

GUIDE Receives Recognition by Prince George's County

By Sarah Smee, May 2004



(From left - right) Adrienne Bennett, Leslie E. Johnson, Scott Birdsong, and Carolyn Billingsley

On May 27th GUIDE was honored by Prince George's County as the "Outstanding Program of the Year" by the Department of Family Services Mental Health Authority Division. GUIDE's juvenile justice related services including Therapeutic Group Home and Family Intervention Specialist programs were singled out by the County for special recognition at this year's Annual Provider Appreciation Luncheon that was held at the Camp Springs South County Conference Center. Prince George's "First Lady," Leslie E. Johnson, treated the assembled to an inspiring address about renewing spirits and energies in these challenging but exciting times.

The Department's Director, Adrienne Bennett and the Mental Health Authority Division's Director, Carolyn Billingsley presented awards. The "Outstanding Program of the Year Award" is given at the discretion of the Mental Health Authority to an organization that has shown a deep commitment to public service through mental health care. Said Carolyn Billingsley, "Because of the commitment of the GUIDE Program, and the FIS workers, the youth and families participating in this program are receiving another opportunity to turn their lives around. It gives me great pleasure to present the 'Outstanding

Program of the Year Award' to GUIDE Program, Inc."

Scott Birdsong, GUIDE's Executive Director, graciously accepted the award on behalf of GUIDE's staff. He told attendees, "The real heroes of the GUIDE organization are the staff and personnel who directly work in GUIDE's programs on a daily basis and who truly make wonderful contributions to the lives of children, youth, and families." Birdsong thanked members of the Department of Family Services for their continued support and recognition of GUIDE's work.

GUIDE's Therapeutic Group Home provides a structured environment for severely emotionally disturbed youth. While at the group home, individuals receive support and supervision. They participate in chores, school, community service and cultural activities. GUIDE also provides family counseling to assist in reuniting youth and their families. GUIDE's three Family Intervention Specialists (FIS) partner with the Department of Juvenile Services to work with youth returning from residential treatment and detention centers. FIS staff, who are Licensed Social Workers, meet with youth and their families before release from residential care to ensure a smooth transition back home. They provide parenting classes, support groups, crisis counseling and referrals for longer-term mental health care, addictions treatment and housing. These interventions help the young adults and their families find a successful new start. Since the program's inception in October of 2002, the Family Intervention Specialists have worked with more than 70 families in Prince George's County. Also in Prince George's County, GUIDE operates its Independence Program—a previous year's awardee—that provides residential psychiatric rehabilitation services to individuals with mental illness.