

# PERSPECTIVES

*Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*

December 2016



## *Celebrating the 25th Anniversary Friends of NHS/AVS Golf Open*

On a late September day, NHS Allegheny Valley School (NHS/AVS) hosted its 25th Anniversary Golf Open. The event, held at Shannopin Country Club, honored J&P Service Management Co., Inc. (J&P) as the 2016 AVS CHAMPion. Chairperson Emil Parent of Guardian Protection Services along with 109 golfers, dozens of sponsors, underwriters, donors, and others helped to raise more than \$130,000 to support NHS/AVS programs.

During dinner, former President and Chief Executive Officer Regis G. Champ presented the AVS CHAMPion Award to J&P, a long time supporter of and friend to NHS/AVS. The AVS CHAMPion Award, named in honor of Regis Champ, recognizes those who go above and beyond to support NHS/AVS. We were delighted to honor J&P with the award in recognition of their more than 30-year partnership with NHS/AVS.



Before the golfers teed off, members of the NHS/AVS Edward J. Zapp Program Center Communications Club performed America the Beautiful and the National Anthem, using both their voices and sign language.

## *We're Hiring!*

Are you, or someone you know, interested in making a difference in the lives of individuals with intellectual & developmental disabilities (IDD)? We have many opportunities available for nurses, direct care professionals and more! Full-time, part-time and casual shifts are available. NHS/AVS offers competitive wages and great benefits.

For more information visit: [avs.nhsonline.org/careers](http://avs.nhsonline.org/careers). Proud to be an equal opportunity employer M/F/D/V.

## *Thank you to our Donors!*

**For a full list of NHS Allegheny Valley School and NHS Human Services Foundation donors from July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016, visit [avs.nhsonline.org](http://avs.nhsonline.org).**

## Assistive Technology

### Communication Technology

As the Communication Technology Program continues to thrive, the Computers class at Zapp has been participating in many exciting activities and featured classes.

The group took a trip to the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium to visit Aquarist Josie Romasco and the sea turtles they had been studying through web cam sessions. They spent the day seeing first-hand the activities they had learned about through their classes.

The group used technology to learn about pet therapy. They watched educational videos about safety with dogs in the community, the benefits of pet therapy, and training videos for therapy dogs. Participants also played an interactive computer game that helped them to learn about feeding, exercising and bathing a dog. The educational experience wrapped-up with a visit from therapy dogs.



Mary (pictured left) and Brandon (pictured right) experience hands-on learning during pet therapy and sea turtle encounters.

### Technology Home

In the coming year, NHS/AVS will build and open a second technology home! Funded through lead grants from AVS Foundation and Polk Foundation, the four bedroom home, located in Allegheny County, will include many "smart" features including an adapted kitchen, remote patient monitoring, communication technology and home automation. "Building upon our learning with our first home, we are thrilled to be moving ahead with this home that will include additional technologies that will help the individuals to learn new skills and become more independent," comments Administrator Shaleea Shields who, along with NHS Vice President of Information Technology Tom Morgan is co-chairing the technology home committee.

## Improvements to Hummelstown Campus

Renovations to the Hummelstown Campus are underway and include expansion of and new equipment for the Medical Suite, a renovated maintenance area, and other needed improvements. These major updates to the Campus have been funded by contributions to the Capital Development Fund.

## Memory Care Program Inspires Alzheimer's Awareness

NHS/AVS' Memory Care Program helped to raise awareness of Alzheimer's and other dementias for many throughout the year.

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month was celebrated in June with Edward J. Zapp and Kennedy Program Centers hosting The Longest Day, an event of the Alzheimer's Association®. Activities included sharing a walk and stories, and planting purple flowers to honor the effort.

Also in June, Alzheimer's/dementia training sessions were held, and useful tips on recognizing and caring for those with the disease were shared with staff members.

In October, 31 clients, staff members and friends from NHS/AVS gathered in Beaver, PA to participate in the 2016 Walk to End Alzheimer's.



Leading the effort to continue to build awareness of the disease is NHS/AVS Administrator Amanda Thomas. "I am extremely thankful to everyone that has supported these individuals, and we will continue to share information and opportunities for learning in the coming year," commented Amanda.

# Partners in Kindness

For nearly 20 years, employees at Guardian Protection Services have brought holiday joy to the individuals at the NHS/AVS Pittsburgh Campus. To recognize their commitment to NHS/AVS, Guardian and their team were named the AVS CHAMPion in 2015.

This past year, the partnership between Guardian and NHS/AVS expanded even further with Guardian creating a "Partners in Kindness" initiative. To show appreciation for the Guardian employees who have shared so much with NHS/AVS, Helen, Jonathan, Sharon, Shequala and Vicki visited Guardian Protection Services in Warrendale, PA. Guardian employees in Phoenix, AZ, who have also participated in holiday gift giving, joined in on the celebration event via video conference.

"Our employees take great pride in personally shopping during the holidays for just the right gifts for the NHS/AVS residents, and we support this in any way that we can," commented Guardian's President Joe Colosimo. "Unfortunately we can't send 300-plus employees to deliver the gifts personally, so this event will bring the residents to us and give our employees a chance to shake hands and personally meet some of the special people from NHS/AVS for whom they have made wishes come true."

In 2016, Guardian has committed to making sure each client on the Pittsburgh Campus receives a gift! We look forward to continuing to grow this partnership with Guardian and we thank them for their commitment to the individuals in our care.



Jonathan presents a handmade card to Nicole, an employee at Guardian.

## About NHS

In 2008 Allegheny Valley School became an affiliate of NHS.

With a rich tradition spanning almost 50 years, NHS is at the forefront of providing care and services to people with special needs. Today NHS, through its subsidiaries, is a leading provider of community-based, non-profit education and human services. More than 10,000 employees provide care to almost 40,000 adults and children throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, New York, Maryland, Delaware, Louisiana, and Michigan. NHS has developed a unique continuum of care providing services in the areas of mental health, addictive diseases, education, foster care and permanency, autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities and many more specialized programs.

### Mission

Enriching lives by providing exceptional services through an individualized approach.

### Vision

Creating communities where everyone is empowered to take meaningful steps toward reaching their fullest potential.



# Pursuit for those with disABILITIES

NHS/AVS was selected as one of two area service providers to host a team of cyclists from around the United States that rode cross-country to raise money and awareness for people with IDD.

On July 26, NHS/AVS hosted a learning event and party honoring Pursuit for those with disABILITIES. In a packed room, leadership of NHS/AVS, ACHIEVA, The Center in Houston, TX and Friends of Pursuit shared ideas about how to better address the needs of individuals with IDD. Topics included the need for ongoing advocacy to address the shortfalls in federal and state funding, dental care resources, partnerships with other non-profits and the business community, and more.

The Pursuit – Pittsburgh Partnership Party took place on the NHS/AVS Pittsburgh Campus and brought together 400 NHS/AVS clients, staff members, families and community friends. The carnival themed party included a dunk tank (popular on the hot July day), beautiful decorations summarizing Pursuit's cross-country journey, the opportunity to ride a short course on a bicycle, in a wheelchair or on foot, and music, dancing, and delicious food!

The following day, NHS/AVS Assistant Regional Executive Director Roni Erath and Executive Director, Development & Communications Dorothy Gordon joined Rider-in-Chief David Baldwin and more than 50 others in a 122-mile bicycle journey from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD. During the ride, Roni and Dorothy were able to continue to develop connections with the Pursuit team. In November, they both attended the Pursuit 1.0 wrap-up in Houston where they were facilitators for round table discussions. We are grateful to be connected with this dynamic group that is supporting individuals with IDD nationwide.

Pursuit - Pittsburgh Partnership underwriters:

The Hillman Company  
Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation

Lintons Food Service Management  
The Pollon Family



At the Pursuit-Pittsburgh Partnership Party, attendees were able to enjoy a ride through campus.

## Connect with us!

Websites: [avs.nhsonline.org](http://avs.nhsonline.org) & [nhsonline.org](http://nhsonline.org)

412-299-7777

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# 34th Annual Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix

During ten days in July, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix (PVGP), presented by the Greater Pittsburgh Automobile Dealers Foundation, hosted car shows, parades, a gala, concerts, vintage races, and much more.

NHS/AVS residents served as charity ambassadors, attending the Jazz & Jaguars Blacktie & Tailpipes Gala, Pitt-Race, and the Opening Ceremonies Parade on Race Weekend. PVGP Ambassador Liz was highlighted and shared her story on live radio from the Gala, and at a dinner hosted by BMW Car Club (see below). In October, NHS/AVS volunteers received the coveted award of a "checkered flag," given to those who are outstanding in their support of the PVGP efforts. We are grateful for the commitment of the NHS/AVS ambassadors and volunteers who enthusiastically represent our organization.

The 2017 PVGP will be held July 7 – 16. For more about the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, visit [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org).



PVGP Ambassadors Ed and Liz ride in the Opening Ceremonies Parade.

## PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW



Benefiting Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Charities

Results from the 2016 PVGP will be announced at the Dancing with the Cars event on February 16, 2017. For more information or to buy tickets visit [pvgp.org](http://pvgp.org).

## BMW Supports NHS/AVS

In 2016, a wonderful partnership began between NHS/AVS and the BMW Car Club of Allegheny County. A group from NHS/AVS presented at the annual BMW Club pre-PVGP dinner, providing us the opportunity to share who we are, who we serve, and how the PVGP supports NHS/AVS. PVGP Ambassador Liz stole the show as she shared her experiences with the PVGP and at NHS/AVS, and her appreciation for the group's support. Later in the summer, Bobby Rahal BMW of South Hills chose NHS/AVS as the beneficiary of its Drive for a Cause event. For every test drive taken, a donation was made to NHS/AVS! We're thrilled that BMW has embraced the mission of NHS/AVS and are excited for more opportunities to partner in the coming years!

## SRPC Happenings

### Pathway Reaches its Goal

With support from 90 friends and neighbors, more than \$25,000 was raised to build a pathway and make other enhancements to the Slippery Rock Program Center (SRPC) garden. Improvements include an accessible pathway, landscaping and a pergola.

Much of the project was completed through the hard work of staff members. The enhanced outdoor space will be used year-round for exercise and learning by the individuals, staff members, family members and visitors.

### Community Resource Fair

SRPC hosted its first Community Resource Fair in September. Throughout the day, dozens of community members visited the site to not only learn more about NHS/AVS and apply for job opportunities, but also to gain information from participants including the Central Blood Bank, Highmark Caring Place, Slippery Rock Fire Rescue, American Heart Association and more!



Clients enjoy the new outdoor space at SRPC.

# Thank you to our Parents Associations!

NHS/AVS is fortunate to have two active parent groups, the Allegheny Valley School Parents Association and the Combined Parents Association. During 2016, the two groups made contributions to the Capital Development Fund that totaled \$12,000. Support from the Parents Associations over the years has totaled more than \$255,000, and in 2014 we honored the groups with the AVS CHAMPION Award. We are grateful to our Parents Associations for their generosity. To learn more about or to join the Parents Associations, please contact Amy Rocini (arocini@nhsonline.org).

## Projects of the Nicoden Fund

Through a grant received from the Walter F. and Ellen H. Nicoden Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, funding is available to support recreational activities and programs for NHS/AVS consumers and their accompanying staff members. Numerous opportunities have been funded through this bequest including camps, pottery classes, sensory equipment, equestrian lessons, vacations, sporting events, community outings and more. Activities of 2016 included:



Clients at the SRPC are enjoying a new adaptive bike.



The gentlemen from Fox Group Home enjoyed a weekend in Ohio visiting the Pro Football Hall of Fame, House of Blues and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.



More than 600 clients and staff members in Eastern and Western PA enjoyed a boat cruise and seeing the sights of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, respectively.



Individuals from SRPC and Pittsburgh Campus enjoy ongoing horseback riding lessons.



Petting Zoos were funded and featured at four celebrations in Western PA.

Proms were held at the Pittsburgh Campus in both June and October. It was exciting for participants to get dressed-up, dance and enjoy delicious treats and the festive atmosphere.



A beautiful mural is now brightening-up a common area of the Philadelphia Campus.



A kickball tournament for 150 clients and staff members of the Philadelphia Program Center was held in August.