

## **Training Center's last residents prepare for life in the community**

**By Mike Wade / NRVCS**  
[mwade@nrvc.org](mailto:mwade@nrvc.org)

*"When one door closes, another opens."*

That well-known and often-used quote from Alexander Graham Bell might be the best way to summarize the pending closure of the Southwestern Virginia Training Center in Hillsville.

Plans to close the facility, which houses individuals with developmental disabilities, were first set in motion back in 2012, after the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) reached a settlement with the Commonwealth of Virginia to require that individuals be served in the most integrated settings appropriate to meet their needs.

At the time, Southwestern Virginia Training Center (SWVTC) was one of five training centers in the state. Two others have already closed in the wake of the DOJ settlement - Southside Virginia Training Center and Northern Virginia Training

Center - closed in 2014 and 2016, respectively. A fourth - Central Virginia Training Center - will close by 2020. Southeastern Virginia Training Center, located in Chesapeake, will be Virginia's lone remaining Training Center and is expected to house 75 residents.

SWVTC, which at one time was home to more than 200 adults with disabilities, is now literally just weeks away from closing. The facility's doors are expected to close by the end of June 2018.

According to Crystallyn Heron, a Developmental Disability (DD) Support Coordinator Specialist with NRVCS, most of the individuals NRVCS is responsible for at SWVTC and their families have selected residential providers in the community, all of whom are located in southwest Virginia.

Heron notes that most of those individuals have been in the process of touring their new homes and participating in service planning meetings, in preparation for their transition to the community.

Heron explains that the process of transitioning individuals from SWVTC has been a major undertaking, requiring a true collaborative effort.

"I have been working closely with SWVTC residents, staff, families and their substitute decision makers to ensure seamless transitions into the community," notes Heron.

She adds that several individuals have transitioned into sponsored residential homes and group homes since the fall of 2017. Work is underway to get the few remaining SWVTC residents moved to a community setting before the facility closes.

"Those individuals have continued to thrive after their moves and are enjoying their lives in the community," Heron says.

Heron went on to comment that NRVCS will maintain case management for those individuals who transition into the community, per their and/or their substitute decision maker's request.

### **NRVCS Radford Center opens**

The NRVCS Radford Center, located in the former Wade's Supermarket building, (401 W. Main Street) opened for services on February 12. The facility, which is smoke-free, will serve as a primary location for outpatient and psychiatric services.



By Mike Wade / NRVCs  
mwade@nrvc.org

**BLACKSBURG** - Even under the best of circumstances, raising a child can present its share of struggles. Those challenges can be even greater for families of children diagnosed with developmental disabilities.

Fortunately for families in the New River Valley, help is available.

The team of staff at NRVCs who focus on the needs of children with developmental disabilities and their families are responsible for support coordination (often referred to as “case management”) and service facilitation, which gives individuals/families a variety of consumer-directed service options. Staff providing these services are supervised by Tom Meadows, who has been with the agency since 1995.

“My support coordination and services facilitation teams keep me energized,” declares Meadows. “I’m so lucky to supervise such a great staff.

“Each person brings their own set of talents, skills and professionalism - which leads to positive and meaningful outcomes in our clients’ lives,” Meadows adds.

Getting to those positive outcomes often requires a great amount of effort on the part of Meadows’ staff. A higher volume of referrals and cases of children with more intensive needs, combined with seemingly endless external pressures, means staff are routinely having to go above and beyond the call of duty to get things done.

“I don’t think anyone would argue that the paperwork has gotten worse,” explains Meadows. “There also aren’t a lot of services out there for this population and the opportunities for transition once they reach adulthood are fairly limited.”

Meadows went on to note that while more families of children with developmental disabilities are becoming aware of the Medicaid Waiver process and the benefits of having a slot, it is also a point of frustration for parents and providers alike.

“Unfortunately, having a child who receives special education does not automatically mean they can get a Waiver slot,” Meadows adds. “We’ve got over 180 kids on the waiting list at this point and almost half of them are considered Priority I. Plus, the criteria that’s used to determine who gets a Waiver slot is constantly changing.”

Meadows says the Waiver redesign that



**Support Coordination and Services Facilitation Teams:** Members of the NRVCs Support Coordination and Services Facilitation Teams for children and youth with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities include: (from left) Paige Ash, Consumer Directed Services Facilitator; Amanda Woods, Support Coordinator; Chasity Lawson, Support Coordinator; Tom Meadows, Program Supervisor; Hannah DiRico, Support Coordinator; Patrick Weaver, Consumer Directed Services Facilitator; Julia Ports, Support Coordinator; and Jessica Bellefeuille, Support Coordinator.

happened in 2016 has made navigating the system a bit more cumbersome, but feels those changes have also led to some improvements.

“It’s been great to see some major changes and advances to the system we work in, and they were definitely needed and supported, but some of these changes have been challenging to both staff and clients,” he adds.

Meadows and his staff are seeing more children with a dual diagnosis - those who have both a developmental disability and mental health issues. The team is also having to navigate more complicated family issues that are often a result of substance use disorders and addiction.

“Our goal is to be proactive and not reactive to the needs of a child and his or her family,” Meadows says, “and my team does a great job with finding creative ways to get families what they need.”

“It truly does take a team effort,” adds Paige Ash, a Consumer Directed Services Facilitator on Meadows’ team, “but parent participation is really the key.”

“It’s also hugely rewarding to know that you are playing a part in seeing services implemented that can have a real impact

on a family that feels completely overwhelmed by their particular situation.”

Meadows points out that when a child’s needs require that they be placed in a residential setting outside of the home - usually in another part of the state - his team must continue to provide case management services for that young person.

“My staff spend a ton of time in their vehicles,” he notes. “It’s not unusual for us to have to drive to somewhere like Winchester or Richmond to see one of our clients.”

Despite the obvious challenges, Meadows and his team remain committed to making a difference in the lives of the families they serve.

“In some cases, our staff is truly considered a part of the family,” declares Jessica Bellefeuille, a Support Coordinator on the team. “...You can’t make up some of the stuff we see but you have to recognize that we don’t all have the same ‘normal’ - you have to quickly figure out and adapt to each family’s circumstances.”

“The majority of the families we work

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(Note: Includes excerpts from the “My Life, My Community” literature supplied by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (October 2017 - Sixth Edition)

### What is a Waiver?

When you receive and accept a Waiver, you are choosing to have people support you/your family in your home and community.

### Can anyone have a Waiver?

No. Not everyone is eligible for a Developmental Disability Waiver. To determine eligibility, contact NRVCS at 961-8300.

If you meet eligibility criteria and are approved, you must be willing to accept services within 30 days. Individuals who are determined to be eligible are placed on a statewide waiting list. A committee determines who receives Waiver slots, based on urgency of needs. Priority status is based on how much and how quickly someone is in need of help.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of individuals currently on the waiting list in Virginia and many must wait years for a Waiver.

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with are doing what they can to make the best of what are sometimes very difficult situations,” Bellefeuille adds. “They are so resilient - and many times we helping them develop those resiliency skills so that they can keep fighting.”

Even with his years of experience in the field, Meadows says he continues to benefit from his interactions with the families he comes into contact with.

“The most rewarding part of my job is learning from the families we serve,” he states. “I’ve learned so much from them - invaluable information that can’t be found in text books or trainings.”

“Everyone that works in this field should embrace that and be willing to learn from our families,” Meadows concludes.

## SERVICES for INDIVIDUALS with DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
<b>Community Living, Day Support &amp; Residential</b>	Community living and day support services include individualized training, support and supervision that promotes peer interactions, opportunities for independent living and social skill development, and community participation for individuals with Developmental Disability (DD) diagnosis. Residential services provide individualized support services to individuals who are living with other individuals (one or more) and who need continuous supports available 24 hours per day. These services are provided in either a large or small group homes. Sponsored residential (“host homes”) are residential supports for individuals who prefer living in a family setting.
<b>Developmental Disabilities (DD) Case Management</b>	This team supports individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) by facilitating access to needed resources in the community and helping them maintain those resources. Services include referral, accessing and monitoring resources for all facets of life; family support and education, discharge planning and community networking , and education. This team can also coordinate screenings for DD Waiver criteria.
<b>REACH (Regional Education Assessment Crisis Services Habilitation)</b>	REACH utilizes a team approach to provide: clinical assessment; crisis prevention; stabilization and intervention planning and education; community- and home-based crisis intervention and stabilization available to both adults and children; facility-based therapeutic emergency and limited planned stays available for individuals 18 and over. The goal of REACH is to stabilize current or emerging crisis events, strengthen the individual’s support systems with intervention and training to increase capacity to support individuals served and promote person-centered positive outcomes. REACH serves adults and children with a developmental disability (DD) and a co-occurring behavioral health need or challenging behavior that is affecting their quality of life. Services for children also include time-limited behavior therapy. Behavioral therapists assist families in the use of interventions to help improve their child’s behavior and communication.
<b>Service Facilitation</b>	Allows individuals and their families to choose from a variety of consumer-directed service options. These include: personal assistance, companion, and respite services. Consumer-Directed services are available under a Virginia Waiver. The individual is the employer in these services and, as such, is responsible for hiring, training, supervising, and firing assistants or companions. If the individual is unable to independently manage his or her own Consumer Directed Services or if the individual is under 18 years of age, a family member/caregiver may serve as the employer on behalf of the individual.



700 University City Boulevard  
Blacksburg, VA 24060-2706  
nrvcs.org



## NRVCS Quarterly Service Report: FY 2018 (2nd Quarter)

Data from the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 illustrates the continued growth in demand for behavioral health services in the New River Valley.

Second quarter data covers the months of October through December of 2017. In comparing that period of time with the second quarter of the previous year, NRVCS served more residents in each of its five jurisdictions. The only segment of consumers that decreased were those individuals served that live outside of the New River Valley.

NRVCS Executive Director James Pritchett attributes at least some of the increase to implementation of Same Day Access, which is helping adults connect with services in a more timely manner. Pritchett adds that the higher numbers are also a result of the agency's continued efforts to expand programs and services for individuals with substance use disorders, as well as increased supports for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Total Unduplicated Consumers by Locality (All Services)			
	2018	2017	% Change
Floyd County	604	547	10.42%
Giles County	942	843	11.74%
Montgomery County	3364	2972	13.19%
Pulaski County	2827	2236	26.43%
City of Radford	788	710	10.99%
Other	835	848	- 1.53%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>9360</b>	<b>8156</b>	<b>14.76%</b>

Total Minor (Under Age 21) Consumers Served (All Services)			
	2018	2017	% Change
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4017</b>	<b>3764</b>	<b>6.72%</b>

Total Adult (Over Age 21) Consumers Served (All Services)			
	2018	2017	% Change
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5343</b>	<b>4392</b>	<b>21.65%</b>