

LARS Letter

Serving the Laurel Community Since 1987

Volume 27, Issue 1

Executive Director:

Lori Proietti, LBSW

Deputy Director:

Leah Paley-Merriman, LGSW

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Nicole Tuchinda
Community Partner

Jenny Wall
St. Philip's Episcopal Church

Mike Woodruff
St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church

Dear Friends of LARS:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc. During my ten years at LARS, I have developed an intricate understanding of the agency through the various positions I have held. I started in August 2004 as a social worker with the Transitional Housing Program. I was promoted to Deputy Director in August 2010 and was recently appointed as Executive Director by the LARS Board of Directors.

I took on this position at a time when two of LARS' primary funders were implementing radical changes that would directly impact on our daily operation. The Fannie Mae Foundation's Help the Homeless Program, through which LARS raised over \$115,000 each year between 2009-2012, has been reducing its incentives for walker participation over the past two years, and has now completely retired the program. Additionally, the Office of Housing and Urban Development is in the process of reallocating LARS' Homeless Outreach grant of \$48,165 into two additional permanent housing units. While the added units are certainly needed, the reallocation means that LARS will no longer have grant funds to assist homeless clients with daily

needs such as obtaining IDs, birth certificates, bus passes, prescriptions, dental care, drug treatment, and more.

Despite these setbacks, LARS has risen to the challenge of the changing economy by securing new sources of funding, including grants from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc., and the Howard County Community Service Partnership. As we approach our new fiscal year and the expiration of these grants, LARS will continue to look for new ways to ensure that those most in need are stably housed with food on their tables and power in their homes.

During these tough economic times, we recognize that our success is truly owed not only to our hard-working staff, but to the community that keeps our food pantry stocked, supports our events, and lends time and resources to our cause. We *thank* you for all you do and hope you will continue to support LARS in our effort to help our neighbors in their times of need.

Sincerely,

Lori Proietti, LBSW
LARS Executive Director



A small but talented staff
(from left to right):

*Tiffany Haynes
Ernestine Gibson
Jennifer Asiedu
Lori Proietti
Emily Kleeman
(kneeling)
Leah Paley-Merriman
Susan Lee
Laura Wellford
Lauren Cohen
Lynette Greenwood*

Road to Recovery

A few months back, a homeless client came to LARS ready to take charge of his health and address his addiction to alcohol. With the help of a LARS case manager, he contacted his Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) and learned that he was eligible for inpatient care covered by Medicaid. First he would need to enter a detox center, which would also be covered by insurance. LARS provided him with funds for transportation to the detox facility and encouraged him to follow through with his recovery. After successful completion of detox and a 28-day inpatient treatment program, the client returned to LARS for help transitioning into the next chapter of a healthier life. LARS was able to assist him with a security deposit and two weeks' rent at a halfway house, allowing him to make his health a priority without the added stress of being homeless.

Roughly 35% of homeless individuals in the U.S. struggle with chronic substance abuse issues (SAMHSA, 2010). The decision to seek treatment is difficult for anyone, and especially so for those who are already fighting for basic survival. This client's success is truly noteworthy.

Mid-Year Highlights

January 1, 2014 - April 30, 2014

- Distributed over 3,280 bags of groceries from the LARS food pantry.
- Received approximately 851 bags of donated food.
- Provided \$22,659.82 in rental assistance funds to prevent 49 evictions.
- Enabled 12 individuals to obtain eye exams and eyeglasses free of cost through partnership with the Laurel Lions Club.
- Assisted two formerly homeless families with locating stable housing after successful completion of LARS' Transitional Housing Program.
- Moved a chronically homeless, disabled individual into an apartment furnished by community donations.

Save the Date!

"Betting on Change"

10th Annual Auction & Dinner to Benefit LARS

Saturday, June 7th, 2014 / 6-10pm

American Legion Post 60

2 Main Street, Laurel MD 20707

Tickets: \$40 in advance/\$45 at the door

Includes Famous Dave's BBQ Dinner and 1 bidding paddle

This year's auction is getting a big makeover! Over 100 gift certificates, gift baskets, handmade crafts, getaways and more will be up for bid, but some of these items will be part of our first-ever quarter auction. This means you can win high-value items for as little as 25 cents! Other items will be auctioned off in the traditional "silent" way.

Bring quarters for bidding! Quarters will also be available on site for purchase/exchange. Extra bidding paddles are \$5. Buy-in to all rounds of the quarter auction for \$30/paddle. Visa/Mastercard, check, and cash accepted.

Tickets can be purchased ONLINE at www.laureladvocacy.org or mail check to LARS at 311 Laurel Avenue, Laurel MD 20707. Please put "Auction" in the memo. Tickets will be mailed to you.

Contact Laura Wellford at 301.776.0442 ext. 27 or lwellford@laureladvocacy.org for more information.

Wait... What's a Quarter Auction?

With your paid admission you receive 1 paddle for bidding and a list of items being auctioned. A ball with your number goes into a container for continuous drawings throughout the night.

Each time an item comes up for bid that you would like to win, place the required bid amount (1, 2, 3, or 4 quarters) for each paddle being played in a bucket on your table and hold your paddle(s) up. If your number is drawn and your paddle is up, you win the item! If you didn't bid and your number is called, we keep drawing until someone wins!

Extra paddles can be purchased to increase your chances of winning. You also have the option to "buy-in" to all rounds of the quarter auction, giving you an automatic chance to win every item that comes up for bid without having to raise your paddle each time.

Volunteer Corner

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: LINDA KEAN

Linda has been an amazing asset to LARS over the past 14 years as our administrative volunteer. Linda first started volunteering at LARS in 2000 after she learned about the organization from a newspaper article. Fascinated by the work being done at LARS, she attended an open house where she was able to express her interest to volunteer. Although Linda's background is in Information Technology, she has always wanted to help people and contribute to her community in a more personal way outside of the corporate world. When Linda first started volunteering, she was responsible for closing inactive client files and entering their information into a database, a very tedious and time-consuming task! The job originally started with a case load of no more than 100 clients. Today, Linda continues to volunteer on a monthly basis assisting in closing client files, but she is now challenged with maintaining files for over 2,000 clients. Says Linda: "Even though I am not directly helping people, I enjoy knowing that I am helping those who do help people."

Thanks to Linda's dedication, our file cabinets are always up-to-date, organized, and ready to go. Thank you Linda!

LARS can always use helping hands! Contact Jennifer Asiedu at 301.776.0442 ext. 28 or jasiedu@laureladvocacy.org for information about volunteering.

LARS Staff

Lynette Greenwood
Office Manager

Lauren Cohen, LBSW
Permanent Housing Case Manager

Emily Kleeman, LGSW
Transitional Housing Case Manager

Ernestine Gibson
Case Manager

Susan Lee, MAR
Case Manager

Tiffany Haynes, MA
Case Manager

Jennifer Asiedu, BSW
Case Manager/
Volunteer Coordinator

Laura Wellford
Program Coordinator/
LARS Letter Editor

An awesome volunteer crew who took on the task of meticulously organizing the LARS pantry (and keeping it organized!):

John & Rosie McLeod
Maureen Bauer
Monica Revelle

We can't thank you enough!



If you would like to have your name & address updated or removed from our mailing list, please contact: lgreenwood@laureladvocacy.org

Subscribe to the
LARS e-newsletter at:
www.laureladvocacy.org

Facebook: Search for "Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services"

Twitter: @laureladvocacy

Create "A Piece of Our Community"

As one of Laurel's favorite traditions quickly approaches, we wanted to come up with something fun and unique to contribute to this year's Main Street Festival. When you stop by our table, we invite you to make your mark on a collaborative puzzle mural, which will be set up at our booth. Each participant will be given a blank piece of the puzzle to answer the question "How do you give to your community?" As the festival-goers paint their individual pieces, the collective masterpiece will slowly come to life. The finished mural will be hung in the LARS lobby for some much-needed color and inspiration for all who pass through. Come be a part of this exciting community project! All ages are encouraged to participate in the creation. No artistic talent required and no cost to participate. All art supplies will be provided. Just bring your imagination!



**LAUREL ADVOCACY &
REFERRAL SERVICES, INC.**

311 Laurel Avenue
Laurel, Maryland 20707

Phone: 301-776-0442
Fax: 301-604-7076
www.laureladvocacy.org



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Stay up to date with LARS news and
events at www.laureladvocacy.org

LARS Food Pantry

Food donations can be dropped off at LARS during business hours:
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday from 9:00-2:00pm and Monday evenings from 5:00-7:30pm.

Items that are especially helpful include:

Canned soup, canned fruit and vegetables, pastas and sauces, rice, peanut butter and jelly, cereal, oatmeal,
“just-add-water” pancake mix, tuna, Tuna Helper, macaroni and cheese, and other staples.

Please check expiration dates!

We are also in need of plastic bags (new or used) to distribute food.

*For more information about donating to the LARS pantry, coordinating a food drive, or volunteering, please
contact Jennifer Asiedu at 301-776-0442 ext. 28 or jasiedu@laureladvocacy.org.*

Mark Your Calendars!

- ⇒ **Saturday, May 10th:** Laurel’s 34th Annual Main Street Festival... *Bring your creativity!*
- ⇒ **Saturday, June 7th:** 10th Annual “Betting on Change” Auction & Dinner at American Legion Post 60
- ⇒ **Thursday, November 27th:** 10th Annual Thanksgiving Morning 5K Turkey Trot to Benefit LARS...
It’s never too early to start training for the Trot!

*For more information about any of LARS’ fundraising events, contact Laura Wellford at
301-776-0442 ext. 27 or lwellford@laureladvocacy.org.*