

Portia Iversen's "Strange Son" Offers Hope and Insight into the World of Autism

LATE ONE NIGHT, 12 YEARS AGO, ON THE VERGE of being worn out and demoralized with the limited progress that their son Dov was making with the various autism therapies, Portia Iversen and Jonathan Shestack decided to start a foundation that would focus on autism research. With sheer determination and passion driven by the desire to help their son, Iversen and Shestack grew this foundation into one of the largest non-governmental funding resources for autism research worldwide – Cure Autism Now.

PORIA IVERSEN



Strange Son

Two Mothers, Two Sons,
and the Quest to Unlock
the Hidden World of Autism

"Strange Son" is written in such a way that it draws the reader in and helps them understand and appreciate what it's like to be the parent of a child with autism.

It was at one of these meetings that Iversen heard about Tito Mukhopadhyay, an Indian boy with severe autism who was nonverbal, but whose mother Soma had taught to read, write and communicate. It became Iversen's mission to track down Tito and his mother, in the hopes that Tito would be able to provide a window into what autism was like and how it effected the way a person thought and how he or she behaved.

In her book "Strange Son: Two Mothers, Two Sons, and the Quest to Unlock the Hidden World of Autism," Iversen shares with readers 12 years of hopes, fears, accomplishments and disappointments, all part of her journey to put together the pieces of the puzzle that is autism. "Strange Son" is written in such a way that it draws the reader in and helps them understand and appreciate what it's like to be the parent of a child with autism. Even though some of the events were over 15 years ago, "Strange Son" paints a vivid picture that instantly transports you to that time and place – whether it's sitting in Dov's ▶

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Save the Date!
Community Meetings Being Held In September

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People to People Sports Ambassador Joshua Markell Represents the United States at the Youth Friendship Games

Joshua Markell displays the banner that he brought back from his trip to Holland where he participated as a People to People Sports Ambassador at the Youth Friendship Games. In between soccer games, he got to see many of the sights of Amsterdam and the surrounding areas.

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Lanterman Creates Team to Address the Needs of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

IN 1997, IN AN EARLY RESPONSE TO A MARKED increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism, the California Department of Developmental Services introduced the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Initiative. Among the goals of this initiative were to identify and promote best practices within the state in assessment and diagnosis, treatment, and education and training related to autism.

Recently, funding from the DDS initiative has enabled each regional center to add two staff positions – an ASD clinical specialist and an ASD program coordinator – as well as to provide training on autism to regional center professionals and develop best practice guidelines for autism treatment and intervention. Lanterman Regional Center has used these funds to create an Autism Team consisting of Mandy Moradi, Psy.D., clinical psychologist; Jean Johnson, Ph.D.; and Erin Broughton-Rodriguez who will serve as the ASD program coordinator. The team is supervised by Hasmig Mandossian, assistant director of Intake and Assessment.

The primary purpose of the Autism Team is twofold. The team will focus on increasing the level of expertise among Lanterman professionals and other staff about autism-related disorders and their effective treatment. It will also work to develop the capacity among individuals and organizations within the community to better serve children and adults with autism in an integrated setting. An ongoing responsibility of the team will be to oversee activities intended to improve the quality of services provided in the community.

Moradi and Johnson will assist service coordinators with clinical referrals and advise the Center's Intake and Assessment unit on best practice guidelines for the screening, diagnosis and assessment of individuals with ASD. They will also coordinate and manage the clinical application of best practice guidelines, provide technical assistance to local clinicians and service providers specializing in ASD, and will participate in the ASD Learning Collaborative. ▶

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Staff Highlight

Lanterman's Nurses Work to Ensure that Health Needs of Clients Young and Old are Addressed

LANTERMAN IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT OUR CHILDREN AND ADULTS HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE health. This is a major goal of our Clinical Services department, and the department is privileged to have a team of four highly qualified nurse consultants, each of whom has specific responsibilities for the health-related needs of the Center's clients. During the course of a typical year these nurses shoulder a diverse and challenging workload that includes among other activities over 400 visits to individual homes and facilities, almost 400 nursing assessments and follow-ups, and attendance at over 350 individual program planning meetings.

All of the nurses are responsible for training Regional Center staff, clients and caregivers on a variety of health issues, such as medication administration, and diabetes prevention and care. They also provide hundreds of formal and informal individual consultations to service coordinators and service providers. They stress the importance of being able to assess the whole person, how to ask health-related questions and get informative answers, and how to make determinations about when to make a referral to the nursing staff. And all of these responsibilities involve reviewing thousands of health-related reports on individual clients.

"Each of these remarkable women has a rich and varied experience in the field of nursing. Their skills and strengths compliment each other well and ensure that the Clinical Services department is able to meet the challenging and ever-changing health care needs of the individuals with developmental disabilities that Lanterman serves," says Gwen Jordan, director of Clinical Services.

The following are profiles on Grace Kotchounian, Ardis Adrian, Anita Arcilla-Gutierrez and Wanda Okunsanya that include their past professional experiences, current responsibilities, and the reasons behind why they do what they do. ▶

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The Director's Viewpoint

Parents Have Always Made the Difference

ONE OF OUR

core values at Lanterman is leadership. We define it as: "an act of service to the community as a whole. As an organization, and as individuals, we strive to be in the forefront



Executive Director Diane Anand

– pioneering new ways to enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities, their families and the community we share. We want to inspire the Center to reach its full potential and lead the way for others."

Webster defines the word lead as "to guide by showing the way, to precede, to introduce by going first..." That could easily be a description of our regional center system which began more than 40 years ago through the tireless, dedicated – one might say dogged – commitment of parents seeking a better way for their children.

This edition of "Viewpoint" features two stories about parents who are leading the way for this generation of children. One is Portia Iversen who, with her husband Jonathan Shestack, started Cure Autism Now, an organization that provides funding for research into autism. Another is the story of Patricia O'Brien White, her husband Jim White, and Roger Kafker who co-founded the Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation to promote research into Down syndrome.

Different people, different experiences, but one major value in common – their deep devotion to taking a leadership role, "to guide by showing the way."

We've all heard the saying "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness," first attributed to the great humanitarian and leader Eleanor Roosevelt. That is what parents like Iversen, Shestack, the Whites and Kafker exemplify as they take a profoundly personal challenge and use it to make a difference – not just for themselves, but for others.

The story of the regional center system is really the story of parents who have consistently pushed the envelope of possibility to make things happen, to develop something in the community that had never been done before – and to strive for the betterment of the whole.

That tradition survives to this day. Now parents are not taking on a lack of services nor looking for an alternative to institutions. Instead, they are daring to tackle the root causes of developmental disabilities themselves, seeking to push society into finding answers and developing cures.

At Lanterman, we have worked to be a community-owned organization, one in which each stakeholder assumes a personal responsibility, and through that to create a renewable source of leadership. We must now focus on encouraging and engaging the young parents entering our system to take their place at the head of the column, to "lead the way for others."

Parents have always made the difference. They were our roots – and they are our future.

THE BUDGET UPDATE

We Finally Have a Budget

AS THIS NEWSLETTER GOES TO PRESS, THE BUDGET HAS JUST BEEN ADOPTED BY THE LEGISLATURE, nearly eight weeks overdue, and is on its way to the Governor for signature. This is the second latest budget in decades and while Governor Schwarzenegger's administration and the majority of the Legislature, particularly the Democrats, were in agreement on key components, adoption was held up because California is one of only three states that requires a two-thirds majority to enact a spending plan.

For the fiscal year just ended in June, 2006-07, a budget reconciliation bill that was enacted has allowed regional center contracts to be amended to cover any projected deficits. As we entered late spring, Lanterman's projected deficit had been in excess of \$2 million, out of an overall POS budget of more than \$90 million.

For 2007-08, regional centers have received cash advances from the Medi-Cal emergency fund as allowed by law. However, those funds were exhausted and many centers, including Lanterman, had to activate their lines of credit through their banks. It is important to note that the state does not reimburse regional centers for the costs of this borrowing or lost interest earnings.

We anticipate the budget will contain the following items relating to regional centers that were presented in the Governor's May revision proposal, however, he has line-item veto power and could reduce certain funding:

OPERATIONS

- An increase of \$14.3 million for a projected increase of 8,050 clients statewide
- An additional \$1.1 million statewide for staffing related to the implementation of self-directed services
- No cost of living or other such increases for regional centers

PURCHASE OF SERVICES

- An increase of \$287.3 million statewide, and of this amount, \$232.1 million is for an increased number of clients served and increased service utilization
- There is about a \$73 million increase related to placing individuals from state developmental centers into the community
- The state plans on saving \$44 million due to changing how reimbursements are made to certain classes of residential providers who operate intermediate care facilities
- There are no rate increases other than the continuation of increases related to the minimum wage and others put into place last year
- There is a small amount allocated for the implementation of self-directed services
- Rate freezes and previously imposed cost-containment strategies are slated to continue

Prior year unallocated reductions in both Purchase of Services and Operations continue.

Given the continuing stressors to the system and lack of significant increases other than those related to serving new clients:

- Service providers will continue having difficulty in meeting service standards and paying staff a living wage
- Regional centers will continue to have difficulty in recruiting and retaining service providers and staff

Despite these challenges, the Regional Center has continued to provide services and supports without interruption, as we have for over 40 years. ■

Lanterman Recognizes Support Group Facilitators' Contributions During Recent Training



Pictured are some of the participants at the support group facilitator training.

*Top, from left: Monica Mauriz, Araksia Eneziyan, Manushak Eneziyan, Bertha Suazo, Edward Perez, Luisa Cruz, Maria Cibrian, Carmen Alabat, Margaret Rodriguez, Mary Diaz, Zulma Mena, Alma Flores and Sandy Riancho
Bottom, from left: Irma Cruz, Agustina Mellin, Rose Chacana, Freddy Gonzaga, Kay Kwak and Yudi Bennett*

DURING THE SUMMER, MANY OF LANTERMAN'S regularly scheduled trainings and support groups will go on hiatus for a month, creating the perfect opportunity for the Center to offer support and training to our otherwise busy support group facilitators. This August, 20 parent and service coordinator support group facilitators attended training specially designed to meet their needs.

The training was presented by a panel of facilitators, including Manushak Eneziyan from the Armenian Parent Support Group, Yudi Bennett from Foothill Autism Alliance, Monica Mauriz from the Early Intervention Spanish-Speaking Parent Support Group, and Sandy Riancho from the "everyone is different" group, all of whom have been leading support groups for a number of years.

Rose Chacana, assistant director, Koch♦Young Resource Center, shares: "The major emphasis of the training was on support group facilitation, including what is a support group and what are the goals, how to provide the highest quality support, ground rules for support groups, following the

four-part format, and the role of the facilitator. The presenters also focused on how to recognize and nurture leadership potential in a support group, and what leadership opportunities are available within the Lanterman community."

Maria Richardson, founder of FUERZA, and the featured speaker, also emphasized parent leadership, motivation and the opportunities support groups have to make a difference.

Out of Lanterman's 19 support groups, 10 groups were represented. All of the facilitators received awards for their years of service and commitment to the Lanterman community.

"Support group facilitators need 'support' too, and in speaking with some of my counterparts, we really felt this was a nice opportunity to learn more about what other support groups are doing, what types of educational presentations are available, the do's and don'ts, and the fruits of empowerment," shares Riancho, who is also a resource and information associate at Lanterman.

Lanterman Community Attends Grassroots Day in Sacramento

MOST OF US HAVE A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATE LEGISLATIVE process – voters elect a representative that they feel shares the same values and positions on issues that they do, and they send them to Sacramento to represent their interests when making decisions about new legislation, how their tax dollars are spent and what services are provided.

But how do legislators know what specific issues are important to their constituents, especially in this era of term limits? Many larger organizations and major industries employ lobbyists to ensure their legislators are informed about their issues. But what about smaller companies and non-profits, and even individuals, how do they get their message out? By participating themselves in educating their legislators.

Lanterman and other regional centers count on members of their communities – adults with developmental disabilities, family members, service providers and regional center staff – to visit legislators in their offices at the local level and in Sacramento, make telephone calls, write letters, and send e-mail and fax messages on issues of importance to them.

And once a year, the Association of Regional Center Agencies organizes a Grassroots Day in Sacramento when regional centers spend the day visiting legislators and their staff to inform them about issues of importance to people with developmental disabilities, their families, the community organizations and individuals that provide services, and the regional centers.

This year, the state's Grassroots Day was held on Wednesday, April 18, and Lanterman sent seven individuals that represented the four key segments of our community – clients, families, service providers and staff. The client representatives were Howard McBroom and Ray Drumheiser, Kelly Vencill Sanchez and Marjorie Heller represented families, service providers were represented by Ann Seisa, and the Center was represented by Director of Community Services Karen Ingram and Service Coordinator Marie McGinley.

During the course of the day, Lanterman's representatives visited the offices of senators Jack Scott and Gilbert Cedillo, and assemblymembers Kevin de Leon, Anthony Portantino, Mike Feuer, Mike Eng and Paul Krekorian. Here's what some of them had to say about their visits.

Marie McGinley, Lanterman service coordinator

"I felt privileged to have attended Grassroots Day. It was educational, interesting and fun, and I believe we were able to make a real connection with our legislators in Sacramento."

Ann Seisa, Lanterman service provider and owner of Vagthol's Residential Care Center, Inc.

"From my perspective, it was one of the most successful Grassroots Day visits that I've ever participated in. It was very valuable to have a client as eloquent as Howard participate in these visits, as he was able to share with our representatives the value of the services provided by the Regional Center and service providers, and the difference they have made in the quality of his life. This really put a face to the issues we were there to talk about, including the challenges providers are facing such as providing a living wage, recruiting and retaining staff, and how legislative decisions in Sacramento directly affect our ability to support clients such as Howard to achieve their fullest potential. Now more than ever, we need to educate and empower clients about the importance of becoming involved in legislative issues."

Ray Drumheiser, client and facilitator of the UCP Burbank Adult Client Group

"The whole trip was great. It was my first time flying, but there was nothing to it once we got up in the air. The visits were a little nerve wracking; I don't usually talk to people like that. I brought up the need for more housing like the UCP apartments in Burbank. I would definitely go back and this is absolutely an experience that others should have. I'm hoping that our visits made a difference and that they listened."

Kelly Vencill Sanchez, Lanterman parent and board member

"I loved going to Sacramento for Grassroots Day. Just being in the Capitol building itself was an exciting experience, and it reminded me how important it is for us 'ordinary' citizens to get out and make contact with the people we've elected. I've written letters and sent faxes, but there's nothing quite like telling your story to your representative in person and putting a face to an issue that is important to you. They say we get the representatives we deserve – we have to stand up and speak out for the things that matter to this community."

Howard McBroom, Lanterman client and board member

"Ray and I talked about the importance of affordable housing and jobs for people with developmental disabilities. These are the two biggest problems we face. I spoke about how I had gotten my job as a Vons inventory tagger and how much the Regional Center had helped me. I spoke about how it does no good to have a social support system if it does not have the tools to do the job it needs to do."

If you are interested in learning more about Lanterman's legislative focus, contact Karen Ingram at kigram@lanterman.org or 213.383.1300, x. 617. She adds, "I maintain a list of those in our community who are interested and willing to contact their representatives or make visits to legislative offices. I strongly encourage everyone to become educated about and involved in the legislative process."

Lanterman Board of Directors Elects Two New Members in June

The beginning of summer is a very busy time for Lanterman – the start of a new fiscal year. And with this new fiscal year comes a new budget, new challenges and new additions to our board of directors. In June, two new board members were elected to Lanterman's board, each bringing with them a unique set of skills and experiences. The Lanterman community is delighted to welcome John Erdos and Howard McBroom, and looks forward to the perspective, guidance and leadership these individuals will be providing during their terms on the board of directors. Following is a bio that offers a look at both the personal and professional experiences of Erdos. A bio on McBroom will appear in the fall/winter edition of "Viewpoint."

John Erdos' Financial Background Combines with His Spirit of Volunteerism to Benefit Lanterman Community

ACCORDING TO THE BUREAU OF LABOR

Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor, between September 2005 and 2006, about 61.2 million people (26.7 percent of the total U.S. population) volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2005 and September 2006. Many of these volunteers spent their time assisting non-profit organizations, and Lanterman is no exception to being one of these non-profits that depends on volunteers for their assistance. Lanterman's support group facilitators, Peer Support Partners, and board and committee members all carry out their work as volunteers and provide a valuable service to the Lanterman community. And Lanterman's newest board member, John Erdos, has a long history of direct volunteer participation dating back to his high school years.

A 2003 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, Erdos majored in Finance and received a Bachelor of Business Administration. While in college, Erdos was a member of the Notre Dame Investment Club and the Student International Business Council. He also joined the National Honor Society, a service-based organization, of which he is now a life member. During the summer before his senior year, Erdos worked as a Private-Client Services intern at Bear, Stearns & Co., Inc., and was hired as a Private-Client Services assistant after his graduation.



*Lanterman Board Member
John Erdos*

In this position, Erdos participated as a member of the Compliance Department in the supervision of all broker trades, worked as part of a private-client wealth management group, and assisted the branch manager with the San Francisco branch operations.

In January 2005, Erdos moved to Los Angeles to work as a Portfolio Control assistant with the Capital Group Companies, and was promoted towards the end of his first year to Portfolio Control associate, Global Market Transactions. He works as a member of a global team and is responsible for executing market transactions and investment convictions for institutional clients across the world. In this role he has various duties that expose him to proprietary investment products, equity analysis and discussion, and international markets.

The Capital Group Companies have a strong commitment to community support and giving, including a matching gifts program, community service leave, and company-sponsored volunteer opportunities. And in 2006, Erdos became a member of the Capital Group Non-Profit Leadership Steering Committee, attended the 10-month course offered by the Riordan Volunteer Leadership Development Program that provides board training experience and fosters lifelong service in the governance of non-profit organizations, and joined Lanterman's

Looking for New Blood... with experience

As a multi-million dollar corporation, Lanterman is always interested in recruiting board and committee members who have backgrounds in finance, personnel and related areas. Should you or someone you know be interested in volunteering in such a capacity, contact Patrick Aulicino at 213.383.1300, x. 690 or paulicino@lanterman.org.

Board Welcomes Your Attendance at its Meetings

Please be aware that anyone in the community is welcome to attend Lanterman's board of directors meeting, which is conducted on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. Meetings are held at Lanterman Regional Center. Contact Frank Lara in advance at 213.383.1300, x. 665 or flara@lanterman.org so you can be placed on the list of attendees. We look forward to your visit.

Administrative Affairs Committee, also becoming a member of the Real Estate Subcommittee.

Earlier this year, Erdos attended the Lanterman Leadership Institute to gain a better understanding of how he can most effectively contribute to the needs, goals and mission of Lanterman Regional Center. He shares: "As a new board member, I am interested in using my skills and talents to support the growth and development of the lives of people with developmental disabilities, and increasing opportunities available to them. As a result of my personal interaction with individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, I can only hope to make a positive difference and help improve all facets of life – with the ultimate goal being absolute dignity, respect and understanding."

Erdos has been a member of the Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce since 2005. He also became a member of the Notre Dame Alumni Schools Committee in 2006, and was elected to the position of secretary for the Notre Dame Club of Los Angeles in 2007. In his free time, Erdos enjoys playing golf, reading, traveling and arguing about college football. ■

Meet the People Behind the Titles: Frank Lara

As manager of the Executive Unit at Lanterman Regional Center, Frank Lara is an integral member of our leadership team. We feel it's important for everyone in our community to have a better idea of the person behind the title and his responsibilities, so "Viewpoint" recently met with Lara and asked about projects in the works, as well as the biggest challenges and most rewarding aspects of his job.

OFTEN, WHEN YOU ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS been at Lanterman for many years, they'll tell you, I never planned on staying for more than a year or two, and Frank Lara, manager of the Executive Unit is no exception.



Executive Unit Manager
Frank Lara

He joined Lanterman in January 1990 as an administrative assistant to the director of Administrative Services and Community Services, then he moved on to Legal Services, and in September 1991 became Lanterman's Operations manager, a position he held for eight years before accepting the position of assistant to the executive director,

which is now called the Executive Unit manager. He shares: "I told myself when I accepted the assistant position that I wasn't going to stay very long. I'd never worked in non-profit, only in the fields of banking and insurance as an assistant to senior leadership, but somehow life changed and I never left."

"My experience working in some of the other departments in the Center set the foundation for my present role supporting the executive director, and has made me a more informed and knowledgeable adviser," says Lara.

In his current position, Lara works directly with the executive director and has overall responsibility for organizing a diverse and demanding day-to-day workload of the executive office, as well as monitoring and evaluating daily needs within the Executive Unit as a whole. "Where Diane Anand's focus goes, my function goes. I enjoy working in a dynamic and ever-changing environment and having the creative freedom to address the various projects and challenges, and working together as a team to pull together the solutions," he adds.

Lara also supervises the four executive assistants that provide administrative support within the Executive Unit for the two associate directors, two assistant directors, appeals and complaints, and human resources, and he provides support and coordination to the board of directors and its various committees.

And, when someone at the Center has a question that no one else has a ready answer to, they all say, "Just ask Frank," and almost always, he knows the answer or who does. "No matter how small or how big a request, it really makes this job for me when I know that I've been able to help somebody," shares Lara.

When asked if he had any favorite projects that he'd worked on, he replied, "I truly enjoy all of the things that I do and the challenges that come with this job, however, if I had to pick, I would say that coordinating the move from our old building to our current location, and ensuring that it was a seamless and smooth transition that resulted in very little down time for the Center, was one of the more challenging but also very rewarding projects that I've worked on." Lara has been an instrumental figure at all of the Center's recent special events, including Perspectives, the 40th anniversary celebrations and events, and many other smaller events. He is currently coordinating the Center's facility expansion at our current location, a two-year project which is expected to be implemented some time in 2009.

Lara, a native of the Los Angeles area, now lives in Atwater Village. In his free time, he enjoys both interior and exterior design, not only working on his house and garden, but also assisting his friends with their interior and exterior design projects. ■

RESOURCE ROUNDUP

The Christian Food Center Provides Basic Food Staples at a Low Cost to Those in Need

CHRISTIAN FOOD CENTER IS AN OUTREACH program of McCobb Ministries, a non-profit religious organization assisting Los Angeles' low-income families. The Food Center provides basic food staples at low cost to disadvantaged families living in Los Angeles County. They distribute food items such as meats, processed foods, bread, beans, rice, cereal, pasta, milk and milk derivatives, canned goods, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Recipients receive over 200 pounds of groceries per visit, which is enough food to feed four adults for one whole week. One box is prepared beforehand by the Food Center staff, and recipients prepare the second box themselves. Recipients can get food as often as they need it.

Eligibility to participate in the Food Center's program is quite broad and includes recipients of government assistance programs such as Aid for Disadvantaged Children (AFDC); Social Security Income (SSI); General Relief (GR); Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC); California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS); and those receiving food stamps or unemployment assistance. Individuals also eligible include people with disabilities; fully employed individuals who have an annual income of \$19,000 or less and who also have two or more children living in the same household; and those



The 200 pounds of groceries Christian Food Center participants receive includes lots of fresh produce and other food staples, such as meat and dairy products, and grain-based products.

individuals referred by other non-profits, religious organizations of all denominations, and from the Department of Social Services.

There is a minimal shared maintenance cost per visit that is \$20 or 10 cents per pound, if the individual is a member, or \$25 per non-member visit.

For questions about the Christian Food Center and details about becoming a member, call **213.741.0213**. You can also view this and other related resources on Lanterman's Network of Care site at www.lanterman.networkofcare.org.

Save the Date! Community Meetings Being Held In September

THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND OUR SERVICE PROVIDERS are key partners with Lanterman Regional Center. This partnership is only successful when all parties involved have an opportunity to provide feedback on the future direction and long-term goals of the Center. One avenue utilized by Lanterman to ensure that all persons interested in participating have an opportunity to provide feedback and comments is at our annual community meetings. This year's meetings will focus on four key areas:

- Budget overview for fiscal year 2007-08
- Accomplishments from the past year's performance plan
- Changes to the performance plan for 2008
- Continuation of our alternative service coordination model

Meetings will be held specifically for service providers, adult clients, and our Korean, Armenian and Spanish-speaking communities, in addition to the community meeting held at the board of directors meeting. We look forward to your attendance at these important sessions. If you have any more questions, contact the Koch♦Young Resource Center at **213.383.1300, x. 730**, toll-free at **800.546.3676**, or kyrc@lanterman.org.

If you are unable to attend one of the community meetings, you still have a chance to give your input. You may access the 2008 performance plan on our Web site at www.lanterman.org or you can pick up a copy at the KYRC. After reviewing the plan, written comments may be submitted to Diane Anand, executive director at:

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center, 3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90010
or by e-mail at kyrc@lanterman.org. ■

COMMUNITY MEETING DATES

Session for Service Providers

Sponsored by the Service Provider Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 5, 2007 – 10 a.m.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
7th Floor, Berendo Room

Session for Armenian-Speaking Families

Sponsored by the Armenian Parent Support Group

Thursday, September 6, 2007 – 7 p.m.

Armenian Relief Society
517 West Glenoaks Boulevard
Glendale, CA 91202

Session for Spanish-Speaking Families

Sponsored by Grupo La Esperanza

Monday, September 10, 2007 – 9 a.m.

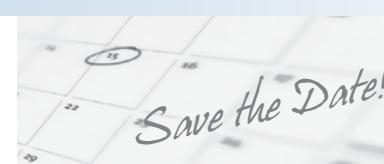
Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
7th Floor, Berendo Room

Session for Adult Clients

Sponsored by the Consumer Advisory Committee

Monday, September 10, 2007 – 4:30 p.m.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
7th Floor, Berendo Room



Session for Service Providers

Held during the regularly scheduled service provider in-service

Tuesday, September 11, 2007 – 10 a.m.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
2nd Floor, Meeting Room

Session for Korean-Speaking Families

Sponsored by the Korean Parent Support Group

Wednesday, September 12, 2007 – 10 a.m.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
7th Floor, Berendo Room

General Session

Held during the regularly scheduled board of directors meeting

Wednesday, September 26, 2007 – 7 p.m.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center
3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
7th Floor, Berendo Room

Lanterman's Autism Team

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Broughton-Rodriguez will serve as the primary point of contact at Lanterman on ASD issues and will be the critical link between families, their service coordinators, and the clinical professionals and service providers. She will also work with ASD coordinators at other regional centers to create a statewide network to exchange information on best practices and their application through intake and service coordination. Finally, she will advise local agencies, such as schools, mental health agencies, child protective services, and local law enforcement on ASD issues.

Currently, the team is conducting a needs assessment to determine what services exist for children and adults with autism, in what areas these services are located, and in what areas there is need for service development and quality improvement. This phase includes interviews with Lanterman clients and their families, service coordinators, and service providers who primarily work with individuals with autism. Moradi notes: "Thus far as a system, we have been very reactive in how we have addressed ASD. We are hoping that this initiative will enable us to be more proactive in addressing the needs of people with ASD." Johnson adds: "We want everyone touched by ASD to recognize that they are a stakeholder in this initiative. They are the people who can give us the most helpful insights. We have some idea of where the gaps in resources are and what areas require improvement, but we want to make sure we are not missing anything."

The results of the needs assessment will give the Center the information necessary to move on to the development phase of this project. The information will enable the team to focus its development efforts in areas of greatest need as Lanterman attempts to improve the capacity of the community service system to effectively serve individuals with autism.

Following are profiles of the members of the Autism Team.

MANDY MORADI

Dr. Mandy Moradi's experience in the field of autism began during her undergraduate years at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she was pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology with an emphasis on developmental disabilities. While at UCLA she worked under the direct supervision of Dr. Ivar Lovass, a pioneer in the application of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) to the treatment of children with autism.

After graduating from UCLA, Moradi earned her Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) from the California School of Professional Psychology and completed two fellowships. The first fellowship was funded by the Department of Developmental Services through the University Affiliated Program, now known as the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, where she worked in a wide variety of areas related to developmental disabilities and gained a connection to regional centers. Her second fellowship was in diagnosis and testing at the Reiss-Davis Child Study Center in Los Angeles.

Soon after finishing this second fellowship, about eight years ago, Moradi took a position as a clinical psychologist at Lanterman. She also maintains an independent practice working with children and teenagers with autism. Of her experiences she says: "I've completed many diagnostic evaluations of young children and have provided ongoing therapy for high-functioning teens on the autism spectrum. I also have experience in training others, reviewing treatment plans, and working with service providers, families and service coordinators."

JEAN JOHNSON

Dr. Jean Johnson studied autism as both an undergraduate and a graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She participated in autism research with Dr. Robert Koegel, a nationally-recognized expert on autism treatment and director of the UCSB Koegel Autism Center, an institute dedicated to clinical research on autism treatment. In this position she developed expertise in program development and research on the effectiveness of treatment techniques.

Johnson joined the regional center system in 1989, serving as a staff member at North Los Angeles County Regional Center. She came to Lanterman in



The members of Lanterman's new Autism Team include (from left) clinical specialists Mandy Moradi, Psy.D. and Jean Johnson, Ph.D., ASD Program Coordinator Erin Broughton-Rodriguez, and Hasmig Mandossian, the team's supervisor. The team will be focusing on increasing the level of expertise among Lanterman's professionals about autism-related disorders and effective treatment, and will also work to build capacity among individuals and organizations in the community to better serve children and adults with autism in integrated settings.

1995 as a manager for the Early Intervention unit. Johnson subsequently worked at Villa Esperanza in Pasadena as director of Education Programs specializing in the development and implementation of educational programs for children with autism. "My interests and passions lie in early identification and intervention," she states. Most recently, she was a member of the Intake unit at Lanterman where she conducted psycho-social evaluations. These evaluations are an integral component of the intake and assessment process through which eligibility for regional center services is determined.

Johnson is a published researcher and a mother of five.

ERIN BROUGHTON-RODRIGUEZ

Erin Broughton-Rodriguez brings to the ASD program coordinator position an extensive knowledge about sensory needs and experience as both a service provider to regional center clients and service coordinator. A graduate of San Diego State University, she has bachelor's degrees in psychology and dance, and a master's degree from UCLA in movement therapy emphasizing healing and therapy in children with special needs.

After completing her education, Broughton-Rodriguez spent two years with Pasadena Child Development Associates conducting music and movement therapy, social skills groups, and intake assessments. From PCDA, she moved to Dynamic Autism Therapies where she did in-home and school therapy, working directly with clients, as well as teaching their parents and teachers therapeutic techniques.

In 2005, Broughton-Rodriguez joined Lanterman as a service coordinator working with clients between the ages of 14 and 30. "I really started to see the needs

of this particular age group in the autism population, and was concerned with the difficulty that exists in finding resources," she explains.

HASMIG MANDOSSIAN

Hasmig Mandossian has the educational background and the breadth of experience necessary to oversee the activities of Lanterman's autism initiative. She was recently promoted to assistant director of Intake and Assessment after 25 years working at Lanterman in a variety of positions. In addition, she has both undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology from the American University in Lebanon, as well as a master's degree in counseling psychology from Pepperdine University.

She believes that her academic experience in two countries has provided her with the clinical knowledge and skills to work with families from diverse backgrounds and situations. "I also have experience working as a service coordinator and regional manager here at Lanterman," she shares. "This provides me with a good perspective on how the Autism Team can fit into the overall operational environment of the Center. I also have experience working with clinicians making diagnoses as part of a multi-disciplinary eligibility team. And I've attended a lot of trainings related to ASD."

Mandossian is very pleased with the make-up of her team. "We're very fortunate that our team is comprised of professionals who have experience working with autism in many different capacities and who also have knowledge and experience acquired in a wide range of roles within the regional center system," she adds. ■

CAC News

Looking for a Few Good Men and Women to Join the CAC



LANTERMAN'S CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN who are clients of the Center to join as members. The CAC reports to Lanterman's board of directors and is charged with providing input and advice on the policies, services and programs offered by the Regional Center for clients and their families.

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of membership, contact your service coordinator and ask them to set up an opportunity for you to attend a CAC meeting. The CAC meets the second Monday of every month at 4:30 p.m. at Lanterman Regional Center.

DDS Web site Features "Consumer Corner"

For more information about the Consumer Advisory Committee, visit the Department of Developmental Services Web site at www.dds.ca.gov and select the "Consumer Corner" option to access information that includes:

- Information about the CAC
- Materials developed by DDS and CAC committees for clients, families and professionals
- Advocacy resources to help clients ensure their rights are protected
- Links to other resources available to individuals with developmental disabilities

Which is it? – Consumer or Client

A number of years ago, the Lanterman Act was amended from "client" to "consumer," changing how the Act refers to individuals with developmental disabilities served by regional centers. While people with developmental disabilities resist labels and want to be referred to as individuals, they report not liking the term "consumer" and would rather be called "clients," so Lanterman Regional Center has made the decision to use the term "client" whenever possible in referring to the individuals with developmental disabilities that we serve.

Contact the Consumer Advisory Committee at Lanterman

If you are a client of Lanterman Regional Center and have an issue or idea that you think other clients would be interested in, and would like to share it with the Consumer Advisory Committee, you can write the CAC at:

Lanterman Regional Center CAC
c/o MJ Kienast
3303 Wilshire Boulevard,
Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010

or contact CAC Staff Advisor MJ Kienast at **213.383.1300, x. 606** or mkienast@lanterman.org.

Recreational Activities in Integrated Settings Provide Wonderful Benefits

For all people, keeping physically active, whether in organized sports activities or by just walking the dog, not only helps keep our bodies healthy but also provides mental health benefits. And for individuals with special needs, these activities also provide added opportunities to excel in non-academic areas, build self-confidence and self-esteem, work on social skills, and make friends. The key is to find the right activity that piques the child's or adult's interest.

Each of the stories in this centerfold demonstrate the importance that physical activity has played in the individual's personal development.

Swimming is a Great Motivator for Michael Miyazaki

MICHAEL MIYAZAKI COULDN'T BE HAPPIER THAN

when he's in the water. "He took to swimming like a fish to water at about 2 years old," shares his mother Sharlene Miyazaki, "and as Michael grew older, it seemed to us that swimming would be a great way to reach out and engage him, and use his interest in this activity to work with him on basic skills development."

Swimming also helps keep 8-year-old Michael physically fit. "One of the side effects of the medication that he's on is weight gain, and this helps him stay in shape, and it also helps him burn up his energy so that he sleeps better at night," explains Sharlene.

At the early stages, even the very basic aspects of structured swimming were a challenge to Michael. His instructor of four years, Gabriela Ziolkowski, shares:

"When we first started out, I let him be who he was, I followed his lead and built a relationship with him. As soon as I felt like I was in a position to instruct him, we then started working on the very basics."

Ziolkowski started Michael out on a pretend island by the stairs that she gradually moved farther



Michael Miyazaki with his swim instructor Gabriela Ziolkowski.

and farther out towards the center of the pool, challenging Michael to swim a little farther each time. But he still didn't like to put his head underwater, so she blocked off the island with the floating lane dividers, and just so he could escape her and the island, he'd swim underwater. She adds: "He would go underwater just to get away from me. Then he would swim away and I would have to chase him. He loved it when I would catch and tickle him, but I think the thing that really gelled it for Mikey was the colored chalk. Crayola makes a heavily pigmented chalk that lasts a long time in the water,

and Mikey loves numbers, so I would have him write his numbers on the bottom of the pool. This really helped him build up his lung capacity for swimming and helped him practice following direction."

Sharlene explains, "When Michael first started swimming, he was all over the pool, but Gaby was able to motivate him through his love of numbers and train him to do laps and be more respectful of other people's use of the pool as well." Michael has become adept at wearing goggles, a skill they worked on for two years before he was able to wear them for his entire hour-long session, as well as diving underwater for toys.

He has also become very comfortable swimming in the 17-feet deep end of the pool. Ziolkowski adds: "When the synchronized swim team was practicing, he would go over to them and imitate their moves. He was fascinated by the water speaker and would put his face right in it, and then we would play, twisting and rolling, holding our feet and flapping our arms. Mikey would even put his foot in the air." They are now working on teaching him the concept of freestyle swimming, by combining water play with more structured skill building. Just this year he also learned to use the diving board.

"Even though Michael is mostly non-verbal, using a Spring Board Communication Aid as his primary means of communication, he understands everything, however, some days he needs more time to swim freely to organize himself before Gaby can help him focus on building new skills, so we try to gear the lessons to get the most benefit out of them," adds Sharlene.

Initially, Michael's lessons were held during the noon time slot and there were hardly any people using the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center's facilities. Now he swims directly after finishing school at Palm Crest Elementary School in La Canada, and the Aquatic Center is packed with other children getting lessons, high school and college swim teams, and group class participants.

"Our desire is to have these lessons help Mikey realize that he's part of the social group at the Rose Bowl Aquatics Center. My ultimate goal would be to help him develop the skills and abilities to participate



Swimming motivates Michael Miyazaki to learn new skills.

in a Special Olympics meet. I think he is beginning to feel competitive in some areas, but for now, our next step is going to be working towards actively being able to handle the social aspects of swimming at a large facility. There is definitely a protocol to be followed as well as rules that are expected, and getting Mikey to obey these rules is the next big challenge," shares Ziolkowski.

In addition to lessons twice a week, Michael and his mother also participate in a swim group held in the therapeutic pool at the Center. She shares: "All the special education children in Michael's class and their families participate in this swim group on Fridays. It gives them an opportunity to have a play group since most of them don't have anyone to play with, and it gives the parents an opportunity to talk about everything – what works, what doesn't work, what happened in school, accomplishments, failures – it's really supportive." As part of the swim group, they play games, use floats, sing songs – all in the water.

"When ever you are trying to teach a child with autism a new skill, whether it's related to behavior or a new swimming skill, you have to have patience and keep trying new approaches to get them motivated. And you have to take it one step at a time. For a long time, we were wondering if any of the stuff we were doing was working, and then all of a sudden when Michael hit about 5, something clicked and he's been progressively improving ever since," adds Sharlene.

For more information about the Rose Bowl Aquatics Center and the various programs they offer, visit www.rosebowlaquatics.org.

The Get Fit! Project - Not Just a Memory

ALTHOUGH THE GET FIT! GAMES ARE JUST A MEMORY, THE GET FIT!

Project is still going strong. Margarita Blanco, project coordinator, shares: "The Get Fit! pilot was a success but, we didn't want it to end after one year. We realize that healthy lifestyle changes may take longer than a year to flourish, so we wanted to find a way to continue to provide information, support and encouragement for our clients. The 'Get Fit! Journal' and 'Get Fit! Cookbook' are just the beginning of tools that are being designed with our clients and their continued fitness in mind."

The "Get Fit! Cookbook – A Guide to Healthy Eating for Adults with Disabilities," is written in an easy to understand format and features recipes that are simpler versions of traditional recipes that use fewer ingredients and fewer steps. The first section of the cookbook has an educational component that covers proper food storage, sample serving sizes, the food group pyramid, how to prepare a balanced meal, and rules for the kitchen. In addition, it features images of tools used in the kitchen, as well as pictures and definitions of commonly used kitchen/recipe words.

The recipes feature an ingredients and tools list, and the recipes are broken down into steps with full color photos, and tips for how to combine this recipe with other food items to make a meal.

After the featured recipes, the last section of the cookbook focuses on the best food choices when dining out, making the best selection from a vending machine, and the best snack choices at the movies. It also includes a reproducible shopping list and daily diary.

"The cookbook recipes/menus are merely suggestions for nutritionally-balanced meals, and they are not designed for people with special dietary needs. Clients and service providers should always consult with a physician or dietitian regarding their individualized nutrition and exercise needs," says Blanco.

The Get Fit! participants also received a Get Fit Journal! It is a workbook in a pictorial format that allows participants to check off and track daily mood, exercise habits, water intake, their intake of fruits and vegetables, and junk food.

The journal contains 60 days of daily journal entries, and two reproducible journal pages – a daily format and a more advanced weekly format.

The Get Fit! Project is currently in its second phase, which entails modifying and adapting the pilot curriculum for three specific audiences: independent and supported living, group residential homes, and day programs. In

addition, a Web site is also under construction to provide access to information and additional tools for clients, service providers and family members.

The Get Fit! Web site (www.getfitca.org) will be updated and live by the end of the year. It currently includes an online calendar to track physical activity, a fitness challenge idea, fitness and nutrition tips, and a recipe. Ultimately, the three curriculum formats, the "Get Fit! Cookbook" and the "Get Fit! Journal" will be available on this site, along with other tools, including a Body Mass Index (BMI) calculator, links to fitness/nutrition-related community resources, as well as recommended books and videos, and much, much more. If you are interested in the "Get Fit! Cookbook," there are copies available for circulation through the Koch♦Young Resource Center.



Joshua Markell Chosen as a People to People Sports Ambassador to Represent the United States at the 2007 Youth Friendship Games in Holland

THINK BACK AND TRY TO REMEMBER THE FIRST time you said goodbye to your parents and headed off on an adventure without them. Do you remember what you were thinking, the emotions you were experiencing, and silently wondering how it was going to go?

On, Thursday, July 19, 14-year-old Joshua Markell said goodbye to his parents at Los Angeles World Airport, boarded a plane and headed off to Holland for 10 days as a Junior Sports Ambassador in the People to People Sports Ambassador programs representing the United States in soccer at the 2007 Youth Friendship Games.



Joshua Markell on the soccer field when he was 13 (left) and shortly after he started playing soccer at 8 years of age.



The People to People program was founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to promote the vision of world peace with the hopes that by enabling ordinary citizens of different nations to communicate directly, this would promote knowledge and understanding, and thereby help them appreciate their differences and find a way to live in peace. And Sports Ambassadors have fostered this mission of peace through understanding since 2000, using the camaraderie of sport to gain maturity and a greater connection to the people and cultures of the world. People to People Sports Ambassador programs are an athletic, educational travel experience that cultivates personal growth and development, while providing leadership and life lessons through sport.

"Potential ambassadors are nominated for consideration, and must submit letters of recommendation and go through an interview process," shares Carolynn Markell, Joshua's mother.

Joshua really enjoys playing soccer the best he possibly can, and has improved tremendously since he first started with AYSO six years ago, but he doesn't have a 'cut throat' or highly competitive approach to the game. After his interview, I privately asked the interviewer about the philosophy of the Sports Ambassador programs and was assured that what they were looking for in a player was someone who put their all into doing well and would be a good representative for the United States."

Joshua was notified of his acceptance into the People to People Sports Ambassador programs in March of this year. "As part of the program, Joshua was expected to prepare physically and mentally prior to his departure with a rigorous weekly workout and nutrition plan, and by preparing a five-minute presentation on one aspect of Holland," adds Jon Markell, Joshua's father. "My favorite subjects are language arts, history and science," shares Joshua. "I chose to do my presentation on the history of Holland's windmills, and found out a lot about this topic on the Internet. My teacher at The Frostig School also let me give my presentation to my school class for extra credit."

In addition to traveling in the United States, Joshua had done some international traveling, including to Mexico and Thailand, with his parents. He adds, "I've always wanted to travel around the world, see other countries, try new foods, and meet the people, and see how others go about their everyday lives and what is different about them, and what ways we have that are similar." His parents joke, "We're watching 'Desperate Housewives,' and Joshua's watching shows on history, the military, cooking, science and travel."

"When I was in high school, I had the opportunity to spend several months abroad," shares Carolynn, "and it had a huge impact on my life. I became more mature and self-confident, and appreciative of the unique experiences and richness of diversity, and I wanted Joshua to have this same experience, and really felt that the People to People program would give him the opportunity to have this experience."

When Joshua boarded the plane, he embarked on both a mental and physical journey. It was his first time traveling without his parents, being away from home for more than one night, budgeting and managing his own finances, sharing a room with a roommate, and just negotiating his everyday interactions, all on his own. He also explored Amsterdam and the surrounding towns and cities. Joshua says: "I saw the windmills, went on a boat tour of the canals, saw some ancient sailing ships, and took a tour of a gouda cheese factory and wooden shoe factory, and went to the Van Gogh Museum and Rijksmuseum, the Anne Frank House,

and Ajax Stadium. I also got to play korfball, which is like basketball with a soccer ball."

In addition to touring Amsterdam and its surrounding environs with the other participants in the Youth Friendship Games, Joshua also played two 40-minute-long soccer games each day. He adds: "My soccer team was comprised of other 14-year-old boys, and our team name was the Screamin' Eagles. We played against the English, Latvian, Dutch, Swedish and French teams in our same age group, and we came in third in the 14-year-old male competition category."

"He really matured a lot. He was able to be his own person, and build his self-confidence. The program really exceeded my expectations," says Carolynn. And Joshua echoes her sentiments: "I'm a totally changed person. I came back loving all cheeses, got to taste Swiss chocolate and Belgium chocolate. It was pretty fun. I finally got to be independent, and do stuff without Mom looking over me saying that's my boy, and getting hugs and kisses. I was amazed that I could take care of myself, spend my money wisely, just how my parents taught me to, and I was able to buy some interesting things, such as a pair of wooden shoes, and still had money left over."

Having been selected, Joshua will now be a lifelong member of the People to People Sports Ambassador programs. He adds, "I don't have to be the best, but I should try my best and work hard at it, and even if it's difficult, if I can stick to it, I know that I can prove to myself that I can do it." Once he graduates from The Frostig School, Joshua hopes to get a job, go to a small two-year college, and then transfer to a four-year university, ultimately getting involved with helping people with physical disabilities.

Several months before leaving for Holland, Joshua also had his Bar Mitzvah. He requested on the invitation that in lieu of gifts, guests should send a donation to Cheerful Helpers Child and Family Study Group, which is a program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center for children with special needs that Joshua attended as a young child. "Joshua collected about \$4,000, and in recognition of his contribution, Cheerful Helpers awarded Joshua 'The First Acts of Loving Kindness Award' for giving in lieu of receiving all his Bar Mitzvah gifts for other children's benefit. The funny thing, Joshua has only been away from home two Sundays in his entire life, and the day that they presented the award he was traveling back from Holland," explains Carolynn.

For more information about the People to People Sports Ambassador programs, visit www.sportsambassadors.org. To see photos from the Youth Friendship Games Holland 2007, visit www.yfholland.com. ■

Visit Lanterman's Network of Care Site for Integrated Community Resources

ON LANTERMAN'S NETWORK OF CARE SITE YOU will find a listing of community-based resources for children and adults that are close to where you live. The resources on the site are searchable by several criteria, including by category of the resource, and location/area. The site features resources in the following general categories: Access to Services, Advocacy, Child and Family Services, Crisis and Emergency Services, Disability Assistance, Education, Employment, Fitness/Nutrition, General Health Services, Housing/Homeless Services, Insurance/Financial Assistance, Legal, Mental Health, Recreation/Leisure, Safety, Support/Self-Help Groups, and Transportation. Each of these categories is broken down into subcategories. Please be aware that some sections are still being developed and may only display limited resources.

This site is designed to only include resources that integrate children and adults with developmental disabilities into regular programming and activities with their non-disabled peers. Specialized programs serving only people with developmental disabilities are not listed. The Network of Care site also features: a library; searchable assistive devices database; lists of local, state and national Web sites; a "Legislate" section and "My Folder;" and daily news articles.

To access the Network of Care site go to www.lanterman.networkofcare.org. ■

Mark Your Calendars for the Assistive Technology and Augmentative Alternative Communication Workshop Series

THIS WORKSHOP SERIES

hosted by Lanterman and ATEC is designed for parent-professional teams to participate in together and will focus on a variety of topics including AT/AAC for infants and toddlers, school-age children, and adults, as well as how it can be employed with specific disabilities. For additional information and to register for the AT/AAC workshops that you are interested in, contact Rosanna Flores at ATEC at **714.547.6301, x. 496**.



AT/AAC in Early Development (Birth to 3 Years) MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2007

6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Pasadena Child Development Associates
620 North Lake Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103

AT/AAC in the School Years (3 Years and Up) MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2007

10 a.m. to noon
Bresce Foundation
184 South Bimini Place, Los Angeles, CA 90004

Building Blocks – General AT/AAC for Individuals with Down Syndrome, Autism and Cerebral Palsy TBD – 2008

Assistive Technology Fair – Service Provider Exhibits and AT Demos TBD – 2008

WHAT IS AT?

Assistive technology (AT) can be anything homemade, purchased off the shelf, modified or commercially available, which is used to help an individual with learning, working and interacting socially. These devices include the entire range of supportive tools and equipment from simple homemade devices, adapted toys, computers, powered mobility, augmentative communication devices, special switches, and thousands of commercially available or adapted tools that substitute for or enhance the function of some physical or developmental ability that is impaired.

WHAT IS AAC?

Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) stands for any type of "low-tech" to "high-tech" solution that can be used by a person when they are not able to use speech to effectively communicate in their daily lives.

WHAT ARE CIRCLES OF SUPPORT?

Circles of support – parents, family members, caregivers, therapists, teachers and friends – working together as a team, jointly developing goals and objectives, is the most effective way to implement AT/AAC solutions and achieve the greatest benefit for the individual.

DSRTF Funds Research to Support the Development of Treatments to Improve Cognition in Individuals with Down Syndrome

JUST OVER FOUR YEARS AGO, THE

international research effort to sequence and map all of the genes in human beings, better known as the Human Genome Project, was completed, providing researchers with a genetic blueprint of the structure, organization and function of the entire set of human genes – the basic set of inheritable “instructions” for the development and function of a human being.

The completion of this project served to open up entire new areas of research that otherwise would not have been possible, especially in the field of disabilities caused by genetic variations. About a year after the completion of HGP, Patricia O’Brien White, her husband Jim White, and Roger Kafker co-founded the Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation.

“When our daughter was born with Down syndrome, my husband and I were surprised to learn about how little funding, from both the public and private sectors, was applied to Down syndrome cognition research. We met some very dedicated researchers who had been studying Down syndrome for a long time, but it was difficult to attract new, talented researchers without more funding. We concluded that it was time to create a fundraising entity that was focused on re-energizing Down syndrome cognition research, so that more scientists could apply the recent advances in genetics, brain research and cell biology to the study of impaired cognition in Down syndrome,” shares Patricia O’Brien White on the DSRTF Web site.

The mission of DSRTF is to stimulate biomedical research that will accelerate the development of treatments to significantly improve cognition for individuals with Down syndrome; and by improving their memory, learning and speech, this will hopefully allow them to participate more successfully in school, lead more active and independent lives, and prevent early cognitive decline.

DSRTF supports multi-disciplinary research and encourages frequent collaboration among scientists in different areas. The organization’s commitment to fund research that brings together scientists from different disciplines and different institutions has attracted new interest in the field of Down syndrome cognition research and has led to a number of unique partnerships.

Since its founding three years ago, DSRTF has raised more than \$1.5 million of private funds for Down syndrome cognition research; influenced an additional \$4 million plus from public and private sources for Down syndrome studies or cognition research resources; developed a grassroots fundraising network throughout the country that includes well over 1,000 donors; launched the Adopt-a-Mouse program that raises awareness of the need for funds and for specific resources, like mouse models, to enable this research to take place; hosted a number of educational and fundraising events across the country; and sponsored Congressional testimony about the importance and promise of Down syndrome cognition research, and played a lead role in a National Institutes of Health workshop to determine funding priorities for Down syndrome research.

While the exciting progress that has been made in the field in a very short time is encouraging, it also underscores the neglect that the field suffered until just recently, and indicates the strong potential for identifying treatments in the near future.

For more information about Down syndrome cognition research, progress that is being made in the field, and how you can support DSRTF’s mission, visit www.dsrtf.org.

HaMercaz Offers a One-Stop Approach for Jewish Families Raising a Child with Special Needs to Access Resources and Support

ELEVEN YEARS AGO, DANNY WOLF WAS

diagnosed with global developmental delays and began early intervention services at Lanterman. “It took about a year to get over the shock of my child having special needs,” shares Michelle Wolf, Danny’s mother, “but I knew early on that I wanted to get involved. I’d always worked in the non-profit or government fields, and because of my background, I gravitated toward governance-related opportunities.”

When Danny was about 4, Michelle was elected to Lanterman’s board of directors, a position she held for four years. She also served on Area Board 10’s board of directors, and had an opportunity to participate in the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities training through the University of Southern California University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.

“I was looking to become involved somewhere I could share the experiences and knowledge that I’d gained,” says Michelle. “About this same time, through my job at the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, I began working closely with Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, a social services agency. JFSLA was assessing community needs in the area of developmental disabilities and realized that a central resource for families was needed.”

Michelle was asked to establish a task force to figure out how best to support these families, and out of this came the idea for HaMercaz, which means “The Center” in Hebrew. “A number of people were having trouble finding a place for their child with special needs in the Jewish community, so we put our heads together and came up with the idea of creating a one-stop centralized resource for Jewish families raising a child with special needs,” she adds. Michelle is now the administrative coordinator for HaMercaz, which includes fundraising and publicity activities.

HaMercaz is a virtual center accessed by calling a single toll-free number (**866.287.8030**) or via e-mail (homercaz@jfsla.org) that connects families to a world of support. HaMercaz offers help for families with newly-diagnosed children, ongoing assistance and support for families with children from birth through age 22, connections to a network of community agencies and resources, as well as with special needs programs in the Jewish community at synagogues, schools and camps, and support groups/ counseling.



Danny Wolf (front, right) enjoying time at Camp JCA Shalom, which is a part of the HaMercaz project.

Michelle shares: “We have support groups for fathers, mothers, and grandparents of children and grandchildren with special needs that are offered at various locations throughout the city and San Fernando Valley.

We also have a ‘Bigs for Sibs’ program with Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters that matches volunteer mentors with the siblings of children with special needs, and we have Family Friends which also matches volunteer mentors with the families.”

HaMercaz also maintains a resource directory that is accessible at www.homercaz.org; and they offer a yearly workshop series on different topics, such as preparing for your Individual Education Plan, assistive technology, adolescent issues and grandparenting; an annual conference; general and Judaic educational opportunities for students with special needs in various grade levels; special needs family playdays; inclusion training for social/recreational programs in the Jewish community; and targeted support for Iranian parents.

Additionally, the Jewish Free Loan Association offers a Children with Special Needs Loan Program that offers interest-free loans to help families of all faiths care for a child with special needs, assisting families with dealing with health crises and financial problems caused by unexpected expenses. The Children with Special Needs Loan Program includes loans for diagnostic expenses, funding to purchase specialized vehicles, home improvement for medical necessity, assistive technology and durable medical equipment needs, and funding for behavioral supports, shadows or inclusion specialists. The program can assist with interest-free loans of up to \$10,000 per family.

“Looking towards the future, we will begin offering a range of new sibling programs, and will be conducting community awareness campaigns focused on greater inclusion,” adds Michelle.

HaMercaz is a shared project of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Bureau of Jewish Education, Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters, Jewish Free Loan Association, Jewish Vocational Services, The Etta Israel Center, The New JCC at Milken, and Vista Del Mar-Julia Ann Singer School. Funding for HaMercaz is provided by The Jewish Community Foundation Los Angeles, The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, The Chevra Chai Foundation, and The Marcia Israel Foundation. The Jewish Federation’s Planning and Allocations department provides overall project coordination and Jewish Family Service is the lead clinical agency and first point of contact for families.

For more information about HaMercaz, visit www.homercaz.org. To reach the HaMercaz warmline, call toll-free **866.287.8030** or e-mail homercaz@jfsla.org. ■

Be the First to Know - Subscribe to Lanterman’s E-mail Bulletins

It's very easy to subscribe to Lanterman's e-mail bulletins. Simply visit www.lanterman.org and click on "Subscribe" to provide us with your e-mail address. You will automatically be signed up to receive e-mail bulletins about information related to Lanterman Regional Center's general activities and events.

You can also sign up for bulletins about a specific topic, such as legislative issues, or bulletins specific to a certain age, disability or area, by providing us with additional information. No information collected will be given to anyone outside of Lanterman; it's just for the purpose of sending targeted e-mails to the Lanterman community.

There are many events, including valuable trainings and workshops, we at the Center hear about, but due to limited financial resources, we cannot mail flyers for each of these events. By subscribing to the e-mail bulletins, you too will be able to hear about them and be informed about what's going on in the Lanterman community.



Lanterman Partners with KIT Los Angeles to Make Successful Inclusion a Reality in Community-Based Programs for School-Age Children

WHAT EXACTLY IS INCLUSION? How

is it defined? When is it considered successful? The answers to these and hundreds of other questions related to inclusion have long been up to the perception of the person or individual answering them.

Ten years ago, a non-profit organization called Kids Included Together, also known as KIT, was founded in San Diego on a promise to increase opportunities for children with and without disabilities to access recreational, child development and youth development programs together, outside of regular school hours.

KIT's philosophy on inclusion is: "Inclusion is the right of each person to have choice and to belong. It is a process and not a product. Inclusion supports a philosophy of interdependence and respect for difference...Inclusion communicates something more than 'integration.' It means all children participating in their neighborhood; whether it is school, after school, child care, religious, or recreation programs. Inclusion implies that all people are welcome and asks each of us to reach out to others, perhaps those who are different from ourselves. Inclusion is more than letting in or adding on. Inclusion conveys the idea that we appreciate each other, that we see each other's gifts, and that we value being together. Inclusion is about systems change...Inclusion is a belief in every person's inherent right to participate fully in society. Inclusion implies acceptance of differences. It means welcoming and valuing a person who would otherwise be excluded."

"Over the years, we've explored many different options and strategies to include people with developmental disabilities in their communities," says Diane Anand, executive director. "And one of the things we've discovered along the way is that just because a person is physically present in the community does not mean they are truly included in their communities. Just as strategies and processes exist to nurture and develop personal relationships, inclusion also must be approached in such a fashion. KIT has the experience and knowledge to be able to provide the training and technical assistance necessary to begin laying the foundation for children with special needs to be 'truly' included in community programs."

"And one of the things we've discovered along the way is that just because a person is physically present in the community does not mean they are truly included in their communities. Just as strategies and processes exist to nurture and develop personal relationships, inclusion also must be approached in such a fashion."

—DIANE ANAND

KIT, following the design of KIT San Diego, based on the needs of Greater Los Angeles. Lanterman has partnered with the KIT Los Angeles team to pilot their program with our community. KIT will provide five community training or site-specific training workshops and multiple hours of technical assistance that is either child or site specific and/or for organizational change and leadership.

The training will focus on KIT's four core modules: Introduction to Inclusion, which defines inclusion, as well as the benefits, barriers, philosophy and history; Respectful Accommodations, which provides strategies to support individual children with a variety of disabilities; Positive Behavior Support, which reviews techniques for prevention-based support for children with challenging behaviors; and Partnering with Families, which facilitates partnerships with families while addressing concerns for safety, as well as confidentiality and respectful communication. There are a number of other workshop topics available that focus on areas such as autism, activities that facilitate inclusion, and fostering friendships between children with and without disabilities.

For more information about KIT visit www.kitonline.org. They can also be reached at info@kitonline.org or **858.225.5680**. If you are a community-based organization that operates within Lanterman's service area and are interested in being considered to be included in the KIT Los Angeles program, contact Haleh Hashemzadeh at hhashemzadeh@lanterman.org or **213.383.1300, x. 642.** ■



Meet the KIT Los Angeles Team

Sherry Beamer

Sherry Beamer, coordinator, has worked with people with disabilities and the organizations that serve them for 20 years. Beamer holds a master's degree in social work administration from the Jane Addams School of Social Work at the University of Illinois, Chicago. The focus of her work is to assure the inclusion of people with disabilities to be productive participating members of society by providing technical assistance to service organizations to transform their practices. She has a keen understanding of the disability service systems and has worked in a variety of settings, including regional centers, direct service providers, advocacy organizations and academic institutions. She will provide training on the core modules and will be the lead technical assistant.



Becky Tschirgi



Becky Tschirgi is a highly dedicated and creative trainer and consultant with 30 years experience working in diverse programs serving persons with varying disabilities and those with economic disadvantages. She has demonstrated expertise in developing, teaching, consulting and monitoring short and long-term training programs and workshops. Her educational background includes a PET-RA Certificate (Post Employment Training in Rehabilitation Administration), a master's degree in rehabilitation administration (MRA), and a bachelor's degree in social work. Tschirgi will provide training on the core modules and will be a technical assistant.

Dawn Grabowski

Dawn Grabowski is a motivational speaker through her company "Shattering Images." She holds a bachelor's degree from Stetson University in Florida. Her motivational presentations focus on passion and persistence. She is also a stand-up comedian and actress, and through her passion and persistence wrote, produced and financed one stage play and two films. Grabowski has been included her entire life. She is a co-trainer for the KIT core module on Introduction to Inclusion.



Lolita Recillas

Lolita Recillas is a mother of a young man who is blind and has autism, and who is included in many of life's activities. Her native language is Spanish, and she is bilingual English. She is currently a parent mentor for Hathaway Services, and was a parent mentor for Los Angeles Unified School District, the Blind Children's Center and the Eastern Los Angeles Family Resource Center. She started the successful "Raices Hispanas" parent support group at the Blind Children's Center that assisted families to recognize the strengths and challenges they face as new members of American society with a child with disabilities. Recillas is a highly respected trainer who will help providers understand that parents are a valuable resource for programmatic success and that collaboration and ongoing communication is critical for inclusion. She will be a trainer for the KIT core modules on Introduction to Inclusion and Partnering with Families.

Kathy McCullough



Kathy McCullough has worked with people with disabilities with behavioral challenges for 15 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology, and is completing her master's degree in public administration at the University of La Verne. McCullough is currently consulting after operating inclusive day services for adults with behavior challenges for the Mentor Network. She also worked to include children with disabilities in community out-of-school time programs in the San Gabriel Valley. She will train on the KIT core modules of Respectful Accommodations and Positive Behavior Support.

John Jacobs

John Jacobs is a recognized leader in the disability community. He is a living example of the history of inclusion, experiencing school and community inclusion in Los Angeles before it was mandated. Jacobs is a favorite among the KIT Los Angeles trainers, entertaining audiences with his stories of how community members misinterpret his competence because of his disability, and openly sharing how disability affects his functioning and the creative adaptations he has designed to live his life independently. Jacobs is a co-trainer for the KIT core module on Introduction to Inclusion.



Lanterman Nurses Address Health Needs of Clients

Continued from page 1

Grace Kotchounian

Twenty-four years ago, Grace Kotchounian joined Lanterman as a nurse consultant. A graduate of California State University, Los Angeles, with a bachelor's degree in nursing, Kotchounian also pursued her graduate degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she developed an interest in psychiatric nursing.

"I started working with teenagers with developmental disabilities in 1978 at UCLA's Semel Neuropsychiatric Institute (NPI). The teenagers would be hospitalized at UCLA for six months to one year, participating in intensive treatments. The change in their behavior over time was really quite remarkable," shares Kotchounian.

Almost 30 years later, Kotchounian is still working at NPI, helping Lanterman meet the mental health needs of the Center's clients. Each Friday, NPI holds a clinic for individuals with developmental disabilities to identify any existing mental health issues and make treatment recommendations to help clients and their caregivers manage their mental health needs in the least restrictive way possible. Kotchounian manages all of the referrals to the clinic, reviewing the client's information, and interviewing the caregiver(s) prior to their arrival at the clinic. She attends the clinic to make sure it runs smoothly and also assists the psychiatrists with evaluations. Kotchounian shares: "If necessary, I also do site visits to observe the kinds of environments the client is exposed to and what unique concerns may be present. I also coordinate follow-up to ensure that the doctors' recommendations are being implemented by the caregivers appropriately."

In addition to being the primary liaison for NPI, Kotchounian also works with clients who live independently, and in private homes and community care facilities, managing their other health issues. She also does informal training with the Los Angeles area psychiatric hospitals to help them better handle individuals who have a dual diagnosis of mental health and developmental disability.

She says: "Mental health care in Los Angeles has always been a challenge. It's difficult to find psychiatrists who are interested in treating people who have both developmental disability and mental health diagnoses. There is a complex relationship that exists between the psychiatrists, the psychiatric hospitals and the Department of Mental Health in the Los Angeles area. We need to continually work to improve the understanding and relationships between these groups and the NPI clinic to ensure that we are delivering the best possible mental health care to our clients."

One of the recurring issues that Kotchounian sees is clients who are overly medicated on psychotropic drugs. "When a client is improperly medicated, it's rewarding to work with all involved parties to reduce the medications to appropriate levels that allow the client's personality to come out, and for them to move from a more restricted to less restricted environment, and to enjoy life and be out in the community," she explains.

Kotchounian grew up in Lebanon and has lived in the Pasadena area since 1972. She shares: "In the 20 plus years that I've been here, Lanterman has become like a second home. You know that in the good times and also in times of personal crisis, you have the support of your peers." Out of the many memories she has, Kotchounian fondly recalls going shopping for the 45 Lanterman clients that Clinical Services adopted one year through the *Holidays are for Sharing Adopt-a-Family* program. She adds, "With all the losses that we have throughout the course of our life, you have to live for the day and always appreciate the things and people that you have in your life." In her free time Kotchounian enjoys candle-making and jewelry-making, and has traveled extensively. Her two favorite places in the world are Australia and New Zealand.

Ardis Adrian

A nurse consultant with Lanterman for almost two decades, Ardis Adrian focuses her efforts on the health care needs of school-age children, clients living independently and those residing in community care facilities. In addition to her bachelor's degree in nursing from California Lutheran University, Adrian did graduate work at University of California, Los Angeles,

for two years in the Family Nurse Practitioner program.

Adrian also participates in assessments held during the developmental clinic to determine eligibility for Early Intervention services at Lanterman, and supports Kotchounian by attending the Neuropsychiatric Institute clinic as needed.

She serves as a consultant to the Center's Home and Community-based Medicaid Waiver specialist, Renee Culpepper. Medicaid Waiver is a federally funded program that provides funding for children and adults who are at risk of requiring institutional care because of their disabilities to continue to live at home or in the community. There are stringent eligibility criteria and individuals have to be reassessed regularly. It is a very labor intensive process. Approximately one-third of the Regional Center's funding comes from waiver dollars, and currently there are over 1,700 individuals at Lanterman whose services are funded through the waiver.



Nurse consultants Ardis Adrian (from left), Grace Kotchounian and Anita Arcilla-Gutierrez address the health needs of Lanterman's clients.

Adrian is primarily involved in conducting evaluations to determine the service needs for each individual, which can include homemaker, home health, personal care, respite, day habilitation, environmental modifications, skilled nursing, specialized medical equipment/supplies, family training, residential care, adult foster care and assisted living and adult supported living, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/hearing/language, psychology, respiratory therapy, communication aids, crisis intervention, vehicle adaptations, nutritional consult, and day treatment.

"It's challenging when you realize what the need is, but the resources don't exist to meet that need. In an ideal world, there would be places, similar to Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, but for adults. It could be a special clinic, or some other generic resource, but it would be a place where there was access to all of the specialists in one location. A client could see a neurologist, orthopedist and endocrinologist, get preventive female care, and even oral care," she shares.

Adrian lives in the San Fernando Valley. She is the mother of four boys. In her free time, she enjoys traveling with her family, baking and gardening. She also served in the Peace Corps as a nurse in Ecuador, where she learned to speak Spanish, a skill she now uses daily in her work at Lanterman. Every year during the holidays, the Lanterman staff looks forward to enjoying her many kinds of homemade fudge and rum cake.

Anita Arcilla-Gutierrez

Before joining Lanterman six years ago as a nurse consultant, Anita Arcilla-Gutierrez worked as a department manager in an acute care hospital. With a master's degree in health care administration and Master of Science in Nursing, Arcilla-Gutierrez also has hands-on experience in pediatric, medical-surgical, oncological, home health and hospice nursing. She is the current president of the Developmental Disabilities Nurses Association, Southern California Chapter.

At Lanterman, Arcilla-Gutierrez works with clients from birth onwards. Her main areas of focus are supporting the Early Intervention units, School Age units, and Aging and Transition, and working closely with both the intermediate care facilities and the skilled nursing facilities. She also works closely with home health agencies. Arcilla-Gutierrez does whole nursing assessment review for all applicants in intake, and especially in Early Intervention, this is important for the coordination of in-home services.

She adds: "Many of the clients we have living in skilled nursing facilities are not elderly, but simply have skilled nursing needs in addition to their special needs. It's especially important in situations like this that the Regional Center is closely involved and educates the SNF staff on the importance of helping clients maintain their skills and abilities, and as much independence as possible."

That old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," is never truer than when you are dealing with a health-related crisis. "The biggest challenge we all face is ensuring that service coordinators and service providers see the earlier signs and come to us before things are in crisis, rather than after the fact. We like to be involved from the beginning and focus on prevention rather than dealing from crisis to crisis," notes Arcilla-Gutierrez.

For Arcilla-Gutierrez, one of the most rewarding aspects of her job is when a baby she has met in the neonatal intensive care unit graduates out of Early Intervention because they have met and/or exceeded all of the necessary developmental milestones. She also enjoys hearing success stories from service coordinators that demonstrate their learning in the area of health. And she finds it very rewarding when a client is able to move out of a skilled nursing facility into a less restrictive setting.

"One of the greatest challenges we face is the challenge of time. When you plan a visit for an hour or two to a home, you don't really know what to expect. Many times parents are in crisis, and you need to give them time to express their emotions and frustrations. You need to be sensitive to cultural habits and needs, build a relationship with the family and then focus on the health issues. You have to allow the person to be comfortable and express themselves, and you have to listen to them before they are ready to hear you," shares Arcilla-Gutierrez.

Another challenge that all of the nurses have to consider is the health-related resources a caregiver has access to. Arcilla-Gutierrez adds: "As technology advances, more medically fragile babies are being saved, while at the same time the resources necessary to care for them are more challenging to find. Currently, there is an extreme shortage of home health nurses, and families are caught in the middle. So when working with families, it's really important that we see what resources they have access to and build from there. It empowers them more if we are sensitive to what they can use, what resources they have. We always have to validate where they are at and what they are feeling."

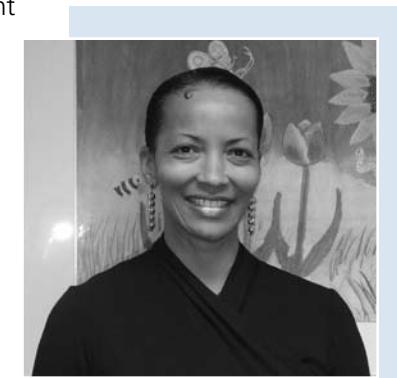
In the time that Arcilla-Gutierrez has been at Lanterman, there are two things that stand out – the work environment and the team spirit. She shares: "All of us have been a staff nurse or worked in higher middle management, and everything that I've done before in my profession is being challenged by this job. When you're at the hospital, everything is at your fingertips, and it's very humbling when you see parents doing all that they can to provide the best possible care without access to all of these resources. It forces you to think critically to meet the needs of clients in environments that are not perfect. And you really come to appreciate families who devote their lives to caring for their family member with special needs."

Since moving to the United States from the Philippines, Arcilla-Gutierrez has lived in California. She enjoys spending her free time doing volunteer work and chauffeuring her two children around to various activities. She also enjoys dancing. "This job has taught me to appreciate the life that I have, rather than wishing for what I don't have. Being a widow is hard, but I've learned to embrace it. It's an almost perfect world," she adds.

Wanda Okunsanya

Although she's only been with Lanterman for several weeks, Wanda Okunsanya brings with her a rich background that combines bachelor's degrees in child development

and African American studies, with special education experience, a degree in nursing, and experience working as a nurse in public county hospitals and military hospitals. ▶



Nurse Consultant
Wanda Okunsanya

Lanterman Nurses Address Health of Clients

Continued from previous page

While attending California State University, Northridge, to obtain her bachelor's degrees, Okunsanya also worked at the California Department of Education's Diagnostic Center, Southern California. About one year after graduating in 1987, while still working at the Diagnostic Center, Okunsanya joined the Army Reserves. She adds, "After finishing my bachelor's, I asked for guidance, and the doors opened up, and it just seemed like joining the military, even though I was 31, was the way to go. It was definitely going to be a challenge, but a good challenge, and with discipline, it has led me to where I'm at now."

The Army trained her as a field medic and after completing her training, Okunsanya pursued her nursing degree through the Los Angeles County College of Nursing and Allied Health (formerly the Los Angeles County Medical Center School of Nursing), which offers a two-year hospital-based associate degree nursing program.

Earlier this summer, Okunsanya celebrated 20 years as a Reservist. She recently finished over four years of active duty service, including a two-year tour as a transition nurse in post-partum nursing at Fort Hood in Texas. She is now attached to the 349th Combat Support Hospital in Bell, California.

"This is my dream job – I get to work with both children and adults and blend my different skill sets and educational experiences together in one job. It's wonderful," says Okunsanya, who will primarily be working with clients living in residential care facilities. "While it will be challenging learning how to access the different resources that are available and how the system works, I'm looking forward to bringing everything together and making sure that the needs of the clients are accomplished. I've found that my military experiences, by regularly placing me in new situations, have provided me with the training and skills to connect the dots and really make sure what I'm doing works, and that I know how to access and synthesize everything."

A recent experience that Okunsanya had was at an Operation Purple camp near Santa Barbara, which is designed for military children, especially those who have a parent deployed. "I'd never done camp nursing, and it really teaches you to be flexible and adapt, and it takes you out of your comfort zone. It was a very humbling experience and I learned to never underestimate the resourcefulness and ingenuity that a camp nurse and other nurses who don't work in the well-controlled hospital environment are required to display. It also made me realize that everything doesn't always fit into a neat little package," she shares.

Even after 20 years, Okunsanya regularly does physical training and still sings cadences as she runs. She adds, "The way the military teaches you about health and the importance of staying in shape physically, it really changes your lifelong health and nutrition habits." Born in South Central Los Angeles, Okunsanya has lived in a number of cities in the United States, and currently resides in Westchester. She has two children and one grandchild. In her free time, Okunsanya loves to sing karaoke, particularly the oldies but goodies, and also likes poetry, reading and attending plays. ■

Portia Iversen's "Strange Son"

Continued from page 1

bedroom keeping vigil, or awaiting the answer from a scientist who you are hoping will agree to study autism, or chasing after Tito as he runs through the house, and even whether Soma's pointing method would be successful with more children than just Tito and Dov.

Through considerable observation and research, Iversen developed a theory that there are two primary categories of people with autism – the visual type and the auditory type – which was confirmed through testing of Tito, Dov and others similar to them. Until the last several years, the majority of teaching methods and therapies were designed for visual learners and not auditory learners. Along with the release of the "Strange Son" book, Iversen also launched a Web site called StrangeSon.com that is home to an online social network connecting people together



Lanterman Regional Center Presents Staff with Service Awards

IN A JOB MARKETPLACE WHERE COMPANIES OFTEN SEE RELATIVELY HIGH TURNOVER OF THEIR

employees, it becomes important to acknowledge those individuals that stay on five, 10, 15 or even 20 plus years. Years ago, the Lanterman board of directors implemented service awards to recognize the service and commitment of our own veteran employees to the Center and the Lanterman community. Service awards are presented to employees during the month in which they reach their milestone year of service – five, 10, 15, 20 and more years.

"Lanterman staff that reach these milestones do so by embodying the Center's commitment to delivering a high quality of service. Regional Center work is very challenging, and staff often find themselves working with limited resources and high expectations to achieve results. It takes a special kind of person to succeed," says Diane Anand, executive director.

During the period from May to August 2007, the following individuals received service awards for their years of service to Lanterman Regional Center and the community: Steve Garcia and Rita Chen-Brown for five years, and Fidella Klein for 15 years.

We asked all of the Lanterman staff that have received service awards why they stayed at Lanterman and what is their favorite memory during their time here.

*Steve Garcia
manager, Client Revenue Management, 5 years*

I've stayed because of the difference we make for people with disabilities. My favorite memories are from the staff appreciation events and how much everyone enjoys the day.

—STEVE GARCIA

*Rita Chen-Brown
service coordinator, Pasadena Service Coordination Unit, 5 years*

When I first arrived in California I was hesitant to accept a position working with individuals with developmental disabilities, but it happened that I interviewed at a temp agency and heard about Lanterman and came to check it out. I can't describe how much I have learned not only from my peers, but most of all from my clients. My memorable moments occur whenever my clients achieve their goals. Their successes give me hope for myself that I too can overcome the challenges in my life. Thanks to Lanterman for giving me the opportunity to grow.

—RITA CHEN-BROWN



Portia Iversen (at left, behind desk) at a book signing event held at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena at which Jane Kaczmarek also read selected passages from "Strange Son."

in a "grassroots" movement to help nonverbal and "low-communicating" children with autism learn to communicate and get a better education.

Since January 2007, over 500 members have joined the online community where you can upload videos, exchange information on the community forum, and even share your experiences on your personal blog. You can also access tips on how to get your child communicating and chat with other members, and much more. On StrangeSon.com you can read excerpts from the book, read the Strange Son blog, view interviews and video clips with the author, and learn more about Soma and Tito.

About the Strange Son Web site, Iversen says: "I felt like families who have a nonverbal child with autism needed a place to go. We needed a place where we could get support and resources, and most importantly, find hope again. The Strange Son Web site is a place where you can find encouragement to not give up on your child – even though many people may be telling you to." According to Iversen, research to better understand nonverbal people with autism, their intelligence and best practices in communication and education is still in its infancy. A

handful of researchers at the University of California, San Francisco; Columbia University in New York; and the University of Montreal in Canada, are among the first to begin to investigate these much needed areas of study. "My own son Dov did not communicate until he was 9 years old and I wanted to share that hope with families," explains Iversen. ■

Use Your PrepGuide to Prepare for the Next Major Disaster or Emergency

IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN 13 YEARS SINCE THE last major earthquake in the Los Angeles area. And, in addition to earthquakes, our area is known for fire danger in the summer and mudslides in the winter. Are you and your family prepared for the next emergency or natural disaster?

Inserted in this newsletter is a PrepGuide booklet, originally prepared by the Salvation Army but customized for the regional centers, that provides emergency preparedness information, as well as a place to keep basic data particular to you and your family that can help you when you most need it.

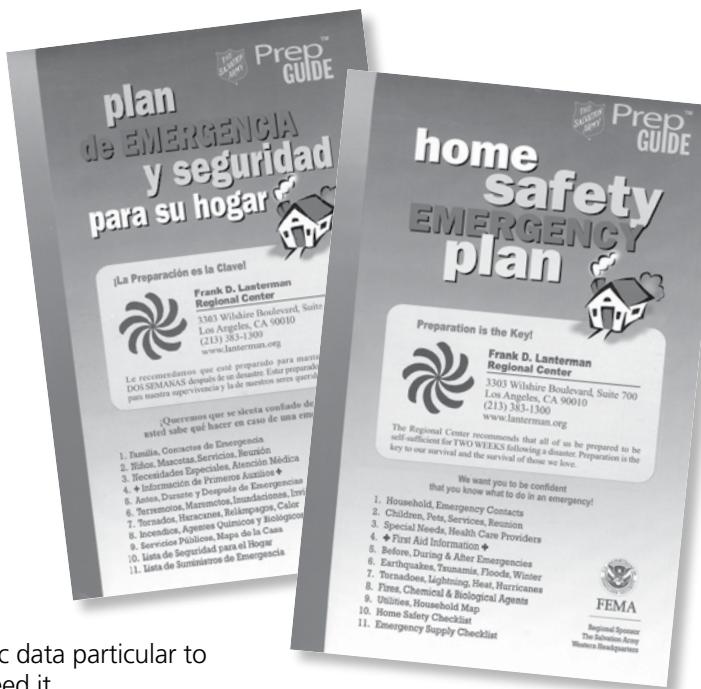
Use your "Home Safety Emergency Plan" to help you get prepared to be self-sufficient for at least three days to one week following a disaster and/or emergency. Preparation is the key to your survival and the survival of those you care for, and this booklet will help you be confident that you know what to do in an emergency.

The booklet features sections that provide tips and places to record information in the following categories:

- ✓ Emergency contacts, communication plan and household members info
- ✓ Child and pet safety, as well as service provider contacts and reunion procedures
- ✓ Special needs, health care providers and medication list
- ✓ First aid information
- ✓ What to do before, during and after an emergency
- ✓ What to do specifically during earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and flash floods, winter storms, tornadoes, lightning, extreme heat, hurricanes, fire, and chemical and biological agents
- ✓ How to create a shelter-in-place and escape from fire
- ✓ Utility instructions and household map
- ✓ Home safety checklist, including housing structure and ground stability, home security, fire safety, medication and chemical safety, and neighborhood safety
- ✓ Emergency supply checklist

Remember, in the event of a large natural disaster or emergency, you cannot count on an immediate response from public officials for each individual situation, so it is in your own best interest to be as prepared as you can be. The preparations you do now will reduce personal and material loss in the future. So don't delay. Create your safety net now and be prepared.

The booklet is magnetized so you can keep it in a place that's handy and visible, such as your refrigerator. ■



National Preparedness Month

This September is the fourth annual National Preparedness Month, a nationwide initiative sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security to encourage Americans to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies. This year, National Preparedness Month focuses on back-to-school planning, business preparedness, multicultural preparedness, and home and family preparedness. To assist with preparedness planning, Lessons Learned Information Sharing, LLIS.gov, has created the National Preparedness Month resource page to share important information about these issues. In addition,

many LLIS.gov topic-specific resource pages feature special sections highlighting information related to National Preparedness Month, planning or community preparedness.



To access the National Preparedness Month page, visit www.LLIS.gov and click on National Preparedness Month under Featured Topics. They also welcome any thoughts, questions or suggestions that you may have at [nationalprepmouth@llis.dhs.gov](mailto:nationalprepmonth@llis.dhs.gov).

FRANK D. LANTERMAN REGIONAL CENTER

3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone: 213.383.1300
Fax: 213.383.6526
www.lanterman.org

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EDITOR:
Vinita Anand
Resource and Information Specialist
Koch♦Young Resource Center

ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS: Ardis Adrian, Diane Anand, Vinita Anand, Anita Arcilla-Gutierrez, Patrick Aulicino, Sherry Beamer, Margarita Blanco, Erin Broughton-Rodriguez, Karem Chacana, Rose Chacana, Marian Chen, Rita Chen-Brown, Myrna Contreras, Ray Drumheiser, John Erdos, Steve Garcia, Haleh Hashemzadeh, Karen Ingram, Portia Iversen, Diana Janas, Jean Johnson, Gwen Jordan, MJ Kienast, Grace Kotchouian, Kay Kwak, Frank Lara, Hasmig Mandossian, Carolyn Markell, Jon Markell, Joshua Markell, Howard McBroom, Marie McGinley, Sharlene Miyazaki, Mandy Moradi, Wanda Okunsanya, Edward Perez, Sandy Riancho, Kelly Vencill Sanchez, Kathy Schmitt, Ann Seisa, Elizabeth Selkin, Sharon Shueman, Melinda Sullivan, Michelle Wolf and Gabriela Ziolkowski

PHOTO CONTRIBUTORS: Vinita Anand, Sherry Beamer, Portia Iversen, Frank Lara, Carolyn Markell, Christine Mayola and Michelle Wolf

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