

The Resource



September, 2018

Newsletter from

Families of Richmond State Supported Living Center

a charity devoted to enhancing the quality of life for our loved ones at Richmond State Supported Living Center and keeping our members informed about the facility and its services.

Our next meeting will be Sunday, September 16, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

in the Forever Young building by the chapel. Meetings are scheduled on Sundays so that you can visit your family member AND attend our informative meetings. For those who can't attend, a conference line has been set up. To use it, please follow the instructions below. **PLEASE:**

1. Turn off your television set, radio, and any other background noise.
2. Dial **877-226-9790**.
3. Enter the Access Code: **9 2 0 6 9 1 9** and then press **#**.
4. Press the **"Mute"** button on your phone so we cannot hear what's going on in your house.

Thank you.

Our mailing address: P O Box 1671, Richmond, TX 77406

(This mailing address is for the FAMILY association, not Richmond SSLC or Volunteer Services.)

Please check out our website at FamiliesOfRSSLC.org.

Contents

Message from President Louise Clay
Planning Meeting Held on June 30
Reaching Out to Other Families
New TX Guardianship Registration Required

Donations to [Families of RSSLC](http://FamiliesOfRSSLC.org)
Minutes from the May 20 Meeting
Better Security for RSSLC
Ombudsmen for Texas SSLCs

From President Louise Clay

Hello, everyone –

A lot has been happening in and out of RSSLC. First we will mention management changes:

- Director Al Barrera has retired for good, and his position is temporarily being filled by Donna Jessee from TX Health and Human Services (HHSC) in Austin until a permanent director is in place. (We can't talk her into staying.)
- RSSLC has a new Assistant Director of Administration, Mr. Samuel Lynn. Mr. Lynn is a retired 20+ year US Navy veteran. Having been Assistant Director of Administration at Lubbock SSLC several years ago, he is experienced with SSLCs. He has worked in many key managerial roles in the healthcare and hospitality industries. We hope he will be around a long time.
- Assistant Director Cynthia Fannin remains director of programs.
- Scott Schalchlin, who was TX HHSC Associate Commissioner over all the SSLCs, retired recently. We're hoping he just "retired" and will be back, as so many people do. He started his career in the SSLC system and understands the SSLCs very well.

The May newsletter noted that RSSLC parent Dr. Tom Diaz and I would be attending a state Parent-to-Parent ("P2P") conference in San Marcos in June. We went, and it was an interesting experience. Our purpose was to educate families and professionals about the existence of the SSLCs. There were numerous IDD professionals who did not know about the existence of the SSLCs. There were also many families who had some big intractable problems. We took all our literature, my laptop, and my mid-size flat-screen TV on which we continuously showed the RSSLC 50th Anniversary video. One of the young family members attending with his parents had a major melt-down and knocked my TV onto the floor and smeared our hand sanitizer all over our table. My TV survived intact. But that was a reminder of the magnitude of the problems these unserved families face every day of their lives.

Tom has written an article about our attendance which is on the next page of this newsletter. Please note that the RSSLC 50th Anniversary video can be seen on our website: FamiliesOfRSSLC.org/FYI/.

In June Texas HHSC took testimony regarding its SSLC Long Range Planning Report. Eloquent testimony was given by our member Nancy Hernandez. Her testimony is much too long to print in this newsletter, but it is on our website FYI page: FamiliesOfRSSLC.org/FYI/. If you get our newsletter by mail and want a copy of this, please contact me. Her testimony was particularly well written.

Dr. Diaz has been busy on our behalf in addition to the P2P conference which we attended. He went to the National VOR convention in Washington, DC. VOR used to stand for "Voice of the Retarded" before the word "Retarded" became an insult. Now it is the "Voice of Reason." And we really need a voice of reason. VOR is the only national organization that supports CHOICE for our loved ones, whether that choice is congregate care (SSLCs), group homes, or family homes. Tom wrote an article for VOR titled "**Texas VOR Report 2018**" about SSLCs and guardianship. Please read it on FamiliesOfRSSLC.org/FYI/.

Speaking of guardianship, there is a [new state registration requirement for guardians](#). More on this later in the newsletter.....

That's all for now. Hope to see you at the meeting on September 16.

Louise Clay
louise@pcm.net

(281) 346-0346 home
(281) 543-0123 cell

P O Box 966
Fulshear, TX 77441

Planning Meeting Held on June 30

A special planning meeting was held for our organization, with our officers and some other active family members attending. It seemed that all 13 people present had different concerns and hopes related to the care of their loved ones. For our organization we coalesced and formed three committees:

Legislative Committee – will keep the membership updated on actions by the Legislature; notify when action is needed by the members; and represent the Families of RSSLC to the Legislators when necessary. **Members are:** Nancy Hernandez, Ileene Robinson, Luisa Kluger, and Tom Diaz.

Marketing Committee – will coordinate outreach efforts to inform the outside community of the existence of Richmond State Supported Living Center, the services it provides for adults with Intellectual Disabilities, and the positive setting in which these services are provided. **Members are:** Tom Diaz, Jay Dietz, and Nancy Hernandez.

Internal Liaison Committee – will represent the membership in communicating with the Administrative staff of RSSLC as necessary in order to maintain a cohesive and mutually beneficial relationship. **Members are:** Louise Clay, Nancy Kircher, and Peggy Osborne.

Michele Arnold wishes to serve anywhere she is needed. And as current president of the Families of RSSLC, Louise Clay will serve as an ex officio member on all committees. New member Carrol Johnson, who has a family member at Brenham SSLC, will handle printing and mailing of our newsletter, and we owe him a big thank-you for that because this newsletter requires a lot of labor.

Reaching Out to Other Families

by Tom Diaz, MD (and RSSLC parent)

Our association was well represented at this year's Texas Parent-to-Parent 14th annual parent conference in San Marcos this June. Louise Clay and I had an idea to reach out to families and guardians of our IDD population. We worked with an exhibit distributor in town and with the help of Michelle Gunnett, a local graphic designer, we were able to create a professional-grade portable custom-printed banner and table runner. Thank you, Michelle, for all your hard work and dedication!

The Conference recorded at least 750 people registered and with many more attending. There were dozens of exhibitors of support services to the community servicing every possible need. There seemed to be a fairly high level of interest in our booth as the only representatives of our SSLCs. We spent a good part of the time educating not only the caregivers but many professional case managers and service providers.

We handed out hundreds of brochures, cards, RSSLC 50th Anniversary video DVDs, bags, and we ran a very successful prize drawing. There were family members and guardians of individuals with all forms of IDD and medical diagnosis. The highest number of represented individuals were the Autism population from the mild to the very severe.

By speaking one-on-one at the booth with the attendees and by listening in on some discussions, we learned the immense difficulties that caregivers face as are they asked to literally become case managers of services for their loved ones. There was a high level of frustration demonstrated at the meetings by families who related their personal attempts at accessing care at home or in the community. This was obvious at some meetings where there were representatives from HHSC attempting to explain the deficiencies in the new managed care or MCO system in providing services.

We felt attending the conference was personally rewarding in as much as we were able to share our personal experience with other families and guardians. We now have an available physical "platform" from which we should continue to educate and inform.



Dr. Tom Diaz in our booth at the TX Parent-to-Parent Conference in June

Our banner in the back had a lot of neat pictures from RSSLC, and we showed the RSSLC 50th Anniversary video continuously.

New TX Guardianship Registration Required - Important

New legislation requires all guardians in Texas to register with the state. **New** guardians (June 1, 2018, or later) have to receive guardianship training (about a 1-hour online course) and have a criminal background check. **Existing** guardians (before June 1, 2018) do not have to take the training or have the background check. If you are an existing guardian, the guardianship judge is supposed to notify you when you need to register. The registration can be done by mail or online. The state website does not say whether the registration is a one-time thing or whether it has to be done annually or otherwise.

Families of RSSLC Donations

The Resource is published to provide communications among families and friends of Richmond State Supported Living Center residents. Costs are covered by tax deductible gifts from individuals. Please make checks payable to **Families of RSSLC** and send to PO Box 1671, Richmond, TX 77406.

♥ Our recent donors: Thank you!! ♥ Louise Alexander Tom Diaz, MD Dorothy Specks

We are a 501(c)(3) organization named "Richmond State School Families and Friends, Inc.", a non-profit incorporated in Texas. Our operating name is "Families of Richmond State Supported Living Center", which is an assumed name registered with the state. If you look us up on the internet, be sure to enter the entire organization name as underlined above. An acknowledgment will be mailed for all contributions. If you fail to get yours, please call Louise Clay at (281) 346-0346.

Minutes from May 20 Meeting

The meeting started at 1:32 with Chaplain Billy Guerrero giving an opening prayer. Louise Clay gave the Treasurer Report.

We watched the 50th Anniversary Video. Great job was done by those who produced it and gave their time.

A reminder was given to save to date for annual Volunteer Services fundraiser Vegas Texas Style to be held August 4, 2018, 6:30 to 11:00 pm at 1 Fluor Daniel Drive, Sugarland, TX 77478. You can go to www.goVSC.org to register or sponsor.

The Director of Admissions, Bea Alonzo, has suggested that our group get more involved with helping families of new admission. It was discussed that we might be able to help new parents with the admission process.

Tom Diaz attended the National Council Meeting, and he discussed their views and procedures.

Louise Alexander talked about our wills and having them reviewed. Lisa Wilson of the firm Hayes & Wilson, 1235 North Loop West, Suite 907, Houston, TX 77008 Tel: 713-880-3939 will do an initial consultation for \$150.00. It was discussed so that we might want to get this help for ourselves and our loved one.

News on campus is that the staff has a new system for retraining residents for the safety of all. The residents celebrated Cinco de Mayo.

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 pm.

Submitted by Pat Lodder, secretary.

Better Security for RSSLC by Sharon Kratz

As I drove into the RSSLC complex and turned toward the administration building, I waved to the two security guards at the gate. They waved back. Upon entering the administration building, I was told security had called. They wanted me to return to the entrance and check-in. "I *never* check-in!" I protested. "Anyway, they waved at me! They always wave me through!"

I asked the receptionist if I should return to the gate or blow them off. "I think you should do the right thing," she replied. I went back to the gate.

I fussed a bit and they were very diplomatic but firm. You need to check-in – STOP – at the front gate every visit. If you haven't visited RSSLC in a while, your driver's license will be scanned at the security gate. Later, when you check-in and get your name tag it will go faster because you've already been entered into the security system. You also have to stop on your exit and return the name badge so they can verify you've left the property.

I was grumpy about this at first. But isn't that exactly what we want? We want our loved ones and their caregivers to have the best protection – the best security – possible.

Ombudsmen for Texas SSLCs by Sharon Kratz

Each state supported living center has an [assistant independent ombudsman onsite](#) to help residents, family members, staff, guardians, LARs (legally authorized representatives), and others who have

concerns about the centers. That means in the state of Texas, we have 13 SSLC ombudsmen. Deatrice Potlow has been with us at Richmond SSLC since 2013.

Our RSSLC ombudsman truly is independent. She does not work for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Potlow directly reports to Candace Jennings, Deputy Independent Ombudsman. Ms. Jennings reports to Dr. George P. Bithos, Independent Ombudsman, who reports to the State of Texas.

What Does Our Ombudsman Do? Here's how you pronounce ombudsman: AHmbudsman. (I had a bit of difficulty with that.) Here's what it means:

Your loved one at RSSLC complains she's not getting all the showers she needs. You check with the staff, but there appears to be no resolution. You call Deatrice (281.344.4271). You can also email Mrs. Potlow at deatrice.potlow@hhsc.state.tx.us. She will review the records of your loved one's care, especially the number of showers.

It doesn't really matter if the staff had other priorities and skipped a few showers or if the resident was confused about the number of showers. Deatrice Potlow simply seeks resolution to the situation. Because she does not work for RSSLC and is an independent resource, Potlow has no agenda. Her job is to advocate for the residents of RSSLC.

You are a nurse's aide and suspect one of the patients is being over-medicated. You aren't sure, but if you report your worries, you are afraid you might lose your job. You can call Deatrice, who will respect the sensitivity of your position while also investigating your concerns.

Have You Met RSSLC Ombudsman Deatrice Potlow? Maybe *not* knowing Deatrice Potlow, Assistant Independent Ombudsman for Richmond State School Living Center (RSSLC) is a good thing. Many people think she's their last resort for a problem. She may be, but she brings much, much more to her role. After I met her, I felt re-focused, soothed, more optimistic about my loved one at RSSLC. In fact, I felt more optimistic about everything! Deatrice is simply all that.

Deatrice Potlow is pretty, vibrant, energetic and at the same time compassionate and reassuring. "I advocate from facts," said Mrs. Potlow. "I can't be all pro-you. I have to emotionally remove myself," she continued. Deatrice says she has to "check out" of the space where assumptions and feelings live so she can objectively evaluate every situation. Most important, while all of us occupy one frame, she has to see "the big picture."

"You can never discredit a person because you never know what they bring to the table," says Potlow. "Think about it. We all have a disability. We have to combine our resources to help one another." She understands how our staff teams operate to provide more personalized attention to each resident. And she understands the fears family members sometimes have about their loved ones.

Sometimes it's difficult knowing how to help someone who is without traditional communication skills. Her advice to RSSLC family members? "Be involved. Be informed. Be aware. And ask questions!" Asking the right questions is the only way you'll get the answers you need.

If you are concerned about a resident of RSSLC, contact:

Deatrice Potlow 281-344-4271 deatrice.potlow@hhsc.state.tx.us



See you on September 16, we hope!

Chaplain Billy, thank you for always being in Forever Young first to open that beautiful space for our meetings and putting the chairs back in place.