



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES
ANDREW JACKSON BUILDING, 15th FLOOR
500 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243

**For Immediate Release
December 28, 2006**

**Contact: Tony Troiano
615-519-7377 (P)
Tony.Troiano@state.tn.us**

Changing of the Guard at Arlington Developmental Center

Dr. Nina Staples, a 16-year employee with Arlington Developmental Center, is now the acting chief officer at the facility. Staples assumed the reins from Leon Owens who resigned to become chief officer at Pee Dee Center, a state-run ICF/MR in Florence, South Carolina. Owens departs Arlington at the end of this month.

A graduate of the University of Memphis (formerly Memphis State University), Staples has served the developmental disabilities population her entire career. She has worked with Easter Seals, as a member of the University of Tennessee Division Of Developmental Pediatrics and as director of a Memphis pre-school program for children with disabilities, part of the United Methodist Neighborhood Centers.

"We certainly hate losing Leon," said Staples. "Working beside him has been the best professional situation I've ever experienced. We complimented one another so well. However, I'm intimately involved with all areas here, so this is a natural transition. I know I have the full support of the staff and Arlington families."

"DMRS is fortunate to have Dr. Staples assume the position of acting chief officer at Arlington," said DMRS Deputy Commissioner Stephen H. Norris. "She has distinguished herself during her tenure there and knows the operation inside-out. Her skills and commitment make this change a smooth one."

"Leon's impression on Arlington won't soon be forgotten. His accomplishments in a short period of time can not be understated. Weighted with a host of challenges he was not daunted; rolled up his sleeves and went to work. The State of Tennessee, DMRS and certainly I, appreciate his contributions."

Owens arrived at Arlington in 2004 from Topeka, Kansas where he was superintendent of the Kansas Neurological Institute, an ICF/MR residential facility. He coined Arlington's mission, "Building Better Lives," and instituted "Person Centered" planning, which allows the person receiving services to set the direction of his or her plan that meets their lifestyle choices.

(More)

Page 2/Changing of the Guard

“There is a big part of me that doesn’t want to leave Arlington,” said Owens. “We’ve made headway here and I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished. The staff are wonderful, a very good group of people.

“DMRS has the right leadership in place with Deputy Commissioner Norris and Assistant Commissioner Dr. Larry Latham. The progress that has been made over the past couple of years is amazing.”

###