

Learn More About MRSA – Signs and Symptoms, Treatment and Prevention

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METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS aureus (MRSA) infection is caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria – often called “staph.” Decades ago, a strain of staph emerged in hospitals that was resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat it. Dubbed methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), it was one of the first germs to outwit all but the most powerful drugs. MRSA infection can be fatal.

Staph bacteria are normally found on the skin or in the nose of about one-third of the population. If you have staph on your skin or in your nose but aren’t sick, you are said to be “colonized” but not infected with MRSA. Healthy people can be colonized with MRSA and have no ill effects. However, they can pass the germ to others.

Staph bacteria are generally harmless unless they enter the body through a cut or other wound, and even then they often cause only minor skin problems in healthy people. But in older adults and people who are ill or have weakened immune systems, ordinary staph infections can cause serious illness.

In the 1990s, a type of MRSA began showing up in the wider community. Today, that form of staph, known as community-associated MRSA, or CA-MRSA, is responsible for many serious skin and soft tissue infections and for a serious form of pneumonia.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Staph infections, including MRSA, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils or spider bites. These can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that require surgical draining. Sometimes the bacteria remain confined to the skin. But they can also burrow deep into the body, causing potentially life-threatening infections in bones, joints, surgical wounds, the bloodstream, heart valves and lungs.

Continued on page 10

Articles Focus on Lanterman’s Efforts to Address Challenges

Given the significant challenges facing the developmental services system and the regional centers, many of the articles in this newsletter focus on Lanterman’s efforts to address these challenges, including educating our legislators about the impacts of their policies and decisions, as well offering solutions for how to sustain the entitlement for future generations.

These articles start on the homepage with the piece on the Legislative Forum and continue on pages 2 through 5 with The Director’s Viewpoint, The Budget Update, A Letter to the Lanterman Community from Board of Directors Chair Gary Pancer, and the Center’s participation in Grassroots Day.



Inclusion Films Wraps Up Pilot Practical Filmmaking Workshop with Screening of “Sweet 16”

Inclusion Films’ student filmmakers and staff, along with members of the “Sweet 16” cast, answer questions after the film screening.

See story on page 13

Legislative Forum Addresses Many Challenges Faced by the Regional Center System as Part of State Budget Problems

GEORGE SKELTON’S “CAPITOL JOURNAL” column on March 3, “Clock is ticking for new speaker,” included a quote from Karen Bass, the Assembly speaker-elect: “To me, the point of politics is to move policy. Power for the sake of power doesn’t interest me. I’m interested in power for the sake of making sound public policy.”

But how do legislators know where their constituents stand on the issues and where do they get the information they need to make decisions on public policy? They depend on their constituents to be actively involved in the legislative process and educate them about the impact that a particular policy would have on their lives.

Under term limits, the longest any person can serve in the Assembly is six years, and the same with the Senate, which means that someone who has been serving for four years is considered to be a veteran

legislator. And in politics, it takes time to acquire policy expertise and hone skills, so just as someone is able to do this, they are termed out. Karen Ingram, director of Community Services says, “We have a responsibility as constituents to educate both our new and ongoing legislators about the issues that impact children and adults with special needs and their families so they know where we stand and how their decisions will impact our lives.”

And that’s why Lanterman hosted a Legislative Forum in mid-February at The California Endowment’s Center for Healthy Communities attended by over 60 members of the Lanterman community, including individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, service providers, Lanterman staff and board members, and representatives from several legislators.

Continued on page 4

Kurt Freidenberger Epitomizes Scout Spirit and Goes the Extra Mile to Achieve Eagle Scout

NOT MANY OF US CAN SAY THAT BY THE TIME WE turned 18, we’d hiked several hundred miles throughout Southern California and the High Sierras, climbed rock faces 80-feet high or descended over 120 feet, and made Eagle Scout, but Kurt Freidenberger can.

When Kurt was 10, Scout Master and Scout Council Member Ross Kelsey, head of Troop 319 in La Crescenta, suggested to Kurt’s father Pete that he should follow in his big brother Colin’s footsteps and become a Scout. Pete shares: “Until Ross suggested the idea, I hadn’t actually thought that Kurt would be a Scout, but when he turned 11, we signed him up. It was slow going at first compared to the other children, but after a couple of years, Kurt had gradually moved up from Scout to Tenderfoot and then First Class, and he started to earn a few merit badges. That’s when I thought to myself, he could carry this through all the way to Eagle Scout.”

Kelsey adds: “I invited Kurt to come to our troop with Colin because there is so much for people to learn from people with disabilities. That is what he has to offer. To educate people and teach compassion...Kurt is always ready to go. You can’t be around him without smiling. The other boys got that too.”

As Kurt advanced in the scouting ranks, he took to heart and truly came to embody the Scout Law which says, “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean



Eagle Scout Kurt Freidenberger

Continued on page 9

The Director's Viewpoint

The Passing of a Pioneer...The Passing On of the Responsibility

ALL OF US AT LANTERMAN

– and I personally – were greatly saddened by the recent passing of Katie Nack. She had been in failing health for several years and died at her home at age 83.

Many of you reading this will know Katie only as a name, and perhaps not even that. Some of you will have seen her as an eloquent participant in the documentary film “We’re Here to Speak for Justice” about the founding of the regional centers. I can tell you that she was truly a guiding force who helped shape the regional centers and became a dedicated leader in our community.



Executive Director Diane Anand

When her daughter Susan was born with Down syndrome, Katie was devastated at first – especially in a time when there were no options for children with disabilities other than institutionalization. Katie saw that as unacceptable and launched into efforts with other parents to change what would have been a bleak future for their children. Once she decided to get involved, she never looked back. Susan became a client of the pilot program housed at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.

Katie was one of the incorporating board members when Lanterman Regional Center separated from Childrens Hospital, and went on to be a three-term president. Over the years, she devoted many, many hours of service and leadership, not only to Lanterman, but also to Villa Esperanza and the city of Pasadena. Her life was one of great community involvement, and there is more written about her many accomplishments elsewhere in this newsletter.

She was intelligent, articulate and relentless in her pursuit of a better world for people with disabilities. She was also a treasured mentor and friend. We shall all miss her.

Katie saw the regional center system begin, grow and survive many challenges – and she would have been especially concerned to see the looming crisis which again threatens the viability of our system.

Continual budget cuts, along with governmental and bureaucratic shortsightedness, are once again threatening this bold – and for 40 years, successful – experiment.

Our board of directors have always have been strong supporters of the Lanterman Act and the entitlement that it bestows on Californians with developmental disabilities. For this reason, five years ago we adopted a position paper called “Sustaining the Entitlement for the Developmental Services System: A Regional Center Perspective.” We have watched with increasing concern as the State has struggled to contain costs while repeatedly failing to address the core structural problems that are undermining the foundation of the entitlement. During the ensuing five years, these structural problems have continued to grow and we now face a crisis, with a community-based service system that is under extreme stress and has its very existence threatened.

In light of the current realities, we have revisited and revised the position paper. The paper offers a series of recommendations which, taken together, provide a realistic policy framework and effective tools for addressing the problems which threaten the viability of the developmental services system. In the end, they would contribute significantly to ensuring that the system created by the Lanterman Act will be sustained for future generations. The full text of the paper can be found on our Web site at www.lanterman.org.

The Lanterman Act is not only an entitlement, it is a trust – a dynamic trust which must be nurtured, protected and adapted by each generation. We need parents to step in now, raise the banner of local control, and take their place as leaders and volunteers who will not let what is best in the system die, while dealing with the new economic realities.

Katie's passing reminds us that the service system we enjoy today was forged through the tireless efforts of pioneering parents to ensure a better future for their children. It is our turn to protect the trust for the next generation.

The survival of the regional center system depends on each of us.

THE BUDGET UPDATE

Significant Cutbacks Proposed, Hard Choices Need to be Made

THE GOVERNOR HAS RELEASED HIS PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2008-09. SINCE WE last reported, the estimated budget deficit has grown to more than \$14 billion and is expected to go even higher. The challenge remains as to how to meet the diverse needs of Californians within limited resources.

As we indicated last time, the governor directed state agencies to put forth budgets for 2008-09 that reduced spending across the board by 10 percent. The Department of Developmental Services, in putting forward its proposal, included existing cost containment methods, rate freezes and unallocated reductions that make up the bulk of the required “reduction.” As a result, the proposed budget, which includes money for expected client growth, is actually larger than the prior year. It is far from certain, however, that it is adequate to cover the growth we have been experiencing.

Significant cutbacks are also being proposed for other state-funded programs. These include a 10 percent rate reduction for Medi-Cal providers (California already has the lowest paid providers in the nation), a delay in the cost of living adjustment for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients, and significant cuts to the education budget, including special education.

This, however, is just the opening act of the budget scenario that will be played out between now and the coming summer.

In mid-February, the governor did sign emergency measures enacting the Medi-Cal cuts and keeping in place existing cost containment measures (such as rate freezes and the prohibition against using funds to start new programs) in the regional centers.

Most significant at this point is a bill enacted in the emergency session that restricts the ways in which regional centers can negotiate rates with service providers. Effective July 1 of this year, for those categories where regional centers are allowed to negotiate rates, we cannot pay more than the statewide median rate or the local median rate paid to existing providers of the same service, whichever is lower. This is expected to produce lower rates for new providers and will mean that many regional centers (particularly those in more costly urban areas) will have a difficult time recruiting new providers. Many may be unable to recruit or maintain enough providers to meet existing needs. This could very well lead to waiting lists as additional clients and families look to receive services from a more limited pool of providers.

The various measures enacted and proposed may help to close the budget gap but will by no means eliminate it. Hard choices will need to be made in the coming months as state policymakers consider available revenues and desired expenditures to come up with a budget. ■

DDS Report “Controlling Regional Center Costs” Released

AB 203, passed last August as one of several budget-related bills and signed by the Governor on August 24, 2007, required the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to submit a report to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, and the Senate and Assembly Human Services Committees listing out options “to better control” regional center costs of “operating and providing state-supported services.” This 102-page report, called “Controlling Regional Center Costs,” provides both prior and impending cost-containment options for regional centers. It was released to the Legislature on April 7, 2008 and is available for viewing on the DDS Web site at www.dds.ca.gov and on the California Disability Community Action Network Web site at www.cdcan.us.

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.



A Letter to the Lanterman Community

*from Gary Pancer, President
and Chair of the Board of Directors*

FIVE YEARS AGO, IN JANUARY OF 2003, the board of directors of Lanterman Regional Center adopted a position paper entitled, "Toward a Sustainable Entitlement for the Developmental Services System: A Regional Center Perspective." We developed this paper in response to the financial crisis facing the state of California at that time – a budget shortfall significantly greater than any other in the State's history. Our great concern was that the escalating rate of service growth and the cost of those services in the regional center system would not be sustainable in the long term, given the limitations of public resources. We were also concerned that the entitlement to services could be threatened. We decided, therefore, to take a proactive stance and offer our perspective on the challenges and recommend potential solutions.



Our position paper included a set of recommendations for changes to the developmental services system that we believed would result in a more equitable and cost-effective entitlement program under the Lanterman Act and help ensure that it could be sustained for future generations of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Many of the recommendations were based on Lanterman Regional Center's experience over the years as we have tried to meet the needs of clients and families while being good stewards of public funds. The recommendations also reflected strategies that have been used successfully by this regional center and others to address challenges in our local communities.

At the time we developed the position paper we saw serious threats to the entitlement looming on the horizon. We now find ourselves face-to-face with those threats. We have suffered five years of rate freezes deeply affecting community service providers while the cost of doing business has continued to increase. We are now facing a freeze on negotiated rates, a reimbursement system that was intended to fairly compensate new and innovative types of services for which traditional rate models were inappropriate or wholly inadequate. Further, we have had no funds for resource development that would enable regional centers to facilitate development of innovative services based on advances in knowledge and technology.

Mandates by the State to limit spending have repeatedly failed to achieve this objective because they have left unaddressed the structural issues that are at the heart of this ever-worsening problem. The regional center population continues to increase at a rate significantly greater than the population growth in the State and the cost of services far outpaces what would be expected for the increase in the client population and the rate of inflation.

The financial situation in the State continues to worsen and the State is now facing a budget deficit of historic proportions. In recognition of the seriousness of the escalating fiscal crisis, Governor Schwarzenegger has called an emergency session of the Legislature and the Department of Developmental Services has been mandated to submit an "exhaustive list" of changes that could be made to address the escalating costs in the developmental services system.

We believe that everyone associated with the regional center system has a responsibility to contribute to the search for solutions that will result in a fair, equitable and sustainable developmental services system. To that end, we have reaffirmed our support for the position put forth in the January 2003 paper and have revised it to reflect the economic and political events that have occurred since its initial publication. This revision includes expanded discussion of some issues, most notably the use of cost-effective services and supports, particularly those provided in integrated (included) settings and those with a preventive focus. We believe that only a comprehensive approach, based on thoughtful analysis and empirically-based policy development, can result in effective solutions to the problems we face.

The recommendations contained in the revised document, taken together, provide a realistic uniform policy framework and effective tools for addressing the structural problems which represent a serious threat to the viability of the development services system. They would facilitate movement of the system in a positive direction by moderating cost escalation, allowing the State to better predict the growth of the program from year to year, and better ensuring equity within and across regional centers. We believe our recommendations, if implemented, will contribute significantly to ensuring that the system created by the Lanterman Act will be sustained for future generations.

We are committed to sustaining the entitlement of the Lanterman Act. This can only be achieved, however, if we undertake to seriously and realistically address the current challenges to the system. To do otherwise is to allow continued deterioration of the community-based service system that will be extremely difficult to reverse and will result in increasing inequities and unaddressed needs. The Legislature must seize the opportunity at this critical juncture to make the investment in rational system change that ensures fairness, cost-effectiveness and accountability in the context of a community-based service system that is sustainable for future generations of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Our intent is to give this paper wide distribution. You will find it on our Web site at www.lanterman.org. It will be sent to Governor Schwarzenegger, state departments, and members of the Legislature. This is an important time in our history and a most critical time for all of our voices to be heard. We are hopeful that this paper makes a positive contribution to the search for solutions.



Gary Pancer, President and Chair of the Board of Directors

Fondly Remembering A Pioneer...

KATIE NACK, A LONG-STANDING AND VALUED member of our Lanterman Regional Center family, passed away March 16 in Pasadena. She was 83 and had been in failing health for several years.

Those who did not know Katie personally may remember her as the first parent appearing in the regional center documentary "We're Here to Speak for Justice."

Her daughter Susan was born with Down syndrome at a time when families had virtually no service options. After her initial shock, Katie decided she was going to make the world a better place for her daughter and others with developmental disabilities, and became a guiding force in the evolution of the regional center system.

As a child, Susan was a client of the pilot program housed at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. That program – one of two in the state – would go on to become Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center.

Katie was one of the incorporating board members when Lanterman Regional Center separated from Childrens Hospital. She went on to be a three-term board president, and led the Center during the period when Lanterman also governed what is now Westside Regional Center, helping establish a new corporation and a new board of directors. Katie also served on the board of the statewide Association of Regional Center Agencies.

When Susan became a student at Villa Esperanza, Katie became very involved with that organization. She served several terms as board president and then as consultant to the board.

Her involvement in the field of developmental disabilities would be an impressive service resume in and of itself. But Katie's life was filled with much more.

She grew up in Tyler, Texas where she studied mathematics and dress design. She was one of 100 female math and science majors selected nationwide to study aeronautical engineering at the University of Texas, replacing the male engineers during World War II. After the war, she moved to Pasadena and attended the UCLA School of Architecture. Katie became one of the first 10 women in the state of California to earn a license to practice architecture.

She and Donald Nack, a father of three, married in 1955 and had three children of their own.

Her public service career began with an appointment to the Pasadena Planning Commission in 1979. She was then elected to the Pasadena Unified School District Board of Education where she served three terms as president. During that time she worked tirelessly for school integration. Having grown up in Texas, she understood first-hand how important it is for children of all races to attend school together.

A 66-year resident of Pasadena, she was a member of the City Council from 1987 to 1995, serving as mayor in 1994.

Katie retired from public service in 1995 to dedicate her time and energy to caring for Don, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. In typical fashion, she joined the Board of the Alzheimer's Association of Los Angeles.

Called a "true pillar of the community" by Pasadena



Katie Nack

Mayor Bill Bogaard, Katie was described by others as "standing Texas tall, but knowing how to bend down to serve others." Always a lady, she was a formidable force for good, focusing her steely determination on many causes over the years.

Her dedication, energy and leadership benefited countless families and children. Katie Nack truly made a difference, and she lives on in the many good works she accomplished in her lifetime.

We at Lanterman Regional Center have lost a pioneer and a good friend. ■

Legislative Forum

Continued from page 1

The main focus of the forum was on the proposed budget cuts and changes, and how they would impact children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. The forum featured a panel that included three service providers and a client, as well as a family.

Steve Schultz from AbilityFirst addressed the need for affordable housing and discussed some of the challenges organizations face when developing this type of housing – primary of which is the inflexibility of state and federal government rules and regulations. With most local area Housing Authorities not even adding names to their already long waiting lists, the only viable option is to develop affordable housing to meet the needs of the increasing number of adults with developmental disabilities who want to live independently.

The second panelist, Lupe Trevizo-Reinoso of Easter Seals Southern California, shared some of the issues that supported living providers face on a daily basis when looking for housing options for individuals with developmental disabilities. Common issues include:

- They may have no credit history, or have had their credit abused.
- They are considered higher risk renters.
- The required security deposit and first month's rent for an apartment in Lanterman's service area is anywhere from \$1,800 to \$2,500.
- They have limited experience handling money and personal finances.

But the challenge doesn't stop there, if they can get past the concerns mentioned above and get a place rented, an individual's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) money is not adequate to cover basic living expenses – rent, gas, water and power, phone, homeowners insurance, property taxes, cable, transportation, food and other miscellaneous household expenses. In the three examples shared, the unmet need between monthly expenses and SSI ranged from \$306.17 to \$470.78. The difference is made up through loans and supplemental income, and Easter Seals also gathers donations of household items and supplies. Trevizo-Reinoso noted: "In the face of all of these challenges, what motivates us to keep on the hunt for apartments for adults with developmental disabilities is their expressed desire for having their own space, personal independence, and things like a full-size bed rather than a twin bed and having their guests stay over as late as they want. Which are all the things that the majority of adults desire."

Ann Seisa, owner of Vagthol's Residential Care Center, Inc., spoke about the impact of rate freezes and lack of regular cost of living adjustments on service providers. Since 1991, the reimbursement rates for most care providers have been stagnant. While there was a three percent increase given to some providers in 2007, this does not cover the increases in utilities, gasoline and insurance, for example, that providers have experienced. These



The Legislative Forum panelists included an adult client, a family, three service providers and Lanterman staff. They addressed the proposed budget cuts and changes, how they would impact children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families, and also suggested solutions for tackling the tough challenges.

rates are now proposed to be frozen permanently while the cost of caring for individuals with developmental disabilities continues to increase. She said, "There are grave consequences stemming from these policies – providers cannot keep pace with the cost of doing business and they are closing their doors, and those that are staying open face the challenge of trying to hire and retain quality and experienced staff."

Robert Aber, a 70-year-old client of Lanterman, with a background in psychology, including professional experience doing psychological testing and assessments, shared with participants the effect that an 18 percent cut in In-Home Support Services would have on him and his life. Aber, who has limited mobility, including difficulty using his hands because of cerebral palsy, receives about four hours of IHSS per day. Aber demonstrated the difficulty that he had just putting a straw in a cup, which is the only way that he can drink, sharing with the audience as the straw popped out of his hand onto the floor, that getting it into the cup was "no slam dunk" for him. Aber explained, "An 18 percent cut in IHSS would be an 18 percent cut in my life, and for me and others in similar situations, it could mean we would have to go into more restrictive living situations."

Ingram elaborated on some of the budget proposals and cost containment measures, and offered suggestions about what practices all regional centers should adopt, including transportation vouchers. She also shared instances where providers in the developmental services field were switching to similar work in other areas, such as the Department of Corrections for much better salaries, as well as the perception that people in prison are better cared for than many people with developmental disabilities, who with the 18 percent cut in services would be like prisoners in their own homes.

Lanterman parents, Monika and Brad Jones, talked about the significant difference that early intervention services have made in the quality of life for their son Henry. Henry was born with a rare brain disorder and doctors recommended frequent and intense therapy to help retrain his brain. A hospital social worker at the University of California, Los Angeles, referred them to Lanterman. They shared: "We consider ourselves to have exceptional

"An 18 percent cut in IHSS would be an 18 percent cut in my life, and for me and others in similar situations, it could mean we would have to go into more restrictive living situations."

—ROBERT ABER

insurance, however, they cap therapy at 20 sessions per year, which is less than one month of what Henry required. The EI program has been a godsend. Without it, we don't know where we'd be, as well as the financial or psychological impact of all of this, and what to expect for Henry over his lifetime."

But even with all of these challenges, people with developmental disabilities in California have something no resident of any other state has – the entitlement to services and supports granted by the Lanterman Act to enable them to live more independent, productive and normal lives. But the entitlement is under increasing stress, especially with the growing budget crisis in California now estimated to be \$16 billion. "Even though California has an open-ended entitlement it has been pushing up against the limits of government funding for a number of years," said Diane Anand, Lanterman's executive director. "If we want to hang on to and sustain this unique and valued entitlement, we need to set priorities and define what is in the benefit package. The Lanterman Act states that the State has 'a' responsibility, not the sole responsibility, for people with developmental disabilities. Families and individuals with developmental disabilities have a responsibility too. Together we need to make hard reasonable choices, to help change and grow the system in innovative and cost-effective ways. The budget remains the most powerful public policy. No matter what the Lanterman Act grants if the funding is not sufficient the entitlement will not be viable into the future." ■



Over 60 members of the Lanterman community – individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, service providers, Lanterman staff and board members, and representatives from several legislators – attended the mid-February Legislative Forum to hear about the challenges facing the regional center system and to find out what they could do to get involved in the legislative process.

NOC "Legislate" Section
Makes it Easy to Track Bills and
Communicate with Lawmakers

Lanterman's Network of Care has a "Legislate" bill-tracking section that features a list of state and federal bills from the current legislative session that could affect people with developmental disabilities. The section is updated daily so users can follow amendments and votes. Once users have read the latest developments and formed their own opinion on the legislation, they can communicate their views directly with lawmakers using the fast and easy e-mail system.



Visit Lanterman's Network of Care at www.lanterman.networkofcare.org and click on "Legislate" to access the lists for state and federal bills.

Lanterman Participates in 2008 Grassroots Day; Budget Cuts Major Focus of Visits

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

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

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

This year, the State’s Grassroots Day was held on Wednesday, March 5, and Lanterman sent five individuals that represented the four key segments of our community – clients, families, service providers and staff. The client representative was Susan Tomic, Kelly Sanchez represented families, service providers were represented by Ann Seisa, and the Center was represented by Director of Community Services Karen Ingram and Service Coordinator Marie McGinley.

During the course of the day, Lanterman’s representatives visited the offices of senators Jack Scott and Gilbert Cedillo, Speaker of the Assembly Fabian Nunez, and Assemblymembers Paul Krekorian, Mike Feuer, Kevin de Leon and Anthony Portantino. The group primarily discussed the impact of the budget cuts. Here’s what some of them had to say about their visits:

Susan Tomic, Lanterman client

I’ve been living independently in Glendale since 1990 and I’ve worked at Bank of America in Pasadena for over 11 years. This was my first time in Sacramento. It was interesting and I really liked it. I talked about all the budget cuts and shared with them that I need the services and I wouldn’t know what to do without the services and all the help that I get if they get cut. It was valuable to talk to our representatives, and I liked talking to Assemblymember Paul Krekorian, he’s a nice person. I also enjoyed walking through Sacramento and sightseeing, but what I didn’t like about the trip was flying.



Lanterman’s Grassroots Day delegation members Susan Tomic (front) and from left, Kelly Sanchez, Marie McGinley and Ann Seisa.

the need for services such as In-Home Support Services to continue in order for clients like Susie to remain living independently. He asked that we continue to spread the word around to other state representatives about this and the other needs of people with developmental disabilities. The day went well and I think that the experience was good for everyone. ■



Lanterman client Susan Tomic meets with Assemblymember Paul Krekorian during Grassroots Day.

Recruiting Community Members for Local Legislative Visits

As Kelly Sanchez said, “Everyone’s voice matters.” So get involved in local legislative visits throughout the year to keep our legislators informed and remind them just who we are and how we are being impacted by their policies.

To get involved, contact Karen Ingram, director of Community Services. She can be reached at 213.383.1300, x. 5694 or kingram@lanterman.org.

Lawmakers Unveil Legislative Effort on Autism

Package of Bills Crafted Based on California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism Report

LAWMAKERS RECENTLY UNVEILED A comprehensive legislative package of eight bills to combat the rise in diagnoses of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in California. The bills were inspired by a report issued by the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism. “This Commission was charged with providing real solutions and recommendations to improve the lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families,” said Senate pro Tempore Don Perata, who authored the resolution that created the commission (SCR 51, 2005).

The Commission consists of health experts, family members, business leaders, educators and researchers, and is chaired by Sen. Darrell Steinberg. “The rise in children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder affects families, schools and communities all over California,” Steinberg said. “Today this Legislature is responding strongly to the challenges this disorder poses to the State.”

After conducting extensive public hearings and town-hall meetings throughout California, the Commission submitted its findings and recommendations to the governor and Legislature in its September 2007 report, “An Opportunity to Achieve Real Change for Californians with Autism Spectrum Disorders.” You can read the report at <http://senweb03.senate.ca.gov/autism/index.html>.

“With the broad participation of parents, families, clients, educators, clinicians, researchers and advocates, the Commission’s report provides a momentous step in forging new directions for real change,” said Dr. Barbara Firestone, Commission vice chair and president and CEO of The Help Group.

The autism legislative package includes the following bills:

- SB 1563 (Sen. Perata) to provide appropriate and equitable coverage for ASD by private health plans and insurers
- SB 527 (Sen. Steinberg) to improve the early identification and intervention for young children with ASD
- SB 1175 (Sen. Steinberg) to expand the housing and independent living opportunities for adults with ASD
- SB 1475 (Sen. Tom Torlakson) to improve the coordination of ASD services and programs between regional centers and school districts for children from birth to 5 years of age
- SB 1364 (Sen. Gil Cedillo) to improve community awareness and outreach efforts on ASD by the California Department of Public Health
- SB 1531 (Sen. Lou Correa) to improve the training and knowledge of ASD among law enforcement officers
- AB 2303 (Assembly Speaker-Elect Karen Bass) to expand the credentials that would qualify teachers to educate students with ASD
- AB 1872 (Assemblymember Joe Coto) to establish a state clearinghouse for the education of students with ASD

The autism legislative package is supported by numerous families and stakeholders such as actor Gary Cole, the parent of a child with autism. “The Autism Commission has not only garnered enthusiastic support from stakeholders and autism organizations, but today’s California autism legislative package brings real hope into the lives of individuals and families coping with autism throughout our State and nation,” said Cole.

Sign Up for Legislative E-mail Bulletins

To receive action alerts and stay informed about legislative issues impacting the Lanterman community and regional center system sign up for legislative e-mail bulletins by visiting Lanterman’s Web site at www.lanterman.org and clicking on the “Subscribe” link. Be sure to select the “legislative” option when you sign up.

SAVE THE DATE!

Lanterman to Host Affordable Housing Legislative Forum

The affordable housing legislative forum will be held on Thursday, September 11, 2008. It will be an all day forum held at the Los Angeles Cathedral. More details to come.

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 January to April 2008, the following individuals received service awards for their years of service to Lanterman Regional Center and the community: Lorena Avalos, Myrna Contreras, Mary Flynn, Hector Gravina, Garik Gyuloglyan, Juan Maldonado and Janette Villasis for five years of service; and Zena Begin, Steve Ganoe and Debrah Murphy for 10 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.

I have stayed at Lanterman because of the families I have met. I'm honored to know these families and for having been given the chance to share in their lives. I live in the community I serve, so I get a chance to see the children at the park, in the store, and even at ball games since some play on the same baseball team as my son. I feel that because I'm part of the community it has enabled me to become better acquainted with the local resources available to meet the needs of the children and families I work with. I worked in the Early Intervention unit for my first five years, and when I transferred to the Foothill School Age unit upon its formation, I was able to keep 75 percent of my caseload from early intervention. I have seven children that I've known since they were born and two are turning 10 this year. It's been wonderful to watch them grow up and also defy the odds placed against them by doctors who told their parents they would never walk, talk or participate in their community. Another reason I've stayed at Lanterman is the staff. We are our own community – we support each other, enjoy watching our children grow up, and are truly a family.

—ZENA BEGIN



Zena Begin
service coordinator specialist, Foothill School Age Service Coordination Unit, 10 years

The last five years working at Lanterman have been a great experience – from supporting the computer class students to sharing the knowledge of assistive technology with others. It's all been wonderful. And I'm looking forward to another five great years.

—GARIK GYULOGLYAN



Garik Gyuloglyan
computer support assistant, Koch-Young Resource Center, 5 years



Hector Gravina
service coordinator, Early Intervention Service Coordination Unit, 5 years

Time goes by so fast. I'd forgotten I have been here for five years and loving every minute of it. Wow!

—HECTOR GRAVINA

I have stayed here at Lanterman because I love my job. It means a lot to me to educate women in taking a more proactive approach to accessing their healthcare. A lot has changed in my life since I took a more proactive approach to my health – my seizures are less frequent, I can talk to my doctors and ask questions, and I am able to understand what is going on with my body. I feel that is important to be able to advocate for oneself. Having been the victim of sexual assault at the age of 13 by an uncle that I trusted, and a rape victim at the age of 23 by a security guard that offered to give me a ride home, it is very important to become educated on how to reduce the chance of being sexually abused or assaulted. My work is to educate and I will continue to educate with a passion.

—MARY FLYNN



Mary Flynn
peer advocate, Training and Development, 5 years

Throughout these years, I have realized that Lanterman is a rewarding and enriching organization and this is the reason I have stayed so long. One of my fondest experiences is the relationships that I have built and the different people that I have met, which has made my stay here much more enjoyable.

—JANETTE VILLASIS



Janette Villasis
secretary, LA Hollywood Service Coordination Unit, 5 years

It's been very rewarding for me to be able to help so many people realize their goals and dreams over the years in a dynamic environment.

—STEVE GANOE



Steve Ganoe
service coordinator specialist, Pasadena Service Coordination Unit, 10 years

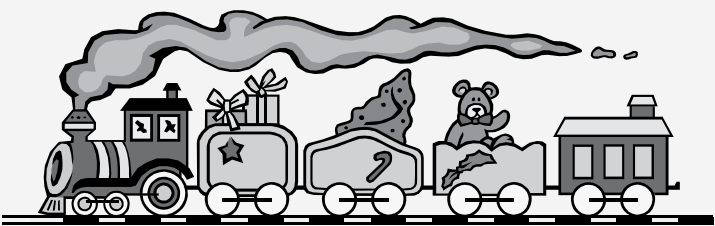
There is a certain “calling” that I have always had for working with young children and their families. It's a different experience working with families in Early Intervention than with families with older children in other units, since the majority of them have only recently learned their child has been diagnosed with a developmental delay or disability. Given that this area has always been my interest, it seems fitting that I've been at Lanterman for as long as I have. Also, the staff that I manage, and the other employees at Lanterman, are a very special part of why I have remained here. My special memories are of the annual staff appreciation party, which provides an opportunity for Lanterman's leadership to show the staff how much they are appreciated for all they do on a daily basis, and it allows all of us to “let our hair down” and for a short time leave all the stress behind.

—DEBRAH MURPHY



Debrah Murphy
regional manager, Early Intervention Service Coordination Unit, 10 years

Lanterman Community Makes 2007 Holidays are for Sharing Most Successful Campaign in Recent Years



OUR HEARTFELT thanks to all of the friends and families of Lanterman Regional Center that made the 2007 *Holidays are for Sharing* campaign the most successful in recent years. We were able to fulfill every request from both families of children with special needs and adults with developmental disabilities.



Diane Anand, executive director, says, “The Lanterman community came together to support those members of our community who needed a little extra help during the holiday season, and made a difference in the lives of hundreds of our community members who otherwise may not have been able to celebrate during this special time of year.”

The 2007 *Holidays are for Sharing* campaign saw donations in some of the categories double or even triple compared with 2006. Lanterman was able to provide 556 Target gift cards, 992 food vouchers and over 5,000 toys and other age-appropriate gifts for children and adults. The Westlake Lutheran Church selected 112 Lanterman clients to be part of their

Christmas Angels program; Temple Ahavat Shalom provided 42 holiday baskets, \$3,000 worth of toys and clothing for children and adults, and through their Twining Program, 14 children’s birthday party baskets; and 63 families were adopted through Lanterman’s Adopt-a-Family program.

The Center received just over \$36,000 in cash contributions from families, service providers, staff and other friends of Lanterman, a portion of which is used during the holiday season, with the remainder being allocated to the Help Fund, which provides 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.

Through payroll deductions, Lanterman staff contributed an additional \$8,600. The *Holidays are for Sharing* Committee also organized several fundraising raffles held at the office, as well as other events, including a swap meet and an arts and crafts sale. Along with these efforts, the Center continued the Lanterman Lotto and recycling program, and held an in-house toy drive. A few other donations, including ones from Cars 4 Causes, Edison International and United Way, rounded out the cash donations, and brought the total to a little over \$49,000.

Several organizations, including Super Estrella, Turning Point Church, the Office of the City Attorney of Los Angeles, and Accredited Nursing, organized toy drives from which an estimated \$17,500 worth of toys were collected. The Center also received about \$3,000 worth of toys from Toys for Tots and \$1,500 from Alliance for Children’s Rights. Donations of gifts for adults and other gifts in kind were valued at \$16,500. The total cash value for donated items was estimated at just over \$54,000.

Anand adds, “By coming together, the Lanterman community was able to make this holiday season better for the children, adults and families served by the Center who struggle with daily challenges and ensure that there was a gift for a child who would otherwise have gone without or food for a holiday meal, and that these individuals could walk away knowing that they were not alone but part of a caring and compassionate community that truly embodied the spirit of the season.”



Temple Ahavat Shalom student, Karen Yakobi, prepares turkey baskets with fellow students and parents, which will later be filled with an assortment of food items.

“The Lanterman community came together to support those members of our community who needed a little extra help during the holiday season, and made a difference in the lives of hundreds of our community members who otherwise may not have been able to celebrate during this special time of year.”

—DIANE ANAND

Community Resource Fair Showcases Inclusive Community Options



ORGANIZED BY THE FOOTHILL School Age Service Coordination Unit, the fourth annual community resource fair held in March at the Pacific Community Center in Glendale was a rousing success. Co-sponsored by the City of Glendale Parks Recreation and Community Services Division, the fair featured approximately 50 community agencies that focused on a variety of topics, including parks and recreation programs, legal advocacy, medical and dental care, summer camps, dance and music programs, and free and low-cost community programs. Over 120 families attended the event. “The fair is a great opportunity for families to find out what resources and activities are available for children and adults with special needs. It also provides an opportunity for the participating agencies to learn more about the other agencies’ programming related to special needs,” shares Candice LaMere, Foothill School Age’s regional manager. And special thanks to the 35 Lanterman staff that attended the fair and the Foothill School Age Team for their ongoing commitment to broadening the inclusive community options for Lanterman families. If you missed the fair, check out Lanterman’s Network of Care at www.lanterman.networkofcare.org for a variety of community-based resources.



Lanterman families check out resources and programs available from approximately 50 community agencies (above), including dental resources (bottom left) and Danny’s Farm (bottom right).



A Special Trip to Disneyland

DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE 2005-06

school year, Paula Stanley was asked to substitute for three days for a special education class at an elementary school in Glendale. She shares, “I was credentialed to teach K-8 regular education and had an interest in history, but no interest in special education, so I agreed to substitute for one day since they were so short. But by the end of the first day, I’d fallen in love and couldn’t wait to go back.” Shortly thereafter, she substituted for one week at Wilson Middle School in Glendale, where she was then asked to take over as teacher for the remaining six weeks of the school year. Stanley, whose first master’s degree was in education, went back for a second master’s degree in special education.

Stanley returned to Wilson Middle School as a full-time special education teacher at the start of the 2006-07 school year. Her class currently has nine students with moderate to severe disabilities. They regularly go on field trips out in the community so the children can practice their social skills in different situations. After a successful trip to a local restaurant, Stanley, a huge Disney fan, jokingly said to one of the parents we should go to Disneyland, and from there an idea was born.

Stanley says: “The students were so excited, but first we had to fundraise. We started recycling, and parents were hitting up their friends, family and neighbors for cans and bottles. The students also sold homemade holiday ornaments from which they raised about \$50. Our school PTA and principal were very supportive as well. Our PTA president donated funds to purchase each child Mickey ears with their name embroidered on the back. One



grandparent donated his change jar which was worth approximately \$180. The Glendale Foundation donated a charter bus for the class to use.”

Just about the time they had reached their halfway goal, someone shared with Stanley about Disneyland’s Community Involvement Program, which offers tickets to Disneyland on select days for individuals with disabilities and five additional guests at half-price. “With this great bit of news, our fundraising was over. We’d raised enough money to cover every expense for the children and their aids, including meals and even \$15 per child in souvenir money,” explains Stanley.

When the day finally came, and the eight children boarded the bus, waiting on each of their seats was a plush toy – a Mickey Mouse for the boys and a Minnie Mouse for the girls. “It was the most amazing trip – there was not one negative behavior, no one got lost, the students all knew exactly what time we would be doing what,” shares Stanley. “Some of the students had never been to Disneyland before. There was one student,

Special Education Teacher Paula Stanley organized a special trip to Disneyland for her students at Wilson Middle School in Glendale. The students held a number of fundraising activities to raise the money to be able to go during Disneyland’s Community Involvement Program.

who doesn’t say much, but he walked up to one of the Disney characters and started talking. He was so taken by the whole experience. One little girl was a bit afraid, but when she saw Cinderella, she started hand signing to express her joy. The Disney employees and characters really embraced our students and it was very touching to watch.”

At the end of the day, the children picked out their souvenirs. Stanley adds: “There was no give me, get me, I want...no one asked for anything, and when they made their souvenir choices they picked a pen, a coffee mug and other small items. We also brought back a souvenir for one of the students who was not able to join us for health reasons.”

The trip to Disneyland was a great learning experience. Stanley shares: “I really want people to know and see how special outings like this are for this incredible population. Just recently, someone said to me, ‘I can’t believe you took them to Disneyland, they can’t do anything there.’ Everyday I see that these kids face barriers that are often placed upon them, and so unnecessarily.” Stanley’s middle school class is looking forward to many more additional skill building community-based adventures during the coming school months.

Imaginary Forces Gives Back to Their Neighbors

AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, WE’VE ALL FOUND

ourselves driving by a group of people and wondering about their story – “Do they live around here?” “Are they tourists?” “What brought them here?” And then we drive on, never knowing the answer to our questions.

But what happens when you take the time to stop and find out? Nine years ago, Chip Houghton, co-founder of Imaginary Forces, did just that. He shares, “Every day on my drive from the Westside to Hollywood, I’d be traveling through some of the side streets and I’d see the same group of people – some in wheelchairs, others walking, along with their caregivers – and I’d wonder to myself if they lived around here, was it more than one family, so finally one day, I stopped my car to find out.”

Houghton discovered that he worked right around the corner from one of Vagthol’s Residential Care Center’s homes in Hollywood. After he arrived at the office, he had his assistant look up additional details and set up a time to visit the home. He adds: “I have been so fortunate, and wanted to be able to give back to the local community. After visiting the home, I realized that this was the exact place where I wanted to give back and offered to help out in what ever way I could.”

Ann Seisa, owner of Vagthol’s, says: “I was so

appreciative of his gesture and really just wanted to leave it open and have Imaginary Forces help how ever they wanted to. We eventually decided that Vagthol’s annual holiday party might be a good fit.”

And that decision started an annual holiday tradition. More often than not, his schedule permitting, Houghton will dress up as Santa Claus. He adds: “It’s just like that old saying goes, ‘The more you give, the more you receive,’ and not just me, but everybody here at Imaginary Forces. I’m the guy that gets dressed up as the big red guy, but I couldn’t do that if it wasn’t for all the people that totally get into it. It’s just one way we can give back.”

Some employees at the company go shopping for presents, others help wrap the gifts, and some help out as elves at the party. “We were hooked after the first party and are lucky to be part of Vagthol’s event every year. It’s been a really wonderful experience for all of us. Some of us even bring our families. My kids have been coming for the last couple of years,” shares Houghton.

Imaginary Forces provides gifts selected from the wish lists of the 35 clients that live at Vagthol’s six homes. In more recent years, they’ve also recognized Vagthol’s staff with gift certificates. The party used to be held in the backyard of one of the homes, but over the years it has grown to where they now rent a

hall for the 200 or so guests, including clients and their families, Vagthol’s staff and their families, and other guests. The event features a DJ, caroling and other activities.

Houghton explains: “Every year, I do one dance and go 100 percent nuts out on the dance floor as Santa. I think



Imaginary Forces’ Chip Houghton dresses up as Santa Claus and hands out gifts at Vagthol’s annual holiday party.

one of the funniest moments is when I went over to give one of the clients a present, and bent over since she was in a wheelchair, when she promptly grabbed my hair and beard with an iron grip, and nearly pulled it off in front of all of the kids.”

In addition to the annual Christmas party, Imaginary Forces also has helped out with Thanksgiving celebrations and has sent all the clients and caregivers to Disneyland.

“It’s really not about what we’ve done, it’s truly about what Vagthol’s does every day for their clients. Even though it’s Hollywood, it’s also a neighborhood – and we’re one of their neighbors – that is what’s really important – we’re here if they need us and we help out when we can,” says Houghton. Seisa adds: “We’re truly blessed to have such great neighbors and be a part of the Hollywood community. Imaginary Forces has gone above and beyond in making the holidays a very special time for all of Vagthol’s clients.” ■



Vagthol’s Residential Care Center’s staff and residents sing carols for the 200 or so guests that attend the party, including the 35 residents and their families, as well as staff and their families.

ABOUT IMAGINARY FORCES

Imaginary Forces is a multi-disciplinary entertainment and design agency based in Hollywood and New York. The award-winning work spans the diverse industries of feature film production and marketing, architecture and experience design, corporate branding, commercial advertising and network branding. For more information, visit www.imaginaryforces.com.

Freidenberger Achieves Eagle Scout

Continued from page 1

and reverent.” Pete says: “On Scout nights, when I’d let Kurt know that it was time to get ready, he’d give me a little salute and would be off to put on his uniform. He’s really proud to wear his uniform.”

During the last seven years of scouting, Kurt, who has difficulty communicating, has hiked well over 300 scout miles, been camping over 20 times, scaled 80-foot rocks and managed 120-foot descents, and earned 21 merit badges. Pete, who became an assistant scout master because of Kurt, has hiked every one of the 300-plus miles that his son has hiked, been on every camping trip, and even scaled a few rocks on the climbing adventures. He adds: “Kurt only had to apply for one substitute badge. Since I work in radio, and I’m a merit badge counselor for the radio badge, he applied for this badge, as it’s hard to get a communications badge when you can’t communicate well.”

As part of achieving the Eagle Scout requirements, Kurt had to organize a leadership project. He coordinated a landscape beautification project at his old elementary school in Glendale, R.D. White Elementary School. Pete shares, “Kurt’s helped out on a dozen or so Eagle Scout leadership projects for other troop members, since you want to give back before you get to yours, and when it came time for his project this past October, about 40 volunteers, including current and past troop members, and friends, came out to help him do his.”

Another Eagle Scout requirement asks that an applicant make a statement of his ambitions and life purpose. Typically these statements are submitted to the Scout Council in written format along with the application, but due to Kurt’s difficulty communicating, he could not make this statement on his own. Working with Assistive Technology Specialist Jay Schwartz, Kurt created a PowerPoint presentation to articulate his hopes and dreams with the assistance of people who know him well, including his family and family friends.

Patti Ranous, a family friend, shared the following for Kurt’s presentation: “I believe Kurt’s life purpose is to show the world that having a disability is no excuse for not using your ability. Many times over, Kurt could have used his challenges to avoid challenges. But with the amazing support of his family, Kurt knows how to push himself. He is awesome.” Colin included the following: “Kurt epitomizes Scout spirit. He supports everything and everyone. He just wants what everyone else wants, so he goes that extra mile,” and Kurt’s mother Lee said: “I think Kurt would want to show people that being different from others is okay...Kurt just wants to be a part of things....he accepts everyone as they are. He just wants the same.”

Kurt also used word cards and special programs on the computer, such as Boardmaker and Classroom Suite/IntelliTalk 3 to help him organize his thoughts and share what being a part of the Boy Scouts and becoming an Eagle Scout meant to him. Following are some of the things he had to say: “My name is Kurt.” “I want to be Eagle Scout. My fun is with me at Scouts.” “Rock climbing is fun. Feel free.” “I climb with my Boy Scout troop. My brother climbs too.” “My name is Kurt and I am brave and strong.” “Being a Scout has made me see me like everyone.” And on his life purpose, Kurt said: “My life purpose is easy for me. I want to help others when I graduate from CV. I want to go to college with my Dad.” “I am Autistic. I can help others when I can.”

Kurt’s Board of Review was held the end of December and his Court of Honor will be held on June 14, where he will be honored by his troop, his family and friends for his efforts and accomplishments in achieving the highest level in scouting – Eagle Scout.

“I want to be Eagle Scout.”

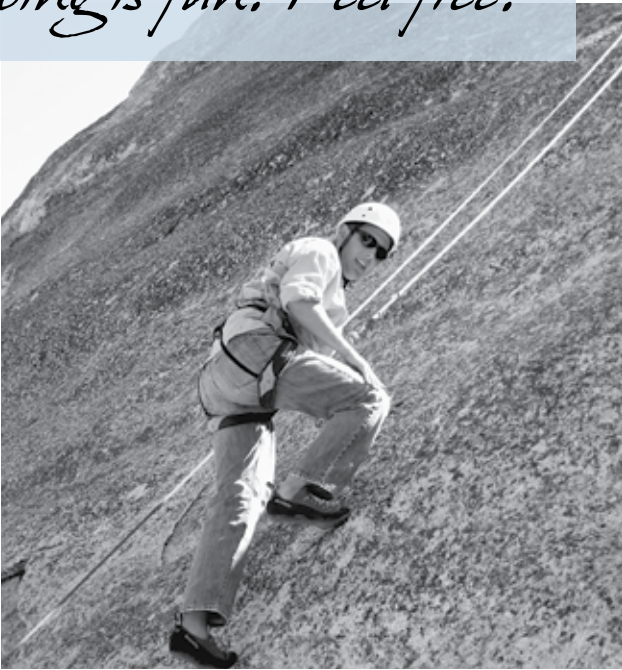


Above: Kurt Freidenberger coordinated a landscape beautification project at his old school, R.D. White Elementary School for his Eagle Scout leadership project. Over 40 people, including current and past troop members, and friends, came out to help him. Below: As part of scouting, he has hiked several hundred miles, been camping numerous times and learned to rock climb.

“Rock climbing is fun. Feel free.”

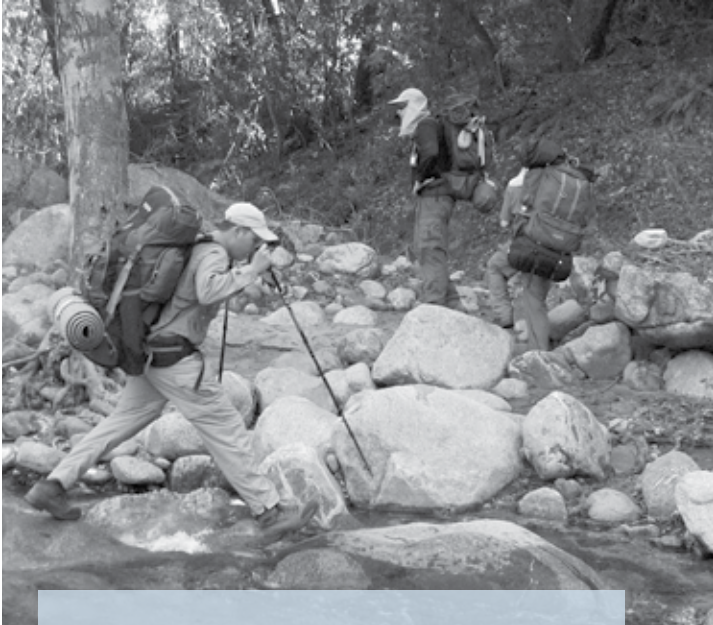
Although he has completed Eagle Scout, Kurt along with his father plan to stay involved with Troop 319, which currently has about 40 scouts and 20 scout leaders.

In addition to scouting, Kurt plays the clarinet, which he started in the fifth grade, and has been a member of the Crescenta Valley High School Varsity Swim Team for all four years of high school. He also helps manage the school’s water polo team. When he finishes his senior year this June, Kurt will be joining the Foothill Area Community Transition Services (FACTS) program in Glendale. Pete says: “We’ve wanted Kurt to have as much exposure to life as everyone else does. We’ve never not included him in anything. Where ever we go, he goes, from restaurants and movies to concerts, including KROQ shows, The Who and classical performances.” ■



“I think Kurt would want to show people that being different from others is okay...Kurt just wants to be a part of things.... he accepts everyone as they are. He just wants the same.”

—LEE FREIDENBERGER



“Being a Scout has made me see me like everyone.”

“My name is Kurt and I am brave and strong.”

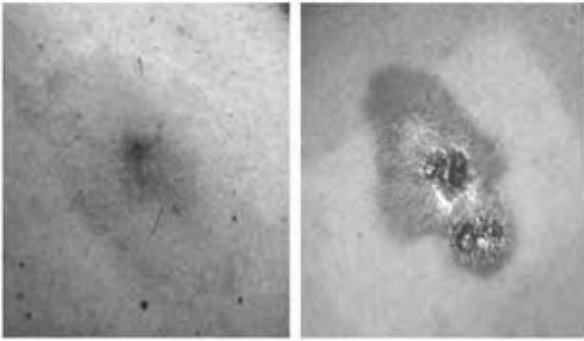


Learn More About MRSA

Continued from page 1

Staph Infection

MRSA infections start out as small red bumps that can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses.



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CAUSES

Although the survival tactics of bacteria contribute to antibiotic resistance, humans bear most of the responsibility for the problem. Leading causes of antibiotic resistance include:

- **Unnecessary antibiotic use in humans.** Like other superbugs, MRSA is the result of decades of excessive and unnecessary antibiotic use. For years, antibiotics have been prescribed for colds, flu and other viral infections that don’t respond to these drugs, as well as for simple bacterial infections that normally clear on their own.
- **Antibiotics in food and water.** Prescription drugs aren’t the only source of antibiotics. In the United States, antibiotics can be found in beef cattle, pigs and chickens. The same antibiotics then find their way into municipal water systems when the runoff from feedlots contaminates streams and groundwater. Routine feeding of antibiotics to animals is banned in the European Union and many other industrialized countries. Antibiotics given in the proper doses to animals who are sick don’t appear to produce resistant bacteria.
- **Germ mutation.** Even when antibiotics are used appropriately, they contribute to the rise of drug-resistant bacteria because they don’t destroy every germ they target. Bacteria live on an evolutionary fast track, so germs that survive treatment with one antibiotic soon learn to resist others. And because bacteria mutate much more quickly than new drugs can be produced, some germs end up resistant to just about everything. That’s why only a handful of drugs are now effective against most forms of staph.

RISK FACTORS

Because hospital and community strains of MRSA generally occur in different settings, the risk factors for the two strains differ.

Risk factors for hospital-acquired (HA) MRSA include:

- **A current or recent hospitalization.** MRSA remains a concern in hospitals, where it can attack those most vulnerable – older adults and people with weakened immune systems, burns, surgical wounds or serious underlying health problems. A 2007 report from the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology estimates that 1.2 million hospital patients are infected with MRSA each year in the United States. They also estimate another 423,000 are colonized with it.
- **Residing in a long-term care facility.** MRSA is far more prevalent in these facilities than it is in hospitals. Carriers of MRSA have the ability to spread it, even if they’re not sick themselves.
- **Invasive devices.** People who are on dialysis, are catheterized, or have feeding tubes or other invasive devices are at higher risk.
- **Recent antibiotic use.** Treatment with fluoroquinolones (ciprofloxacin, ofloxacin or levofloxacin) or cephalosporin antibiotics can increase the risk of HA-MRSA.

These are the main risk factors for community-acquired (CA) MRSA:

- **Young age.** CA-MRSA can be particularly dangerous in children. Often entering the body through a cut or scrape, MRSA can quickly cause a wide spread infection. Children may be susceptible because their immune systems aren’t

fully developed or they don’t yet have antibodies to common germs. Children and young adults are also much more likely to develop dangerous forms of pneumonia than older people are.

- **Participating in contact sports.** CA-MRSA has crept into both amateur and professional sports teams. The bacteria spread easily through cuts and abrasions and skin-to-skin contact.
- **Sharing towels or athletic equipment.** Although few outbreaks have been reported in public gyms, CA-MRSA has spread among athletes sharing razors, towels, uniforms or equipment.
- **Having a weakened immune system.** People with weakened immune systems, including those living with HIV/AIDS, are more likely to have severe CA-MRSA infections.
- **Living in crowded or unsanitary conditions.** Outbreaks of CA-MRSA have occurred in military training camps and in American and European prisons.
- **Association with health care workers.** People who are in close contact with health care workers are at increased risk of serious staph infections.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

Keep an eye on minor skin problems – pimples, insect bites, cuts and scrapes – especially in children. If wounds become infected, see your doctor. Ask to have any skin infection tested for MRSA before starting antibiotic therapy. Drugs that treat ordinary staph aren’t effective against MRSA, and their use could lead to serious illness and more resistant bacteria.

Wash your hands. Careful hand washing remains your best defense against germs. Scrub hands briskly for at least 15 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer containing at least 62 percent alcohol for times when you don’t have access to soap and water.

SCREENING AND DIAGNOSIS

Doctors diagnose MRSA by checking a tissue sample or nasal secretions for signs of drug-resistant bacteria. The sample is sent to a lab where it’s placed in a dish of nutrients that encourage bacterial growth (culture). But because it takes about 48 hours for the bacteria to grow, newer tests that can detect staph DNA in a matter of hours are now becoming more widely available.

In the hospital, you may be tested for MRSA if you show signs of infection or if you are transferred into a hospital from another health care setting where MRSA is known to be present. You may also be tested if you have had a previous history of MRSA.

TREATMENT

Both hospital and community associated strains of MRSA still respond to certain medications. In hospitals and care facilities, doctors generally rely on the antibiotic vancomycin to treat resistant germs. CA-MRSA may be treated with vancomycin or other antibiotics that have proved effective against particular strains. Although vancomycin saves lives, it may grow resistant as well; some hospitals are already seeing outbreaks of vancomycin-resistant MRSA. To help reduce that threat, doctors may drain an abscess caused by MRSA rather than treat the infection with drugs.

PREVENTION

Hospitals are fighting back against MRSA infection by using surveillance systems that track bacterial outbreaks and by investing in products such as

antibiotic-coated catheters and gloves that release disinfectants.

Still, the best way to prevent the spread of germs is for health care workers to wash their hands frequently, to properly disinfect hospital surfaces and to take other precautions such as wearing a mask when working with people with weakened immune systems.

In the hospital, people who are infected or colonized with MRSA are placed in isolation to prevent the spread of MRSA to other patients and health care workers. Visitors and health care workers caring for isolated patients may be required to wear protective garments and must follow strict handwashing procedures.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IN THE HOSPITAL

Here’s what you can do to protect yourself, family members or friends from hospital-acquired infections.

- Ask all hospital staff to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching you – every time.
- Wash your own hands frequently.
- Make sure that intravenous tubes and catheters are inserted under sterile conditions, for example, the person inserting them wears a mask and sterilizes your skin first.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Protecting yourself from MRSA in your community – which might be just about anywhere – may seem daunting, but these common-sense precautions can help reduce your risk:

- **Wash your hands.** Careful hand washing remains your best defense against germs. Scrub hands briskly for at least 15 seconds, then dry them with a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer containing at least 62 percent alcohol for times when you don’t have access to soap and water.
- **Keep personal items personal.** Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, sheets, razors, clothing and athletic equipment. MRSA spreads on contaminated objects as well as through direct contact.
- **Keep wounds covered.** Keep cuts and abrasions clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. The pus from infected sores may contain MRSA, and keeping wounds covered will help keep the bacteria from spreading.
- **Shower after athletic games or practices.** Shower immediately after each game or practice. Use soap and water. Don’t share towels.
- **Sit out athletic games or practices if you have a concerning infection.** If you have a wound that’s draining or appears infected – for example is red, swollen, warm to the touch or tender – consider sitting out athletic games or practices until the wound has healed.
- **Sanitize linens.** If you have a cut or sore, wash towels and bed linens in a washing machine set to the “hot” water setting (with added bleach, if possible) and dry them in a hot dryer. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.
- **Get tested.** If you have a skin infection that requires treatment, ask your doctor if you should be tested for MRSA. Doctors may prescribe drugs that aren’t effective against antibiotic-resistant staph, which delays treatment and creates more resistant germs. Testing specifically for MRSA may get you the specific antibiotic you need to effectively treat your infection.
- **Use antibiotics appropriately.** When you’re prescribed an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better. Don’t stop until your doctor tells you to stop. Don’t share antibiotics with others or save unfinished antibiotics for another time. Inappropriate use of antibiotics, including not taking all of your prescription and overuse, contributes to resistance. If your infection isn’t improving after a few days of taking an antibiotic, contact your doctor. ■

Original Article: www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/DS00735.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILES

Mark Higgins' Background Provides Lanterman Board with Combination of Professional Business Experience and Parent's Perspective

WITH THE CHALLENGING ECONOMIC TIMES facing state-funded organizations, Lanterman is fortunate to have Mark Higgins as a new board member.

Higgins is the president of Higgins, Marcus and Lovett, Inc., a business valuation firm based in Los Angeles. The firm conducts valuation studies of both publicly and privately held businesses for a variety of purposes, including merger and acquisition, eminent domain, federal estate and gift taxes, income taxes, financial reporting, employee stock ownership plans, and litigation support.

Higgins has worked extensively with business owners and financial, legal and accounting professionals, advising them on matters related to business valuation and treasury management. He has advised a wide range of businesses, from the Fortune 500 to the middle market. He has been qualified in various superior courts and in U.S. Tax Court as an expert witness in valuation matters.

A graduate of the University of Southern California, Higgins obtained a Bachelor of Science in Finance and Business Economics, followed by a Master of Business Administration. Prior to joining Higgins, Marcus and Lovett in 1994, Higgins worked in various management positions at Bank of America



Lanterman Board Member
Mark Higgins

A member of the American Society of Appraisers since 1995, Higgins is a past member of the Los Angeles Chapter's governing board, as well as past chairman of the chapter's Business Valuation Committee. He is also a charter member of the Family Business Roundtable, which was formed in 2003. Higgins has been a speaker at regional and national conferences on subjects related to appraisal, financial management and banking, and is a frequent guest lecturer at the University of Southern California.

and Wells Fargo in their commercial and merchant banking areas.

Higgins says, "I have two children receiving services from Lanterman and part of what I hope to offer the board is the combination of a parent's perspective with my background in business and experience serving on other boards."

Active with a number of community organizations, Higgins has been a member of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles since 1995, where he served as a director and committee chair. He also served as a director from 1998 to 2007 at the Florence Crittenton Center, serving a number of terms as treasurer and secretary. He is a past president and former treasurer of the Jonathan Club, where he has been a member since 1986. Higgins is also a founding member of the Dean's Advisory Board at UCLA related to continuing education and UCLA Extension, and is a past member of the Executive Board of the District Advisory Committee for the Glendale Unified School District.

"The Center provides a valuable service to the community and I'm pleased to have been invited to be a part of the board," shares Higgins. "Given my financial background, I'm looking forward to serving on the Center's Administrative Affairs Committee, as it's a natural place for me to focus my efforts. In light of the twin challenges of rising demand for services and the State's budget crisis, I hope to add value to this important aspect of the Center's operations."

Higgins lives in Glendale with his wife and their two sons, who are 10 and 15. In his spare time he enjoys hiking and photography. ■

Board Member Taleen Khatchadourian is Passionate About Parent Education

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, TALEEN KHATCHADOURIAN HAS ACTIVELY volunteered for a variety of organizations in both the American and Armenian communities, and she is now directing her efforts toward her work on Lanterman's board of directors.

Recently elected as a board member, Khatchadourian has been actively involved in the Lanterman community since her son Raffi, now 4 ½ years old, was diagnosed with autism. She makes "welcome calls" to new Lanterman families, is a Peer Support Partner with the Koch•Young Resource Center, has provided translation assistance for Lanterman's Armenian-speaking parents, and helps other parents as an advocate for services and placement.

A graduate of the University of Southern California with a bachelor's degree in business administration, Khatchadourian has been involved with the Armenian Autism Outreach Project since its inception, and continues to be actively involved with the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry to raise funds and awareness around the world. She has also assisted in fundraising efforts for the Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School, and serves on various parent committees at St. James Episcopal School. Khatchadourian is also an active alumnus of Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity. In the past, she has volunteered for the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Homenetmen and the Armenian Professional Network of the Western Diocese.

She shares: "I'm looking forward to being a voice for Lanterman's parents on the board of directors. The board has done a fabulous job making sure that the Center's children and adults with special needs get the direct services and support they need. However, we also need to focus our efforts on educating families and clients about the other services available to them, such as support groups, therapy and advocacy training, and information fairs that Lanterman offers the community."

Since joining Lanterman, Khatchadourian has been building an e-mail network comprised of Armenian families to distribute news and information about classes, activities and events. She adds: "There are so many moving parts – IEPs, IPPs, therapy sessions, etc. – that parents lose track of information and knowledge building opportunities, which are so beneficial. When parents are educated about the system, their rights and available options, they become better advocates for their children and better partners with Lanterman."

Khatchadourian has also been educating the public about how they can support families of children with special needs. "We have a strong spirit of volunteerism in the Armenian community, and when I talk to individuals who are interested in volunteering I encourage them to explore working with people with developmental disabilities. It's also important to talk with young adults and make them aware about the many different career options available in the field of developmental disabilities," she explains.

Her husband Jacob is a software engineer, and in his personal time, provides support for Shriners Hospital for Children. He is a source of strength for Khatchadourian in all her efforts. In addition to Raffi, who is currently a student at The Help Group in Sherman Oaks, they have an older son Robert, who is 7 ½ years old. She says: "We are trying to raise Robert to be understanding of all disabilities. His unconditional love for Raffi is an inspiration for us all." In her free time, Khatchadourian enjoys reading a good book, laughing with great friends, and spending precious time with her family. ■



Lanterman Board Member
Taleen Khatchadourian

The Armenian Autism Outreach Project (AAOP)

STARTED IN 2006 AS A PROJECT OF the Foothill Autism Alliance, Inc., the Armenian Autism Outreach Project (AAOP) quickly grew in to a separate stand alone organization in light of the ever-increasing demand for assistance and resources for Armenian-American parents of children with autism.

AAOP is a volunteer-run organization, spearheaded by five Armenian-American professionals who specialize in serving children with autism and their families. The group promotes early identification and appropriate intervention for Armenian-American children and youth who may be at risk for, or have autism. AAOP also strives to ensure that children with autism progress optimally in their development, achieve their highest potential in school, and participate at their individual best as members in their communities.

With a focus on raising awareness about autism in the Armenian community,



and informing parents and educators about autism and its diagnosis; AAOP is an information and resource hub for parents, teachers and administrators about best practices in autism treatment. Through its focus groups, lectures and seminars, AAOP offers informational resources.

For more information about AAOP and to learn about some of the group's activities, visit <http://armenianautismoutreach.org>, e-mail info@armenianautismoutreach.org or call 818.662.8847. AAOP also offers a monthly parent support group at the Armenian Relief Society in Glendale and has a Google group that you can subscribe to by joining their e-mail list on the AAOP Web site.

Board Welcomes Your Attendance at its Meetings

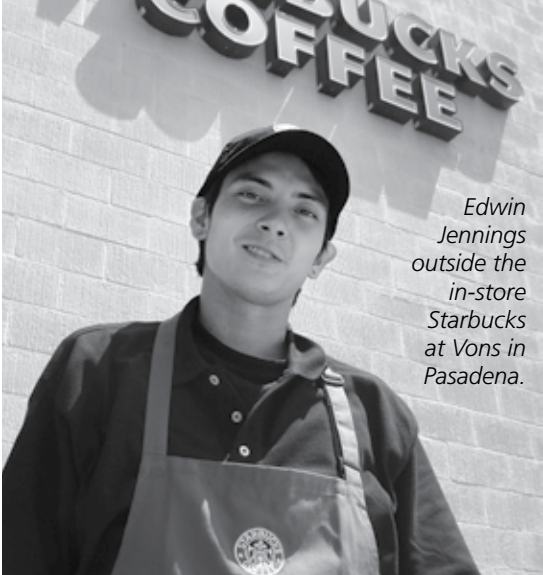
Please be aware that anyone in the community is welcome to attend Lanterman's board of directors meeting, which is conducted on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. Meetings are held at Lanterman Regional Center. Contact Frank Lara in advance at 213.383.1300, x. 4902 or flara@lanterman.org so 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. 4928 or paulicino@lanterman.org.

Starbuck’s Edwin Jennings: Breaking Barriers

By Robert Efford, Director of Employment and Transition Services at Villa Esperanza Services



Edwin Jennings outside the in-store Starbucks at Vons in Pasadena.

When I tried to get through to Starbucks corporate headquarters in Seattle, I discovered that the place is more locked down than the Pentagon. They must get thousands of proposals, I thought. But where there’s a will, there’s a way – and I immediately thought of my client, Edwin Jennings. Edwin wouldn’t let a small matter like a multi-billion dollar conglomerate stand in his way. So neither will I. I’ve often asked myself the poignant question many in our field of work may have asked – “Who’s serving whom?” I’m evidently supposed to be the one breaking down barriers on behalf of individuals with disabilities, yet I realize that without these extraordinary folks, I doubt I could push past my own fears of failure and defeat. I owe a debt of gratitude to courageous individuals like Edwin.

Over two years ago, Villa Esperanza assisted Edwin with placement and job coaching support as a courtesy clerk at a Vons in Glendale. Within two weeks, the management scheduled him full-time. Within two months, he was assisting in various departments. Within six months, he was cashiering. A year later, Edwin decided to move into his own apartment in Pasadena, and transferred to the Vons on California Boulevard.

Edwin called me up one day and said, “I want to work at Starbucks.” I remember my flash of horror at the thought of working behind the counter, a long line of 8 a.m. customers snapping out complex drink orders like: “Please give me an iced, triple, grande soy latte” or “Please give me a half-caf, triple, two-pump mint, one-pump vanilla, soy, extra hot, extra foamy latte.” Sure. I’ll get right on it.

What I would find overwhelming, Edwin apparently did not. Heroes inspire others to push past their barriers – as he did for me. Despite my caution and clarity on the demands and pace of the job, Edwin remained undeterred. As a result, he rallied a team of believers to help him achieve his goal.

With the help and support of the local Vons management, Vons corporate human resources, and Starbucks regional staff, Edwin was offered a position at the in-store Starbucks at the Vons on California – with a contingency – Edwin would need to pass a test. He would need to pass Starbucks’ certification on the many products they serve. To facilitate our support of Edwin during this process, Villa Esperanza Services was offered the opportunity to certify one of our own staff through training before Edwin even set foot behind the counter. This allowed us to support Edwin as he went through training himself.

Edwin studied the manuals and memorized the drinks. With support and encouragement, he learned how to pace himself, to focus on one task at a time. Nine months have passed – he’s mastered the drinks, he runs the register, he gets up at 5 a.m. to get to work. What’s his favorite drink? “Passion tea lemonade.” When I asked him in awe how difficult it is to make a “grande, triple, two-pump mint, two percent, extra hot mocha,” he laughed and replied, “It’s easy.” ■

Lanternman Awards AFI Conservatory Production Grant

Lanternman has awarded the American Film Institute (AFI) a \$10,000 grant to help aspiring artists produce films focused on the world of developmental disabilities. The production grant will be awarded as part of the AFI Conservatory Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program.

Diane Anand, executive director, says, “Lanternman’s board of directors approved this grant to advance our vision of promoting understanding and inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities, and we hope the creative work that will result will help us as a society learn to embrace and value diversity.”

“We also see this as a natural extension of the Perspectives Film Festival,” she added, explaining, “People with developmental disabilities and their families tell us that what they value the most and find the least in society are both understanding and inclusion. The film festival was an educational effort to change that.”

Launched in 2003, the festival grew out of the conviction that we live in a complex world driven largely by images created and disseminated by the entertainment and news media. These images shape our individual and collective perceptions of who and what we value as a society, and for people with developmental disabilities, those images and perceptions are often insensitive and misleading. The three festivals to date have demonstrated that there is genuine interest in the media’s depiction of people with developmental disabilities and room for ongoing constructive dialogue.

“Film has always been an avenue for opening eyes to experiences and stories that enable us to understand life from another point of view, and we see this grant as an effective way to send the message of inclusion out to the next generation of filmmakers,” says AFI Conservatory Dean Robert Mandel.

AFI fellows produce a thesis film as the final part of their two-year MFA degree program. These films are then submitted to festivals, story development personnel, creative directors and producers. “This grant will go to individuals who produce films with story lines that advance the vision of creating a truly inclusive society. These young artists will use their skills to tell stories that can change perceptions about disability,” adds Joe Petricca, the Conservatory’s executive vice dean.

About the American Film Institute (AFI) Conservatory

AFI is a national institute providing leadership in screen education and the recognition and celebration of excellence in the art of film, television and digital media.

The AFI Conservatory offers a two-year accredited Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program, granting degrees in six filmmaking disciplines – cinematography, directing, editing, producing, production design and screenwriting. World-renowned for its advanced professional training, AFI’s program is designed to nurture the talents and enhance the skills of tomorrow’s leading storytellers in the global motion picture and television professions. The curriculum focuses on narrative, visual storytelling through hands-on collaboration, taught by working professionals from the film, television and digital media communities. The AFI Conservatory has trained more than 3,000 artists since its founding in 1969. These graduates have, and will continue to have, a major impact on the art of film, television and digital media.

Additional information about AFI is available at www.afi.com.

SAVE THE DATE! Pathway at UCLA Extension to Host Art Gala and Silent Auction Fundraiser

It’s where art, education and the chance to make a difference for students with intellectual disabilities all come together – the Pathway Art Gala and Silent Auction.

Pathway at UCLA Extension is California’s first postsecondary education and enrichment program on a university campus for young adults with intellectual disabilities. It’s a two-year certificate program that provides a blend of educational, social and vocational experiences taught and supervised by a highly trained staff that helps prepare young adults for independent living, rewarding careers and meaningful personal lives. Students attend classes on campus, and participate in the many social, recreational and cultural activities of a major university. They also interact with other students and enjoy learning opportunities for career exploration through coursework and employment on and near the UCLA campus.

The program is highly individualized by design in order to offer students the support services which will empower them to achieve their goals, prepare for their futures and become a part of the community. Kathe Beltran, co-chair of the Pathway fundraising committee, says, “Unlike what is available for typical college and university programs, traditional federal



As part of Pathway at UCLA Extension, students attend a variety of classes on the university campus. The first Art Gala will feature an exhibition of the students’ art.

and state financial aid opportunities are not available to Pathway students, and many families are unable to afford the costs, so we are raising funds to be able to offer Pathway scholarships.”

The Pathway class of 2009 has 17 students, and the program is looking to enroll approximately the same number of students in the class of 2010. This is where you can make a difference. Attend and support Pathway’s first Art Gala on Wednesday, April 30, 2008, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Westwood Village, and help young people who have often been told “they can’t” realize that they can achieve their dreams through education.

The event will include an exhibition of students’ works, a silent auction and reception. All proceeds will benefit the Pathway scholarship fund. For more information about the Art Gala, call [310.794.1235](tel:310.794.1235) or e-mail pathway@uclaextension.edu. To learn more about Pathway at UCLA Extension visit www.uclaextension.edu/pathway.

PHOTO CREDIT: JAMES MICHAEL FERRARI, PHOTOGRAPHER

Inclusion Films Wraps Up Pilot Practical Filmmaking Workshop with Screening of “Sweet 16”

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER THE FIRST Inclusion Films Practical Filmmaking Workshop wrapped up, the students and their instructors reunited for a special screening of their 30-minute film “Sweet 16” at the American Film Institute’s Mark Goodson Screening Room. During the pre-screening reception, everywhere you looked the workshop participants and their families were making the rounds, excited to be together again and quickly trying to catch up with each other and the Inclusion Films staff before the screening started.

As part of the pilot workshop, the 14 students received instruction in the areas of script development, directing, working with actors, all aspects of production, camera and lighting, and post-production from Inclusion Films’ staff – Joey Travolta, artistic director; Raymond Martino, director of classes; Bill Dion, producing; Dallas Dinnocente, instructor; and Seth Shulman, post-production.

In addition, Inclusion Films collaborated with Final Draft, Inc., which are the makers of the Final Draft scriptwriting program for film, television and theatre. And they visited Deluxe and Panavision for tours. The students were also treated to special guest speakers from the film industry, including Anne Lower, director of Education Sales for Final Draft; John Landis, writer/director of “The Blues Brothers;” Tom Shell, writer/producer; Mike Tristano, weapons and effects on “3:10 to Yuma;” and Dan Lauria, actor/writer/director and co-star of “The Wonder Years.”

Each participant created and directed an individual three-minute short film. However, most of the workshop was spent on developing the students’ skills and knowledge through the collaborative group project that centered around the pre-production, shooting and post-production of “Sweet 16.”

Joey Travolota, Inclusion Films’ director, says: “During one of the lessons, everyone had to get up and tell a story, and Sam Yi, who has a hard time communicating and being understood because of his cerebral palsy, got up and shared a beautiful story about a young man with cerebral palsy, but rather than having the storyline focus on his disability, it was just about a day in his life. The story really touched all the students and served as the inspiration for the film.”

Along with Raymond Martino, two of the students, Sumit Bhagi and Sam Yi, wrote the film script, however, all of the students had their own individual responsibilities, including everything from casting the actors to researching the best theme song for the film.

“One of the students, Addison Clark, had to leave the program early to attend college, but all of the other students thought he would be perfect for the starring role in their film, so when it came time for casting calls, they invited him back, and in the end selected him for the part,” adds Travolta.

Inclusion Films was able to secure Chaminade High School as the setting for their film. Travolta shares: “My daughter, who attended Chaminade, started the school’s film festival and it was where the film ‘Normal People Scare Me’ premiered, so it seemed fitting that we were able to come back and film ‘Sweet 16’ on the campus. It was great of the campus and their film department to help us out like that.”

The cast and crew only had three days to complete all of their filming. They were able to tie in their shoot with Chaminade’s homecoming, and the festivities



Workshop participants learn camera techniques as part of their practical filmmaking education.

and all the guests served as natural extras for the film. Adam Denzer, student filmmaker, shared with the audience during the post-screening question and answer session: “It was very intense. We were nervous as there were only three days to shoot. We were always pushing the time we had.”

As part of the question and answer session, curious filmgoers, some of whom were interested in enrolling in the upcoming workshop, asked a variety of questions related to all aspects of making the film. Everything was fair game – from the best part of the workshop to how it could be improved. All of the instructors and workshop participants in attendance at the screening participated in the question and answer session. Kevin Ewing said: “Our favorite part was the aspect of learning about filmmaking. The instructors really encouraged and inspired us.” Seth Shulman, who has since gone on to get professional work making a “Behind the Scenes” for Norwegian film company Penelope Films, explained, “In order to improve the program, we should all be paid.” Denzer added, “This was a dream come true for me. We need to get into more technical stuff and we need more people to join and to make more movies.”

Bhagi, who also co-directed the film, shared: “The entire program has been phenomenal. We are indebted to Bill and all his hard work teaching us the process of production management. And thank you Joey, Ray and everyone else for allowing us to use the camera to make special films not focusing on special needs.”

Towards the end of the session, most of the “Sweet 16” cast also joined the workshop students to share what they thought about making the film. One of the older cast members, who has been in the film industry for a while, shared with the workshop participants: “It was an incredible experience for you to be a part of this. There are thousands of people that don’t get a smidgeon of what this workshop offers. Appreciate that the experience itself is worthwhile and will help you become tops at what you do.” Roger Villarreal, who played Tommy’s best friend in the film, noted, “They were all really professional – as people they are great, as filmmakers they were even better.” Another cast member said, “I was really impressed with the workshop and with the passion of the students.”

So what direction is the practical filmmaking workshop headed in? Inclusion Films has introduced a phase two for those students who have the desire and ability to continue working in the film industry. The goal of this second phase of the practical film vocational program is to further develop skills in the technical aspects of filmmaking, specifically focusing on lighting design, cinematography and editing. As part of this session, participants will produce

two low-budget, high-quality commercials for local cable television, as well as two short films for the regional centers. Each phase two participant will also participate in the mentoring of a phase one student by lighting, shooting and editing the student’s three-minute short film.

Travolta is also working on developing partnerships with the studios and establishing filmmaking internships, and hopes that the knowledge and skills workshop participants learn can carry over into employment in the industry or even the creation of a micro-enterprise production company once their vocational training is complete.

Diane Anand, executive director, says: “We are very excited about this project as we are optimistic that it will open doors into the entertainment industry for adults with developmental disabilities. This was also one of the goals of *Perspectives*, along with raising awareness in the industry about the portrayals of people with developmental disabilities and the media’s role in promoting inclusion and understanding in society.” ■

ABOUT “SWEET 16”



Written by Inclusion Films Instructor Raymond Martino, as well as Sumit Bhagi and Sam Yi, two students in the Inclusion Films six-month filmmaking workshop for individuals with developmental disabilities, “Sweet 16” is a twist on the classic high school story of the popular and pretty girl, Rebecca (Zoe Myers), who is going out with the “cool” guy on campus that bullies anyone “different” from himself. Tommy, (Addison Clark) who has cerebral palsy and regularly finds himself being harassed by most of his classmates, is attracted to Rebecca, and is encouraged by his friend Ron (Roger Villarreal) to ask her to Chaminade’s homecoming dance.

Tommy, a budding artist, arrives at the dance with a portrait of Rebecca, only to realize that he had misinterpreted her being nice to him as something more. He leaves the dance to get some air and wanders into the empty bleachers on the football field where he meets Angelina (Corie Lee Loiselle). Angelina convinces Tommy to return to the dance, but nobody knows who she is, just that she looks like an “angel.” And without giving away the ending, Tommy and Angelina have a “magical” night, which is an experience that will last Tommy a lifetime.

The film, which was made by Workshop Productions in association with Bluth Enterprises, was directed by Raymond Martino and Sumit Bhagi, and produced by Chris Clubb, Adam Denzer, Kevin Ewing, Jennifer Jones, Chris Quintana, Danielle Dejean, Ian Rodriguez, Nischolas Peterson, Blair Williamson, Seth Shulman and Todd Sabin. Joey Travolta and Richard Bluth are the executive producers.

Are you interested in learning filmmaking?

The next workshop session starts soon and space is limited.

The next session of Inclusion Films Practical Filmmaking Workshop starts on Monday, April 28, 2008. This 20-week program for individuals with developmental disabilities 18 years and older will take participants through the process of making a short film, from pre- to post-production, using a working film production as the lesson plan. Participants work alongside actual production crew and gain hands-on experience and knowledge that will give them the background and tools they need to pursue employment possibilities in the film industry. The workshop will run through September 26, 2008 with a two-week break to be announced.

If you are interested in participating in the workshop, contact your service coordinator to set up an interview.

For more information about the workshop call **818.219.0511**, e-mail inclusionfilms@aol.com or visit www.joeytee.com.



CAC News

Consumer Advisory Committee to Focus on Employment, New Advisor Named

EARLIER THIS YEAR, MJ K IENAST, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, transitioned her responsibility for Lanterman’s Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) to Helane Schultz, regional manager of the Los Angeles Wilshire/Aging Transition Service Coordination Unit.

Schultz, who has been with Lanterman for eight years, has a bachelor’s degree in speech arts from Adelphi University in New York. Prior to Lanterman, she worked as a supported employment service provider in Orange County where she also facilitated an advocacy group for Regional Center of Orange County. At Lanterman, Schultz has facilitated the Strategic Initiative Committee on Employment and has been involved in planning the Center’s bi-annual workshops on supported employment.

“I’m really excited about the opportunity to work with the Consumer Advisory Committee. I’ve only been to one meeting, but I’m very impressed with the committee members and the way in which they conduct the monthly meetings,” says Schultz.

Capitalizing on Schultz’ knowledge and experience with supported employment, the CAC members decided to focus their next project on this very area. The CAC will be provided with an overview presentation in April on supported employment and afterwards will pick a more specific topic in this area that they want to focus on. ■



CAC Staff Advisor Helane Schultz

Contact Lanterman’s CAC

If you are an adult client of Lanterman Regional Center and have an issue or idea that you think other adults with developmental disabilities would be interested in, and you would like to share it with the CAC you can write the committee at:

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

Or call CAC Staff Advisor Helane Schultz at **213.383.1300, x. 6606** or e-mail hschultz@lanterman.org

The CAC welcomes any adult client that is interested in participating to attend their meetings. The committee meets on the second Monday of the month at 4:30 p.m. at Lanterman.

The Consumer Advisory Committee reports to Lanterman’s board of directors and is charged with providing input and advice on the policies, services and programs offered by Lanterman for clients and their families.

DDS’ CAC Partners with BRC to Produce Six Videos Related to Person-Centered Planning

IN 2006, MEMBERS OF THE CONSUMER Advisory Committee (CAC) for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) created a project called Leadership Through Personal Change to assist Californians with developmental disabilities to live by the motto: My Life, My Way!

Members created a process called Think-Plan-Do. Think-Plan-Do teaches people how to develop goals, design working plans, and take action steps that lead to success.

In partnership with the Board Resource Center (BRC), six videos and supporting material were designed to make complex ideas simple and assist people to customize person-centered plans that work.

The six videos include:

- CAC Mission Statement
- CAC Managing My Money
- CAC Relaxation and Fun
- CAC Professional Image
- CAC Being Healthy
- CAC Organizing and Planning

The videos can be viewed on YouTube at www.youtube.com/BoardResourceCenter.



Click on “playlists” at the top of the Board Resource Center landing page. Then click on the text, “Board Resource Center DVDs” to view a list of the six CAC videos with links to play the videos. In addition, the site features three other related videos from the Board Resource Center.

The videos are also available in DVD format with a companion workbook at www.brcenter.org. ■

WHICH IS IT? – CONSUMER OR CLIENT

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

DDS Web site Features “Consumer Corner”

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

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

Alberto Suazo Participates in 5K Fundraiser as Part of the Los Angeles Marathon



AbilityFirst organized a 5K fundraiser walk that they held in conjunction with the 2008 Los Angeles Marathon. Approximately 100 people participated in the walk, including AbilityFirst Work Center clients and their families, raising approximately \$4,500. Alberto Suazo was one of the clients that participated along with his mother Bertha and aunt Adela Sayes. Bertha shares: “The best part of participating was the excitement of seeing my son’s face coming through the finish line, which he accomplished in 20 minutes. It would be great for other parents to motivate their children to participate in the Los Angeles Marathon because it is such an emotional experience. We will definitely walk in it again next year.” At left: Alberto and his aunt show off their ribbons.

Jeff Stimpson Helps Other Special Needs Parents Feel Less Alone Through JeffsLife.net

FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, the Internet has greatly expanded networking and support opportunities. At their fingertips are thousands of information Web sites, as well as message boards, chat rooms, e-mail groups, blogs and online support groups. Unlike traditional media, these newer communication avenues have enabled them to not only share their ongoing life stories with their families and friends, but also with other parents of children with special needs, the broader special needs community and the community-at-large.

One site that offers value for both families of children with special needs and the general community is www.JeffsLife.net. Created by Jeff Stimpson, the stories he and his wife Jill Cornfield share about their life and experience as parents of a child with special needs provide reassurance for other parents that they are not alone in what they may be feeling or experiencing. The essays also provide insight for the general community as to what it's like being the parents of a child with special needs, including the joys and rewards, as well as the challenges.

"Viewpoint" spoke with Stimpson, outside his office, on a cold, blustery day in New York City to get some background information about why he started JeffsLife and how the site has developed in the last 10 years.

"There is a certain aloneness that this kind of situation brings... We want this site to be a source of empowerment for parents so they don't feel as alone or helpless."

—JEFF STIMPSON

He explains: "Before our son Alex was born, I had a job with a chain of weekly give away newspapers in suburban Baltimore, where I convinced them to let me write opinion pieces about various life things." After getting pregnant, Stimpson and his wife moved back to New York in early 1998 to be closer to family, and he took a job writing for a trade magazine distributed to certified public accountants. He adds: "Jill developed some complications with her pregnancy and Alex was born prematurely, weighing only 21 ounces. About a month later, it hit me that the situation I was going through now was at least as interesting as what I used to write about in the opinion pieces."

Stimpson began writing a weekly essay somewhere between 700 to 900 words in length about his family's experience as parents of a preemie, including life in the hospital, juggling work and home life, bringing Alex home from the hospital, therapy, early intervention and preschool, as well as other aspects of life. The original essays were posted on a text-only Internet site which Stimpson and Cornfield shared with their family and friends.

"In fall 2003, I decided that I was interested in taking the body of work I'd written over the last five years and marketing it for a book. 'Alex: The Fathering of a Preemie' was published in late 2004 and traces Alex's life from birth to kindergarten, including his diagnosis of autism," shares Stimpson. Since Stimpson had to pull the first five years of his essays off the Internet when the book was published, he took this opportunity to launch JeffsLife.net as a new platform for posting future essays about his family's experiences. The site currently has about five years worth of essays documenting the experiences and adventures of Stimpson, Cornfield, Alex, and his younger brother Ned.

Stimpson notes, "Areas of particular interest are the essays on Alex's education from kindergarten through fourth grade, the sibling essays, as well as the parenting essays."

About 18 months ago, Stimpson and Cornfield started doing one to two podcasts per month. He adds: "This is all part of building a platform that supports many different ways of telling a story and



Jeff Stimpson started JeffsLife.net after his son Alex was born. He started the site to share his family's experience with special needs, and help other families to feel less alone.

reaching an audience. There is a certain aloneness that this kind of situation brings. Relatives and friends just don't understand and it can be hard to get together. We want this site to be a source of empowerment for parents so they don't feel as alone or helpless."

The podcasts are generally 15 minutes long, and topics have covered everything from sleep to schooling, vacations, eating in restaurants, and even a discussion on what happens to money. Ned also did a podcast on what it is like being the sibling of a brother with special needs.

Stimpson shares: "As Alex has gotten older, I've started to wonder what is going to happen to him after the teenage years, and in recent essays and podcasts, I've started writing about the fears I have with regards to Alex's adulthood – who is going to take care of him, what kind of life am I giving him. The fear is almost as tangible as the reality."

Several times per year, Stimpson also participates as a speaker in conferences on prematurity sharing with participants the premature father's experience. Lately, he has pursued opportunities to speak directly to college students studying in the areas of early or special education, as well as teachers, sharing with them situations that they may encounter with special needs families and also how to approach parents. Stimpson has also compiled a list of corporate funding sources for non-profits that can be accessed from JeffsLife.net. And he is currently working on a second book about Alex, with a working title of "Alex the Boy." ■

The following is a quote from one of Stimpson's long-time readers, C., who lost a baby daughter nearly seven years ago.

Reading your essays creates a sense of sharing. What you write is very vivid. It's a comfort to know that in those areas we share, I am not alone. Also as you know, through your writing I have grown to love Alex and Ned. How on earth can that happen when I don't even know them in person? Well, it's because you write about them in such a way that it seems like I do know them. You describe it like it is. No effort to make it prettier or uglier than it really is, no effort to become popular by pandering to what readers might want to read, just the story as it is, and very well written from all angles.

The real value I see in your writing is the fact that because of how you write, you were able to do what no one before you was able to do: provide a real voice to preemies, children with autism, and their families. This is because, uniquely, you are able to bring about understanding in those who have not been through the experience. This is no light thing. Because your essays are read by professionals, this makes a real difference in how parents of preemies are being spoken to and treated in hospitals. Only someone who's been there can fully appreciate the magnitude of what I've just said...it's a very important thing, this difference in how the families are approached and treated. I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out to be the same for children with autism.

UCLA CART Recruiting for Study on Infant Development in Younger Siblings of Children with Autism

RECENT RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT THE younger siblings of children with autism are 20 to 80 times more likely to develop an autism spectrum disorder than a child without such a sibling.

Ted Hutman, Ph.D., project manager for the Infants at Risk of Autism study at the University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Autism Research and Treatment (UCLA CART), says: "We know that there is a genetic component for autism, and infant siblings are at higher risk than children with no affected relatives. We are interested in looking at the early development of children who are later diagnosed with autism to get a clearer picture of the precursors of autism, what signs we see that indicate a greater level of risk than merely the genetic link."

Dr. Marian Sigman, co-director of CART, is the principal investigator for this research study, which is entering its sixth year and recently received a second round of funding from the federal government. Dr. Sigman's research team is looking to enroll approximately 100 additional infants in the study from now through the end of 2009. While the initial developmental assessment won't take place until the child is 6 months of age, if possible, parents should enroll their infant in the study at an earlier age.



The child will be tracked on a calendar and the family will be contacted by the research team to schedule the first assessment. Developmental assessments include evaluation of language, social skills, imitation, and play skills. Additional assessments are done at 9, 12, 18, 24 and 36 months of age.

Parents receive free feedback letters with their child's evaluation results. Hutman adds, "By starting at 6 months of age and seeing the children every three months for their first year, we are able to identify early signs of autism, so children can be referred back to the regional center to get into early intervention as soon as possible."

Every step of the research study is voluntary to complete. Participants receive \$40 in compensation for each visit. If you are interested in participating, contact Dr. Sigman's research staff at [310.825.3478](tel:310.825.3478).

Boost Your Parenting Skills – Training Helps Families Tackle Tough Parenting Challenges

AT SOME POINT, ALL PARENTS HAVE FOUND themselves stymied by their children’s behavior and wondered to themselves why are they behaving that way and what can they as parents do about it.

To help families of children with special needs between the ages of birth to 5 gain the know-how to tackle these tough parenting challenges, Lanterman is offering an eight-week workshop in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to help families boost their parenting skills.

Vernon Wright, LACOE school psychologist and assistant principal, and adjunct professor with Glendale Community College Parent Education Program, facilitates the parenting training. He says: “The class is broken down into two parts. The first hour we focus on general parenting skills so parents are more aware of how their parenting style affects their child, and the second half of the training focuses more specifically on parenting children with special needs.”

Topics covered in the workshop include: understanding behavior, temperament,



communication, social and emotional development, and positive discipline.

Wright adds: “A family’s parenting style has a lot to do with the way their child responds and behaves. Children have goals with their behaviors, such as seeking attention, power, revenge and learned helplessness, and the general parenting section of the workshop teaches a respectful and democratic parenting method that has been successfully used for many years. How a parent responds will determine whether the behavior will continue or not, so this training is designed to help parents learn and understand common sense, practical and do-able strategies to support them in raising great children, while also enjoying the process.”

But when parenting children with special needs, many of whom have sensory challenges, the tried and true strategies don’t always work. So the second half of each workshop section explores how these techniques can be modified depending on how the child senses, understands and reacts to the world.

“Parents are invited to talk about their child’s disability, how it affects his or her sensory processing over all five senses – hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell – and how the child responds. By taking a biological approach and looking at and understanding the disability, parents are more informed about how it affects his or her daily living, and how they can modify their parenting skills and styles to help promote intellectual and emotional growth in their child,” explains Wright.

For more information about the workshop “Promoting Intellectual and Emotional Growth in Children with Special Needs,” contact Wright at **818.339.2342** or wright_vernon@lacoedu.edu. The next workshop session will begin in June. If you are interested in registering for this class, contact your Lanterman service coordinator.



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—VERNON WRIGHT



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In This Issue

Learn About MRSA.....	1, 10
Legislative Forum	1, 4
Eagle Scout Kurt Freidenberger	1, 9
The Director’s Viewpoint	2
The Budget Update	2
Sign Up for E-mail Bulletins	2
Letter to Lanterman Community from Gary Pancer	3
Remembering Katie Nack.....	3
NOC “Legislate” Section	4
Grassroots Day.....	5
Recruiting for Local Legislative Visits	5
Sign Up for Legislative Updates	5
Save the Date for Affordable Housing Forum	5
Legislative Effort on Autism	5
Staff Service Awards	6
2007 Holidays are for Sharing Successful	7
Community Resource Fair	7
Special Trip to Disneyland	8
Imaginary Forces Gives Back.....	8
Board Member Profiles	
Mark Higgins	11
Taleen Khatchadourian.....	11
The Armenian Autism Outreach Project.....	11
Attend a Board Meeting	11
Looking for New Board Members	11
Edwin Jennings Works for Starbucks.....	12
Lanterman Awards AFI Grant	12
Save the Date for Pathway Art Gala	12
Inclusion Films Practical Filmmaking Workshop	13
About the Student Film “Sweet 16”	13
Learn Filmmaking – Next Session Starts Soon.....	13
Lanterman CAC Has New Staff Advisor	14
Watch YouTube Videos from DDS’ CAC	14
Contact Lanterman’s CAC	14
Consumer versus Client.....	14
DDS “Consumer Corner” Web site	14
Alberto Suazo Walks in Los Angeles Marathon	14
Jeff Stimpson Talks About JeffsLife.net.....	15
UCLA CART Recruiting for Autism Study	15
Boost Your Parenting Skills.....	16