

# The Seagull

Support Services of Virginia Newsletter



Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading SSVA's monthly newsletter. Our goal is to share with you the latest accomplishments, events, news and inspiring stories from and about our SSVA community.

## February is Black History Month

**Black History Month** is an annual **celebration** of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of blacks in U.S. history. At SSVA, we celebrate **diversity** and appreciate the **valuable contribution** made by men and women of African American descent over the course of history who worked on promoting and safeguarding the rights of people living with an intellectual and developmental disability. There were also those who pioneered through the many challenges and barriers by demonstrating that developmental or intellectual disability was not an obstacle to personal success. Thomas Wiggins, also known as "Blind Tom" was one such pioneer. Thomas, an African American man born in 1849 who was an autistic savant who was able to play music on the piano after listening to a song only once. He could sing and recite poetry and prose in several languages, phonetically duplicate long speeches, and reproduce the sounds of nature, machines, and musical instruments on the piano. His life serves a an important reminder about the value of all of the individuals we serve and the men and women who come alongside them to realize their success by helping others realize theirs.



## Proud to Share



### Danville Says Goodbye to a Fellow Team Member

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 our Danville office celebrated a long time employee on her last day by throwing her a retirement party.

Joan Jones – came on board in June of 2011 acquisition of ACE by SSVA.

She served as a Group Home Site Coordinator for years until she decided she preferred the role of DSP. She was working full time in our Group Day Support program. During her party her colleagues presented her with a lovely music box with an SSVA key-chain, a “no one can ever fill your shoes” key-chain and some retire”mints” inside. Everyone also enjoyed the delicious cake!



### Kay Mirick, SSVA founder recognized as an Honoree

We are very proud to announce that Kay's legacy lives on and is recognized outside of SSVA. Kay Mirick, the founder of Support Services of Virginia was selected as an Honoree in The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Historic Recognition Project.

The purpose of the project is to create an historical record of the events and people who shaped the field over the past 20 years. This has been a period of significant change; creating an archival record to be retain for future generations is the legacy we hope to achieve.

Honorees will be recognized in the Historic Recognition “Commemorative Book” that is being developed by AAIDD; all the national and state associations will have links to the document.

We are so proud Kay was recognized in this effort; her contribution to the field has been significant and her story is important to be shared as part of the historical record.

# Employee Spotlight

## Laveria Stewart

**SSVA Team Member Since:**

August 1, 2019

**Role:** DSP III

**Division:** Hampton Roads

**Fun Fact:** Laveria is a team player who is always willing to step up at short notice. She is a self-starter and energetic. During her free time she likes dancing. She is also a hair stylist and a wonderful mom to 2 handsome boys.



## Back to Basics

### The Magic of Positive Practices

*by Andie Plumley*

My friend Dwight Martin has been on my mind a lot this week. Dwight was one of my first teachers of Positive Practices. We helped each other realize success. I miss him. We lost him - suddenly - at the age of 40. I knew he died several years ago, so I googled his obituary to discover that he passed exactly 10 years to the day that I began writing this - February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010. Serendipity - perhaps, maybe he has more to teach us.

Dwight was from Danville Virginia. How he arrived in Virginia Beach was unclear - he never spoke of it - but it was obviously by way of one or many of the state institutions. He had a diagnosis of autism and schizoaffective disorder (a diagnosis that justified the use of a wide variety of psychotropic medications). Whatever happened in his early life - it was obvious it had not been easy for him.

Dwight often had difficulty expressing himself with words - his behavior, however, spoke volumes. He would yell, often at himself, and occasionally he would lash out physically. One day, when experiencing a great deal of frustration and anxiety he did a complete take down - on himself. "Dwight I will take you to the ground!" he shouted as he went through the steps of bringing an imaginary Dwight to the ground and holding him there.

Dwight's internal state was fraught with uncomfortable feelings. His Walkman was his lifeline. He would constantly wear his headphones, listening to music, talk radio, or sometimes just static - anything to block out the external and internal chaos. We quickly learned that having extra batteries and a backup Walkman was essential to him having a safe day, and Dwight learned he could count on us to come through.

I spent a lot of time with Dwight. I watched, listened, and sometimes joined him in his pacing, rocking and even finger writing. I learned when he needed me to be quiet, how important frequent, positive feedback was, what to do when the unexpected happened, and that when he smiled and brought his face close to mine he liked me to rub his beard.

Sometimes Dwight used echolalia to communicate - echoing back voices of days past. Often the content was harsh and abusive. Our words to Dwight were kind and supportive, acknowledging how hard he worked to be safe. One day, after many months together, he turned to me and, in my voice and with my smile said, "You're doing a good job." My heart melted and I knew - Positive Practices had worked its magic on both of us!

## Fiscal 101

### Numbers, Numbers and More Numbers!

*by Andrea Anderson*

Dana, Veronica and Andrea make up the corporate accounting team. It's our job to make sure the numbers (and there are tons of them) represent what the company does. We hope that the accounting tasks that are required of you are manageable and leave you with enough time to focus on the most important part of your job, supporting all of those whom we hope to help realize their success!

Luckily, we LOVE numbers, especially numbers that add up and make happy charts! However, we also know numbers can be very tedious and using a variety of software platforms can be confusing, so if you find yourself struggling, please reach out to us. You can drop in, call or Scomm, but we are likely to be most responsive by email and we love to use Zoom! In case you're wondering which one of us to contact, here's a brief overview of what we do:

**Dana** is the one to go to if you have any billing or sponsor payment questions. He gathers what goes into Therap and submits it to DMAS to be paid. He then transfers all of the billing into our accounting software. It's a complicated system since he uses 5 different software programs, the company provides 9 different services, and we bill 21 different service rates for about 150 people EVERY week which adds up to about.... wait for it... 11,000 claims each year. Wow! On top of that, he manages the sponsor payments for about 50 sponsors.

**Veronica** manages our accounts payable and our payee accounting. Veronica makes sure all of the bills are paid for all divisions (usually more than 150 a month) for both SSVA and Chateau. (Chateau is SSVA's sister company that provides housing and payee services to SSVA's customers.) Veronica manages the Invoice side of Concur and makes sure all of what goes into Concur also goes into our accounting software. In addition to that, she maintains the accounting for all of the roughly 25 folks for whom we are representative payee. She makes sure their Medicaid renewals and payee reports happen annually and she makes sure the customers expenses are handled appropriately by maintaining all of their bank accounts.

**Andrea** develops and oversees all of the accounting processes. She reconciles the accounting and problem solves any technical issues. She provides reporting to help others make company decisions and maintains the accounting software programs we use. She manages the Expense side of Concur and is backup for all accounting processes.

**Here are a couple of deadlines to remember so that we can all keep up with the details:**

- Billing confirmation is due to Dana by noon on Tuesdays.
- Concur Expense reports are due on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of each month.



## HR UPDATES



## Policy of the Month

### *Excerpt from the* **SSVA Code of Conduct**

This month's policy is SSVA's Code of Conduct. The purpose of this policy is to ensure a positive and peaceful environment for employees and the individuals receiving services. SSVA expects its employees and contractors to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous matter. You should always show respect, maintain self-control, share when possible, maintain a positive attitude, and speak softly respect. Also remember to respect the choices of others, do not raise your tone of voice, and be patient. Most importantly enjoy working with the individuals to help them reach their goals, leave negativity at the door, touch others gently, and obey the law. We want to make sure we are creating a positive and peaceful environment while making a

difference.

Full policy information can be found on SSVA's [training platform](#) under course category Handbook and located under SSVA's Code of Conduct.

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## Important Dates to Remember

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March is national **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**. SSVA invites you to join us on March 29 in a grassroots initiative to help raise **awareness** about people with intellectual and **developmental disabilities**. This one-day movement led by The ARC will serve to harness our collective power to gain allies, foster understanding, dispel myths and encourage a greater understanding among people without a disability. Visit The Arc's [website](#) and find out more about this campaign and things you can do join in. And spread the word using the hashtag **#SSVADDAwareness** on social media during the month of March.

SSVA is also planning to launch a social media campaign to commemorate the Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. During the month of March we will be showcasing original artwork created by the men and women we support along with a short description of how he or she has realized his or her success through SSVA. We are asking for all regional offices to participate in this Call. Please submit the artwork and the write-up by the first week of March. For more information please email [monica@ssvainc.org](mailto:monica@ssvainc.org)

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## Wellness Corner

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### February is American Heart Month. Learn all the facts that can save your life!

Heart disease is a leading cause of death for men and women in Virginia. About half of all Americans (47%) have at least 1 of 3 key risk factors for heart disease: **high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking**. The most common type of heart disease in the United States is *coronary artery disease (CAD)*. A key part of Virginia's [Plan for Well-Being](#) focuses on preventive actions that keep Virginians active and healthy, and the good news is that most heart disease and its complications are completely preventable by making healthy choices and knowing your risk factors.

**High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease.** If you have high blood pressure, manage it by going to your health care provider for regular visits, taking your prescribed medication, and monitoring your blood pressure at home.

One of the greatest concerns with heart disease, especially CAD, is having a heart attack. A heart attack occurs when a part of the heart muscle dies or gets damaged due to reduced blood supply. If you know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack you are more likely to survive.

The four major symptoms of a heart attack are:

- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, back, arm, or shoulders
- Feeling weak, light-headed, or faint
- General chest pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath

If you or a loved one have any of these symptoms call 911 immediately and get to the hospital quickly. Making healthy lifestyle choices after a heart attack can reduce the risk of future heart attacks.

Make a promise to yourself to:

- Choose [heart healthy meals](#)
- Limit salt and sodium intake
- Maintain a healthy weight and learn your body mass index(BMI)
- Exercise regularly
- Breathe clean air (don't smoke) and limit alcohol use

It is easy to keep your heart healthy, so during the month of love give your loved ones the gift of a healthy and happy heart!

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## Superhero Corner

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**The Seagull's  
Superhero  
Corner**

**Superhero of the Month**



**Grayson Levee**

Grayson has been a part of the SSVA family since November of 2014. He enjoys listening to a variety of music. Grayson is independent, outspoken and quite tech savvy. He enjoys spending time in the community, making new connections with people and living life to the fullest.

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