

Sylvia Lee Builds the Way for Employment Opportunities for People with Significant Disabilities

IN APRIL 2005, JUST TWO YEARS SHY OF celebrating her 60th birthday, Sylvia Lee moved out of Fairview Developmental Center, her residence of 45 years, into the Koch-Vagthol's Metabolic Residential Center in Burbank.

Lee was born with PKU (phenylketonuria), a rare, inherited metabolic disease that results in mental retardation and other neurological problems when treatment is not started within the first few weeks of life, and because newborn screening for PKU did not begin until the mid-1960s, she went undiagnosed and untreated. By the time she was 13, Lee was demonstrating a number of behaviors, and her mother felt she could no longer adequately care for her and placed her in the care of the local state hospital.

Ann Seisa, owner of Vagthol's Residential Care Center, Inc. says, "When Sylvia moved in with us, she was on an array of medications, had significant behaviors associated with her PKU and her Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and her phenylalanine levels had not been stabilized. So the team, headed up by Dr. Richard Koch, set to work on treating her PKU, and also started working with an interdisciplinary team at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and

Human Behavior at UCLA." In addition, Lee has very limited speech and language abilities, however, her comprehension skills are much greater.



Sylvia Lee has enjoyed puzzles all of her life, and can now complete an entire puzzle in one sitting.

During her first year in the home, Lee adjusted well to living in the community and became independent with her personal care, learned to make her own bed, and started helping with other chores around the house from setting the table to bringing in the groceries and helping in the kitchen. She also attended Kaiser Adult Behavior Center in Burbank. Seisa adds, "At first, no one believed me that Sylvia could start doing these things, but I'm a dreamer and kept telling everyone, 'Yes she can.'"

Lee used to do puzzles as a child, and to this day still enjoys doing them. She only used to be able to focus for a few minutes at a time, but the staff worked with her to increase her attention span and now she can complete entire puzzles in one sitting. ▶

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AAC Device Helps Jewelianna Bello-Lira Share with Her Family What She Wants to Do and When

Jewelianna Bello-Lira uses her IntelliKeys, which is linked to a software program that allows her to use the images on her keyboard to play corresponding children's songs and stories.

See story on page 7



Lanterman Partners with Planned Parenthood to Offer Sexual Health and Safety Education for Teens and Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Class for Parents Also Offered

SEXUALITY IS PERVASIVE IN OUR CULTURE TODAY – FROM TELEVISION SHOWS TO BILLBOARDS AND especially on the Web – and it is practically impossible to prevent today's youth from being exposed to it. However, in many ways, it's also taboo, and children today are confused and struggling to make sense of it all. When many of us hear the word sexuality, we think that it's only referring to sex, but sexuality is a lifelong process that is much broader and includes everything from personal safety to friendships, intimate relationships and reproductive health.

Maureen Wilson, director of Training and Development, says, "We'd receive a number of requests from parents seeking sexuality education for their children, but at the time we didn't have anyone to provide this kind of training, so we contacted several different agencies to see if they'd be interested in designing a training specific to individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents. Ultimately, we selected Planned Parenthood Los Angeles because they have years of experience in the field of sexuality education and offer training for teens and adults, as well as parents."

Part of the challenge in addressing the topic of sexuality is recognizing when it's appropriate to begin having conversations with your child about the subject. Diane Medsker, program manager with Planned Parenthood Los Angeles, shares, "Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children, but having these ▶

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Making New Friends, Taking Classes at UCLA and Living Independently – Pathway Enables Kate Beltran to Have the Typical College Experience

Article written with contributions from Kathe Beltran

THE BEGINNING OF OCTOBER, WITH THE HINT of fall in the air, the four young women grabbed their jackets and backpacks and headed out the door of their Westwood apartment for the mile-long trek to the athletic complex on the University of California, Los Angeles, campus. As they walked away you could hear them chatting and laughing until they turned the corner at the end of their block and then they were gone – off to enjoy a sunny afternoon since they were done with classes.

So, what's so remarkable about that – thousands of college students have that same experience everyday – and that's just the point of UCLA Extension's Pathway program for young adults with intellectual disabilities – Kate Beltran, and her suitemates Jasmine, Lauren and Sivan are having the typical university experience.

Kathe Beltran, Kate's mother, shares, "When our daughter Kate was diagnosed with PDD-NOS at age 6, Steve and I had no idea what her future might be. She spoke only in simple phrases

that were difficult to understand, and she was hyperactive and had a hard time relating to others. We lived the experiences common to families of children with special needs – trial and error school programs and placements, endless hours of speech, occupational and social therapies. A university experience was something we expected to forego. And then last fall, we got an e-mail from a friend telling us about a new pioneer program for young people with intellectual disabilities that was starting at UCLA. This two-year postsecondary education program, run through UCLA Extension, would also include social and recreational opportunities. 'Could this be true?' It was what we had often wished were available."

Shortly thereafter, the family attended an open house to learn more and really liked what they saw and heard. Kate signed up for a night course offered by Pathway called "Skills for Academic Success," and her involvement with the class and the students cinched it for her. She would apply. The application process took several months and included an in-person interview with Kate, which she did by herself. Eric Latham, Pathway's executive director, adds, "We had the candidates fill out applications, including a personal statement, and supply us with school ▶



Kate Beltran

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SAVE THE DATE!

COMMUNITY
RESOURCE FAIR

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2008
9:00 A.M. TO NOON
PACIFIC COMMUNITY CENTER
IN GLENDALE

See page 4 for details

The Director's Viewpoint

Turning Endings Into New Beginnings...

THIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN we find ourselves reflecting on endings and beginnings...the end of one year, the beginning of another, the cycle of progress and change, and continued hope for the future.

The story of the regional center system has also been one of continual endings and beginnings. From the outset, the parents who worked so diligently to effect change were looking for an alternative to the unacceptable ending they faced for their children with developmental disabilities – and that led to the remarkable beginning that would become the regional center system.



Executive Director Diane Anand

As our system started, we began looking at the ending represented by the “disabled thinking” of people without disabilities, thinking that limited the opportunities for those with developmental disabilities. There was a time when we thought about people with developmental disabilities in terms of their problems and recorded them in “problem-oriented” records, when we didn’t believe individuals could live on their own in the community, or work in meaningful employment, or go to school with their non-disabled peers.

Over the years, this thinking has certainly been evolving, albeit slowly. In this newsletter we offer some wonderful examples of people in situations that seemed like endings, but were turned into new beginnings.

People who for years languished in state hospitals are demonstrating what they can do when given a chance to live in the community. For example, we tell the story of Sylvia Lee who lived in the state hospital for years with untreated PKU and now lives in the community in a home that focuses on treating adults who were born before effective treatment was realized. Not only that, she is now working at a workshop and her residential provider, Ann Seisa, a true believer in people’s potential, believes that she eventually will be able to work in the community with support.

Then there is the experience of Joan Gardenhire, unable to return home from a skilled nursing facility because her home needed rehabilitation and specific adaptations. A non-profit group of volunteers in Pasadena accomplished the work for her, and Joan is living in her own home again.

Education was once an ending after high school, now people are going to college thanks to programs like Pathway at UCLA Extension – an innovative beginning for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Lanterman client Kate Beltran is taking advantage of this opportunity.

These are just a few of the true success stories made possible by people who thought in terms of opportunity and possibility, in terms of beginning and not ending.

But today, we are faced with a potential ending that is a genuine threat to all that we have accomplished over 40-plus years – the deepening budget crisis in California. At this writing, the state’s deficit is projected to be \$10 billion, rivaling a similar crisis in the early 90s.

California is the only state that has services and supports for its citizens with developmental disabilities as an entitlement. However, possibilities are nothing more than that – possibilities – without the funding to turn them into genuine opportunities.

The Department of Developmental Services has been mandated by the Legislature to produce an exhaustive list of cost savings that can be achieved by regional centers, and in the purchase of services for clients, as well as the pros and cons of each. That report has yet to be made public. And the Governor has called on all departments in state government including the Department of Developmental Services to prepare budgets for the next fiscal year that begins in July 2008 with 10 percent reductions.

In light of this – and understanding that our budget issues will not be quickly or readily resolved – we must always be mindful of resource limitations and work hard to make innovations in services, supports and technology as cost-effective as possible, so that we are seen as stewards of public funds and thus maintain public trust in our system. Only in this way can the entitlement of the Lanterman Act be sustained into the future.

Our enduring vision remains unchanged: to provide each person with developmental disabilities the opportunity for the most productive and satisfying life as an included member of the community, backed by individualized and community-based services and supports. It is up to us to continue working through our challenges – whether budgetary or attitudinal – to turn endings into opportunities and possibilities into new beginnings.

THE BUDGET UPDATE

State Budget Challenges Have Significant Implications for Regional Center System

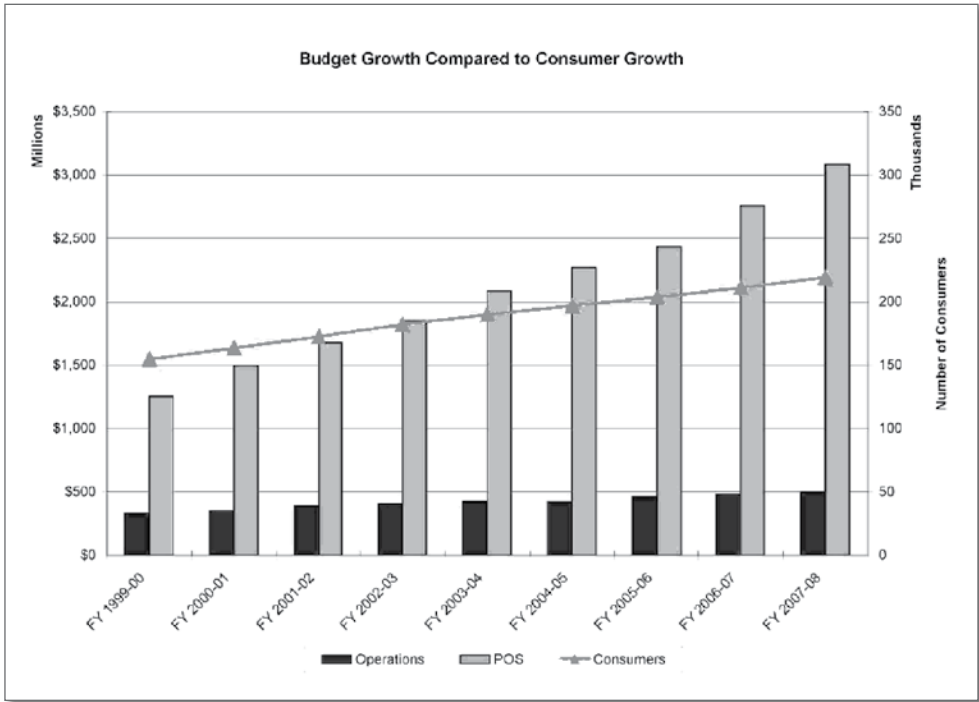
THE CALIFORNIA REGIONAL CENTER SYSTEM, WITH ITS UNCAPPED ENTITLEMENT for purchased services based on each client’s individualized program plan, remains unique within the 50 states. However, given the current state of the California economy, available revenue, and the fact that per capita purchase of services spending continues to outpace client growth, it is questionable how long the system can be sustained in its present form.

Elizabeth Hill, the non-partisan legislative analyst, estimates that California is facing a \$10 billion shortfall. She has urged policymakers to take immediate action, in the form of structural reductions to programs or tax increases. She points out that California has a structural deficit, and that the temporary fixes used in the past, such as borrowing and moving money around, are no longer feasible. In addition, the federal government has notified the states that it intends to reduce Medicaid funding. This has significant implications for the regional center system, since federal dollars account for more than one-third of regional center funding.

Acknowledging that tough decisions lie ahead, the Governor has directed state agencies to develop plans to reduce spending by 10 percent in 2008-09. Such an action would affect our clients in a variety of ways because many of them rely on other state-funded programs such as Medi-Cal, the Department of Rehabilitation, and In-Home Support Services (IHSS).

Over the past eight years, the number of individuals served by regional centers has grown by 41.5 percent. Purchase of services (POS) budgets, however, have grown by 146 percent, and annual per client POS spending has grown from \$8,083 to \$14,070. During this same period, the regional center direct services and operations budget has grown by 50 percent. This growth has been principally to support the increase in service coordinators necessary to serve the growing client population. The table below graphically shows the change over time in the three variables: number of clients, operations/direct services funding, and POS funding. As can be seen, the POS growth has been significantly outpacing the growth in operations funding, as well as the increase in the client population.

A large part of the growth in POS is due to the increasing numbers of infants and children with autism and the attendant need for intensive intervention services. Further, as services have become more individualized, program savings that result from economies of scale in large congregate settings are no longer possible. Another high growth area has been supportive living services, wherein clients, regardless of their degree of disability, receive all support necessary to allow them to live independently in their own homes or apartments. Finally, the Community Placement Plan, aimed at moving clients from developmental centers into the community, is requiring the development of resource intensive facilities in the community to support the significant medical and behavioral needs of these clients.



In terms of total dollars, regional center budgets have grown from about \$1.5 billion in 1999-2000 to over \$3.6 billion in 2007-08, about 87 percent of which is for purchase of services. Even with the increased POS funding, however, regional centers are currently projecting a collective deficit in purchase of services that may exceed \$100 million this year.

In prior years when California has had budget crises, there has been no agreement on defining or limiting the entitlement to regional center services. Instead, regional centers have been asked by the State to make unallocated reductions in their operations budgets and to implement program efficiencies. However, regional center operations are stretched to the breaking point and most centers have implemented purchase of service efficiencies where possible. Still, the State has often had to go back to the Legislature to ask for additional funds for purchase of services.

It will be a real struggle and a big test of political will to align California’s spending with revenues, particularly in light of the many competing needs within the State, not only for health and welfare programs, but also for things such as investment in basic infrastructure. What is needed going forward is a more balanced approach to budgeting that includes increased revenues, increased efficiencies, and strategies such as statewide regional center service standards that will better ensure equity and reasonably define the entitlement. ■

UCLA Extension Pathway Program

Continued from page 1

records, their Individual Education Plan and Individual Program Plan, but paper just didn't tell us much. We really wanted to look more broadly at the applicants since this program is about so much more than just academic skills, and opted to do in-person interviews with the students and their parents. The most important thing for us was that they were motivated, wanted to live independently and to continue their education, and that they had strong family support."

"Around the beginning of summer, Eric phoned and asked for Kate. She called out joyfully, 'I'm in! I'm in!' And finally, after what seemed like an eternity to Kate, the middle of September arrived and move-in day was finally here," says Kathe. All together, 17 students between the ages of 18 and 25 were accepted for the first year out of a pool of 30-plus applicants, with another 15 or 16 spots available for the 2008-09 academic year, for a total Pathway student body of around 32.

The Pathway curriculum, which was developed by the Pathway Educational Advisory Committee, focuses on the liberal arts as opposed to being career specific. Classes touch on the social sciences, arts and humanities. Latham adds, "All of the Pathway classes are designed to be accessible, and additionally, within each of the classes, there is a hands-on focus that can be applied to something in the community. The educational program also has a service learning component. For example, one of the classes is centered on American government and helps the students understand what benefits are available to them, what their role is in interfacing with the government, and how to get involved. It really helps them see that they are actors in the system and not just recipients."

While the students do have to take specific classes through Pathway, they can also take regular UCLA Extension classes. There is also the possibility of concurrently enrolling in a class on the main UCLA campus. "A number of students have signed up for fitness, cooking, art, dance, yoga, jazz, gymnastics, animation and photography classes through the UCLA Recreation department," notes Latham. First quarter Pathway classes include Pathway 101, a computer class, critical thinking through improv, and a relationships and sexuality class.

All but one of the students are living in the off-campus apartments. Other than time away at summer camp, this is the first time that Kate and her suitemates have lived on their own. Latham explains, "We are collaborating with Creative Support Systems to provide the students assistance with independent living skills. The staff provides support for grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, banking and other types of activities, although currently the students are having most of their meals in the on-campus dining halls."

Since the UCLA and Westwood area is expansive, all of the Pathway students were required to buddy up for the first couple of weeks whenever they left their apartment, whether to go to the gym, to class or just to Westwood, but as they have become more comfortable with the area they have started venturing off on their own. However, every time they leave the apartment, they have to indicate on a log, when they left, where they are going, and who they are going with.

"On a campus as large as UCLA, one of the hardest things to do is to make social connections," says

Latham. "Sharing an apartment with suitemates has provided peer bonding experiences, and created built in companionship and support." In addition to hanging out in their apartments with friends, and having their parents stop by to visit, there are also two residence advisors living in the apartment complex that plan activities on the weekends. So far the Pathway students have been to the Getty Museum, a UCLA football game at the Rose Bowl, a dance party and shopping in Westwood, with many more adventures planned for the near future.

Kate shares, "It's been good fun. I like hanging out with my suitemates and my friends. We watch TV, hang out in the other apartments, and go to Westwood." Jasmine adds, "I like hanging out with friends and suitemates. I also like cooking, and each of us has a night assigned to us to cook for everyone in the apartment, and I made tacos. I'm really enjoying Pathway." Sivan shares, "I like having a roommate such as Miss Kate and getting to know my suitemates. I enjoy staying with Kate, cooking, seeing new things and laughing at the funny things we all do." Lauren says, "I want to be independent some day and live on my own and this is good practice for that."

Kathe shares, "Many of us stopped by during the first week – orientation week – to bring last minute items and make sure that our children were getting settled, and marveled to see our kids cleaning their own kitchens, making their own decisions and just enjoying friends. That first Sunday, almost a week after moving in, we asked Kate if she would like us to drop by and come see her for awhile, and not missing a beat, she said, 'No, maybe next year. I am super busy!'"

Latham explains, "One of the things that many students like the most is being away from their parents. I believe that this transition is much more difficult for the parents, and we did a lot of prep work with the parents to get them ready for the first week. And they were really good for the first week." Kathe adds, "I am sure we parents were the typical 'helicopter parents' the Pathways staff describes – 'hovering over at all times.' One mom at the move-in day luncheon asked if that description had her photo next to it and we all knew what she meant."

So what are their plans for after graduation? Kathe says, "That is the question, 'What will come after this?' We hope that this leads to something we can build on. It has been such an eye opener to see how much they wanted something like this." Kate says, "I want to continue living on my own. I want to work in a day care and help kids. I'm really good with tiny babies. It makes me really happy." "I'd like to get a job teaching in a kindergarten," adds Sivan, and Lauren shares, "This is all about getting a job, earning some money and living on your own."

Currently, Pathway graduates will receive a certificate of completion from the University of California at the time of their graduation from the program. "Our ultimate goal is to take the Pathway curriculum to the UCLA Academic Senate for approval so that in the future we can offer transferable credits for the classes that Pathway students take. However, we didn't want this to delay us from getting the program going," notes Latham. Pathway will also offer transition support prior to graduation to assist each student with locating resources in their home communities related to housing, employment and independent living.

For more information about Pathway, visit www.uclaextension.edu/pathway or the Pathway blog at <http://uclaextension-pathway.blogspot.com>. ■



From left: UCLA Extension Pathway students Lauren, Sivan, Kate and Jasmine hang out in their off-campus apartment in Westwood. This is the first time that all of them have lived on their own.

"That is the question, 'What will come after this?' We hope that this leads to something we can build on. It has been such an eye opener to see how much they wanted something like this."

—KATHE BELTRAN

Benefits of Postsecondary Education and Resources

Students with intellectual disabilities are significantly less likely than their peers without disabilities to go to college. Currently, there are nearly 25,939 students, ages 14 to 22, who receive special education services in the categories of mental retardation, traumatic brain injury or autism in California, and 36,910 clients of regional center services ages 14 to 21. And typically, these youth transition into segregated life skills or community-based programs with the poorest post-school outcomes.

Olivia Raynor, director, Tarjan Center at UCLA, shares, "Recent studies show that students with intellectual disabilities with any postsecondary education experience are more likely to obtain competitive employment, require fewer supports, earn higher wages, and have increased self-esteem and expanded social networks. Whether it is auditing, taking a few classes or full-time attendance, college is a desirable transition for youth to gain the capacity, knowledge and skills for adult living and working in the community."

But the good thing is that postsecondary education options for individuals with intellectual disabilities are increasing. Nationwide, there are approximately 120 different postsecondary education programs available at two-year, four-year and technical schools. In California alone, there are 10 options, and a statewide group called California's Consortium for Postsecondary Education Options for People with Developmental Disabilities is working to make these options a reality throughout the higher education system in California.

The Tarjan Center at UCLA along with Kern County Regional Center, Taft College, the State Center Community College District, and the California Consortium for Postsecondary Education Options for People with Developmental Disabilities also just launched a new postsecondary initiative called Open the Doors to College, which will empower the choice and self-determination of students with intellectual disabilities who want to go to college, however, would find the typical college experience difficult without the necessary services and supports.

The following Web sites provide additional information about postsecondary education options for individuals with intellectual disabilities:

- <http://thinkcollege.net>
- www.heath.gwu.edu/links/view/all/31
- www.pepnet.org
- <http://tarjancenter.ucla.edu>

Avoid Panic – Think Summer in December and Plan Activities Early

AS CRAZY AS IT MAY SOUND, THE TIME TO START PLANNING FOR SUMMER activities is in December, so come May, you’re not in a panic. “By March, many summer recreation providers are completely booked for all of their programming options,” shares Melinda Sullivan, associate director of Client and Family Services, “and for families looking for quality spring and summer break activities in which to include their children with special needs, the time to start looking at your options is now.”

There is such a wide variety of activities available that it can be challenging to know where to start looking for what’s out there.

Here are some things to think about before you start your search:

- ◆ Think about what kinds of activities your child likes. Does he or she like art, drama, dance or perhaps sports?
- ◆ Think about whether the program(s) fits with your schedule. Will a half-day program work or do you need a full-day program?
- ◆ Find out if your child is eligible for extended school year through your local school district.
- ◆ If you work, find out if and when you can take some vacation time to give your child a break from scheduled activities and school.

“Summertime activities offer so many options to include children with special needs, however it’s important to put some thought into what you are looking for to help narrow your search,” shares Zena Begin, service coordinator specialist in the Foothill School Age Unit.

Here are some tips to help make your search for summer activities more successful:

- ◆ If you already have some resources in mind, contact them for their previous year’s summer activity brochure/information sheet to give you an idea of their programming.
- ◆ Sign up for e-mail bulletins from programs that you are interested in to get updated programming information.
- ◆ Schedule appointments with the program’s director and/or staff.
- ◆ If possible, observe the program. If it’s a year-round provider that offers special summer programming, this will give you a better idea of the program.
- ◆ Find out what the staff to participant ratio is, and if they have more help on field trips.
- ◆ Find out if parents can volunteer.
- ◆ Ask the program if they offer scholarships.

Here are some places to start searching:

- ◆ Visit Lanterman’s Network of Care site at www.lanterman.networkofcare.org and review the resources under the recreation/leisure category.
- ◆ Each year, Westridge School in Pasadena hosts a Summer Opportunities Fair. The fair is a community service event that provides a venue for parents and children to learn about summer programs. The fair features a wide range of local, national and international camp opportunities and summer study opportunities for boys and girls of all ages in academic and cultural enrichment, outdoor adventure, sports, travel, day and board situations, community service and volunteer programs, and programs for children with special needs. Visit www.westridge.org/SOF.html for more information. The 2008 fair will be held on Saturday, February 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- ◆ Attend Lanterman’s Community Resource Fair (see below for details)

So start planning out summer activities for all of your children early and avoid getting that panicky feeling. And be sure to keep your service coordinator in the loop as they are available to assist with coordinating the necessary supports to facilitate inclusion in community-based programming.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center Presents: COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR

FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2008
9:00 A.M. TO NOON
PACIFIC COMMUNITY CENTER
501 SOUTH PACIFIC AVENUE
GLENDALE, CA 91204

Co-sponsored by
City of Glendale
Parks Recreation and
Community Services
Division

Event will feature:

- ★ Park and Recreation Programs
- ★ Legal Advocacy Agencies
- ★ Medical and Dental Care
- ★ Summer Camps
- ★ Dance and Music Programs
- ★ Free and Low-Cost Community Programs
- ★ Something for All Ages

To participate, contact Zena Begin at 213.383.1300, x. 525.

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

It’s 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.



Aloha from Hawaii – Billy Hall Goes Cruisin’



Billy Hall (far right) saved up his money to go on a seven-day cruise to Hawaii with his friend Rebecca (far left). They stopped to ask the reception staff on the Pride of America a question and came away with a photo as well.



ASK ANYBODY, AND THEY’LL TELL YOU, THEY’RE SAVING FOR SOMETHING OR OTHER. OFTEN TIMES it’s for a new car, a trip or some kind of expensive electronic, and in Billy Hall’s case, it was for a trip to Hawaii. Hall says, “I had in mind for a while that I wanted to visit Hawaii, I suppose from seeing all of the colorful images of the islands on television, and earlier this year I’d saved up enough and knew that the timing was right to take a trip there.”

But Hall didn’t want to go alone, so he offered to pay for his longtime friend Rebecca to join him, and she said sure. Hall worked with a travel agent to plan his trip, ultimately deciding on a seven-day round-trip cruise on Norwegian Cruise Line’s Pride of America that would take him from Honolulu, Oahu with port stops on Kauai, Hilo, Kona and Maui.

With everything planned, Hall and his traveling companion just had to wait until September 8 rolled around. They flew to Honolulu and after a little mix up at the airport, made it on board the ship and settled into their cabin. “They had everything that you could think of on the ship – a movie theater, lots of different restaurants – and it’s amazing that you can barely feel something that size moving through the water,” explains Hall. “It was very breathtaking and everything was so clean and fresh out on the ocean.”

Hall has only two complaints – Hawaii was not as colorful as he thought it would be based on the pictures and the excursion trips cost a lot of extra money. He adds, “I was trying to be careful and stay within my budget so we didn’t do a helicopter trip, but we did take a bus trip to see the active volcano, only when we finally got up to it after driving through the clouds, the volcano was nice and quiet, and I was prepared with my video camera to catch the action.”

Complaints aside, Hall shares, “It was a wonderful experience to visit a unique place like that. The trip was just awesome and I’m really glad that I did it.” The next trip that he’s got his eye on is a one-week trip to Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. ■

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 September to December 2007, the following individuals received service awards for their years of service to Lanterman Regional Center and the community: Mary Bakchachyan, Caroline Garabedian, Sonia Garibay, Marie McGinley, Margaret Rodriguez, Enrique Roman, Alice Vartabedian and Christine Yuh for five years of service; and Melinda Sullivan for 20 years of service.

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.



Christine Yuh
service coordinator, Los Angeles School Age Service Coordination Unit, 5 years

It has been a great experience to work at Lanterman Regional Center. I have a wonderful team and an exceptional regional manager, and over the last five years it has helped me to grow professionally and even personally.

—CHRISTINE YUH



Mary Bakchachyan
service coordinator, Foothill School Age Service Coordination Unit, 5 years

—MARY BAKCHACHYAN

I have stayed for as long as I have at Lanterman because of the great working atmosphere and how supportive managers and co-workers are.

Working at Lanterman has contributed to my personal and professional growth and has proved to be truly rewarding work. A favorite memory of mine is at the end of a quarterly meeting when one of my clients sang a song to me that he had written while he also played the guitar.

—CAROLINE GARABEDIAN



Caroline Garabedian
service coordinator, Glendale Service Coordination Unit, 5 years



Marie McGinley
service coordinator, Glendale Service Coordination Unit, 5 years

—MARIE MCGINLEY

Traveling with Special Needs - Resources to Make Your Trip Successful

THIS IS THE BUSIEST TRAVEL SEASON OF THE YEAR. People are going home for the holidays, getting away on a winter vacation, and traveling for business, but regardless of their reasons for traveling, no one likes when their trip takes an unexpected turn. And the savvy traveler will tell you that the best way to avoid travel glitches is to plan, plan, plan.

If you’re a traveler with special needs or traveling with someone who has special needs there are even more things to consider other than simply a destination, transportation, lodging and activities. You also have to take into consideration what types of adaptations may be required and overall general accessibility. But you’re not alone. There are a number of organizations and resources that provide information on accessible travel and traveling with special needs. Here is a sampling of resources, many of them also provide links to other organizations and Web sites in this area. So pack your bags and get traveling.

Access-Able Travel Source
www.access-able.com

Access-Able Travel Source is dedicated to aiding travelers with disabilities and the mature traveler. The site features practical information about accessibility needed to go cross town or around the world and the information is divided into the following categories: transportation (van rentals, and the public or private sectors); accommodations (detailed information about each place); attractions (resorts, theme parks, museums, and national parks

in the United States and Canada); adventures; travel resources (access guides for cities, states/provinces, and countries); equipment rental and repair; and medical.

The Boulevard
www.blvd.com/Travel_and_Recreation

The Boulevard is a disability resource directory of products and services for people with disabilities, caregivers and healthcare professionals. They have a travel and recreation section that includes accessible travel and lodging, wheelchair van rental, accessible travel specialists, accessible cruises, accessible vacation home exchange, accessible pools and spas, and adaptive recreation equipment.

disABILITY Information and Resources
www.makoa.org/travel.htm

The disABILITY Information and Resources site has a disability travel and recreation section that includes information and links on topics such as travel planning, travel companions, destinations, transportation, air travel, children and books.

Emerging Horizons – Accessible Travel News
www.emerginghorizons.com

Emerging Horizons is a consumer oriented magazine about accessible travel. Emerging Horizons’ primary focus is travel for people with mobility disabilities; everybody from wheelchair-users to slow walkers. It features lots of access information, resources, news and travel tips, and is available in print and online.

Easter Seals Project ACTION
<http://projectaction.easterseals.com>

Project ACTION maintains a database of transit systems (buses, shuttles, taxis, airport service, etc.) that are accessible for people with disabilities. This is a great resource for tourists with disabilities to access mass transit systems while traveling.

Global Access News – Disabled Travel Network
www.globalaccessnews.com

Global Access News helps to fill the information gap that exists in most travel guidebooks and Web sites for travelers with disabilities by providing a site where they can share their experiences.

MossRehab ResourceNet
www.mossresourcenet.org/travel.htm

MossRehab ResourceNet has an accessible travel section with information and resources for the traveler with disabilities, including airlines, trains, buses, cruise lines, driving, travel agents, tourism offices and more.

Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality
www.sath.org

The Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality (SATH) is an educational non-profit membership organization whose mission is to raise awareness of the needs of all travelers with disabilities, remove physical and attitudinal barriers to free access, and expand travel opportunities in the United States and abroad. Their Web site features tips on how to travel with special needs, links to access information for airlines and hotels, and links to accessibility resources. ■

Meet the People Behind the Titles:

SHOGHIG DIKIJIAN

As regional manager of the Glendale Service Coordination Unit at Lanterman Regional Center, Shoghig Dikijian 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 her responsibilities, so "Viewpoint" recently met with Dikijian and asked about projects in the works, as well as the biggest challenges and most rewarding aspects of her job.

SHOGHIG DIKIJIAN WAS EDUCATED IN LEBANON and obtained a combined bachelor's degree in social work/sociology from the Beirut College for Women. In her last year of college, Dikijian was involved in a pilot research program to determine whether there was a need to establish an employment office for disadvantaged Armenians in a low-income section of the city of Beirut. After graduating she was employed by the project and charged with setting up and staffing this new employment office. She shares, "Job development was a very novel concept back in the 1970s in Lebanon. I would locate potential employers, and sell them on the value of employing individuals who were disadvantaged, and I would also do case management for prospective employees interviewing them and matching them with possible employers, and tracking their success."

About one and one-half years after starting this job, Dikijian married her husband Khajag and took one year off to focus on her new marriage. Instead of going back to work, she went back to school in 1975 to pursue her master's degree in sociology, however, she was not able to complete her degree because civil war broke out. And in August 1976, seven-months pregnant with her son Sevag, she and her husband fled Lebanon traveling to the United States on the Sixth Fleet that was sent by President Gerald Ford, passing through New York and settling in Santa Monica to be close to her sister and brother-in-law.

Dikijian became very involved in the local Armenian community and with a group of friends established the Santa Monica-based chapter of the Armenian Relief Society, and started a Friday school to teach



Shoghig Dikijian, regional manager of the Glendale Service Coordination Unit

children how to speak Armenian. In 1981, Dikijian had her second child. She was also active in the PTA at her children's school.

Back in 1988, a college friend suggested to Dikijian that she apply for a service coordination job with Lanterman Regional Center. "My youngest son Ayke was 8 years old, and I had the right background and language capability for the position, but I'd been out of the workforce for 12 years between immigrating from Lebanon to the United States and having two children, so I wanted to try the position temporarily to see if it was a right fit," adds Dikijian, who was hired as a regular employee in February 1989.

In 1993, Dikijian had her third child Nyrie. "During the budget crisis of the 1990s we were offered the ability to work part-time and I elected to do this for a few years to be able to focus more of my time on family," she adds. Dikijian worked as a service coordinator for 13 years and had been thinking about going back to pursue her doctorate in sociology when the regional manager position for the Glendale Service Coordination Unit became vacant and she decided to apply. She shares, "It's always been part of my plan to continue my education, but life comes at you and forces you to change your best laid plans, and you learn that you just have to go with the flow." In June of this year, she celebrated five years in this position.

"You don't feel the time go by here. It's a very fast paced and dynamic work environment. There's always so much to do, and each person's situation is different, so you really don't feel like you're in the same place doing the same thing ever. I always tell my team that you'll learn a lot and you'll grow a lot, and that working in this field is a job that will really enrich your life," explains Dikijian.

She supervises 12 service coordinators and one administrative assistant in the Glendale unit. "My main

objectives are to make sure that the health and welfare of all of the clients served by our unit is proactively managed; that we support our young adults and adults to become as independent as possible, and encourage and support our families to help their children make this transition; and that we make every effort to maintain family involvement in the lives of our adult clients not living at home," notes Dikijian.

She believes that the only way to approach life is to always think positively and to welcome everyone's opinions and ideas, and she lives by the values of persistence, integrity, honesty and fairness. "I expect the service coordinators on the Glendale team to approach their work with integrity and that they demonstrate a commitment to their clients not just because they are going to be evaluated but because they've internalized this commitment to do what needs to be done for their clients' ongoing growth," adds Dikijian. "My goal is to provide my team with the support they need so they can flourish and also to ensure they feel like they are an integral part of the Center."

The biggest challenge is finding the resources necessary to help young adult and adult clients successfully achieve their person-centered outcomes. Dikijian explains, "For example, things have become so expensive for someone to move out and live on their own, so how do you help a client achieve this personal growth outcome and feasibly sustain this achievement. It takes a lot of teamwork and collaboration to make this goal a reality. But it is the belief that we can make a difference in the lives of our clients and in the importance of what we do here that drives us to find sustainable solutions."

During her time at Lanterman, Dikijian helped start the Armenian Parent Support Group. She also participated as the Lanterman liaison during the selection process for residents at UCP's apartments in Burbank. She shares, "There have been so many moments that were good in my years at Lanterman. I feel like it's my second family here and I get so much satisfaction from my team, the work that we do, and the progress and success of the individuals we work with."

In her free time, Dikijian, a longtime resident of Santa Monica, likes reading everything from "Harry Potter" to nonfiction books, such as "A Thousand Splendid Suns" about life in Afghanistan, and books on autism. She also enjoys shopping and traveling, and her favorite place in the world is Paris. She continues to be active in the local Armenian community. Fluent in French, Armenian and English, Dikijian can also speak Arabic. "My background and my life experiences have helped me a lot in understanding different cultures and contributes to the work that I do at the Center," she adds. ■

The DISKovery Center is Committed to Improving Accessibility for Technology Users with Diverse Abilities

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, LANTERMAN designated a part of grant funding from the California Consumer Protection Foundation to form partnerships with local community technology centers, one of which was the DISKovery Center.

Christine Mayola, resource and information specialist, says, "The local CTCs had also received a grant at the same time from the same foundation to facilitate the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities at their sites to complete a two-month, computer-based, autobiographical, digital storytelling project, offering the perfect opportunity to jump start this new relationship."

But long before a partnership started developing between the DISKovery Center and Lanterman, the DISKovery Center was already focused on accessibility issues. Steven Wong, program manager at the DISKovery Center, shares, "A large percentage of the local residents we serve are seniors and many of them have age-related disabilities, including physical mobility issues, low-vision, and hearing impairments, so we've been working to make our facilities more accessible for a while now."

Back in 2004, the DISKovery Center was able to move to a new location in a newly remodeled building in the heart of Little Tokyo. Wong adds, "Some of our older seniors would stop attending because it became physically impossible for them to reach our old second floor office, but now that we are in a newer building where everything is ADA

compliant, the physical space has become much more accessible."

The DISKovery Center was also recently awarded a \$20,000 grant through the Connections for All project that is a collaboration between the Community Technology Centers' Network and the Alliance for Technology Access, and is funded by AT&T. Wong explains, "This grant made it possible for us to work with EmpowerTech and have them help us develop and implement a technology-related plan to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, and to purchase assistive technology hardware and software for our sites in Little Tokyo and Echo Park."

Additionally, the DISKovery Center's classes and workshops are designed to be repetitive and to accommodate the cognitive disabilities that may accompany an aging population. Wong adds, "The way we structure and teach many of our classes makes it very conducive to including individuals with developmental disabilities into our regular classes." DISKovery Center staff also participated in an inclusion and sensitivity training with Sherry Beamer, an inclusion consultant.

The DISKovery Center is committed to improving accessibility and as they become more capable of serving a wider range of diverse abilities, they are reaching out to other technology users with special needs, including the Lanterman community. The DISKovery Center also created an access oversight committee that provides guidance and

recommendations on disability-related issues. "There are things that we'd still like to do, such as installing automated doors, that are cost prohibitive, but what ever accessibility issues that we can address within our means we are doing, such as lowering the reception counter and installing a doorbell for individuals to ring if they need assistance in opening the outside doors," adds Wong. Based on input from the access committee, the DISKovery also redesigned their Web site to make it more accessible.

For more information about the DISKovery Center, visit www.diskovery.org. If you're interested in taking classes at either of the DISKovery Center's two locations, contact Christine Mayola at [213.383.1300](tel:213.383.1300), x. 750 or cmayola@lanterman.org.



Lanterman client Brian del Rosario is being assisted by Anita Lie, accessibility coordinator at the DISKovery Center, with a shooting exercise as part of his computer class.

Jewelianna Bello-Lira’s Use of AAC Device Reduces Frustrations and Increases Successful Communication Opportunities with Her Family

SIX YEARS AGO, OUT OF THE BLUE, DAVID Bello received a phone call from Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital in Whittier regarding his sister. He shares, “Apparently I was on my sister’s emergency contact list and she was in the hospital giving birth to my niece Jewelianna. My sister abused drugs while she was pregnant resulting in Jewelianna being born 14 weeks prematurely.”

Bello and his life partner Jim Lira visited Jewelianna while she was in the hospital, but shortly after her mother abandoned her at the hospital, she was moved from the hospital in Whittier. Lira explains, “Once this happened, she basically got lost in the system. After spending close to three years looking for her, I happened to be talking to a co-worker of mine, and she said she may know someone who could help, made one phone call, and we found out that Jewelianna had been placed in a home out in Riverside.”

While they wanted to bring Jewelianna home with them immediately, they were living in a one-bedroom house at the time which didn’t have enough space to accommodate her needs, so they drove out to Riverside from Los Angeles two to three times per week to visit her while they figured something out. Bello says, “There was an incredibly generous individual who knew about our situation and sold us this wonderful place that we now call home for half-price. And almost a year to the day after we found Jewelianna, she moved in with us.” Six months after moving in, Bello and Lira officially adopted Jewelianna in May 2006.

When Jewelianna moved in, Bello took family leave to be able to spend time getting to know her, and two weeks and one day before he was supposed to return to work as a digital data system technician he had a life changing experience. He shares, “We were all watching television one night, and Jewelianna was on the floor, and suddenly, she rolled over, crawled to the couch, pulled herself up onto the couch so she could cuddle, and I realized that if I was working I would have missed out on this experience, so Jim and I made the decision that one of us should stay home with her, and I called my work the next day and told them I wasn’t coming back.”

In the two years that Jewelianna has been living with her new family, she’s made some remarkable improvements. When she first moved in, she was unable to balance her torso, was on 13 drugs per day, and had no verbal communication, however,

“Jewelianna has blossomed so much in the last two years with the speech, occupational and physical therapies, as well as with the AT, which has given her the independence of being able to choose what she wants when she wants it.”

—DAVID BELLO AND JIM LIRA



Jewelianna Bello-Lira’s use of AAC device has given her the independence of being able to choose what she wants, when she wants it, and has increased successful communication opportunities with her parents Jim Lira (left) and David Bello.

she was able to gesture some needs using her right hand. She also started working with Kat Andrews, a clinical program coordinator and assistive technology specialist at Holding Hands Pediatric Therapy. Andrews, who is also her case supervisor, notes, “At first, a lot of our work in the Floor Time program was focused on helping Jewelianna develop torso control by incorporating occupational therapy techniques. Also, due to my past involvement with the pilot Assistive

Technology Project at Lanterman, I introduced some assistive technology into the picture.”

Lira, who works as a health care assistant at Salvin Special Education Center, explains, “We spent a few months really getting to know Jewelianna and what her strengths, as well as her needs were, so we could better decide

what additional services we wanted to pursue for her. After seeing how she responded to the assistive technology, we followed up on Kat’s recommendation to get a consultation through the Regional Center.” The family met with Cynthia Cottier, a speech-language pathologist who has worked in the field of Augmentative and Alternative, Communication (AAC) for 25-plus years, and she made some recommendations in her report as far as communication devices. At this same time, Lanterman was transitioning to having the Assistive Technology Exchange Center (ATEC) at Goodwill Industries of Orange County provide assistive technology consultations and services.

Russell Dwiggins, senior technology specialist at ATEC, says, “Jewelianna had no way to communicate except for gestures and by pulling her parents’ hands. She also has limited fine motor skills so we had to find a device that she could access with her gross motor skills and decided to start with a Go Talk 9. She started with one picture, and then moved up to two pictures, and she now uses six pictures to communicate some of her needs – from using the restroom to wanting her favorite toy.” For entertainment, Jewelianna also uses IntelliKeys, which is linked to a software program that allows her to use the images on her keyboard to play corresponding children’s songs and stories.

Jewelianna has been gradually weaned off of all but four of her medications. With assistance from a specialized walker, Jewelianna can now walk, however, primarily still uses her customized wheelchair to get around. The family regularly visits Shane’s Inspiration in Griffith Park, takes Jewelianna horseback riding in Montebello, and goes to Disneyland at least once per month.

Bello and Lira both share, “Jewelianna has blossomed so much in the last two years with the speech, occupational and physical therapies, as well as with the AT, which has given her the independence of being able to choose what she wants when she wants it. And it has eliminated a lot of her frustration and ours at not being able to communicate.” Andrews adds, “Jim and David have done a great job of teaching Jewelianna self-help skills and with using the assistive technology devices to allow her to tell them what she wants to do. They have very realistic expectations about what AT/AAC will be able to do for Jewelianna and they are committed to doing what ever it is they need to do to help her be as independent as possible.”

Mentoring, Support and Dinner

By Vicki Forman

“I DON’T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT... HOW DO YOU MANAGE? WHAT’S IT LIKE?”

For the parent of a child with special needs, these refrains are all too familiar. We’ve heard them from strangers and family members, from friends and parents of typical kids. The questions imply that somehow we special needs mamas are saints, or superhuman, or a little bit of both. The truth is, we’re not. But if we’re lucky, and we’re making it look easy, it’s because we’ve discovered we’re not in it alone.

My son’s occupational therapist introduced me to my first special needs friend. At the time, I did not have a single friend who understood this life of hospitals, doctors, medications, illnesses and treatments. Kelly’s son Luke had recently been diagnosed with cerebral palsy and had the same OT. “Can I have her e-mail you?” the OT asked, “to see if she has questions.” Kelly’s e-mail brought me her friends Traci and Carrie, and soon the suggestion was made: “What if we all meet up in person?” And so our group, “The Premie Moms,” was born.

Our first night together was like a blind date of special needs. It took us nearly three hours to go around the table and tell our stories. When we were done, we sat alone on a dark patio, the restaurant emptied around us, our words of loss still hanging in the air above the table, keeping company with the laughter too.

For many years the group has met regularly to trade stories, keep each other grounded, and celebrate birthdays and milestones. Usually one of us will send out an e-mail, something like, “It’s been too long!” and then another will pick a restaurant, suggest a time and day, and then the e-mail flurry continues as we try to juggle our schedules. Eventually, the night comes and we find ourselves together again, the same way we were that very first night – eating, drinking, and sharing stories, laughter and tears.



Vicki Forman (center) with her daughter Josie, and her friend Holly and her daughters Alexandra and Sydney. Holly, although not one of the Premie Moms, is another key support person for Forman.

The four of us have followed each other’s journeys through IEPs, medical complications, therapeutic victories – and defeats. We share impressions of clinics, treatment plans, programs and services. We urge each other to seek out second opinions or alternative treatments. Even more important – beyond the support and advice – is the fact that apologies and guilt are not allowed. One member has since moved out of town, but when she returns we still meet up. Our kids are getting older – some are walking, others are talking, some are in special education and some are not – and still we remember how much we matter to one another, how lucky we are to have found each other and what we are able to offer: advice; the occasional black humor; the permission to feel lonely, upset, angry or lost; the willingness to watch tears and listen to dark thoughts; and, finally, the refusal to judge.

Recently a mother of three typical kids said to me, “How do you do it?” I could tell she used the words intently, that she honestly wanted an answer to that question. “I get a lot of support,” I said. “I couldn’t do it by myself.” She was wondering, she went on to explain, because in the small town where we live there aren’t a lot of kids like my son, and most of the families probably don’t know what it would be like to raise a child like him. “When you hear what people complain about,” this mother went on to say, “doesn’t it just drive you nutty?”

“Not any more,” I said, thinking of the Premie Moms. “I’ve been really lucky to find friends who understand. I couldn’t do it without them.” ■

Sexual Health and Safety Education
Classes Offered

Continued from page 1

conversations can be hard for parents. There are a number of misconceptions that the general public, parents and families have about sexuality as it relates to people with developmental disabilities, causing a greater resistance on their part to understand and accept the need for sexuality education.”

The training for parents, called “Sexuality and Youth with Developmental Disabilities” is a three-session training facilitated by Medsker and designed to educate parents and provide strategies to assist them in developing positive communication about sexuality and reproductive health. The goals of the training are to:

- Educate parents about human sexuality, sexual development and reproductive health, and how they impact their children’s development and behavior.
- Introduce the concept of healthy sexuality.
- Improve communication about sexuality and reproductive health between parents and their children.
- Improve parental responses to their child’s behavior.
- Help parents reduce the risk of sexual abuse or exploitation of their children with special needs.

Medsker adds, “The parent component really lays the groundwork for parents to understand how valuable sexuality training is for teens and young adults with developmental disabilities. When young people don’t have information, rather than protecting them, it puts them at greater risk. It’s important to make sure that they have accurate information, and if they don’t get it from their parents, they’ll get it from their friends, the movies or the street. The training also helps parents recognize the role they play in reinforcing what their children learn, and provides them with the confidence to comfortably and knowledgably answer their children’s questions about sexuality, as well as the opportunity for sharing their family values and beliefs around sexuality.” The training also gives parents a chance to talk to one another about their experiences with their children as it relates to puberty and share ideas about appropriate ways to respond to various behaviors and other strategies.

The sexuality training for teens and young adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities is called SHASTA, short for “Sexual Health and Safety for Teens and Adults with Developmental Disabilities,” and is a six-week series of workshops that emphasize sexual health and safety. Melissa Mills, program manager with Planned Parenthood Los Angeles’ Ujima Teen Center, shares, “The SHASTA curriculum is based on the belief that sexuality is a part of all people’s lives, whether they are sexually active or not. The curriculum helps prepare people with developmental disabilities to handle typical social and sexual situations by using concrete examples and visual images, as well as role playing and rehearsing responses to build practical health, interpersonal and safety skills.”

“Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children, but having these conversations can be hard for parents. There are a number of misconceptions that the general public, parents and families have about sexuality as it relates to people with developmental disabilities, causing a greater resistance on their part to understand and accept the need for sexuality education.”

—DIANE MEDSKER

Workshop topics cover everything from gender and sexual anatomy, to puberty and hygiene, sexual feelings, behaviors, relationships and dating, sexual decision making and safety, sexual health, and sexual rights and responsibilities. Mills adds, “The sessions stress the importance of recognizing and respecting sexuality, and help participants understand what are appropriate public and private behaviors, and how to reduce their risk of being abused or exploited.”

For more information about “Sexuality and Youth with Developmental Disabilities” contact Diane Medsker at 310.395.0098 or diane.medsker@pp-la.org. For more information about “Sexual Health and Safety for Teens and Adults with Developmental Disabilities” contact Melissa Mills at 323.751.7505, x. 222 or melissa.mills@pp-la.org. You can also contact Maureen Wilson at 213.383.1300, x. 719 or mwilson@lanterman.org. To register for either training contact your service coordinator. Classes are conducted at various locations throughout the Lanterman community. ■

“everyone is different” Informs and Supports Those Individuals Who Are Making a Difference in the Lives of Students with Special Needs

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Lanterman introduced a new support group in the greater Eagle Rock area – “everyone is different.” The group was designed to meet the needs of parents, friends and families of students with special needs and the professionals that work with them.

Sandy Riancho, one of the support group’s facilitators and a resource and information associate at Lanterman, says, “After Friends and Families of Persons with Developmental Disabilities stopped meeting, we found that there was still a desire to have a support group in the Eagle Rock area. When we looked at what people’s needs were and what they were interested in, it became evident that they wanted more information and support related to the school-age years and what happens after school, and to network with other families in similar situations.”

Inspired by a mission – to inform, support and share similar and unique situations that families encounter throughout this journey – all the new group needed was a location. So Riancho, along with co-facilitators Nellia Lippman, service coordinator, and Annette Manning, a Lanterman parent, decided that the perfect setting for a group like this would be a school campus. They started looking, and ultimately approached Eagle Rock High School, which agreed to let them use the campus library for a meeting location.

Lippman shares, “We want this group to be a place for families to get together, to connect and share their personal experiences and stories, and to learn from each others successes and failures, as well as how to meet their challenges.” At most of the group’s meetings there is a presenter. Topics have ranged from individualized education planning to advocacy, the transition to adulthood, journaling and inclusion. Manning adds, “After a presentation, we will exchange ideas and share concerns that the presentation may have raised. As part of the meetings we also help other members brainstorm solutions that help them better support inclusion in any and all areas of their children’s lives. And this is also a great place to share tips and ideas about the other agencies that our children are involved with, such as Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.”

Riancho, Lippman and Manning would like to help people realize that everyone is different, and rather than being afraid of differences they should praise and appreciate unique talents. Riancho adds, “Many of us who have children with special needs want them to be like everybody else, but it’s OK to be different, and we should highlight what our kids are capable of.” And it’s from this belief that the group got its name – “everyone is different.”

Lippman has been with Lanterman for over three years and has worked in the Glendale Service Coordination Unit with a diverse group of clients ages 14 and older, and their families. Lippman has a background in psychology and early childhood special education. Prior to coming to Lanterman she worked as a family support adviser with families who had children from birth to 5 years of age. She says, “I want to share the information that I have with families and caregivers and do everything to make them aware that they are not alone in this journey.”

Riancho has also been at Lanterman for over three years as a staff member, but prior to that she volunteered with the Center as a Peer Support Partner and as a facilitator of the Friends and Families of Persons with Developmental Disabilities. She used to work for Glendale Memorial Hospital Health Ministry. She shares, “As a parent, I remember the first time I found out that there were support groups and became involved in one, and what a difference it made to know that I wasn’t alone. Now that I work here and know even more about what resources are available, I feel that I have a commitment as a parent to share all that info. The one thing that I learned as a parent though, people aren’t going to find you, you have to find them.”

Manning adds, “I’ll see families in my neighborhood in Eagle Rock that have a child with special needs, but I hesitate to approach them out in the community, not knowing their situation, and this support group provides an arena where we can talk and get together, and help our children.” ■



Support Group Facilitators Nellia Lippman (left) and Sandy Riancho.

“Many of us who have children with special needs want them to be like everybody else, but it’s OK to be different...”

—SANDY RIANCHO

“everyone is different” Meeting Information and Contact Details

Eagle Rock High School Library
1750 Yosemite Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90041
323.340.3500

Monthly – last Thursday of each month
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Sandy Riancho – 213.383.1300, x. 716 or sriancho@lanterman.org
Nellia Lippman – 213.383.1300, x. 554 or nlippman@lanterman.org
Annette Manning – 323.256.6829

Oral Health Education is the Key to a Healthy Mouth

AS THE EVIDENCE CONTINUES TO STACK UP about the importance that good oral health plays in an individual’s overall health, it becomes even more important to provide frontline caregivers with the preventive tools and strategies necessary for them to help the children and adults they care for achieve a healthy mouth.

Leticia Reyes, dental coordinator, shares, “I see oral health education, for our families, our service providers and our adults with developmental disabilities as one of my most important responsibilities. As they say ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’ and it’s much more desirable to prevent oral health issues by educating people about the simple tools and techniques that exist to help with keeping the mouth open, brushing hard to reach places and even flossing.”

Reyes gives several oral health education presentations for families each year, and once per year, she presents to service providers in a larger group setting about general oral health. However, during the course of the year, at the request of the service providers themselves or service coordinators, she will present at an average of 10 in-services for individual homes about everything from general oral health to more specific topics. She adds, “I gear my

presentations to what’s appropriate for the individual home and the unique needs and challenges of their residents.”

Lanterman also has an Adopt-a-Home program, where the Center partners with students in the dental hygiene programs at Pasadena City College and West Los Angeles College. Students in these programs are provided an overview of what the Regional Center does, what are some of the oral health issues in individuals with developmental disabilities, and how to approach and interact with the homes’ residents. Then, depending on the number of students, an appropriate number of homes are adopted.

Reyes shares, “In each of the homes that have been adopted, we will do dental screenings on all of the residents, and then each of the students is assigned a resident for whom they will do a case study and then create an individualized oral health plan. They learn to see how the medications the person is taking affect oral health, and also look at the relationship between oral and systemic health. The students also follow up with the home twice over the course of two months, building relationships with the residents and the home’s staff, and at the same time educating the staff about oral health care.” ■



Leticia Reyes (left, standing) provides an overview about the regional center and developmental disabilities for dental hygiene students who are participating in the Adopt-a-Home program.



Good oral health plays an important role in a person’s overall health, and Leticia Reyes recently provided oral health training to the Vagthol’s Residential Care Center, Inc. staff.



Rebuilding Together Pasadena Enabled Joan Gardenhire to Move Back Home

AFTER HER MOTHER’S DEATH MANY YEARS AGO, JOAN GARDENHIRE continued to live in her childhood home in Pasadena, but about two years ago, she experienced some medical difficulties and needed to be hospitalized. Gardenhire, 64, was then transferred to a convalescent home to recuperate her strength and learn to manage her ongoing medical issues. She spent over one and one-half years in the convalescent home, but the thought that kept her going and gave her hope was returning to her home. However, the barrier to returning home was needed improvements and adaptations to her house.

When Sean Goudeau, Gardenhire’s service coordinator, began working with her, Rebuilding Together Pasadena had already been contacted. He adds, “By the time I came on board, the process had already been started, so I just worked hand-in-hand with Modern Support Services, to make sure that the project was moving along.”

Rebuilding Together Pasadena is a non-profit organization whose volunteers help homeowners who are low-income, elderly or have disabilities in Pasadena and Altadena remain independent, safe and warm in their own homes by doing home improvement charges free of cost, such as landscaping, cleaning, priming, painting, drywall, and installing ramps, smoke detectors and handrails.

Goudeau shares, “It took Rebuilding Together Pasadena about one month to make Joan’s house inhabitable for her, however, given that it’s a volunteer-based organization, it took a while to get enough manpower and man-hours to do the actual work. They installed ramps in the front and back yards, leveled her floors, put new carpeting in, painted the inside and outside of the house, replaced some windows, installed a couple of wall air



Joan Gardenhire is standing in the kitchen of her home, thanks to the efforts of Rebuilding Together Pasadena to make her home more accessible.

“She wanted to come home, and had the will and the drive to return home, and now that she’s here, she’s doing what it takes to be able to keep living in her home.”

—BRENDA JONES

conditioning units, made her bathroom accessible, and did some upgrading in the kitchen of appliances and faucets.

Brenda Jones, Supported Living Services area manager at Modern Support Services, says, “In addition to the home improvement modifications, Joan required 24-hour supported living services to help her monitor her diabetes and with her mobility issues; assist her with banking, insurance, taxes, grocery shopping, meal preparation, and gardening; and with her medical appointments, as well as assistance with other daily living needs.”

Gardenhire, who is described by everyone who knows her as outgoing, fun and possessing a great sense of humor, is finally back at home and settled. She has rejoined her community and with some additional support has gone back to living her life. She is back at her day program with Easter Seals, attending church regularly, and visiting with her family and friends. Gardenhire says, “I try to do as much as possible by myself. I do volunteer work at the church, remember to water my flowers everyday, and I like to crochet and knit. I also like to sit and watch television or listen to rock ‘n’ roll music. I enjoy watching nice stories, soap operas and game shows.”

Rebuilding Together Pasadena still has some superficial work to complete on the house, but Gardenhire with the assistance of the staff at Modern Support Services is once again working to make her house into a home again. “I’m getting decorations for the different holidays and JCPenny is coming out to do drapes for some of the windows,” she adds. Healthwise, Gardenhire is doing really well. She’s keeping her diabetes under control and exercising every day. Jones shares, “She wanted to come home, and had the will and the drive to return home, and now that she’s here, she’s doing what it takes to be able to keep living in her home.” And as Gardenhire would say, she’s once again the lady of her house.

For more information about Rebuilding Together Pasadena, visit www.rtpasadena.org.

Staff Highlight

Early Intervention Service Coordinator Specialist Ameenah Francois

AFTER TEACHING SPECIAL EDUCATION HIGH school science for two and one-half years at her former high school, Ameenah Francois decided to make a career switch, and joined Lanterman Regional Center six years ago as an Early Intervention service coordinator.

Francois explains, “I felt that working at Lanterman would offer me the chance to build on the education-related case management experience I gained as a special education teacher, and would make better use of my degrees in psychology and biology, as well as fulfill my desire to continue working with children with special needs.”

A graduate of the University of California, Davis, Francois’ teaching experience in South Los Angeles afforded her the opportunity to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. She adds, “The experience taught me the value of working together as a team with the different partners, and putting our heads together to come up with new ideas and ways to motivate the children and meet their unique challenges.”

In addition to providing service coordination to infants and young children from birth to 3, Francois, who was promoted to service coordinator specialist last year, also mentors new service coordinators, occasionally participates in the Early Intervention Developmental Clinic, and works with families in complex situations. And she enjoys participating in outreach and community awareness activities. She was also involved in a pilot dental project for families in Early Intervention that increased the awareness about oral health issues and the need for dental screening in young children, which was so successful, it has since been included as an integral part in the Individualized Family Service Plan.

When asked what is unique to Early Intervention service coordination, she replied, “I think that this



Service Coordinator Specialist
Ameenah Francois

is a very challenging time in a family’s life. Many of them have just gone through a pregnancy, and had expectations of a ‘perfect baby,’ and when the baby is not developing on target and is at risk for a developmental disability, whether it’s their first or fourth child, they all of a sudden have to deal with a whole different set of circumstances and the full gamut of emotions, from anger and sadness to guilt and frustration. Early Intervention is not just about coordinating services, it is also about empowering and educating families to be an advocate for their child, building a partnership, helping them learn to work with the different public agencies, reassuring them and making them feel comfortable and supported.”

Early Intervention work is fast-paced, in part due to the stringent time guidelines for implementing services, but also because of the considerable positive impact starting services as young as possible has on a child’s development. Francois shares, “The moments I enjoy the most are when I receive a phone call from a parent about their child who took his or her first steps or said a first word. It’s also gratifying to know that I was part of the empowerment process, and it’s wonderful when you realize one day that the parent you are working with almost doesn’t seem like the same parent that

“I encourage parents to look at the world through their child’s eyes, to give their child with special needs as many experiences and opportunities as possible so they can reach their individual potential, and to celebrate every moment.”

—AMEENAH FRANCOIS

you first started working with because they have become an advocate for their child.”

One thing that Francois has learned during the last five years as a service coordinator is to remember that there is a child behind all of the documents who doesn’t realize that they have challenges or limitations. She shares, “I encourage parents to look at the world through their child’s eyes, to give their child with special needs as many experiences and opportunities as possible so they can reach their individual potential, and to celebrate every moment.”

A couple of years ago, Francois was inspired by Rachel Ray’s television show about 30-minute meals and became passionate about learning to cook. A resident of the South Bay, she enjoys hanging out with friends and family. She also likes making beaded jewelry, and this past Christmas along with some of her co-workers made jewelry to donate to *Holidays are for Sharing*. “My favorite time of year at Lanterman is the holiday season, and in particular, the annual staff appreciation party. We’re all about business all year long, and the party is the one day when we all relax and have a little fun together,” she explains. Francois and her husband have been married for three years and are expecting their first child, a girl.

Sylvia Lee Builds Opportunites

Continued from page 1

As time progressed, Lee’s behaviors diminished, she was weaned off of all but one medication, and she developed new skills. Seisa shares, “I started thinking to myself that Sylvia has a chance to work. Needless to say, everyone looked at me like I was nuts, but I kept thinking about how much Sylvia likes bringing order to things and realized that there were a number of paying jobs that were a good match to her strengths and new found abilities.”

So last summer, Seisa approached Build Rehabilitation Industries with an idea – find a way to get Lee a job and earn her own paycheck. Sato Gharibian, vice president at Build, says, “We are all about giving opportunities to people, because if you don’t give them a chance, you’ll never know if it’s going to work out. The only issue we had was how we were going to supervise her since our 20 or so employees in the Burbank workshop operate independently with limited supervision and Sylvia needed one-on-one assistance. Eventually, we decided that she would temporarily be supported by someone from her home while we figured out a solution.”

And earlier this year, Lee started working at Build.



Sylvia Lee does a variety of different work at Build Rehabilitation Industries in Burbank, including collating, folding, stuffing envelopes and packaging products.

Seisa says, “We were so excited. Here was someone who had lived in a state institution for 45 years, living in the community, working and earning a paycheck. It was unheard of and it made you stop and think about how many other people are out there like Sylvia, that we don’t give enough credit or opportunities to, or have high enough expectations of, but who with the proper support and encouragement from those of us providing services can live productive and satisfying lives as contributing members of their communities.”

Lee does a variety of different work at Build – collating, folding, stuffing envelopes, and packaging products. Gharibian explains, “Because she’s obsessive-compulsive, Sylvia’s conditioned towards repetitive behaviors, so anything that repeats a task over and over she is able to do well. She just requires the activity to be demonstrated a couple of times and then she’s off. She does from time to time need someone to help her stay focused and motivated, and redirect her attention when necessary.” Seisa adds, “In the time that Sylvia has been at Build she has continued to make progress. Her productivity compares with that of the other employees, and some of her behaviors have decreased further because of being part of a work environment and having the opportunity to socialize with her peers.

“Sylvia’s story challenges us to change the way we think about individuals with significant developmental disabilities and serves as an inspiration to us all. We need to look beyond the three-plus pages of challenges, and focus on an individual’s strengths...”

—ANN SEISA

We’re hoping that in the future Sylvia will be able to make the transition from a one-to-one aide to a higher ratio of one-to-three or one-to-four.”

Rowena Pangan, Lee’s service coordinator shares, “Given Sylvia’s background, we had to do a greater degree of creative case management, but in the end, the way the supports came together really made the difference for her, and it’s great, the changes that have taken place in her since she started working at Build. Her physical appearance, her outlook and her attitude have all changed for the better – she’s a much happier person now that she’s working. And what’s also really nice is that the other employees at Build have accepted and welcomed her.”

Seisa shares, “Sylvia’s story challenges us to change the way we think about individuals with significant developmental disabilities and serves as an inspiration to us all. We need to look beyond the three-plus pages of challenges, and focus on an individual’s strengths and what he or she can do. Look at Sylvia. Look at where she came from and where she is now. ‘How much further can she progress?’ Compared with the challenges facing Sylvia two years ago, her biggest challenge now is that she is not able to communicate her needs verbally, and we’re exploring assistive technology options to help with this.”

Build is in the process of developing a program that will make it possible for other individuals like Lee to be employed so they too can have the experience of working and earning a paycheck. If approved, this new program will offer support in a one-to-four ratio in the workshop environment. Gharibian shares, “I view the workshop environment as a stepping stone towards community employment. It allows individuals to come through and get the training and experience to grow and develop, not only their skills, but also emotionally and mentally. We have a job club at Build, and for those employees interested in community employment, we help them develop their resumes, practice interviewing, and role play different scenarios so they learn how to handle situations that may arise in their work environment and with their co-workers.”

So it’s quite possible, that one day, with the continued support from those that believe in her, Lee may very well be employed in the community. ■

Lanterman Board of Directors Elects an Additional Member in September

In addition to the two new members that were elected to Lanterman's board of directors in June – John Erdos and Howard McBroom, the board also elected Vicki Forman in September. Each of these new members brings with them a unique set of skills and experiences, and the Lanterman community looks forward to the perspective, guidance and leadership these individuals will be providing during their terms on the board of directors. A bio on Erdos appeared in the summer 2007 edition of the newsletter. Following are bios that offer a look at both the personal and professional experiences of McBroom and Forman.

Vicki Forman Brings Experiences as a Writer, Teacher and Parent to the Board; Looks to Focus on Advocacy and Education

SOME WILL SAY THAT THERE IS NO MORE powerful means of communication than the written word. From the simple to the complex, the analytical to the passionate, the written word allows us to document and share current information, our feelings and much more, and preserves it for the future. With the importance that the written word plays in advocacy and education, Lanterman Regional Center is fortunate to have had Vicki Forman join the board of directors. Forman, a graduate of the University of California, Irvine, with a master's degree in english and a bachelor's degree in literature from Yale University, has been a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Southern California since 1997.

Prior to becoming a lecturer at USC, Forman was an instructor at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. She also taught at UCI's Extension. She teaches both fiction and nonfiction writing, and her research interests include creative nonfiction, creative writing, disability studies and contemporary fiction since 1950.

Forman, who has a 7-year-old son served by Lanterman, shares, "I firmly believe in volunteerism and giving back, and I hope to use my experiences as a writer, teacher and mother of a child with special needs to educate the general population about issues surrounding regional centers, and also to be a strong advocate for the Center and the Lanterman community."

A prize-winning author, she started writing a monthly column in January 2007 in "Literary Mama" called "Special Needs Mama" that reaches over 6,000 readers. Forman has also written a book called "This Lovely Life, A Memoir," which narrates the first year in her and her husband's lives as the parents of a child with a disability. In addition, she has written several book chapters and nearly one-dozen short stories and/or essays that have appeared in a half-dozen anthologies. And she has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize.

"In addition to advocacy, I'm very interested in becoming more involved with programs and services-related issues, as well as performing outreach to clients and parents. I also have a strong interest in legislative affairs and planning for the future, because today's children with disabilities become tomorrow's adults with disabilities.

Forman has served as treasurer for five years for the Pediatric Epilepsy Project at UCLA. She is also a member of the Modern Language Association, the Mid-Atlantic American Culture/Popular Culture Association and the Southwest Popular Culture/American Culture Association.

She has lived in Southern California with her husband Cliff Kamida for 15 years. They have two children, a daughter Josie and son Evan. In her free time, Forman enjoys yoga, reading, knitting and jewelry-making. And she recently started taking classes to obtain her degree in nursing. ■



Lanterman Board Member
Vicki Forman

"I firmly believe in volunteerism and giving back, and I hope to use my experiences as a writer, teacher and mother of a child with special needs to educate the general population about issues surrounding regional centers, and also to be a strong advocate for the Center and the Lanterman community."

—VICKI FORMAN

Howard McBroom Brings His Passion for Advocacy and Education to the Board

RECENTLY ELECTED TO LANTERMAN'S BOARD OF directors, Howard McBroom is looking forward to doing his very best for the board, and as he calls it, the Lanterman Center.

A member of the class of 1977, McBroom graduated from Indiana University at Bloomington with a bachelor's degree in history. Shortly after graduating, he moved to Los Angeles where he worked at Curtin Security from 1977 to 2003, when the company shut its doors, after which he briefly found work with another security company, but left the new job after a short stint.

It was around this time that a friend of his who is a disability advocate suggested to McBroom that he might be eligible for regional center services. And in 2004, one year shy of being 50 years old, McBroom was diagnosed with autism for the first time. He shares, "When I first came to Lanterman, I was having some difficulty taking care of myself, but Marie McGinley, my service coordinator, helped me find a new place to live in Glendale that would be easier for me to manage, and with some independent living services I've been doing better ever since. I call it my cozy little cubby hole."

In 2006, McBroom started working part-time at the Vons just down the street from his apartment as an inventory tagger. He says, "I started working at the same store where I grocery shop, so I joined a workforce of people who already knew me. I like my job a lot."

He has also been a member of the Center's Programs and Services Committee and enjoys participating in community awareness activities. "I went to Sacramento earlier this year as part of the Grassroots Day delegation to share with our legislators and their staff about the important work the Lanterman Center does to support people like me. Marie and I also speak to different groups. We call ourselves the dynamic duo. She talks about what services are available to help young adults transition to adulthood, and I talk about my life, how Lanterman helps me and how it's possible to live independently," adds McBroom.

In his free time, when he's not visiting friends, McBroom enjoys reading history, particularly 20th century American and European history. His favorite history book is "The Longest Day: the Classic Epic of D-Day." He also writes science fiction, which he is working with some of his friends to get published. He shares, "I was recognized as being the number one fan of the World Wrist Wrestling Championship that used to be held in Petaluma, California. I watched the championship in person every year for over 25 years, but they don't hold it anymore." McBroom also volunteers as an usher on Wednesday nights and Sundays at SpiritWorks, his church in Burbank. And two of his friends have made a film treatment of a movie that they would like to make about his life.

He says, "I take my responsibility as a board member very seriously. I would like to do as much as possible to help Lanterman by advocating and speaking out on behalf of how vitally important the services Lanterman provides are, since without the Lanterman Center, I'm sure I would have ended out on the street."



Lanterman Board Member
Howard McBroom

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.

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.

The Holiday Season is a Time for Hospitality and Charity

As WASHINGTON IRVING PUT IT SO WELL, THIS is “the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart.”

And there is nothing better than a holiday season filled with fellowship, feasting, giving and receiving – a time of good cheer, and memories of home. But for many of the children, adults and families served by Lanterman who struggle with daily challenges, the holidays can be an especially difficult time.

In the spirit of the season, through our *Holidays are for Sharing* program, we reach out to those members of our community who need a little extra help during this festive time of year. And now more than ever, times are getting tougher for many more people – meaning more people needing assistance and less people able to meet this increased need.



“Even if many of us can only do a little, we all need to do what we can.”

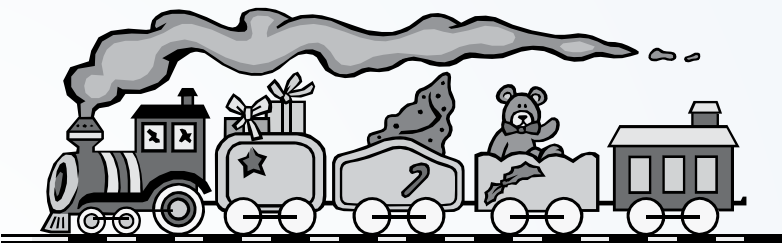
Diane Anand, executive director, shares, “Even if many of us can only do a little, we all need to do what we can. The Lanterman community has always risen to the challenge and our combined efforts will make a world of difference this holiday season – from a gift for a child who would otherwise go without, to enough money for a holiday meal, or even funds for clothes.”

—DIANE ANAND

Please Help Us Share the Spirit of the Holidays

For nearly 30 years, friends and families of Lanterman Regional Center have stepped up to meet the critical needs of members of our community who require a little extra help not only during the holidays, but throughout the year as well.

Generous donations from members of the Lanterman community may mean gifts for children or enough money for a holiday meal. It also means that the Center can provide emergency assistance throughout the year to our clients and families with food, financial aid and other necessities that we are not otherwise able to provide with the funds from our contract with the State.



Throughout the years, *Holidays are for Sharing* has made a significant difference in the lives of members of our community and there are several ways that you can help:

- ❄ Donate online with your credit card at www.lanterman.org/donate/online donations.asp
- ❄ Send a tax-deductible contribution in the form of cash, check or money order
- ❄ Donate a new gift, art supplies, personal care items, baby products or a food/gift certificate
- ❄ Adopt-a-Family and provide them with food and gifts for the holiday
- ❄ Give through your company’s United Way program
- ❄ Participate in “Matching Dollars” if your company has a matching fund program
- ❄ Publicize the program through your business, club, church or service organization

Checks should be made payable to “FDLRC *Holidays are for Sharing*” and mailed to *Holidays are for Sharing*; c/o Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center; 3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700; Los Angeles, CA 90010. Gifts should be delivered unwrapped to Lanterman Regional Center.

For more information about *Holidays are for Sharing*, e-mail hafs@lanterman.org or call 213.383.1300, x. 613. Please know that 100 percent of your gift – whatever its size – goes directly to assist clients and families.



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PAID
Glendale, CA 912
Permit #276

Viewpoint

“Viewpoint” is a publication of Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center. It is produced for the benefit of all members of the Lanterman community.

Estimated Circulation: 8,000

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTORS: Vinita Anand, Vicki Forman, Billy Hall, Christine Mayola and Leticia Reyes

“Viewpoint” can be viewed online at www.lanterman.org. To contact the “Viewpoint” editor, send an e-mail to vanand@lanterman.org or call 213.383.1300, x. 753.

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