a promise of employment. We'd love to talk with anyone who has questions or an interest in becoming a certified home health aide.

Job Opportunities in County Human Services

Office on Aging and Disability Services

Health Nutrition Administrator Position directs the overall operation of six multi-purpose senior wellness centers including the Nutrition Program for the Elderly (i.e., congregate and home delivered meals -Older Americans Act program). Centers provide wellness, educational, recreational and community service programs for clients age 60 and above.

Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center

Psychiatric Nurse Position responsible for providing medical and psychiatric nursing assessment and intervention to clients of the Center. Nursing staff assesses for medication related side effects, documents, and reports to psychiatrist. Medication and nutritional teaching is on going. Any and all staff may be asked to provide clinical coverage as needed and as

Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Program Coordinator: Plans, implements and evaluates educational events and programs for Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) under direction of the FCHS Educator. The incumbent teaches adults and youth, manages multiple priorities and tasks, works with minimal supervision and has strong interpersonal skills. The person collaborates with community groups, creates educational lessons and activities; writes educational articles and/or publications and recruits and trains volunteers for FCHS & RCE programs.

For qualification requirements, compensation information, and job responsibilities please visit the [Somerset County website](#).

Human Services Public Meetings

February 2– 5pm: Mental Health Board

February 8- 9:30am: Local Advisory Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse /County Alliance Steering Subcommittee

February 14– 6:30pm: Freeholder Meeting

February 15– 1:30pm: Aging Advisory Council

February 15– 1:30pm: Advisory Council on Disability Issues

February 22– 1:30pm: Human Services Advisory Council

February 28– 12pm: Youth Services Commission

February 28– 1:30pm: Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council

February 28- 6:30pm: Freeholder Meeting

March 2– 5pm: Mental Health Board

March 8- 9:30am: Local Advisory Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse /County Alliance Steering Subcommittee

March 9– 10am: Continuum of Care

March 14– 6:30pm: Freeholder Meeting

For more information regarding these meetings or how to get involved with a committee email Julie at desimone@co.somerset.nj.us or call 908-704-6335.