

# TSI Living



Published quarterly for our consumers, donors, staff, advocates & friends.

Summer 2006

## Collective Dreaming

Artists from two TSI art classes, led by Gwen Jaffe, were part of a special event this past March. They, along with other artists from the Pittsburgh area, displayed their works at the ArtSpace303 in Homestead. The show titled “Collective Dreaming” was a collaboration between TSI’s Community Supports Program (CSP) and the Steel Valley Arts Council (SVAC).

In the beginning stages of development, it was decided to open the juried show up to artists in the greater Pittsburgh area. In doing so, it brought in talent from around the community and in various media, including metal work, photography, graphite drawings, and video/sound. Each piece focused on one central theme of dreams or



dreaming. Through these dreams, there is a common thread that connects everyone.

The theme was highlighted in the works of the artists at TSI who created individual “dream pillows.” With the help of Sandra Mullins (seamstress), the pillows became three dimensional works of art. They were exhibited in the center of the gallery on a metal four poster bed which was the handcrafted creation of artist Mark N. Tarle. Each of the pillows was for sale, with the majority of the proceeds going to the artists.

Opening night was kicked off by a gala event held at ArtSpace303. The catered event drew in over 100 guests, including the artists and their family and friends. Brian Britza, representing SVAC and the liaison who helped coordinate the show, said “this was the largest opening the gallery had since its inception.” One artist, James Collins, shared his feelings on being a part of the event by stating, “This is something I’ll remember for years to come. It is really special to be a part of this.”

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ABOVE: Rose Bell displays the pillow she created for the art show. LEFT: Three Smiling Faces: Jennifer Mullins, TSI's coordinator for the Collective Dreaming art show and artist Mark N. Tarle and his sun sculpture. Photos by Brian Britza, SVAC.



## From the CEO's Desk

**W**henever most people think of diversity, they most often think of race. Some people may also think of ethnicity. As I looked in Webster's dictionary for a definition, I found diversity defined as "the condition of being different." To go a step further, we can look at groups of people who are classed according to common traits or customs. We begin to see that we can belong to many different subsets; men or women, old or young, parents or adults with no children, Christian or atheist, heterosexual or homosexual, someone with a disability vs. one without a disability and on and on.

Sharon Alberts, CEO

Yet no matter which group or groups we belong to and no matter whether the group is perceived negatively by society or not, we all have special gifts and abilities. It is this combination of gifts and abilities that makes work forces, organizations and communities rich in creativity and development when they are diverse in their composition. In all these groups there exist opportunities for exciting contributions.

Recently TSI co-sponsored an art show with the Steel Valley Arts Council. There was a call for local artists by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. Among the wonderful subset of artists who participated in the show was another subset of individuals; those with mental disabilities. The art show displayed the work of all without stigmatizing any group. The theme of the show demonstrated very clearly the commonality even among a diverse group. This is that we all "dream" whether it is dreaming at night or dreaming about our goals and aspirations. This commonality as humans encourages us to value diversity and to look beyond the differences that can always be found.

## Lost in Translation

**T**ransitional Services, Inc. teamed up with APS Healthcare to host a conference to improve health education for individuals with mental retardation. APS Healthcare is the designated Health Care Quality Unit for the Office of Mental Retardation for providers in seven counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. The all-day conference titled "Lost in Translation: Teaching Health Related Topics to People with Disabilities" was held at the Greensburg Garden and Civic Center on June 1. It was offered free to the staff of all providers in the southwest region.

A wealth of health care information is available to help people lead healthier lives; however, it is a challenge to make it accessible to those with mental disabilities. Much of it is not in a form that is easily available to individuals with mental retardation. Many agencies that provide services to those with mental retardation find it difficult to teach people about vital health topics such as nutrition, medication information and community safety. Both TSI and APS Healthcare recognized this and developed the conference to address this problem.

The conference included lectures on health literacy, a review of the learning process, and ways to facilitate learning. A workshop was presented on activities and programming of TSI's Healthy Living Project which have been effective for those with mental retardation. For more than six years, the Healthy Living Project has been providing activities and instruction on health related issues to persons with mental disabilities. Sallianne Brown, coordinator of the Project says, "It is an ongoing challenge to provide our residents with the kind of information they need to make healthy choices."



Coordination for the Lost In Translation Conference (l-r): Miriam Reddel, RN (APS Healthcare), Sallianne Brown, RN, Coordinator of Clinical and Community Supports Services, and Tammy Tremba, RN (APS Healthcare).

PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape) discussed sexual safety and relationship issues, and APS Healthcare presented a workshop on how to communicate with healthcare professionals.

For more information on APS Healthcare visit their website at [www.apshealthcare.com](http://www.apshealthcare.com) or call 1-888-321-5861.

# Giving Makes a Difference

## ***To Give Is Better Than to Receive***

*by Steve Gilliland*

As a professional speaker, it is my job to be center stage, to have a voice, to command attention. As a caring citizen, however, my charge is infinitely different. I have always been impressed by people who live by the words of William Barclay, the popular 20<sup>th</sup> century Scottish theologian who once said, "Always give without remembering; always receive without forgetting." This is, indeed, the microcosm of giving: to give, not in the spirit of obligation or debt, but merely in the spirit of service.



The investment to give one's self and to share resources is central to the premise of stewardship. And it is limited not by the number of available dollars, but only by one's heart, attitude and commitment to affect lasting change.

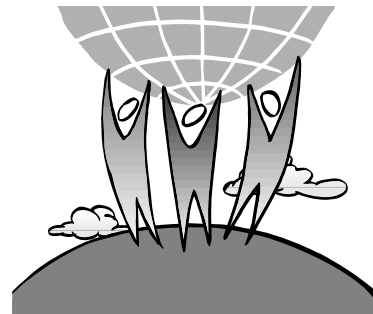
My friends, we are fortunate. We have been given many opportunities. However, significance is measured not by our opportunities, but by our choices. Let us choose significance; let us all choose to give, not merely give back. After all, life is lived best when giving is seen not as an obligation, but as a privilege and a priority.

*Steve Gilliland is an international speaker and accomplished author. He is an avid supporter of Transitional Services, Inc.*

## ***Why I Give***

*by Lynn Nickel,  
Unit Supervisor,  
Island Avenue Center*

When people ask why I donate to TSI, there are lots of things I could tell them.



I could tell them about the people I know who have benefited from classes and activities paid for by donations to TSI.

I could tell them that I have a career in which I learn far more than I teach, or that I gain far more than I give in this job. That's all true.

But the most important reason I give is the hardest to explain.

Most people choose a career because it will bring success and financial security. But those of us who work in this field know we will never be wealthy. Instead, we get to work with the bravest, most resilient, most incredible people anywhere. We are allowed to help people rebuild their lives. We get to witness people become their own heroes.

Ultimately, I give to TSI because I get to work with my heroes every day. How many people get to say that?

## ***The Self Recovered***

*by Janet Hunt*

I never felt safe. Even after I earned a Masters degree, had a good job, friends, and my own apartment, I never felt safe. My fears grew so great that eventually I was hospitalized. It was determined that I could not return to my apartment, my job and everything I knew. It was then that I came to TSI; and only then that I began to face my mental illness and begin my recovery journey.

At first, I felt entombed, worthless and that my life was over; but gradually I responded to the TSI staff as they reached out with genuine caring. They understood me not as a patient but as a person who had talents which were not dead but only dormant. My comfortable, homelike apartment and the support of staff helped me feel safe. They challenged me to be part of my treatment even when I didn't want to participate. They helped transform what I thought was a death sentence to the ability to advocate for a better mental health system. Now I have a quality life and am self-sufficient again.

My story is not entirely unique. TSI helps people with all kinds of mental disabilities build quality lives and has done so for over 30 years. Giving to TSI will allow you to participate in helping people recover their lost selves and the lives they thought were gone forever.



*Contributions to TSI are tax-deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. TSI also participates in the United Way Contributor's Choice Program. Contributions can be made to # 172 (TSI) through the United Way. For more information on making a contribution to TSI, please contact Gerry Henry at 412-461-1322 ext 222 or [ghenry@transitionalservices.org](mailto:ghenry@transitionalservices.org).*

# 2005 Donors

**G**reat care has been taken in the preparation of this list. If we have omitted the name of a supporter, our apologies are offered along with the desire to correct the information. Please contact us at 412-461-1322 ext 222 or ghenry@transitionalservices.org if this has been the case.

## GRANTORS

Citizens Bank  
Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust  
Pittsburgh Center for the Arts

## FOUNDER LEVEL (\$1500.00)

Sharon A. Alberts  
Dr. Robyn Dawes  
Steve and Diane Gilliland  
Chris Lasswell -  
Truefit Solutions, Inc.

## PLATINUM LEVEL (\$1,000.00)

Anonymous  
Joan Geary Gyorkey  
Henry E. Luck Jr. and Jill Luck

## GOLD LEVEL (\$500.00)

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John C. R. Kelly Realty, Inc.  
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Kuhn, Engle & Stein  
Bonni Mackin - Verizon Employee  
Volunteer Incentive Program  
Shirley McConnell  
Donna Santucci  
Barbara Vilanova

## SILVER LEVEL (\$250.00)

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Rose Yeso



# Going Out This Summer?



Summer is the season that most of us spend a lot of time outdoors. There's a need to use caution and good safety skills when you are out and about in the community. Across the country, according to the National Center for Victims of Crime, a theft takes place every two seconds and an assault occurs every seven seconds.

No one can guarantee your safety all the time. But there are things you can do everyday to make yourself safer.

The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime offers education to citizens about protecting themselves. According to their literature, the most important idea to remember is "to avoid being a victim, become a tough target." When out in the community, maintain a confident expression and use body language that conveys you will not be an easy victim. Be cautious, but don't look fearful. Having a positive attitude on the inside will help keep a confident demeanor on the outside.

Scream and draw attention if you are attacked. Never fight to keep your money or personal items. Above all, do everything possible to avoid being taken to an isolated area or into a motor vehicle.

## ***Tips from the Center for Victims of Violence and Crime***

- \* Know how to get where you're going ahead of time; don't look lost even if you are
- \* Don't walk near walls, high bushes or in between cars
- \* Walk with someone else
- \* Use busy, highly traveled and well-lit streets
- \* Avoid areas you feel uncomfortable in whenever possible; if feeling uncomfortable or fearful, leave the area immediately.
- \* If you fear you're being followed, head for an area with a lot of people
- \* Don't keep all of your money in one pocket or in your purse; as a matter of fact, keep nothing in your purse that isn't worth losing
- \* At ATMs or at the bank, put money away quickly and discretely, NEVER walk with money in your hand

## **TSI...IN THE NEWS**

### ***Chosen for New Housing Initiative***

Transitional Services, Inc. has been awarded a \$4.2 million contract by Allegheny County Office of Behavioral Health to manage a new program which will provide affordable housing for people with mental health disabilities.

Patricia Valentine, Deputy Director for The Office of Behavioral Health, stated "Transitional Services, Inc. (TSI) was selected for this initiative because of its extensive experience in meeting the housing needs of adults with mental disabilities. Additionally, the organization clearly demonstrates a recovery philosophy in its services and the ability to collaborate and work in partnership with others".

The Permanent Supportive Housing initiative is designed to provide more than 200 reasonably priced apartments for people served by the county mental health system.

### ***CEO Elected to Board***

Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (PARF) elected Sharon Alberts, Chief Executive Officer of TSI, to a two year term on its Board of Directors. Her term runs through 2008.

### ***Staff Receives Credential***

Yvette Stearns, Clinical Associate, completed examination and credentialing requirements through the Pennsylvania Certification Board and has been awarded the credential of Certified Allied Addictions Practitioner.

### ***Welcomes New Board Members***

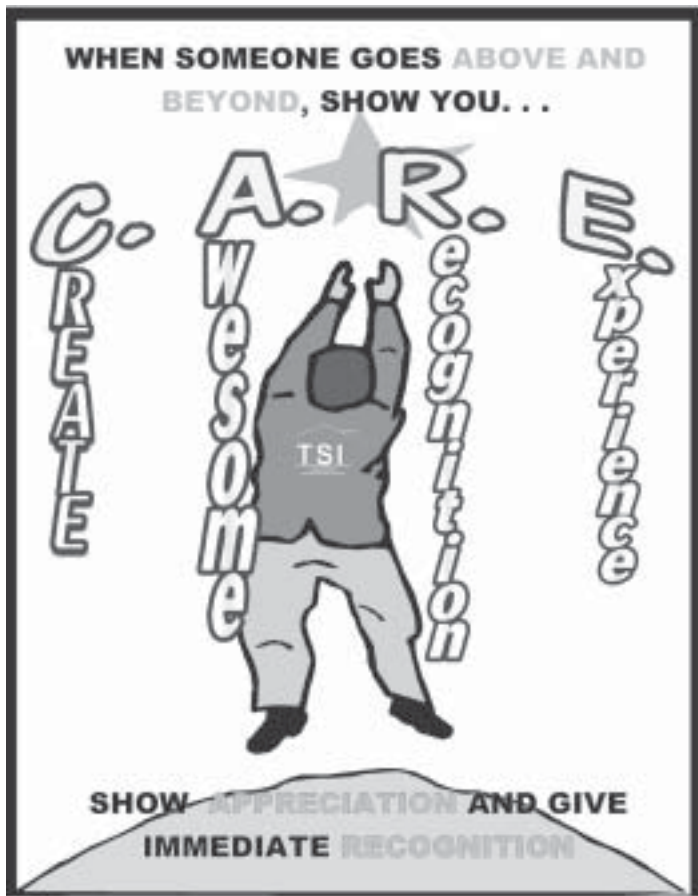
The following people were elected to TSI's Board of Directors in the fall of 2005 and Spring of 2006:

Kathy Paskus  
Faith Stipanovich  
Gregory Yaskulka  
Lawrence Powell



- \* Use ATMs at "safe" times and places, preferably with a friend as a "guard"
- \* Wear clothes and shoes you can run in
- \* Have your house key or car key out and ready before you reach the car or house
- \* Carry a whistle or personal alarm, and have it where you can get to it quickly

*For more information, contact Darnell Drewery, Community Education and Outreach Supervisor for the Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, or visit the Center's website at [www.cvvv.org](http://www.cvvv.org)*



## Exceeding the **ABOVE** and Moving **BEYOND**

Here are the winners through the second quarter of the fiscal year:

- ◆ Boniface Igba, Overnight Resident Advisor, Bryant
- ◆ Sandy Kalsey, Unit Supervisor, Bryant
- ◆ Dana Cook, Unit Supervisor, Mental Retardation Supported Living
- ◆ Joe Sieber, Assistant Property Manager
- ◆ Shawn Glass, Community Support Specialist II, Mental Retardation Supported Living
- ◆ Renay Trotter, Mental Health Residential Services Coordinator

*If you see a fellow TSI team member exemplifying the TSI Values and Guiding Principles in such a way that you believe they have gone Above and Beyond not only what is expected but beyond their responsibilities as well, tell them about it today. Locate a nomination form near the Above and Beyond poster in your unit or building and complete it. We have many outstanding staff members; let's make sure their efforts are recognized. If you are in need of more forms, please contact David Treece at 412-461-1322.*



**J**anet Hunt, who is in TSI's supported living program, and TSI Board Member Chris Weis both won awards at the Day of Self Discovery conference held on May 17 at the William Pitt Student Union in Oakland.

In receiving the Emerging Leader Award, Janet was honored for the many ways she has contributed to the efforts of organizations advocating for better mental health services. Janet's many avenues of advocacy include making quarterly visits to Harrisburg on behalf of the Let Our Voices Be Heard project of the Mental Health Association, serving on the Consumer Action and Response Team Advisory Board and on the consumer satisfaction team for the Community Care Behavioral Health Organization. She challenges those responsible for implementing changes in the system to provide services based on the recovery model and is a consistent advocate for the supports necessary to help mental health consumers have quality lives in the community.

Chris won the Pioneer Award for expanding upon the legacy of individuals who started new programs in the early days of the modern mental health system of Allegheny County. Chris helped start the Community Support Program, which brings together consumers, family members and providers in Allegheny County for the purpose of improving the behavioral health services. He also helped start the Turtle Creek Valley drop-in center as well as the Allegheny Country Peer Support Warmline Service, which provides consumers a way to talk over concerns with a peer support operator any evening. Chris has contributed his ideas and expertise to the Peer Support and Advocacy Network, the Community Care Behavioral Health Advisory Board, the Consumer Action and Response Team Advisory Board and Let Our Voices Be Heard. As a member of TSI's Board of Directors, Chris helps the agency understand and respond to consumer needs.

About 200 people attended the conference for people with mental health disabilities and those who support them. The event focused on helping individuals develop tool kits for shaping their recovery and becoming self-advocates. TSI staff, Jennifer Mullins, served on the Planning Committee for the event and coordinated the agency's information table.

# Safety Recognition

**T**SI was nominated for a safety award by Brown and Brown Insurance of LeHigh Valley. This recognition came as a result of TSI's strong commitment to safety, which is evidenced by the organization's exceptional loss ratio of 5.64%.

Dale Young, Chairman of the Safety Committee and the Director of Property Management at TSI, defines a company's loss ratio as "the amount of money an organization will save in worker compensation claims resulting in reduced costs for the agency." A portion of the money saved is then returned to the organization.

When asked what distinguishes TSI from other agencies in regards to safety, Dale said, "TSI, through the Safety Committee and the strong commitment of the agency's leadership, promotes and develops a culture that provides an overall safe environment."

## How We Do It

- \* Developing and circulating monthly posters pertinent to current safety concerns (through the TSI Safety Committee, which is certified through the PA State Workers Compensation Bureau).
- \* Producing videos that focus on major safety concerns of people with mental disabilities; i.e., "Unsafe Smoking" and "Unsafe Cooking." These videos help the individuals served to draw correlations to some of their own unsafe practices that they might not be aware of.
- \* Conducting monthly safety checks of residential apartments, building safety walkthroughs, monthly fire drills and disaster readiness drills, etc.
- \* Requiring annual training on community safety for supported living and maintenance employees
- \* Offering agency-wide education on "Chemical Right to Know," in addition to training targeted specifically to safety issues that may be of a concern to the industry that year.

# SAFETY FIRST!

# THE VALUE OF US Diversity at TSI

**S**tereotypes are colliding and CRASHing at this year's diversity training at TSI. The training is based on the "in your face" stereotypes and racism featured in the movie CRASH. Emmett Baxendell serves as the facilitator for the agency training.

Many times people confuse the meanings and use of the terms racism and stereotype.

Racism is prejudice or animosity directed against a person or group of people on the basis of their race. It is based on the belief that people of different races, who have different qualities and abilities, are inherently inferior or superior to other races based upon these qualities and abilities. There is no basis in fact for racism.

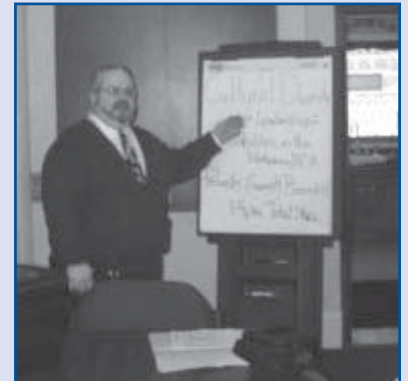
A stereotype is an oversimplification or standardized image or idea held by one person or group based on some observation of the physical traits, actions, dress, cultural practices or some other factor. There is often some truth at the root of a stereotype. The problem with the stereotype is that once an observation is made about one individual in a group it is unfairly applied to every member of that group.

While few people readily admit to being racists, many people will admit to thinking in stereotypes or using stereotypes in their daily lives. Stereotypes are ubiquitous. They are everywhere. We use them and hear them without thinking much about them. We only tend to challenge them when they hit too close to home, when someone tries to apply them to us.

Racism is simple and straightforward. It is based on race and race alone. Since there are only three races it is limited to three groups of people. Stereotypes are more complicated. They can be based on race but often go beyond race. They are based on gender, ethnicity (which is often confused with race), hair color, nationality, social class, political affiliation, the other departments in your workplace, fans of other sport teams, car ownership, the company you work for, and anyone of a thousand other things.

The key to overcoming racism and stereotyping is to remember to see everyone you associate with as individuals, who stand on their own merits and who each have their own quirks that make them unique, just like you.

*Emmett Baxendell is the Director of Education and Training from Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh. Emmett conducts a variety of training on the subjects that include diversity, disability awareness, ethics, problem solving & critical thinking skills and customer service.*



*Emmett Baxendell helps us to discuss stereotypes.*

## *More Collective Dreaming Creations...*



*Dyan Boylen with her dream pillows created for the Collective Dreaming art show (above); Bed created by **Mark N. Tarle** (right).*



*Transitional  
Services, Inc.*

Helping People with Mental Disabilities  
to Achieve Quality Lives

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Homestead, PA 15120-1566  
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[www.transitionalservices.org](http://www.transitionalservices.org)



Transitional Services, Inc. has been accredited by  
CARF for the following programs:

- *Community Housing: Psychosocial Rehabilitation (Adults)*
- *Community Services: Community Living Services*