Felicia Storey helps Presbyterian Home reach milestone as she approaches another

**TALLADEGA --** Talladega’s Presbyterian Home for Children recently achieved national certification through the New York-based Council on Accreditation after nearly two years of work by a team led by Vice President of Program Operations and Services Felicia Ayers Storey.

According to Presbyterian Home President Doug Marshall, the announcement of the accreditation dovetails nicely with Storey’s 35th anniversary at the Home, coming up on July 23.

“In her role, she led our entire team here in achieving this historic accreditation for the Home,” Marshall said in a prepared statement. “She is highly respected by the Alabama Department of Human Resources in Montgomery and their offices across the state. She is loved throughout this entire community where she works here in Talladega, and also in Sylacauga where she lives.”

Said Storey, “It was an honor to be a part of this. It is definitely one of the highlights of my career.”

In a separate statement, Marshall explained, “COA accreditation is important to the Home as a formal recognition of the high performance standards, which have always made the Home special.

“It is an objective, independent and reliable validation that we are delivering the highest quality services to all of our stakeholders.”

The accreditation covers “all our programs to benefit children, families and young adults, on campus and off,” Marshall said. “It also covers all our support services, governance, financial, process quality improvement, safety, client rights, human resources, training, facilities, policies … Everything it takes for us to be able to provide services to children and families.”

According to Storey, the first step towards accreditation is applying for it.

After the application is accepted, “we send in information from a list of questions as a preliminary self-study,” she said. “If we’re successful there, which we were, you go on to an enhanced self-study that covers 13 different categories with information under each heading.”

After that comes an outside peer review conducted by an executive or program director of a program that provides similar services.

“We had two people here over a period of three days talking to staff, leadership, senior board members, stakeholders and alumni, among others, basically conducting an audit,” Marshall said.

Added Storey, “They also went through all our finances to make sure that we were being fiscally responsible as well,”

Said Marshall, “We invested a lot of time and money in this, but that’s what it costs to get the stamp of approval. They want to make sure we are meeting every standard.”

Having this particular accreditation bestows a couple of advantages, Storey explained.

“When we send in a request for proposal to, say, DHR or other state agencies that we work with, having it enhances our score,” she said. “It also helps us when we apply for grants. It shows accountability, it shows we have a plan that we have implemented and that we have checks and balances to carry it out.”

Marshall pointed out the accreditation also helps the Home in finding partners among other nonprofits.

“When we need partners, having this helps open some doors for us, and checks another box with potential partner agencies. It shows that we are held to high standards,” he said.

The process began in October 2018, Storey said, and was just completed recently. Maintaining the certification, which the Home has been awarded for the first time, involves annual reports and on-site inspections and, in four years, will have to be renewed through the same process.

“There’s no rest for us,” Marshall said.

Marshall said obtaining this accreditation was one of four priorities he identified when he came aboard as president.

“We want to obtain our certification; expand Union Village (a partnership with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind), which we are doing now; grow the Ascension Academy, which is also happening now; and restructure our resource development function by expanding it outside the church.”