



THE CHOICE GROUP

# choices & Challenges

## Tips and Information

### **Tips for Fighting Spring Allergies**

With spring rains, there's more mold growth inside and outside your home. Flowers, trees, weeds, and grasses also begin to blossom. And spring cleaning will stir up dust mites throughout the house.

### **Keep pollen under control.**

Wash bedding every week in hot water. Wash your hair and shower before going to bed, since pollen can accumulate in hair.

### **Clean every surface.**

Wear a mask and gloves when cleaning, vacuuming, or painting to limit dust and chemical exposure. Vacuum twice a week.

### **Wash rugs.**

Limit throw rugs to reduce dust and mold. If you do have rugs, make sure they are washable.

### **Keep indoor air clean.**

Keep windows closed to reduce pollen entering the house. Change filters in air conditioning units and vents frequently this time of year.

### **Consider allergy medicine.**

Talk to your doctor about a seasonal allergy drug that may be appropriate for your symptoms.

## Choice Group Counselors Go EXTREME

As the first week of February approached Choice Group employees from Hampton Roads including Ericka Neville, Nicole Jump, Krysta Johnson, Lakia Gordon, and Sandy Dunaway anticipated volunteering as a team to help a deserving family in the community. The ABC TV program, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* was making its way to Virginia Beach, VA. This would be the first time the popular program, which stars Ty Pennington, took on a project in Eastern Virginia. Ericka, Hampton Roads supervisor, recounts, "When I heard *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* was coming to South Hampton Roads, I felt that it would be a great opportunity for The Choice Group staff to assist a family in the community, while still having fun. Everyone was excited to participate so we decided to volunteer as a group." The event proved to be not only fun but also memorable and meaningful for all who participated.

The Choice Group Staff were few among the thousands of volunteers who showed up to give their time to a worthy cause. According to George Verschoor, the show's executive producer, when interviewed by the Virginia Pilot, the South Hampton Roads episode had "the biggest turnout of this season."



The Hill family



As is true of all families featured on the show, the story of Beverly Hill and her family is remarkable. Hill, and her husband Fred Burdette have adopted six daughters. As reported by the Pilot Online, they have nurtured children suffering from Shaken Baby Syndrome, those in body casts mending child abuse injuries, and little ones who could eat only through feeding tubes. They have taken care of over 35 foster children over the past 15 years. Hill's service to her community caused her to be nominated for the show twice before, but it was on her third nomination that she was chosen.

Due to the needs of the construction crews, volunteers signed up for slots working around the clock. Nicole and her sister Ashley donned white hard hats after arriving on site for a 10pm-6am shift. Although the sun had gone down for the evening, the job site was still bustling under the bright lights set up for the workers. Nicole and Ashley assisted with caulking and painting the exterior of the house, disposing of sheets of drywall and trash, and bringing supplies to the skilled workers. (continued on page 2)

### **Spring Driving Tips**

With spring comes rain, warmer weather, and more activity on the roadways. In spring, the after-effects of winter weather—potholes and uneven pavement—make road conditions rough. Keep these driving tips in mind before you travel:

#### **Spring showers bring May flowers—and wet driving conditions.**

Slow down on slick roads, and increase your following distance even when mist begins to fall. Just a small amount of water can mix with oil and grease on the road to create slippery conditions.

#### **Share the road.**

Warm weather brings motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians out on the roads.

#### **Understand the impact of medications on driving.**

Keep in mind that new spring growth often causes seasonal allergies, and over-the-counter allergy drugs can have side effects or interact with other medications to diminish your driving ability.

#### **If possible, go around potholes.**

They can throw your car's front end out of alignment.

#### **Avoid driving through large puddles.**

They can impair your brakes, cloud your vision, or cause you to hydroplane.

#### **Keep your tires properly inflated.**

Doing so can reduce damage from potholes and other road hazards.

## **Choice Group Counselors Go EXTREME (cont.)**

At the end of the week, Ericka, Lokia, Krysta, and Sandy helped by ensuring the neighborhood was clean, loading railings, breaking down boxes for the food bank, and cleaning the parking lots at the mall where volunteers and spectators parked throughout the week. "I enjoyed the chance to have The Choice Group staff work together on a project that was not work-related," Ericka explained after the event, "Working together on common goals outside of work helps build better teamwork overall, which produces better results for our clients and referral sources."

The South Hampton Roads episode aired Easter Sunday, April 24th at 8pm and is also available for viewing online. -Nicole Jump



From Left to Right: Krysta Johnson, Ericka Neville, Sandy Dunaway, and Lokia Gordon

## **Client of the Quarter**



Morris Lewis

This quarter we would like to recognize Morris Lewis who has been working at O'Charley's on Forest Hill Ave since February 2010. Morris started out washing dishes and bussing tables. He impressed his supervisors so much that they decided to promote him by giving him more responsibilities to include unloading the delivery trucks and working on the line in the kitchen. Morris worked hard with his Vocational Counselor to find this position

and met some roadblocks along the way. For over 10 months Morris and his Vocational Counselor contacted employers, completed applications and attended interviews in search of a position which matched Morris' goal of working in a food service environment, an industry where he had a great deal of experience. Morris has a less than perfect record which created some problems when applying for jobs and many employers would not give him a chance. Luckily, O'Charley's gave Morris an opportunity for him to show his managers what he could do, and that's exactly what he did. Morris is an exemplary employee and a valuable member of the team. Morris reports "My managers have a lot of trust in me. I work hard and I'm always prepared; I really enjoy my job."

We are very proud of Morris and his accomplishments. Because of the money he is able to earn, Morris recently completed all the necessary steps to get his driver's license back and is saving up to buy a car in the months to come. A big thank you to O'Charley's for allowing Morris to shine. Congratulations Morris, we can't wait to see what you accomplish next!

-Emily Muniz

## **Transportation Updates**

### **GRTC**

There will be new individual schedules available for all GRTC routes on the buses Wednesday, May 11, 1011, and on [ridegrtc.com](http://ridegrtc.com) on Friday, May 13, 2011.

### **Effective 5/15/2011**

To better serve passengers, GRTC has divided the route 10 Riverview-Jefferson. The route 10 Riverview will exclusively provide direct trips between the Riverview community and Downtown Richmond. All bus stops in each community will remain the same. Commuters wishing to travel from one community to another will need to obtain a transfer.

### **Effective 5/16/2011**

To better serve the university community, the Route 16 - Grove bus stop currently located at the parking lot at Campus Drive and Boatwright Drive will be relocated to the Student Commons.

*If you have further questions, please contact the GRTC Customer Service Center at (804) 358-GRTC (4782).*

## **Employer of the Quarter**

Technology Integration Group (TIG) is a San Diego based company that has 22 offices across the United States, as well as offices in China and Germany. They provide professional computer support for school districts. At their office in Richmond, there are anywhere from fifteen to eighteen Computer Technicians that do the hands-on diagnoses and repairs of computers for various local schools. In June of 2008, Jeremy Branch was hired as a seasonal Computer Technician, as the company was starting out with a temporary contract. Upon hire, Jeremy was told that his position would likely only last three months or less. Despite this, Jeremy's Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) Counselor decided to support the position. At first, Jeremy struggled with the number of repairs that needed to be completed in a day's time. However, with the support provided through job site training, Jeremy quickly caught on and increased his speed and efficiency.

After three months of work, TIG's contract was extended and Jeremy was offered a permanent full-time position with the

company. Almost three years later, Jeremy is still supported through follow-along services and has grown to be the top producer at TIG's Richmond office. His manager states that Jeremy's dependability is extraordinary – almost legendary – as he rarely misses a day and always calls if there is a problem with his ability to get to work. "Everyone loves Jeremy," says TIG Manager, Walter Manley, "he's very well-liked and respected by the whole staff." Over the years, Jeremy's role has been expanded and now, in addition to performing computer repairs, he assists with the delivery and pick-up of computers at local schools.

TIG is very much a family work environment and has been very supportive in helping Jeremy. They have gone above and beyond the role of an employer, doing such things as helping Jeremy when he was having to car problems, to pooling money together to purchase a game system for him for Christmas. TIG never hesitates to call when there is a problem that needs to be resolved. The Choice Group appreciates their support and assistance with helping Jeremy succeed. *-Adair Jensen-Smith*

## **2011 National MS Society's Bike Virginia**

This June, The Choice Group will again be fielding a team in the National MS Society's Bike Virginia fundraising ride. Participants will start in Richmond, Virginia and pedal their way to Williamsburg, crossing 75 miles on Saturday. The next morning, they will hop back in their saddles and pedal all the way back to Richmond for a weekend total of 150 miles.

Last year, The Choice Group team consisted of six individuals raising nearly 5,000 dollars. The MS Society uses this money for a variety of programs, including professional educational training, community programs, and client services.

This year, The Choice Group team will include at least ten individuals and will be attempting to raise even more funds than last year.

The event gathers individuals from all walks of life, with riders either joining teams or riding independently. If you would like to participate as either a rider or virtual rider, feel free to join us by visiting <http://bikevar.nationalmssociety.org>.

This same link will also allow you to donate either to The Choice Group Team or to individual riders.

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## 2011 National MS Society's Bike Virginia (cont.)

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic disease that attacks the central nervous system. In the United States alone, there are nearly 400,000 individuals living with a diagnosis of MS, with nearly 200 new diagnoses per week. Nearly everyone is affected by MS, either having the diagnosis or knowing someone who does.

The Choice Group invites you to support this worthy cause and to support our team. For more information on MS, feel free to visit [www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org).

*-Richard Lucyshyn*

## Referral Source of the Quarter

The Choice Group is proud to provide services to individuals that receive Waiver services. One of the highlights of working with these individuals is working with the successful case managers. Dave Wampler is one of these case managers and The Choice Group would like to commend Dave on his years of hard work and experience and the positive influence he has had on vocational rehabilitation.

Dave Wampler has an extensive background in his field. He has been a case manager with Hanover County since October 2005. Prior to that, he was with Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) for five years, and worked in a group home as a direct-care staff before RBHA. Dave graduated from VCU with a Bachelor of Science in psychology. He is currently enrolled in a Master's of Public Administration program at Virginia Tech.

Dave works with a very wide array of ages and a variety of individuals. Currently, Dave has a caseload of 31, with seventeen individuals receiving ID Waiver services. Of the 31, seven are children, and several are in the "retirement" age range.

Dave is responsible for the individuals on his caseload in many ways. These responsibilities include overseeing and monitoring services, making sure that they are satisfied with all services, and making sure they are healthy and safe. Dave also links his clients to services providers necessary for specific services. Dave says,

"These are the job description lines, but what I really just want is to do my best to help these folks be happy and live a fulfilling life." A challenge and frustration that Dave faces in his position is when funding is not available for supports needed for individuals on his caseload. But he as a case manager and support coordinator, Dave is extremely creative and makes things happen with the limited resources that he has, making the livelihoods for others more productive and fulfilling.

Dave claims that one of the highlights of working his position is when he is able to secure funding or a new Waiver slot for the individuals that he supports. Recently, Dave secured Waiver slots for two individuals who had been waiting for Waiver services for years. "Making those phone calls is an amazing highlight." Dave says. He also enjoys working with service providers who are not afraid to think outside the box. Dave says, "I've seen so much more integration into the community, both by employers and by schools. When I think back to when I first started working in this field, I can see a huge difference in this area." The Choice Group is thankful to be able to work with Dave and other case managers who work and think like him. It is a team effort between case managers like Dave, service providers, and employers that make Vocational Rehabilitation a success in the community. Thank you Dave for everything you have done! *-Jenny Lange*

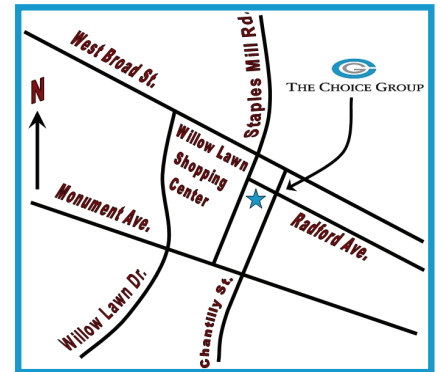
## Welcome New Employee!

Jamie Russock

## About The Choice Group

The Choice Group was established in 1998 as a private rehabilitation and employment services organization. Please feel free to call us anytime at 877-374-5312. You may also visit us weekdays between the hours of 9:00 am and 4:30 pm. We have plenty of reference material for vocational counseling, resources for employers, and resources for people with disabilities, including pamphlets that further describe the extent of our services.

4807 Radford Ave., Suite 106 • Richmond, VA 23230 • [www.thechoicegroup.com](http://www.thechoicegroup.com)



## CARF Accreditation

The Choice Group received the highest accreditation available from CARF: a three year accreditation. We are proud of our entire staff for their contribution to attaining this award. This award makes it possible for our stakeholders to feel secure in the knowledge that they are receiving the best possible services from The Choice Group.

### **What is CARF?**

CARF is a nonprofit organization that accredits human services providers throughout the United States, Canada, and Western Europe in the areas of rehabilitation, employment, aging, and family services.

The mission of CARF is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served.

### **What does it mean to be accredited?**

When the service or program you choose is CARF-accredited, it means your provider has passed an in-depth review of its services. It is your assurance that the provider meets rigorous CARF guidelines for service and quality -- a qualified endorsement that your provider conforms to nationally and internationally recognized service standards and is focused on delivering the most favorable results for you.

### **A hallmark of quality**

After an organization applies for accreditation of its services or programs, CARF sends professionals in the field to conduct an on-site survey to determine the degree to which the organization meets the standards. CARF surveyors also consult with staff members and offer suggestions for improving the quality of services.

CARF-accredited programs and services have demonstrated that they substantially meet internationally recognized standards. CARF accreditation means that you can be confident that an organization has made a commitment to continually enhance the quality of its services and programs and its focus on the satisfaction of the persons served.

### **The benefits of accreditation to the consumer of services**

Choosing CARF-accredited programs and services gives you the assurance that:

- \* The programs and services actively involve consumers in selecting, planning, and using services.
- \* The organization's programs and services have met consumer-focused, state-of-the-art national standards of performance.
- \* These standards were developed with the involvement and input of consumers.
- \* The organization is focused on assisting each consumer in achieving his or her chosen goals and outcomes.

## EMPLOYER PARTNERS

The Choice Group has partnered with a diverse and large segment of the business community. Our aim is to establish long term relationships with businesses in our community and we build these by providing employers with the support they need to obtain and maintain qualified, reliable, dependable employees. Our list of Employer Partners reads like the Who's Who in the Business Community. Listed below are some of the businesses that have hired our clients.

7-Eleven	Cybo Tech
A Touch of Care, Inc.	Deen Foods
A&E Service	Dept. of Taxation
A.G. Dillard	Department of Motor Vehicles
Able Couriers	Domino's Pizza
Advance Auto Parts	Double Tree Hotel
Auto Zone	EC. Link
All Dog Playskool	E.R. Carpenters
America House	Eastern Aluminum
American Family Fitness	Einstein (EOM)
American Security Group	England's Wood Stoves
Applebee's	Enterprise
Aramark. MCV	ESI, School of Business
Averett University	Family Care Home Health
Belle Kuisine	First North American National Bank
Beverly Healthcare	Food Lion
Big Lots	Geico
Bill's Barbeque	General Nutrition Center
Blue Ridge Mountain Sports	Glass Masters
Bon Secours	Gold's Gym
Breath of Life Landscaping	Golden Corral
Brighton Gardens	Goochland Custom Buildings and Play Center
Brooks Gray Sign Company	Goody Bicycle
Brown Toyota	Goody's
Burger King	Greyhound
Burrus Lamber	Hampton Inn
C. Digital	Hawkeye Manufacturing
Capitol One	Health Data Copiers
Cartaret Mortgage	Health South Rehabilitation Hospital
Cedarfield	Henrico County
Central VA Housing Coalition	Holiday Inn
Chesterfield County Disability Service Board	Holly Manor Nursing Home
Children's World	Home Depot
City of Richmond	Hopewell Craft
Civic Development Group	Howard Johnson
Comfort Inn	Hyatt Hotel
Computer Learning Solution	Ikon
Coyne Textile	Imperial Plaza
Creative Signs	ISS/Excel
Crutchfield	Ivy Hill Golf Club
Chester	Jackie's Hair Company
Crowne Plaza	James River Nurseries

The Jefferson Hotel  
Jo Ann Fabrics  
Keebler  
K-Mart  
Liberty University  
Longwood College  
Lowe's  
Lucy Corr Nursing Home  
Mail America  
Main Software Solutions  
Manpower  
Marriott  
Martha Jefferson Hospital  
McGraw GRP  
McDonald's  
MCV  
MCI World Communication  
Michael's  
Milhous Machine Company  
Monticello Area Community Action Agency  
Morehead Memorial Hospital  
Mrs. Marshall's  
Nabisco  
Office Max  
Old Dominion Box Company  
Old Dominion Health Services  
Omni Hotel  
Pegasus Cleaning  
Personal Touch Hair Design  
Pet Club  
Pet Smart  
Photowork Creative Camp  
Pizza Hut  
Porter Associates  
Printer Alley  
Quality Meats  
RC Drafting  
Radisson  
Rainbow Station  
Ramada Inn  
Regal Cinema  
Richmond Country Club  
Rose Department  
Rountree  
Ruby Tuesday's  
Ryan's Family Steakhouse  
SAS Plumbing  
Saint Catherine's  
Saint Christopher's  
Sam's Club  
Sea Ray  
Sears  
Service Master  
Shoney's  
Springs Industries  
Standard Parking  
Stanley Furniture  
Stanley Hardware  
Staples  
Stein Mart  
Strange's  
Super 8  
Target  
TEC Access  
Textilease  
The Boars Head Inn  
The Body Shop  
The Cedars  
The Goddards  
The Virginia Home  
Tour Time  
Trugreen Chemlawn  
Tyson Foods  
Ukrops, Midlothian  
University of Richmond  
University of Virginia Hospital  
University of Virginia Maintenance  
University of Virginia Observatory Hill  
Vanguard Plastics  
Virginia Baptist Hospital  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Virginia Correctional Enterprises  
Virginia Employment Commission  
Virginia Linens  
Virginia School of Technology  
Virginia State University  
Wachovia Bank  
Wal-Mart  
Wallace B. Tucker Mechanical Contractors  
Wendy's  
West End Orthopedic  
Westminster Canterbury  
Whitten Bros Mercury  
Wildbirds Unlimited  
Winn Dixie  
Wintergreen Resort  
Wolf Management  
YMCA  
YMCA Daycare  
World Access  
And many more...