

**FOCUS ON**

# Community Service & Philanthropy

## Center for Social Change Programs Emphasize Individual Choice

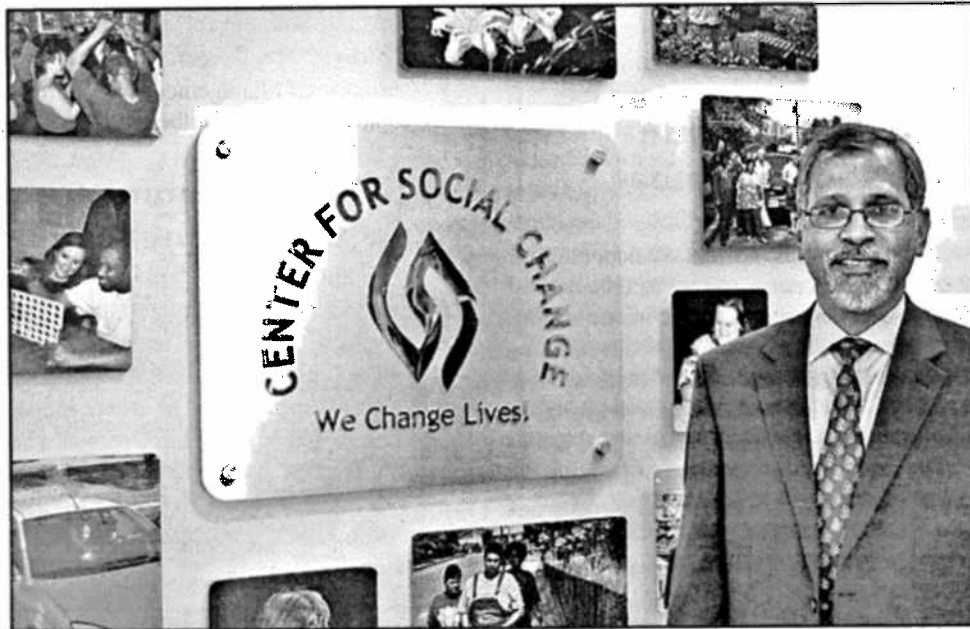
By George Berkheimer, STAFF WRITER

Since 1993, the nonprofit Center for Social Change (CSC) has been working in Maryland to support children and adults with special needs, including autism spectrum disorder. Located in Elkridge, the center is a strong advocate for personal choices in community living for individuals who are developmentally, physically, psychologically and emotionally challenged.

The CSC was founded by CEO Joseph Mathew, a sociologist whose earlier career working with developmentally challenged individuals generated an interest in approaching his profession from an entrepreneurial standpoint.

"It was a simple gesture," Mathew said. "[My experience] made me think that we should have a different way of looking at things," rather than adhering to the rigors of a state-administered bureaucratic system.

Over the past 16 years, the wisdom of that decision has been borne out through



Center for Social Change Founder Joseph Mathew took an entrepreneurial approach in developing programs to help adults and children with developmental disabilities.

CSC's success in providing various services to its clients. Today that service includes residential, vocational, supported employment, medical adult day care, therapeutic integration for children with autism, volunteering opportunities and advocacy to

individuals with intellectual disabilities.

"Services to individuals are always planned in consultation with them, their families and advocates," Mathews said, and individuals who are able to speak for themselves regularly join the CSC team in planning their activities. For those unable to speak for themselves, family and staff have a say in planning activities based on each person's interests and preferences, he said.

### Unique Challenges

In its early years, the center faced not only the challenge of proving the validity of its new approach, but also the challenge of overcoming resistance from an existing institutional system.

"Like anything, it is a competitive field," Mathew explained. "Established providers didn't want a new provider to encroach upon their territory."

Since then, the center's challenges and responsibilities have grown considerably, primarily influenced by the state's 2008 decision to close its Rosewood Center, one of four State Residential Centers for individuals with developmental disabilities. The state called upon the CSC to help integrate some of the Rosewood residents into a community setting.

"These were highly challenged individuals," Mathew said, recalling that some parents were actually reluctant to see their children placed in the community without a safety net because of severe behavioral problems.

Nevertheless, Mathew and his staff were able to successfully integrate more than 35 individuals from Rosewood and from the Great Oaks Center, another state-run facility which closed in 1996.

"This story inspires me," Mathew said. "Peoples' notions were wrong, and today we're happy to see that the warehousing mentality has totally changed. The closings of these institutions are success stories."

What made the difference?

"Love and compassion, and developing a good relationship that has stood up over a period of time," Mathew said. "We also realize that only through a true team effort could we have done something like this."

### Life Skill Center

Rosewood employs approximately 300, with roughly 95 administrative and vocational staff members on-site in Elkridge. Turnover is a concern, Mathew acknowledged, owing to the skills and demands of the positions and the relatively pared down wage and benefits system that nonprofits like the CSC can afford.

With more budget cuts expected during this year's General Assembly session, that concern no doubt will increase.

"The Medicare rate has been lowered, there are reimbursement problems, regula-

## They Inspired the Awards

By Karen Lubieniecki, STAFF WRITER

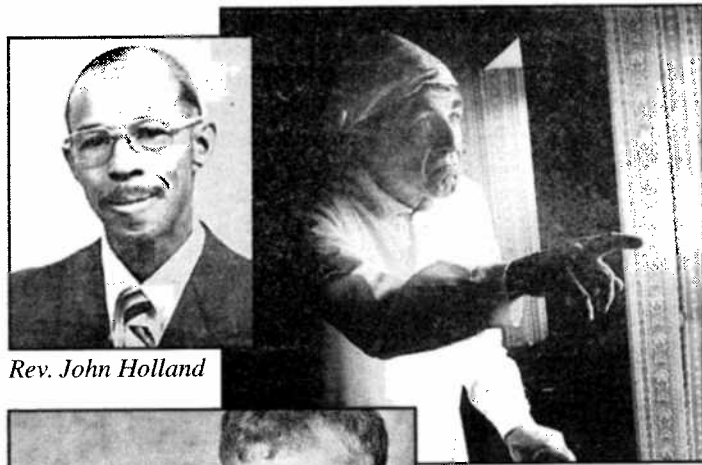
Chaya Caplan was Volunteer of the Year at the 34th Annual Audrey Robbins Humanitarian Awards; Chase Brexton Medical Services received the ninth Casey Willis Making a Difference Award; and Willis McGahee received the 15th Annual Rev. John Holland Humanitarian Award. The 12th Aronson Memorial Awards went to Samantha L. Ferro and Magid A. Wahee. Students from Community Based Learning Centers received Elsie Waters scholarships at the 13th Annual Community Homes Awards Banquet, and Donna Jacobs won the third grant named for Mark Ryder.

We know this year's winners, but what do people remember about those who inspired the awards?

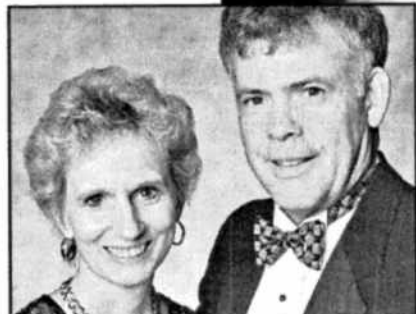
Mark Ryder/Mark Ryder Original Choreography Grant

Mark Ryder's 2006 death merited an eight-paragraph New York Times obituary. The young dancers taking the stage for "A Christmas Carol" during the years 1980-1987 may not have realized that the man dancing Scrooge with them had also danced with Martha Graham and had had a very respected national dance company.

Caryl Maxwell Gazman, for whom he was a mentor, started her classical ballet school because modern dancer Ryder encouraged her to create a performance outlet for students. Students from his days as a head of the dance department at University



Rev. John Holland



Casey and Pebble Willis

of Maryland, College Park, may remember their funny, 6-foot-tall teacher who was not afraid to make silly faces while instilling in them an understanding of dance as more than performance, and a creative process.

Ryder died in 2006, but Alzheimer's disease had stolen him from the local stage close to 15 years before. Created by his wife, Mary Ratcliffe, after his death, the award honors the achievements and creative exuberance Ryder brought to dance, to young professionals and to his community.

Rev. John Holland/ Reverend John W. Holland Humanitarian Award

"I revered him. Respected him. Looked up to him," said Dr. Vernon Gray, administrator of the Howard County Office of Human Rights. Dottie Moore, who knew Holland not only from when she was a child, but as a professional at the Community Action Council (CAC), remembered his

tenacity and forthrightness.

"Rev. Holland was a person who didn't dance around an issue. ... When you finished a conversation with him, you knew where you stood. If it was right, it was right. If it was wrong, it was wrong."

A lifelong resident of Howard County, this quietly peaceful reverend had a small congregation but was a pastor to many, and played a major role in the civil rights battles at a time when Howard County was still segregated, and in caring for county residents in need. He opened his church so there could be a site for senior programs.

State Del. Liz Bobo remembers him as a man who, in 1977, reached out, took her around to his church and educated her about the black community out in the smaller part of the county. "He was a very gentle, kind man who lived his life taking care of other people."

Holland died in 1987 walking in the

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# Hopkins Study: Nonprofit Job Growth in Maryland Defies Recession

Despite the recession, nonprofit employment in Maryland increased by 2.7% in 2008, according to a new report from The Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. By contrast, for-profit employment in Maryland decreased by 3.3% during this same period.

All told, Maryland's nonprofit workforce grew to 256,618 jobs by the end of 2008. This represented 10.1% of all jobs in Maryland and 12.5% of total private-sector jobs in the state, which is well above the United States average.

This workforce makes Maryland's nonprofit sector the second largest employer among Maryland industries, behind only retail. Reflecting this fact, Maryland nonprofit organizations pumped more than \$11.5 billion in wages into the Maryland economy in 2008, or more than 9% of the state's total payrolls. These wages translated into an estimated \$635 million of personal income tax revenue for Maryland's state and local governments and nearly \$1.6 billion in federal tax revenues.

Nonprofit job growth was especially robust in the professional and scientific services field, which grew by 5.8% during 2008. While private nonprofit hospitals experienced slightly lower than average job growth, they still added 1,208 jobs during this period, or about 20% of the state's nonprofit job growth.

The new data indicate that nonprofits

in Maryland seem to be confirming an earlier finding by Hopkins researchers about national nonprofit performance in previous recessions: that nonprofit organizations are a counter-cyclical force in the economy, actually adding workers in times of economic downturn.

During the two previous U.S. recessions (1990-91 and 2001-02), nonprofit employment nationally increased by an average of 2.4%, while for-profit employment declined by 2.2%. The study authors attribute this trend in part to the fact many nonprofits receive substantial portions of their income from public sector programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, which are designed to buffer citizens from economic downturns.

"That nonprofit employment in Maryland continued to rise in the face of the most severe recession since the Great Depression is a testament to the resilience and determination of Maryland nonprofit leaders and those who support them in the public and private sectors," said Lester M. Salamon, study author and director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. "But this accomplishment, impressive though it is, still left many needs unmet and many organizations under severe strain."

"This report shows that nonprofits not only strengthen communities across the state through the services they provide, but also strengthen the economy through

increased employment, wages and general commerce," said Darryl A. Jones, Sr., CEO of Maryland Nonprofits, the state's nonprofit association. "We are concerned about the sector's continued ability to meet

rising demands as the recession drags on and state fiscal problems deepen, and will watch nonprofit employment numbers beyond the conclusion of 2008 to monitor the effects of the recession in 2009."

## Bright Minds Foundation

In 2006, the Board of Education of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) formed a nonprofit foundation, now called the Bright Minds Foundation, which is strongly committed to its mission of "equity, innovation and lifelong learning." In this very bleak economic environment, the board has focused its attention on providing computers for middle school students to support the goal of equity by helping to eliminate the digital divide.


During 2009, Bright Minds gave about 200 Internet-ready, refurbished desktop computers, software, a new printer and flash drives to students and their families at a series of two-and-a-half-hour workshops that provided training on how to install them at home and how to use them. Members of the Bright Minds Foundation board also provided information on Internet options and cyber security training.

Bright Minds continues to work with the HCPSS to identify students who qualify for these computers and is planning to give out 100 more in the spring of 2010.

In addition, during 2009, Bright Minds distributed more than \$11,000 in grant money to teachers in the HCPSS in amounts of \$250 to \$1,000 to sponsor projects of varying kinds, from science programs to partnering and mentoring between high school and elementary school students. The board anticipates continuing to offer teachers an opportunity to create innovative programs in 2010.

The Bright Minds Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates via funds given by members of the public.

For more information about the Bright Minds Foundation and to make a contribution, visit [www.brightmindsfoundation.org](http://www.brightmindsfoundation.org) or call Administrator Pat Sasse at 410-740-0707.



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*This ad made possible through the generosity of Turf Valley Resort*

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**The Volunteer Center**  
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Funded by The Horizon Foundation, Howard County Department of Citizen Services, The Columbia Association, Baltimore UASI, United Way Community Partnership and CERN.

## CSC

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tions change constantly, and the population we serve is living longer," Mathew noted. "Health conditions always worsen with age, and many of our individuals are prone to be [less healthy] than the average population, so they will require more services."

At the moment, CSC supports more than 100 adults and children in its residential program that oversees community-based group housing located in Baltimore City and in Baltimore, Harford, Howard and Prince George's counties.

The center also offers vocational and social skills training, along with job seeking training, job placement services and job coaching services for both residential and non-residential clients.

While many individuals do land temporary jobs, they are also encouraged to engage in volunteer work. "In many cases it is more important to have community involvement than money," Mathew explained. "It helps greatly with establishing a sense of identity and with inclusion and community integration."

Quality assurance surveys along with independent interviews and auditing from The Arc of Howard County serve to keep the center apprised of its effectiveness.

Located at the site of a former commercial recreation property since 2005, CSC has been able to maintain an existing mini-golf course and a few other amenities to provide recreational and therapeutic opportunities for its clients. A greenhouse also allows the pursuit of year-round gardening activities.

## Extensive Outreach

Although CSC's local reach is limited to a few surrounding counties, its program has been noticed by other jurisdictions outside the state.

Last year, CSC expanded services to Washington, D.C., and Mathew has

received an invitation to start a similar program in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The center also is active internationally through a subsidiary organization set up to expand programs and services to adults and children with developmental disabilities in the poorer countries of Asia and Africa.

Originally from India, Mathew has sought to partner with private organizations there and now works with private organizations in four Indian states.

"The Indian government does not have a policy or a system of support for administering services, so it is hard to control who gets the limited resources there," he said. "Our purpose is to educate people and help get rid of the stigma ... that results in being institutionalized in overcrowded conditions."

Working through the federal government's H-3 Visa program, the CSC developed an 18-month curriculum and has begun recruiting candidates from India to receive training in Elkridge. An inaugural group of seven recruits completed the center's first training session in November 2009. Although no partnership exists yet in Africa, Mathew is currently pursuing influential contacts there to help establish a similar program and is considering expansion into some former Soviet Union member-states.

In Maryland, he is still advocating for the state to close its remaining three institutions and to again partner with CSC to integrate their populations.

"Most providers don't want to accept that challenge," Mathew said, "but we have overcome that fear and successfully integrated some of the most difficult individuals that others did not want to serve, so we know we are ready."

Fortunately, he adds, community awareness and attitudes have changed dramatically since the center's residential program first began, and community integration has become more accepted than it once was.

Inclusion, he acknowledged, has been very therapeutic for everybody involved.