

Vinfen's *Moving Images* Film Festival  
March 15, 2008 – Museum of Fine Arts



# THE VOICE

News and Information for Friends and Supporters of Vinfen

SPRING/SUMMER 2008

## More Than 300 Attend Vinfen Film Festival

On March 15, Vinfen not only celebrated its 30th anniversary in grand style but also communicated some very important messages about mental health, developmental disabilities and community-based care.

The day-long celebration, held at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, consisted of two parts: *Moving Images*, a six-hour film festival about mental illness and developmental disabilities, followed by a 30th Anniversary Gala Reception honoring Gerry Morrissey and Bernie Carey, both of whom have dedicated more than three decades to advancing policies and services for Massachusetts citizens with disabilities.

*Moving Images*, presented by Vinfen in conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts Film Program, attracted more than 300 people, many of whom were human service professionals, consumers or advocates.

"It was an incredible day," said Vinfen Director of Development Juliana Field, who organized the event. "The turnout exceeded our expectations, and there was tremendous interest and interaction among people. I think that everyone who attended came away with a little more

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**vinfen**  
helping to transform lives

## Letter From the President

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Vinfen employees (as well as all others in the human services field), Massachusetts has been able to offer supportive community-based programs for those who need them. Nearly 1 million Massachusetts residents require some sort of assistance with their daily lives.

Although more than 185,000 employees provide these important human services, the state has not appropriated any money to reflect the increased operating costs of community-based care since 1987. This has often resulted in fewer programs, lower salaries and health care plans requiring higher employee contributions.

Fortunately, there is a potential solution on the horizon: Senate Bill 65 (S. 65), *The Campaign to Strengthen Human Services*.

This legislation would enable providers to bid on state contracts with rates that are based upon the actual cost of providing services. It would allow providers to increase salaries, retain capable employees and raise the level of care.

S. 65 shifts the responsibility of setting rates from the state's purchasing division to the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, enabling important decisions to be made by people experienced in this complex field.

At Vinfen, we wholeheartedly support this measure. Our management team has been active in meeting with state legislators, writing letters and drumming up support over the phone. More than 200 staff and individuals served attended the State House rally on June 10 (page 4).

Take a few minutes to read about S. 65 by visiting Vinfen's Web site ([www.vinfen.org](http://www.vinfen.org)). Then contact your state representative and senator, requesting support for S. 65. Human service employees work hard, often in challenging environments, and they deserve better.

Sincerely,  


Gary W. Lamson  
President and CEO



## Gala Caps off Amazing Day

### Carey, Morrissey Receive Inaugural Vinfen Transforming Lives Awards

Vinfen's 30th Anniversary celebration finished in dramatic style with a two-hour Gala Reception that featured music, art, moving testimonials and awards for two very special people, Bernie Carey and Gerry Morrissey. About 270 people attended the festivities, which were emceed by WBZ-TV news anchor David Wade.

Carey and Morrissey each received the inaugural *Vinfen Transforming Lives Award*, which honors distinguished careers in the fields of mental illness and developmental disabilities.

"There is no way that we would have been able to help all of the people we serve without the demonstrated leadership and groundbreaking efforts of our two honorees," said Gary Lamson, president and CEO of Vinfen.

Carey has been executive director of the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health for the past 31 years. In 2001, he received the Lilo McMillan Award from the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health in recognition of his advocacy and work on behalf of people with mental illness and their families.

Morrissey recently completed a 10-year term as commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation. He is currently vice president of quality assurance and service development of The MENTOR Network, a national network of local human services providers offering an array of community-based services to adults and children.

"Our work has been rewarding," said Morrissey. "We had the honor to assist families and individuals in overcoming great odds, and left a tradition of service for future caregivers."

The awards themselves were special. Both men received original artwork created by individuals served by Vinfen programs. Carey received *Volcanic Galaxies*, a pen and ink work by Webster House artist Ray Ryan. Morrissey's gift was *Paul Revere's House*, a watercolor painting by Carmella Salvucci of Gateway Arts.

"It's success stories like Ray Ryan that play out, one individual at a time, and keep us focused every day," Carey said. "It's why we all believe in the community system."

One of the more emotional highlights of the evening consisted of brief testimonials from three individuals served by Vinfen programs. "Webster House has been a blessing to me," said Ryan, the first of the three to speak. "I've come a long way."



Bernie Carey (right) congratulates Webster House artist Ray Ryan for a job well done.



Rae Edelson (right) of Gateway Arts presents Gerry Morrissey with his award, a painting by Carmella Salvucci.

Ruby Pearl, an artist at Gateway Arts, expressed her gratitude for having an opportunity to do what she loves. "I'd like to thank everyone at Gateway Arts," Pearl said. "They opened their doors to me when I was homeless and made me feel alive."

Amy Smith said that prior to her involvement with Vinfen, she was a "mentally ill person stuck in the system" but because of the support and training at Webster House, she was able to fulfill her dream of becoming an artist. In fact, she recently received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Tufts University.

Midway through the program, pianist/singer Tony DeBlois entertained the crowd with a fine rendition of Carole King's "You'll Find Me There." The evening came to a close with DeBlois accompanying Vinfen staffer Sara Bielanski as she sang the John Lennon classic, "Imagine."

It was a fitting way to end the program, which celebrated accomplishments as well as hopes and dreams. All were left to appreciate the fine work of many people and imagine how things can be even better in the days to come.



## In My Own Voice

### Thoughts and comments about Vinfen's Moving Images Film Festival

by Christopher Morris, Vinfen Webster House member

This was the first time I had attended a film festival like this. I felt a spiritual connection to the whole day. Through my eyes, to see short films like this brings awareness to others about mental illness and made me feel at home. I was extremely comfortable with it. I would like to inspire someone like Steven Spielberg to direct a major film like those at the festival.

The first movie I saw, *Ryan*, was awesome; a man inspired by animation, who was very inventive and creative. *Outsider: A Film about the Life and Art of Judith Scott* was about a woman with Down Syndrome expressing herself through her art. She didn't communicate well with others, but through her art, she was communicating something very spiritual.

I joined many friends from other programs and Webster House for an enlightening lunch. Then I rejoined the festival for *Imagining Robert*, a moving film about two brothers. The brother without a disability was very supportive of his mentally-ill brother; his love for his ill brother was very moving. The last film I viewed, *Front Wards, Back Wards*, was a very powerful film about the closing and history of the Fernald School. Some men deeply lost in their own worlds walked in a circle together as a ritual of comfort.

As a client of mental health services, I can connect with people in the films and the film directors who made this happen, and want to keep their dreams alive.

I try to understand spirituality through an illness. Through my artwork, I can express hope. Viewing these films helped me; I felt confident that night knowing there are people to support you and that you aren't really ever alone. Given our culture and the media, I think showing others the lives of people with mental illness through entertainment media resources and film is critical.

## Vinfen Film Festival

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

knowledge and understanding of the issues involved with mental illness and developmental disabilities."

The festival's 14 films were divided into six sessions, each of which was followed by a panel discussion that included audience participation. Panelists represented a wide spectrum of people involved with mental illness and developmental disabilities, including Vinfen staff, clinicians from other organizations, artists, filmmakers, advocates and individuals served.

"We heard and saw many different perspectives during the films and the panel discussions," said Gary Lamson, president and CEO of Vinfen. "That's what this festival was designed to do – make people aware of the issues, start talking about them and get more involved."

Because of the educational nature of *Moving Images*, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) were offered by the National Association of Social Workers and the Arizona Nursing Association for viewing the films and attending the panel sessions.

The panel discussions were informative, lively and, at times, emotional. Yet there was one theme that seemed to resonate throughout the day: Psychiatric and developmental disabilities should be treated the same as other any other type of illness, and receive the same high standards of care.

"There is a big difference," pointed out Lisa Halpern, program director of Vinfen's Dorchester Bay Recovery Center, "between living a life and surviving – and having a life and thriving."

The latter approach exemplifies Vinfen's philosophy of service delivery. This community-oriented strategy is embraced by many other organizations but funding and political concerns often make for challenging situations.

Several of the films focused on the challenges of the current human services system. *A Revolving Door, Isn't She Lovely* and *Imagining Robert* examined the difficulties of receiving quality care. Other films, such as *The Life and Art of Judith Scott* and *I Am Dekel*, celebrated the triumphs of individuals who have flourished in supportive, caring environments.

*Front Wards, Back Wards*, a documentary about the Fernald School, provided a historical context for the treatment of individuals with developmental disabilities, drawing the largest crowd of the day. *Lars and the Real Girl*, an Academy Award nominee, focused on acceptance and nurturance as a foundation for treatment.

Many of the films dealt with the family's role – and frustrations – in dealing with mental illness and



Ken Duckworth, M.D., and Susan Abbott of Vinfen were panelists for the day's first session.

developmental disabilities. "Jay [Neugeboren, the benevolent brother in *Imagining Robert*] filled in a lot of the gaps in the mental health system," said Moe Armstrong, a former Vinfen program director and longtime mental health advocate. "It's time we started thinking a little more outside of the box."

The day started with a touching welcome video by the event's honorary co-chairs, former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and his wife Kitty, who did not shy away from the fact that she has been an advocate for mental health reform as well as a recipient of services.

Over the next six hours, more than 300 people were able to get an inside look – and hopefully a greater understanding – of mental illness and developmental disabilities.

"We look at it this way," said Rae Edelson, director of Vinfen's Gateway Arts (and a panelist in the Outsider Artists session). "We work with the individual's abilities – not his or her disabilities."

### EVENT SPONSORS

Vinfen would like to thank the following sponsors for their support of Vinfen's 30th anniversary celebration.

- Alberts Foundation**
- Brigham and Women's Hospital/Partners Healthcare**
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts**
- Cambridge Educational Films**
- Citizens Bank of Massachusetts**
- Clear Channel Outdoor**
- Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare**
- Inavale Foundation**
- Last Minute Productions**
- Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities**
- The MENTOR Network**
- Museum of Fine Arts**
- Shaw's/Osco**

## Vinfen Receives Three-Year CARF Accreditation

Vinfen Corporation has been awarded its eighth consecutive three-year accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).



The three-year accreditation, which runs from October 2007 to October 2010, is the maximum accreditation offered by CARF.

CARF ([www.carf.org](http://www.carf.org)) is an independent, nonprofit accrediting body whose mission is to promote the quality, value and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served.

This process closely examines an organization's business practices as well as its program implementation. Application for CARF accreditation is voluntary.

"This accreditation is an acknowledgement of the dedication and hard work put forth by our entire staff," said Gary W. Lamson, president and CEO of Vinfen.

"The administration, managers, training staff and workers out in the field all deserve credit for this achievement. The result of their fine work is a wide range of excellent services and thousands of individuals reaping the benefits."

In October 2007, a team of CARF reviewers conducted on-site surveys of Vinfen's administrative offices and closely examined a representative sample of Vinfen programs.

A 60-page report released by CARF in December 2007 commended Vinfen programs in 34 areas, including housing, specialized therapy groups, community outreach and training.

According to the report, "family members and persons served throughout the organization report high levels of satisfaction with the services provided."

The report also commended Vinfen for providing services to "individuals with a higher degree of challenges and barriers to employment and independence."

## Web Site Sports New Look

Vinfen's Web site ([www.vinfen.org](http://www.vinfen.org)) has a new look. It's more visual, better organized, easier to navigate and the content is in the process of being updated.

Feedback about the Web site is welcome. Please direct comments and suggestions to Senior Communications and Public Affairs Specialist Howard Newman at [newmanh@vinfen.org](mailto:newmanh@vinfen.org) or 617-441-1726.

[www.vinfen.org](http://www.vinfen.org)

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTS EVENTS

Vinfen's *Moving Images* Film Festival and Gala Reception, held March 15 at the Museum of Fine Arts, received strong support from the community in the form of foundation gifts, corporate sponsorships and individual donations. Proceeds will be used to enhance Vinfen programs for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities and behavioral health issues.

"I'd like to thank all those who supported the 30th Anniversary events with their resources and time," said Juliana Field, Vinfen's director of development. "We express deep appreciation and gratitude to the Gala Committee members, led by co-chairs, Charlie Baker, President and CEO, Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare, and Dr. Gary Gottlieb, President, Brigham and Women's Hospital."

"I'd also like to thank the Vinfen staff who helped organize the events and volunteered at the Museum of Fine Arts. They helped make our 30th anniversary celebration a big success."

## LAWRENCE FIRE RELIEF FUND

A January 21 fire in Lawrence affected eight Vinfen clients, who were displaced from their apartments and immediately moved to temporary housing. Over the past few months, Vinfen has been working to find them permanent residences. To date, five have moved into their own apartments.

A relief fund was established by Vinfen to replace property lost in the blaze. We appreciate the more than \$1,200 received thus far and continue to welcome additional donations.

## NIMH FUNDS IN SHAPE PROGRAM

Thanks to a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant, Vinfen is partnering with Dr. Steve Bartels of Dartmouth College to develop and implement a program that encourages and monitors physical fitness and proper nutrition for participants.

Dr. Bartels reached out to Vinfen, a partner in other successful projects, to apply for the grant from NIMH.

The funds will support a five-year study to replicate and improve upon the *In Shape* program model previously developed in New Hampshire.

The *In Shape* project will recruit 200 volunteer participants, ages 21 and older, from across Vinfen's supported living programs in the greater Boston area. Volunteers will be paid for their participation.

Previous studies have indicated that a higher degree of physical fitness, along with a nutritious diet, not only produces healthier individuals with longer life expectancies – but happier and more productive people. Results from the study will be used to develop an effective strategy for incorporating more fitness and nutrition into Vinfen programs.

This is the second of what Vinfen hopes will be many more projects, as the organization seeks to develop a major health and wellness initiative for all individuals served over the next five years and secure additional funding to make this a reality. Interested parties can contact Project Director Kate Clowry at 617-516-5160 or [clowryc@vinfen.org](mailto:clowryc@vinfen.org).

## VINFEN SEEKS MATCHING FUNDS

An anonymous donor has made a gift of \$10,000 in support of the peer education program at the Dorchester Bay Recovery Center (DBRC). In order for Vinfen to receive this gift, it must be matched dollar-for-dollar by future donations. The deadline is December 31, 2008.

**SUPPORT VINFEN:** Help us transform lives! Please send your tax-deductible contribution to Juliana Field, Director of Development, 950 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02141. For more information, call 617-441-1728 or send an e-mail: [fieldj@vinfen.org](mailto:fieldj@vinfen.org).

## S. 65 Rally at State House



Carol Foley, residence counselor at Bayview Inn, was a featured speaker.

Vinfen was well represented at *The Campaign to Strengthen Human Services* rally held June 10 at the State House. Among the estimated 1,100 campaign supporters in attendance were more than 200 Vinfen staff and clients, including Vinfen residence counselor Carol Foley, one of the event's featured speakers.

The rally was held in support of Senate Bill 65 (S. 65), which aims to change the bidding mechanism for state human service contracts, enabling providers to increase salaries (for further details, see *Letter from the President* on page 2).

"I love my job because I enjoy helping people," said Foley, who works at Vinfen's Bayview Inn program in Quincy.

Foley noted, however, that low salaries make it "a struggle to get by" and many co-workers leave for better paying jobs. Only three of 12 Bayview staff members remain from just three years ago.

"We work hard and deserve a fair wage," she said. "S. 65 will help us achieve this."



Senior Program Director Sandy Cook (left) and Assistant Clinical Director Nick Chappell of Vinfen discuss an issue with psychologist Tommy Stoddard (right), committee chair, at a recent Mental Retardation Division Metro Boston Human Rights Committee meeting.

## Human Rights Committees Provide Safeguard for Clients

### Vinfen Looking for Volunteers to Participate

In addition to providing excellent services to individuals in our programs, it also is important to safeguard their human and civil rights and help them learn to advocate for themselves. This involves constant monitoring of services, activities, training and protocols to ensure that Vinfen staff recognize, protect and promote the rights of individuals served.

State-funded providers like Vinfen are required by Massachusetts law to establish Human Rights Committees. Vinfen's Human Rights Committees are facilitated by the organization's regional directors and staffed by volunteers. Since human rights cover a wide range of categories, Vinfen is seeking volunteers with varied backgrounds.

"This is a terrific opportunity to support your community as well as learn about the services offered to individuals," said Joseph Gomes, senior vice president of Vinfen's Mental Retardation Division. "It's not only a rewarding experience in itself but also a chance to network and interact with a wide variety of people in the field."

Prospective committee members include parents, guardians, and individuals served by Vinfen or advocates for individuals with disabilities.

Vinfen is also looking for people with specific professions, such as:

- physicians
- nurses
- psychologists

- attorneys, paralegals and law students
- master's level practitioners with relevant experience in mental retardation, developmental disabilities and/or mental health disabilities

Committee members cannot have any administrative or financial connection to Vinfen. Committees meet at least once per quarter for approximately two hours.

For detailed information about the roles and requirements for Vinfen Human Rights Committees, see the Vinfen Web site at [www.vinfen.org](http://www.vinfen.org) ("Services").

There are currently three committees in Vinfen's Mental Retardation Division:

**Metro Boston**  
**North Shore**  
**South Shore**

For further information, contact Helen Fantasia at 617-441-1734 or [helenf@vinfen.org](mailto:helenf@vinfen.org).

There are seven committees in Vinfen's Psychiatric Rehabilitation Division:

**Cambridge/Somerville**  
**Metro Boston** (Brookline, Roxbury)  
**Metro Boston** (Roxbury)  
**North Shore**  
**South Shore**  
**Plymouth**  
**Cape Cod**

For further information, contact Beth Thompson at 617-441-1845 or [thompsonb@vinfen.org](mailto:thompsonb@vinfen.org).

## Armstrong Honored by NCCBH

James "Moe" Armstrong, a leader in the field of psychiatric rehabilitation, has been recognized by the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare as the winner of a 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award for Staff Leadership.

Armstrong is being honored for his life-long commitment to promoting community-based and peer-support services for people living with serious psychiatric conditions. The Awards Dinner took place on Friday, May 2 at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, during the 2008 National Council Annual Conference.

A former director of recovery services at Vinfen, Armstrong has spent his career as an advocate, advisor and visionary. Presently, he is working with the VA's Mental Illness Research and Education Center and the Yale School of Medicine toward establishing and documenting the efficacy of peer support.

"Moe Armstrong is beloved in this industry," said Linda Rosenberg, MSW, president and CEO of The National Council. "Building upon his personal experience of living with schizophrenia, he has dedicated his career to serving others."

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare is a nonprofit association of 1,400 behavioral healthcare organizations that provide treatment for nearly 6 million individuals.



Moe Armstrong

## Hancock Gets a Helping Hand

From December 2007 to April of this year, students from the Human Services Bachelor's degree program at Springfield College volunteered at Vinfen's Hancock Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

The students spent several months making community connections and raising funds through donations from the Boston Police Athletic League, Building 19, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Essence Magazine and the Boston-Bay State Banner.

The students visited Hancock Center residents every Thursday night to play bingo and every Tuesday for coffee hour, current events and group crossword puzzles. In addition, the Springfield College students created a small library for the residents.

At the completion of the program on April 11, there was a farewell pizza party. To ensure continuation of the program, the students recruited new volunteers and solidified long-term relationships with community groups in the area.

"We're so grateful for the time these students spent with us," said Glory Wideman, Hancock Center activity director. "The residents really enjoyed their company. Not only that, but they started an excellent program that will continue to run."



SC's Kimberly Miller-Davis with Hancock Center resident James Reeves.

**GROUP THERAPY**  
by Susan Entin

Artist Susan Entin has worked at Webster House for the past year. She has refined her craft by studying at Mass College of Art and The School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

Working primarily with acrylic on paper and canvas, her creations are narrative and somewhat autobiographical. She specializes in portraits of people and scenes of groups. Each of Entin's paintings is part of a narrative, telling a story from past experiences and current interactions with people. For further information call 617-739-5461.

Webster House is a rehabilitation program in Brookline, Mass., for 250 individuals. In a lively atmosphere with a special focus on the arts, Webster House emphasizes teamwork in all activities.



**PFC MATTHEW A. BEAN, PEMBROKE, 22 YEARS OLD**  
by Michelle Jasmin

Michelle Jasmin's artwork has recently paid tribute to soldiers fallen in the Iraqi war. She feels her art is often a reaction to other people's suffering, which she tries to capture, whether it is a broken heart, anger or abandonment. Her art helps her to work out difficult world issues and to express her emotions.

Through funding provided by the Statewide Head Injuries Program (SHIP), Jasmin joined Vinfen's Gateway Arts program in 2005 and has showcased her work in several art exhibitions.

Located in Brookline Village, Mass., Gateway Arts is a vocational arts service of Vinfen for talented artists with disabilities. The Gateway Crafts Store and the Gateway Gallery both show and sell items created in the Gateway studios. For additional information, visit [www.gatewayarts.org](http://www.gatewayarts.org).



Vinfen ([www.vinfen.org](http://www.vinfen.org)) is a private, nonprofit human services organization that provides a comprehensive array of services to children, adolescents and adults with psychiatric, developmental and behavioral disabilities.

If you would like to receive The Voice, please send your address to [newmanh@vinfen.org](mailto:newmanh@vinfen.org) or call 617-441-1726. If you would like to remove your name from our mailing list, use the same contact information.

On May 1, Fred Verro, program director at Vinfen's Coventry Street Community Program, received the 2008 Medoff AIDS Housing Award from the AIDS Housing Corporation (AHC). Coventry Street is an HIV/AIDS residential support program in Roxbury. This award is presented annually by the AHC to honor individuals who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to AIDS housing. Verro became program director at Coventry Street in 1997 and soon recognized that the program was focused primarily on dying and death. His response was to re-establish the program, working with staff to create an atmosphere where life was celebrated. In the environment of Coventry Street's clean and sober standards, he also instituted practices for treating client relapses. Verro, who joined Vinfen in 1993, is currently a member of the Boston/MetroWest HIV/AIDS Service Coordination Collaborative and the Roxbury Community Health Neighborhood Association. Vinfen joins the AHC in congratulating him for his years of service.



*Fred Verro was recognized by the AHC for his work at the Coventry Street Community Program.*

## Verro Honored by AHC

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