

Honors Awarded at Fircrest Luncheon

Members and supporters of Friends of Fircrest came from across Western Washington to take part in the Friends of Fircrest awards ceremony. Those honored were; Senator Maralyn Chase, D-Shoreline, Dr. Ramey Rao, Fircrest dentist, and Paul Strand, President of Action DD and Vice-president FOF. Each has contributed in their own right to the betterment of residents of Fircrest and others across the State.

Senator Chase has for many years stood up for RHCs and especially Fircrest, which she says, "Is my passion."

Doctor Rao is well known for his care, compassion and tenderness when working with our special popu-



lation.

Strand has for many years worked to bring awareness for the need of our state's RHC system.

Wi-Fi is coming

Most people today expect Wi-Fi just about anywhere they go except at Fircrest. That will soon change.

Fircrest contracted to install Wi-Fi individually at each house. Administration will continue to explore campus wide Wi-Fi as technology and resources would allow.



From our President

Dear Friends of Fircrest,

We've survived another legislative session and an Arc inspired attack by KING TV. We could have done worse, we could have done better. The 'fight' to save Fircrest continues.

The Nursing section was audited and got rave reviews. The Intermediate Care section got systemic improvements in key areas and is expected to be recertified and accepting admissions, perhaps by the time you read this newsletter.

The cheap and distorted hits by King TV, a discredit to television feature coverage, resulted in our recruitment of super high quality FoF board recruits, including our new treasurer Tom Norton [his Great Dane is an ad-

ditional-non board member- bonus], and Leone McMullen. Launi Whedon and Kent Questad are relatively new to the board [you may remember Kent as a Fircrest PhD staff psychologist]. Launi has taken on important work and is a valued contributor.

Kent and longer serving board members Saskia Davis and Liz Patterson were terrific in our new video - please watch if you haven't yet. The video concept originated with FoF and was quickly adopted by the other RHC support groups and Action DD which directed its dissemination in Olympia.

More work needs to be done so please contribute to the efforts by donating to Action DD, and participate if you can.

DSHS is renewing the master planning for the Fircrest campus and

neighborhood groups are actively looking to reinvigorate the activities building and pools.

Fircrest may have a new superintendent by the time this is read. Megan DeSmet is now the probationary superintendent. She was formerly at both Rainier School and the Morgan Center.

Changing times means both challenges and opportunities for Fircrest residents. It is up to their advocates [us] to make sure their welfare remains the top priority among decision makers.

Spread the word
J.R. Hardman, JD, CPG
President, Friends of Fircrest

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS AND OTHER BUSINESS. Minutes available by request; cbbraley@q.com

New Treasurer Elected

Friends of Fircrest elected Tom Norton as our new treasurer. He brings with him a strong background in finance and we are most happy to welcome him. His duties began at the first of the year.

By-Laws Updated

In the October FOF meeting time was spent doing a detailed and lengthy review of our Bylaws. State law required by-law revisions which Launi Whedon researched and prepared. The final document was presented at the November meeting and was approved. We thank Launi for her diligence and professionalism in preparing the updates. Huge job, well done!

Election of Board Officers and Directors

See the list Below of our 2016 re-elected and new board members. We welcome new Directors Tom Norton and Leone Mc Mullen. Cynthia Willman was approved as Advisory member. We are more than grateful

for their willingness to serve. Tom Norton has agreed to be our new Treasurer. Transitions occurred during January. Thanks, everyone who has re-upped and bless our new members!

FOF Board of Directors Go High-tech

The FOF Board of directors were able to move fast on decision making thanks to board member Saskia Davis who researched and instituted a cost free teleconferencing service. The Board of Directors met by phone twice on the 10th and 12th of December with complete success. This initiative saved time and money and will be used again in the future.

Swimming Pool Meetings Begin

A group of people interested in restoring the Fircrest swimming have began meetings. Its too early to tell what will come of this but hopes are high.

Campus Master Plan Reborn

The Legislature has funded another run at the Fircrest Campus Master Plan. Casey Moore, a DSHS architect, will head the project. He has formed groups with the intent of finishing up in six months. In his first meeting he asked a group from FOF about likes and dislikes. He asked for personal vignettes about ones involvement with Fircrest. Several were provided. Meets will be ongoing with a verity of groups. Much work was done a few years ago, some of which will be carried forward for this new effort.

FYI

Any one wanting a copy of the by-laws, minutes or treasurers' reports contact:

Candace Beach Braley
cbbraley@q.com

**Remember Fun Fest
will be July 28th
Volunteers needed!**

FRIENDS OF FIRCREST REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE 2016

All meetings, Board & Membership, unless otherwise notified, are held on Saturdays at 1 p.m. in the Staff Training room of the ATP (Adult Training Program) Building, # 88- N.E. corner Fircrest Campus.

Board/Membership Meeting Dates 2016
January 9, February 13, March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11,
September 10, October 8, November 12-Annual Meeting and elections
No meeting in July or August

Home Unit Representatives:
Third Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m.
Fircrest, Admin Bldg. Baker or Cascade Rooms.
Ad Hoc Meetings:
Called as needed. Locations vary
Emergency/Conference meetings called by board member requests.

Officers:

President: Jim Hardman,
J.D., C.P.G
Vice President: Paul Strand
Secretary: Candace B.
Braley
Treasurer: Tom Norton

Directors:

Terri Anderson
Betty Cantrell, RN, BSN
Saskia Davis, RN
Maureen Durkan, RN
Gordon Ellison-Oslin
Kristin Ellison-Oslin, M.
Div. Rev.

Leone McMullin
Liz Patterson
Kent Questad, Ph.D.
Launi Whedon
Emeritus:
Dot Brenchley,
Jo Bousman,
Ruth Durkan,

Alice Hardman, MSW, C.P.G.
Jean Huntley,
Phil Scheier
Advisory:
Michael Johnson J.D.,C.P.G.
Maria Walsh,
Janet Way

NEWS:Visit ActionDD.org for more information

KING 5 Slams Fircrest School and other RHCs

A KING 5 news series called “The Last of the Institutions” paints our states RHC system and Fircrest School as antiquated, expensive and cruel. In each episode reporter Susannah Frame shows old buildings and chain link fences to propel the viewer to a bygone era.

She seems not to know that there is a broad spectrum of need among people with developmental disabilities. Most live at home or with others in a house or apartment. A few, about 4%, require closer care in one of our RHCs; what she calls, “The Last of the Institutions.”

They are not, as KING 5 portrays, fenced in. There are no large dormitories or big buildings to live in, and no one is isolated. There are doctors, nurses, therapists and caregivers on duty at all times. Best of all, it costs no more to provide campus based service than it does for community provided services. DSHS has agreed with this, where close care is needed. Even the United States Supreme Court agrees (Olmstead Decision, 1999)

Several years ago we replaced the so called institutions with community homes where some of the folks interviewed by Frame, now live. They are happy to be on their own. But for those who need more intensive care, we built homes on our RHC campuses with individual bedrooms, kitchens and other amenities, much like a house on any American street. These

amenities are difficult-if not impossible - to duplicate elsewhere.

Instead of having KING 5 degrade the RHCs they should be thankful that we have them. Not all states are so fortunate.



Friends of Fircrest and Friends of Rainier Release Important New Video

This five-minute video is a must watch for anyone who wants to understand why Washington State supports RHC care. This important video was commissioned by FOF and produced by a well known Seattle production company. Watch it at: www.friendsoffircrest.org.

Action DD Achieves Most Goals in 2016 Legislature

Action DD sponsored a legislative reception and membership meeting on Capitol Campus February second that doubled the attendance of last year. A packed meeting saw several legislators and members of their staff stop by to take part in the day-long event with members of Action DD.

The high light of the meeting was the showing of the our new video, “Protecting Our Most Vulnerable.”

Our legislative objective was to keep the Yakima Valley School open and fund it’s respite program, eliminate the discriminatory age limit for RHC admittance from 21 years of age to 18, and get unannounced visits to protect people in community based homes.

Of that, we got 8 respite beds

funded at YVS, and provisions for unannounced visits to community homes. Our bill to save the YVS failed to get through the session. We will pick it up again next year. YVS remains on track to close by attrition when the population sinks to 16 residents.

Action DD’s annual elections meeting will be at the Yakima Valley School June 4th, 2016. (details at: actiondd.org) This is an open meeting for all who wish to attend. Please consider being an officer or being on our board of directors.

President Paul Strand is retiring. So far no one has come forward to fill that position. This volunteer opportunity to serve must be filled. The payment for service is knowing that you have helped preserve a system of care that persists in our state only because people like you have given your time and resources for the benefit of all of us.

Action DD is your voice in the legislature. It is the legislature that approves services for people with developmental disabilities. They must hear from us. Visit our website at: www.ActionDD.org. We are a 501 (c)(4) nonprofit corporation. Please donate.

Dwyer New VOR Executive Director

Hugo Dwyer, who earlier this year assumed the position of Advocacy and Membership Manager, has taken on the duties of Executive Director. Hugo has been with the organization since 2009 as NY State Coordinator along with his wife, Cristy. He also chaired the Marketing Committee from its inception in 2012.

He is following the King TV Susannah Frame Investigative Reports – “Last of the Institutions”.

website at: www.VOR.net

CAMPUS NEWS PLUS

Fircrest Gets New Superintendent

Megan DeSmet has accepted the position of Probationary Superintendent of Fircrest School. She has been with DSHS for many years serving at the Frances Haddon Morgan Center and Rainier School.

Acting superintendent, Jeff Flesner will leave Fircrest for a new assignment at Rainier School April 22nd. He will fill the position of Assistant Superintendent. In an email he said, "Everyone here, FOF included, has been so very good to me and I do really love it here but the distance is just too much." He lives much closer to Rainier.

- Dentist position remains unfilled. Dr. Shirley Hsieh, DMD has decided not to stay on as our new dentist. She leaves the end of April. Dentistry will be covered by the UW DECOD, Seattle Special Care Dentistry and the Dentist at Rainier.
- DSHS will again fund Fun Fest. In 2008 when money dried up for Fircrest, FOF picked up the tab. With funding increases Fircrest can now afford to resume the Fun Fest responsibility.
- When nursing facility auditors left in February their parting remark was that the Fircrest Nursing Facility is the , "Cadillac of Nursing Homes."
- New ATP programs are coming. More interactive and hands on employment is the new focus. On campus gardens and grounds programs are being considered.
- A failing sewer system at the Birch house remains unresolved. The age of the building and the severity of the problem has administration looking at the campus master plan and possible new construction.



Benjamin, a ten year old with Asperger's syndrome, had a simple school assignment: Write a poem with the title "I Am." He nailed it and then some.

I AM ODD I AM NEW

I am odd I am new
I wonder if you are too
I hear voices in the air
I see you don't, and that's not fair
I want to not feel blue

I am odd I am new
I pretend that you are too
I feel like a boy in outer space
I touch the stars and feel out of place
I worry what others might think
I cry when people laugh it makes me shrink

I am odd I am new
I understand now that so are you
I say, "I feel like a castaway"
I dream of a day that that's okay
I try to fit in
I hope that someday I do
I am odd I am new

- Sprinkler system for Therapy Garden is ready. Grounds staff will be trained to use it before May. Spring clean up will follow and the raised beds will get new soil ready for spring planting.
- Expect new roofs for houses 317 through 320.
- Fircrest to get seven new employees



Fircrest Chapel Gets Much Needed Upgrades

This historic gem of the Fircrest campus has a long history of service dating back to the close of WWII. All the wear of the years caused the floor to weaken and time has passed over requirements for disability access. This is all being fixed. A new floor is being constructed from the joists up. A handicap access restroom is on its way.

As construction progresses, services are being held in the coffee shop. Chaplain Kirstin Ellison-Oslin reported that attendance is up.

She reminds us that all are welcome at Sunday services., 9:45 a.m.

OTHER NEWS

Chicago host to nationwide "Together for Choice" Conference

People from all over the country went to Chicago in October to speak up for various facilities which assist the disabled population. Many of them are worried that dollars may dry up over outdated ideas.

Residents of Fircrest School already find themselves at the center of growing controversy with KING 5 news taking aim at what they call the "Last of the Institutions." Some advocates for people with intellectual and physical disabilities are worried about what they call a "disturbing trend" in federal funding. They say that in recent years, the emphasis has been on expanding so-called stand-alone residential housing for clients at the possible expense of large campus facilities like Fircrest.

"If the government rules that services that we provide are inadequate and everyone must be out in the community, I feel it's ridiculous,

not only the loss of many agencies but the residents involved would definitely be injured by it," said Sister Rosemary Connelly, executive director, Misericordia Heart of Mercy, Chicago.

She fears looming regulation changes and funding recommendations, which she says are fueled by "memories of a time when many large facilities were simply warehouses for people with disabilities."

"That's where the trend began, in opposition to those big, neglectful institutions that were typical of the past. They are not looking at what's available at present," Connelly said.

That's the message behind the Together for Choice Conference.

Disability advocates and representatives from 25 states who want to make sure people continue to have a choice in the types of facilities which are available to their loved ones.



"It's giving us the opportunity to pull together many like minds, people that are providing excellent services whether it's a campus setting, a farm setting, individual homes in the community, whatever it is as long as it's for the people that we serve," said Geana Connelly, Misericordia administrator.

The people at the conference say they just want legislators to remember that the primary concern should be the quality of care, not the size of the facility

Friends of Fircrest 2016 Membership and Donation Form

NAME: _____ LEGISLATIVE DIST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TEL: _____ E-MAIL: _____ CELL: _____

PLEASE SIGN ME UP TO GET FoF Newsletters, Bulletins and Announcements

ANNUAL DUES: \$25.00 FAMILY ___ \$15.00 INDIVIDUAL ___ ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____

Check Total: \$ _____

Please make check to Friends of Fircrest

Kindly indicate on your check how much you are dedicating for membership if additional donation is included with a single check. Your donations are tax deductible. Be sure to keep a record. Questions?

Contact: Tom Norton tjnorton@whibey.com 360 321 9782

Thank you for mailing this form with your dues /donations and comments to:

Friends of Fircrest , c/o Fircrest School RHC, 15230 15th Avenue NE, Shoreline, WA 98155

Comments:

Friends of Fircrest

c/o Fircrest School, RHC
15230 15th. Ave. N. E.
Shoreline, WA 98155

Friends of Fircrest Mission Statement

Friends of Fircrest is a volunteer 501(C)(3), non-profit organization advocating for the right to quality living and care choices for all citizens with developmental disabilities (ID/DD)

Fircrest Residents, in the Adult Training Program, earn wages for preparing this newsletter for mailing.

Friends of Fircrest Newsletter

Spring Issue

Save the Date:

- May 14 - Membership meeting (moved due to Mother's Day)
- June 11 - Membership meeting
- July and August- No meeting (campus events committees meet on ad-hoc basis)
- JULY 28 ANNUAL FIRCREST FUNFEST
- September 10 - Membership meeting
- October 8 - Membership meeting (plans & slate preparation for annual meeting)
- November 12 - Annual membership meeting (Officer Elections & Service Awards)
- December - No meeting (holiday events committees meet on ad hoc basis)

Reminder: All FOF meetings are now combined Board and Membership meetings monthly as scheduled. Meetings are held in the ATP Building training Room at 1pm.

- **Home Unit Reps (HUR)** Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at 1pm in either Baker or Cascade Room, Administration building. Informal lunchtime information sharing and discussions. A great way to stay in touch for those who can't always make our Saturday meetings.

All are welcome to any FOF or HUR meetings

Full meeting schedule on website, FriendsofFircrest.org.

