Tucked away in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, the La Pintoresca Branch of the Pasadena Public Library hosted a pilot, 20-week, functional literacy class conducted by the Association for Developmentally Disabled Armenians for three hours on Saturday mornings. The class was designed to improve the literacy skills of adult clients served by Lanterman Regional Center. This new approach focused on improving functional literacy skills rather than using a traditional literacy instruction model based on phonics. The curriculum for the pilot class was developed by Barbara Del Monico, a literacy specialist with a background in reading instruction and professional education, and was specifically tailored for adults with developmental disabilities.

“A number of years ago, when we first started the adult computer classes at Lanterman, Marty Sweeney, who was then director of the Assistive Technology Project, shared with me that many people with developmental disabilities are capable of learning to use the computer, but that learning the computer is literacy-based. He believed that many of our clients were capable of learning to read, but they did not learn how to in school or their reading comprehension was low. Marty proposed offering adult literacy classes. It was our good fortune that we were connected with Barbara Del Monico, a special education reading specialist who is the current director. ‘When we look at what people with developmental disabilities want to be able to accomplish in the future, I imagine more self-directed, making informed choices, accessing information, working more diverse jobs – being functionally literate in real world situations is fundamental to being successful,’” said Jack Darakjian of the Association for Developmentally Disabled Armenians and Modern Support Services shares.

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Jack Darakjian hired Tom Peters, a professor at Santa Monica City College with a Ph.D. in business administration who also had considerable experience in special education. The curriculum for the pilot class was developed by Barbara Del Monico, a literacy specialist with a background in reading instruction and professional education, and was specifically tailored for adults with developmental disabilities.

Employer Spotlight: Vons Is at the Forefront of Hiring Employees with Developmental Disabilities at Their Stores

Y

You can learn a lot about a company from their Web site. You can read the company’s history, find out if they have a diversity program, research what types of charitable contributions they make, locate your local store, and even do your shopping, all with the click of a mouse button. If you were to click on the “About Us” section of the Vons Web site, you would find a link to a “Diversity” section, and at the very top of the page is the following statement: “At Vons, we feel that our team should reflect the diversity of the people who shop in our stores. That is why we are pleased that Fortune magazine has recognized our dedication to hiring and promoting qualified people from all backgrounds. Our team brings you the quality and service that you expect from Safeway every day.”

The Diversity Web site is just one of many avenues that Vons, the Southern California arm of the Safeway family of stores, uses as part of its diversity initiative, which also includes diversity advisory boards, recruitment initiatives, leadership accountability, diversity education, network groups and mentoring. Safeway recognizes diversity as an integral part of their business, and their view of diversity is all inclusive and covers the many ways the company’s employees are different, including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age and disability. For Safeway, diversity is more than a corporate initiative; it is a living part of the company’s culture, and the company is committed to providing an environment in which the individual is respected and supported, and teamwork is encouraged and enriched by including every person’s contribution. Safeway has received numerous awards and recognition from community and government organizations for their commitment to employ people with disabilities. Due to Vons’ continued commitment to competitively employing a diverse team from all backgrounds, including people with developmental disabilities, Lanterman is recognizing them in our “Employer Spotlight” feature in “Viewpoint.”
In January of this year, Lanterman Regional Center’s board of directors adopted the position described in the paper, “Reaffirming the Lanterman Vision: A Decade of Reinvention and Renewal,” which can be found at www.lanterman.org. This paper set out an initiative intended to achieve funding for service providers and regional centers that reflects the actual cost of providing services. The initiative would require creation and implementation of a sustained program of education and active advocacy to be carried out locally and statewide. A key component of the implementation strategy focused on educating the various stakeholder groups—families, service providers, regional center staff and legislators—as to the issues. Legislative impact forums are one way for us to let our collective voices be heard by the legislators that represent us. It’s a two-way conversation between people with developmental disabilities, service providers and the regional center, and our legislators. They hear our issues and concerns, and we hear from them what they need from us to make the legislative process work. For most people served by Lanterman, community-based services are the norm, but that wasn’t always the case. They’re attested to by some of the presenters at the recent legislative impact forums, the community-based system of support and care is threatened by hiring freezes, low wages and soaring operating costs. We all have the responsibility of letting our legislators know what the services and supports mean to us and what the impact of not having them will be.

What is a legislative impact forum?

It’s really easy to forget what the pioneers who lobbied for humane treatment of individuals with developmental disabilities had to over come to get the Lanterman Act passed. Forty years later, the memories of those early years have faded into history. But the vision created by the passage of the Lanterman Act is threatened, and it is time for the Lanterman community to pick up and carry the torch lit so many years ago. Legislative impact forums are one way for us to let our collective voices be heard by the legislators that represent us. It’s a two-way conversation between people with developmental disabilities, service providers and the regional center, and our legislators. They hear our issues and concerns, and we hear from them what they need from us to make the legislative process work. For most people served by Lanterman, community-based services are the norm, but that wasn’t always the case. They’re attested to by some of the presenters at the recent legislative impact forums, the community-based system of support and care is threatened by hiring freezes, low wages and soaring operating costs. We all have the responsibility of letting our legislators know what the services and supports mean to us and what the impact of not having them will be.

And what of the people that this unique system was designed to serve? What of the Californians with developmental disabilities? California’s residents with developmental disabilities are here to stay. The question is, who will be here to assist them?”

“Landerman Director of Community Services, Karen Engram, welcomes the various stakeholders, including clients and their families, service providers, and representatives for Assembleynembers, Carol Liu and Dario Frommer, to the Burbank legislative impact forum at which the effects of rate freezes and cost containment measures on service providers were discussed.

Linda Jones, director of Client Services at United Cerebral Palsy, represented service providers at the Burbank forum. She shared, “As a result of funding cuts, unallocated budget reductions, and a concomitant freeze on payment rates, the dreams that came true through the passage of the Lanterman Act are in jeopardy of turning to dust.”

During her presentation, Jones detailed some of the differences between the cost of providing services today compared with costs of 20 years ago, when rates were set. During the last 20 years, the cost of gas has increased 200 percent, minimum wage is up 42 percent, worker’s compensation costs have tripled, and health insurance costs have increased 50 plus percent.

Towards the end of her presentation, Jones posed several questions to the audience that really cut to the core of the issue. “This system of services was designed to assist people with developmental disabilities to build and lead full and dignified lives. How can this be accomplished without a steady and well-trained workforce? The lack of experienced and qualified staff contributes to the deterioration of the quality of programs and services. And what agencies do when the amount of money they receive from their only paying customer, the state of California, is not enough to pay their bills, and they cannot recruit and maintain enough skilled employees to ensure the health and safety of the people they serve?”

They shut their doors. Homes close. People lose their homes. Programs close. People lose opportunities. The quality of programs and services decreases. People lose opportunities as they require to participate as active community members.

Numerous homes have closed already and many others are on the brink of closing. Many agencies providing other services including day programs, independent living services and supported living services are unable to accept new participants because they are already operating at a loss. Agencies cannot continue to provide services under these circumstances. And so they leave.

And what of the people that this unique system was designed to serve? What of the Californians with developmental disabilities? California’s residents with developmental disabilities are here to stay. The question is, who will be here to assist them?”

Legislative Impact Forums Raise Key Issues that the State Needs to Address Before the Lanterman Act Turns to Dust

While Saewert also believes there is something that can be done about it. She says, “Become involved with what is going on around you. I am the first to admit that I don’t always have a grasp on what laws are being passed and who they are affecting. It is my responsibility as a direct care professional to make sure I am in agreement with what is going on in the government.”

Representatives for Assemblymembers Carol Liu and Dario Frommer attended, and assured the audience that both of them were aware of the problem and were doing their best to ensure that the proposed 3 percent rate increase for providers remained in the State’s budget.

The Los Angeles forum focused on several bills that will have an effect on service providers. One bill, AB2836 (Karntene), would require homes for the elderly to install fire sprinkler systems, but would provide no funds for providers to purchase, install and maintain the systems. Lanterman Regional Center’s board of directors has taken an “oppose” position on this bill and has sent a letter to the author explaining why.

Lanterman Act is threatened, and it is time for the Lanterman community to pick up and carry the torch lit so many years ago. Legislative impact forums are one way for us to let our collective voices be heard by the legislators that represent us. It’s a two-way conversation between people with developmental disabilities, service providers and the regional center, and our legislators. They hear our issues and concerns, and we hear from them what they need from us to make the legislative process work. For most people served by Lanterman, community-based services are the norm, but that wasn’t always the case. They’re attested to by some of the presenters at the recent legislative impact forums, the community-based system of support and care is threatened by hiring freezes, low wages and soaring operating costs. We all have the responsibility of letting our legislators know what the services and supports mean to us and what the impact of not having them will be.

Tips for Writing a Letter to Your Representative

Attendees at both forums were encouraged to participate in the legislative process by writing letters to their representatives. There were letter writing stations set up at both forums and many participants wrote letters before they went home. Following are some of the letter writing tips that were shared:

• Don’t forget to put your address in the letter so that it will get there
• Include a picture of the client who would be affected by the legislation
• Be polite
• Keep the letter short, one page is best
• Introduce yourself and indicate which bill you’re writing about
• Say why you support or oppose the bill
• Ask your representative to support or oppose the bill
• Ask them to keep you informed on the bill
• Thank them for their time
• Don’t forget to put your address in the letter in case the envelope you sent it in gets lost
• If you would like more information about the legislation that Lanterman is following, send a note to Lanterman’s Web site at www.lanterman.org and click on “Legislative.” To receive e-mail updates and action alerts, please subscribe at Lanterman’s e-mail bulletin from the homepage.

Karen Logan, director of Community Services, at 213.381.1300, x. 617.
The Budget Update
Governor and Legisature Agree to State Budget Prior to Start of 2006-2007 Fiscal Year

For the first time in six years, a budget was delivered by the Legislature and signed by the Governor prior to July 1, the start of the State’s fiscal year. This budget is based on regional centers serving approximately 212,000 clients and families, an increase of 14 percent over the 203,000 currently not being served. It calls for an increase in purchase of services from $2.4 billion to nearly $2.7 billion, or 10.8 percent; and an increase in state direct services and operations from $456 million to $488 million, or 7 percent. A 5 percent rate increase has been given to certain classes of service providers, primarily those affected by an ongoing rate freeze. In addition, small rate increases have been given to supported employment and some day program providers, provided they meet certain conditions relative to moving to more community-based, inclusive settings.

However, the cost of services, particularly purchased services, continues to grow at a rate much higher than the rate of client growth. This budget gives the developmental systems service providers, who are now called “regional centers,” a chance to do some good work. Although the State’s fiscal outlook appears to be improving, it still has a significant deficit to be paid down. And there is growing worry that the State’s obligations outweigh its revenues.

This is a good point for us to pause and look at how far we have come as a system and to acknowledge the many challenges that continue to have significant impact.

In 2006, about 3,000 people with developmental disabilities live in state hospitals now called developmental centers – while more than 200,000 children and adults receive services in their own homes. The state is committed to further reducing the population in the state hospitals, and one of these institutions - Agnew Developmental Center – is scheduled for closure in 2008. As Agnew closes, only four developmental centers will remain open, down from 11 in 1967.

Services and supports offered through regional centers allow more than 98 percent of children with developmental disabilities to live in their home communities with their own or foster families.

Nearly 20 percent of adults with developmental disabilities live in their own caregivers and support their families, and approximately 18 percent live primarily in small, homelike, community-based care facilities. Additionally, the number of people living on their own is severely limited by the availability of affordable housing, particularly in high-cost areas of the State. This means that children and youth from the San Francisco-Oakland region.

More than 9,000 adults with developmental disabilities are employed with support in real jobs in regular work settings in the community. This number, however, has not increased in several years.

Regional centers have proved to be a cost-effective alternative to state institutions. The average per capita expenditure by regional centers for clients served in the community is approximately $11,000 per year. The corresponding per capita amount for developmental center residents is approximately $250,000 per year. Many people with developmental disabilities living in the community have support needs as great as or greater than some residents of developmental centers. Individuals such as these obviously cannot live in state hospitals, and it continues to be challenging to find services to meet their needs within the State’s existing rate structure for service providers. Additionally, about 85 percent of a regional center’s budget is devoted to purchase of client services, while the remaining 15 percent of the budget pays for direct client services, such as service coordination and direct family support provided by regional center staff members. Only 3 percent of the budget is devoted to regional center administration and operating expenses.

Current Challenges to the System
- Residential service providers have not received increases in reimbursement that reflect growth in the actual cost of delivering services since 1986, when the current rate system was instituted, although some small increases, such as cost-of-living increases and supplemental Security Income funds, provided by the federal government, have been passed through to providers in the regional centers.
- During the early 1990s, in response to unprecedented budget deficits in California, regional centers were subject to “unallocated reductions” in funding and much of this lost funding has not been restored.
- In response to a $38 billion shortfall in the state budget in 2002, 1) payment rates for the already underfunded community services were frozen, and 2) regional centers were prohibited from using purchase of service (POS) funding for new program start-ups. Although the state economy has made significant gains since that time, the rate freeze continues, although a 5 percent cost-of-living increase has been granted to certain classes of service providers. In addition, the approval for the use of POS funds for start-ups remains very limited.
- Currently, in the Lanterman Regional Center area, the average hour rate for direct service professionals in all types of programs – the people who work directly with clients – ranges from approximately $14 to nearly $18, or approximately $10. The last available statewide survey of wages in community care facilities (2001) documented hourly wages over $10 per hour. The wage situation has resulted in very high vacancy and turnover rates among program staff, undermining service quality and availability of services. And even when small wage increases have been granted, there are still other costs that are unanswered for, such as rent and insurance increases.
- In the past year, financial stresses have led to the closure of six licensed homes in the Lanterman area.
- Start-up funds for new programs have been restricted to programs setting people moving out of developmental centers. As a result, regional centers have been unable to develop programs and services critical for new and emerging populations, including people with autism, older adults and people involved with the criminal justice system. This situation has resulted in its fact to waiting lists for services, which is contrary to the mandate of the Lanterman Act.
- The provision that allows for the following of the use of $3 million for startup projects statewide is welcome but does not begin to meet the need.
- Despite an increase in the Consumer Price Index of more than 4 percent in the last decade, regional centers have received no cost-of-living wage increases for their staff, nor have they had increases in the amounts budgeted for insurance, equipment, supplies and other operating expenses.

What is needed?
- Implement rates for programs that reflect the real cost of doing business and provide a reasonable wage for direct support professionals. The approval of the 1 percent cost-of-living increase for regional center service providers is only a first step, a discontinuation of the service provider rate freeze and further, ongoing rate adjustments are necessary for the provision of quality services to clients and families.
- Allow the use of purchase of service funds for the development of additional needed new programs.
- Reimburse regional centers for the real cost of doing business, such as rent, utilities, and recruiting qualified staff, and increasing operational expenses such as rent, communications, and keeping abreast of new technologies to promote more efficient service delivery.
- Increase availability of affordable housing in decent, safe neighborhoods by authorizing regional centers to use purchase of service funds for the development, purchase and rehabilitation of such housing.

The Director’s VIEWPOINT
Searching for the Next Generation of Leaders

In the last issue of “Viewpoint,” I wrote about the need to recommit to the vision embodied in the Lanterman Act – and the absolutely crucial need for the Lanterman Center to develop the next generation of leaders.

One of our core values at Lanterman is leadership development – an act of service to the community as a whole. As an organization, and individuals, we strive to be in the forefront of pioneering new ways to enhance the lives of people with developmental disabilities, their families and the community we serve. We want to inspire the Center to reach its full potential and lead the way for others.

Many of the families we serve today were not even born when the valiant efforts of parent leaders helped bring the regional centers into being. They don’t realize that the system was designed to be governed at the local level, not in Sacramento. It was a very important concept that Frank Lanterman called “home rule,” and it was built on a foundation of continuity, of the ongoing presence of experienced leadership.

Over the years, as families have benefited from the fruits of the system’s hard work and functioning, the concept of giving back – of actively contributing – has been replaced by a sense of entitlement. As a result, many of our services and our existence more and more for granted; the regional center vision is in danger of being lost.

The leadership challenge looming before us is critical – and we must meet this challenge head on.

What kind of leader do we need to take us into the next 40 years?

There is no single mold, no universal template, but certain qualities do come to mind: a deep-seated sense of service, an openness to learning, and a commitment to innovation.

Our new leaders will also need vision, tempered by pragmatism. They must be willing to take risks, but be equally willing to jettison a pilot or an experiment that doesn’t work, realizing that everything that is not innovative is a waste of resources.

They must also be stewards in the broadest sense of the word, mindful of the needs of the entire community and prepared to weigh short-term gains against long-term sustainability. The unchanged reality is that the future will continue to be one of greater competition for fewer resources. We need leaders who understand that.

Recently, I was asked if I thought that we would ever fully realize the vision of the Lanterman Act. That’s a significant question – with no simple answer. There’s no doubt that we have made tremendous progress in realizing the vision of having each individual with a developmental disability be able to live a full, productive and satisfying life as a valued and included member of the community. But along the way, we have neglected to plan for succession, and it is time to take up the task.

In addition to parent leaders, adults with developmental disabilities and community members show good leadership potential. Adult clients have served in various capacities on our board, committees and other areas. Many of them are well able to lead and should be encouraged, and an opportunity to take up the mantle.

The other is the broader community of individuals who have no formal connection with the world of developmental disabilities. They are a vital resource which we must engage and draw upon, particularly if we wish to preserve “home rule.”

Whatever our future holds, one thing is clear – we must identify, nurture and mentor the next generation of leaders. That is the single most important thing we can do to ensure that the promise of the Lanterman Act is fulfilled.

Executive Director Diane Anand
**How are we doing? – Read Lanterman’s Performance Report to Find Out**

Every year for the last 40 years, the Department of Developmental Services has contracted with the regional centers in California to serve individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Beginning in 1995, the Department required regional centers, with input from their communities, to develop performance plans that then became part of their annual contract with the State. These plans included goals and measurable objectives in 10 program areas, such as employment, family support and community living options. Regional centers were pretty much free to decide what their goals and objectives would be, but they were then held accountable for achieving them.

Several years ago, DDS changed the model for performance plans. Rather than allowing regional centers to create their own plans, the Department created a standard set of goals that every center was required to adopt, which are discussed later in this article. Centers were still responsible for developing the specific objectives that described how they would achieve the goals and they could work with their communities to include additional goals. This new model was phased in over a period of years and Lanterman Regional Center adopted it for the calendar year 2005.

Every year, DDS looks at how well the regional centers are doing on these “Performance Plans” and makes the results public. The information that follows provides a summary of how Lanterman performed on its plan in 2005.

Last year, Lanterman served about 6,800 clients and their families. “At Lanterman, we want to improve every year, do better than the state average, and meet or exceed the DDS standard. As you can see in this report, we did well in helping ensure that 99.08 percent of the children we serve live with their own or foster families, and that those few children who do live out of home live in small homelike settings, with fewer than six beds,” says Diane Anand, executive director. “We still need to improve in helping people move out of the developmental centers and ensuring that adults whom we serve live with their families, on their own, or in small homelike settings.”

There is a major state initiative to move people from state developmental centers into the community and Lanterman is actively involved in that initiative. Lanterman is also working very hard to reduce the number of adults who live in facilities serving more than six clients. “A major reason why a relatively high percentage of Lanterman clients live in larger facilities is that the Lanterman service area is home to a disproportionate number of skilled nursing facilities. Other regional centers place clients in these facilities and those people subsequently become Lanterman clients,” adds Anand. “About a year ago, we began carefully reviewing the health status and support needs of all adults living in SNFs in our area and are working diligently to help them move to more homelike, less restrictive residences.” Since the beginning of 2005, Lanterman has reduced the SNF population by more than 5 percent.

The charts in the summary below provide information about the clients we serve, as well as how well we are doing in meeting our goals and in fulfilling our contract with DDS. A detailed version of our Performance Report for the 2005 year can be downloaded on the homepage of Lanterman’s Web site at www.lanterman.org.

### Who uses Lanterman?

These charts tell you about who Lanterman clients are and where they live.

### Where Lanterman Clients Live

- **ICF** – Intermediate Care Facility (facilities licensed by Department of Social Services)
- **CCF** – Community Care Facility (facilities licensed by Department of Health Services)
- **ILS** – Independent Living Skills
- **SLS** – Supported Living Services
- **Family/Foster Home Agency** 1%
- **Home of Parent/Guardian** 79%
- **CCF/ICT 14%**
- **ILS/SLS 5%**
- **Other 1%**

### ILS – Independent Living Skills

### SLS – Supported Living Services

### Primary Diagnosis of Lanterman Clients*

- **Autism** 28.20%
- **Mild/Moderate Mental Retardation** 48.12%
- **Severe/Profound Mental Retardation** 17%
- **Cerebral Palsy** 15.14%
- **Epilepsy** 20.53%
- **Additional diagnoses**
  - Other 1%

*Please note that despite the fact that the term primary diagnosis suggests each person would have only one, this is not the way the State defines it – i.e., some people have more than one primary diagnosis, and that’s why the total is greater than 100 percent.

### How well is Lanterman performing?

The chart below tells you about five areas where DDS wants each regional center to keep improving.

The first column, labeled December 2004, tells you how Lanterman was doing at the beginning of 2005, and the second shows how we were doing at the end of 2005.

To see how we performed relative to the other regional centers in the State, compare our numbers to the state averages in the shaded columns.

### Regional Center Goals (Based on Lanterman Act)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>December 2004</th>
<th>December 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passes independent audit</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in the federal waiver</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audits vendors as required</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP (Individual Program Plan) requirements met</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>93.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) requirements met</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>86.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intake/Assessment timelines for clients age 3 or older met</td>
<td>96.32%</td>
<td>98.36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Home settings include: independent living, supported living, Adult Family Home Agency homes, and clients’ family homes.

As you can see from this chart, the change in our performance relative to each of these goals was in the desired direction. For example, we reduced the percent of Lanterman clients living in a developmental center from 1.93 percent to 1.76 percent.

### Did Lanterman meet DDS standards?

Read below to see how well we did in meeting DDS compliance standards.

### Areas Measured

- **Last Period**
- **Current Period**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Passes independent audit</th>
<th>Participates in the federal waiver</th>
<th>Audits vendors as required</th>
<th>IPP (Individual Program Plan) requirements met</th>
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<th>Intake/Assessment timelines for clients age 3 or older met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>96.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, Lanterman successfully complied with the state requirements related to audits and fiscal controls. The data reflecting requirements for IPP and IFSP development are from record reviews conducted by the State in 2004. It should be noted that the data related to “IFSP requirements” are based on a review of only 13 cases. This result should, therefore, be interpreted with caution.

### What about other performance areas?

In the future, we will measure how well we are doing in other areas, including:

- Increasing the number of clients who work,
- Getting better pay for clients who work,
- Making sure clients get medical and dental services, and
- Meeting Intake/Assessment and IFSP timelines for children birth to 3.

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*Please note that despite the fact that the term primary diagnosis suggests each person would have only one, this is not the way the State defines it – i.e., some people have more than one primary diagnosis, and that’s why the total is greater than 100 percent.*
Lanterman Elects Two New Board Members at June Meeting

Kelly Vencill Sanchez Contributes Firsthand Experience as a Parent, Social Worker and Freelance Writer to Lanterman’s Board

Although Kelly Vencill Sanchez was just recently elected as a member of Lanterman Regional Center’s board of directors, she has been involved with the regional center for several years, first as a social worker in maternal, labor and delivery, and the neonatal intensive care units at Good Samaritan and Huntington Hospitals, and then as a parent in Early Intervention when her son, Luke, was born prematurely in 2002. Luke, who is now 4, was later diagnosed with cerebral palsy and seizure disorder and is now a part of Lanterman’s Footsteps Program.

Vencill Sanchez has a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and literature from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a master’s degree in social work from California State University, Long Beach. She worked as a social worker with juveniles on probation and is currently a freelance writer and editor with Conde Nast Publications. She attended the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disorders (LEND) Program offered by the University of Southern California and University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) from 2004 to 2005.

Committed to the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in school, extracurricular activities, work and life, Vencill Sanchez has volunteered to help out with the last two Perspectives Film Festivals. “Sometimes it seems like we have a long way to go before attitudes change about people with disabilities. Change is hard, inclusion can be complicated and messy, but the benefits are well worth the fight,” adds Vencill Sanchez, who is also a Lanterman Peer Support Partner.

Vencill Sanchez believes deeply in the ability of “ordinary” people to do extraordinary things and was moved and inspired by the grassroots efforts of parents 40 years ago who contributed to the founding of the regional centers. She says: “This is an especially challenging time for our clients and service providers, economically and politically, and I’m sorry that we do not have a champion like Frank Lanterman in the Legislature. But we do have clients, parents and others with knowledge, will and passion, and I believe that together our efforts can make a difference for those with developmental disabilities and their families. I have learned so much from those who have gone on this journey before us, and I hope I can learn a lot more to learn, but I am in this battle for the long haul.”

Even though Vencill Sanchez is the parent of a young child, she is very much looking forward to learning about and understanding the challenges that face adults with developmental disabilities in the community, and advocating on behalf of Lanterman’s adult clients and those who provide services for them. “The board members of any regional center have a unique challenge in front of them in that they must be concerned with the diverse needs and issues relating to clients of all ages,” she adds.

In addition to Luke, Vencill Sanchez and her husband, Michael, have a 6-year-old son, Teo. As time permits, she enjoys traveling and anything to do with horses, particularly riding. Although she’ll go anywhere, her favorite destination is the American Southwest.

Phyllis Kochavi’s Accomplishments in the Health Services Field and Volunteer Experience in Education are an Asset for Lanterman’s Board

Even though she is new to Lanterman’s board, Kochavi and her family have been a part of the Regional Center for the past eight years. When he was 4, Kochavi’s son, Ari, who is almost 22, was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, necessitating surgery to remove it if he was to have any chance to live. Kochavi and her husband, Doron, had to make a treatment decision that would impact the rest of their son’s life.

Throughout the years, Kochavi has volunteered to participate in the board process with a number of education-related organizations. She held several positions on the La Cañada Educational Foundation Board, including co-president and chair of the annual gala, and she served on the Community Advisory Committee for the La Cañada Burbank Glendale Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA), including two years as chair.

She enjoys working with people from all walks of life. “I feel I can learn something from everyone. I also like meeting people who I would not otherwise have had an opportunity to work with or to get to know. I also enjoy working for the betterment of an organization,” she explains.

Currently she serves on the board of The Frosting School in Pasadena where: Ari attended for nine years. She is also a member of the Parent Association Advisory Council for George Washington University, where her 20-year-old daughter, Dani, will be a junior in the fall. “We meet three times per year in Washington, D.C., and represent the interests of undergraduate parents in those non-academic areas that affect the quality of student life,” says Kochavi. “Most recently we have been instrumental in elevating making in the dorm rooms.”

Kochavi, herself a graduate of George Washington University, has a bachelor’s degree in English literature, and her master’s degree in public administration with a health services specialty from the University of Southern California. She has worked at both Childrens Hospital Los Angeles and at Northridge Hospital Medical Center. At Childrens, Kochavi coordinated the integrated medical school program moving into the hospital, and at Northridge, she was the administrative director in charge of Volunteer Services and Community Outreach. “We hire and train volunteers throughout the hospital and we received several awards for innovative programs, such as utilizing volunteers in the Trauma department to work with the families of trauma victims brought into the emergency room,” she shares.

As one of Lanterman’s newest board members, Kochavi is looking forward to “championing the efforts of parents 40 years ago who contributed to the founding of the regional centers. She says: “I am open to serving in a capacity where I can contribute my knowledge and skills. She adds: “I am open to serving in a capacity where I can add to the board in a very good way, at thinking of new ways to approach a problem and hopefully this skill will be of benefit.”

In her free time, Kochavi enjoys reading and learning about other cultures through literature. She also loves traveling, especially with her family.

Help Raise Money, Use GoodSearch!

Did you know that performing your good deed of the day could be as simple as searching the Internet using GoodSearch? Simply by searching the Internet at www.goodsearch.com you are helping Lanterman Regional Center for Learning and Development.

You use www.goodsearch.com like any other search engine – the site is powered by Yahoo! – but each time you do, money is generated for Lanterman. Here’s how it works:

1. Go to www.goodsearch.com
2. Type Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center into the “I support” box and click on “verify” to add the Internet just like you would with any search engine.

Since GoodSearch shares its advertising revenue with charities and schools, every time you search the Internet at GoodSearch, you’ll be earning money for Lanterman.

GoodSearch also has a toolbar you can download from the homepage so that you can search right from the top of your browser.

You can keep track of Lanterman’s estimated earnings by clicking on “amount raised” once you download the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center as your organization of choice. The more people who use the site, the more money we’ll earn, so please spread the word. All money earned through GoodSearch will be designated for Lanterman Regional Center’s Help Fund, which is the fund that gives all year long by providing assistance with emergency food, clothing, shelter and other necessities for Lanterman clients and their families.

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.

For information, please contact Frank Lara in advance at 213.383.1300, x. 665 or frank.lara@lanterman.org so you can be placed on the list of attendees. We look forward to your visit.

Board Member Kelly Vencill Sanchez

Board Member Phyllis Kochavi

Board Meeting Perspectives Film
Lanterman Celebrates 40 Years as Partners in Lifelong Support

Nestled along Hollywood Boulevard, across the street from Grauman’s Chinese Theater and just up from Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, the recently-renovated historic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel served as the backdrop for Lanterman’s gala dinner celebrating 40 years as partners in lifelong support. Once in decline, the now trendy and popular hotel helped preserve some of the glamour that was once Hollywood, and for that one evening in March, the guests at Lanterman’s gala dinner were made to feel like the stars of old.

Guests, who were treated to delectable appetizers in the hotel lobby, climbed Shirley Temple’s tiled stairway to the upstairs mezzanine that encircles the lobby, to check out an exhibit dedicated to old Hollywood, while others just chose to sink into the plush, oversized sofas that are part of the Library Bar to soak up the ambience and enjoy each other’s company.

At exactly 10 minutes before 7:30 p.m., the doors to the Blossom Room, the site of the first ever Academy Awards, were thrown open and dinner guests streamed into the ballroom in search of their seats. The master of ceremonies for the evening was Elizabeth Espinosa, anchor and reporter for KTTV Fox 11 News. Espinosa has a brother with developmental disabilities and is an advocate for the special needs community.

The program for the evening’s celebration eloquently summed up the event: “Today, a child born in California with a developmental disability faces a radically different future from a child born with the same disability 40 years ago. This evening we celebrate our accomplishments, reflecting on the progress we have made in changing lives and building community. We have been a partner and advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their families, developed and improved services, challenged perceptions, made in changing lives and building community. We have been a partner and advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their families, developed and improved services, challenged perceptions, made in changing lives and building community. We have been a partner and advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their families, developed and improved services, challenged perceptions, made in changing lives and building community. 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Among those individuals who have contributed to the accomplishments of the last 40 years, there is one individual who particularly stands out – Al Marsella. Marsella, a founding member of the Los Angeles County Developmental Services Foundation, and past Lanterman board president and advisor, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his many years of dedicated and selfless service to the Lanterman community. (At right is a more in-depth article about Marsella and his contributions to Lanterman.)

With dinner finished and the memory of dessert still lingering, guests were treated to a presentation by the featured speaker of the evening, Emily Perl Kingsley. An Emmy Award-winning writer for “Sesame Street,” Kingsley shared with the audience her initial struggles and ultimately her accomplishments with including children and adults with disabilities on “Sesame Street.” The mother of an adult son with Down syndrome and a frequent lecturer on disability rights, Kingsley shared various clips from different “Sesame Street” episodes that had included people with disabilities.

The evening concluded with a rousing rendition of “Sing,” the song originally written by The Carpenters, but made famous by “Sesame Street.” The song, which was beautifully signed by Service Coordinator Christine Yuh, was opened up to audience participation. And while it brought back memories of our childhoods, it also served as a reminder of why we have dedicated our lives to serving people with developmental disabilities and not music careers.

Although no one from Lanterman saw the two ghosts rumored to haunt the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel – Actor Montgomery Clift haunts the ninth floor (suite 928), where he used to pace the halls back in 1953, memorizing his lines while making “From Here to Eternity,” and Marilyn Monroe, whose image is said to occasionally appear in a full-length mirror which used to hang in her poolside suite and is now next to the elevator on the lower level – many did have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of Paris Hilton at the end of the evening who was attending an event hosted by Playboy at the hotel.

At right: The featured speaker of the evening, Emily Perl Kingsley, an Emmy-award winning writer for “Sesame Street,” shared footage from an episode during which her son, Jason, shares a scene with Ernie.
Al Marsella Honored at 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner for His Selfless Service, Dedication and Commitment to the Lanterman Community

Al Marsella, a Hollywood CPA and business manager, served on the Program Policy Committee of the Regional Center at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, one of two pilot regional centers established in California. He went on to become a founding member of the Los Angeles County Developmental Services Foundation, the parent organization that was formed in 1979 when Lanterman Regional Center separated from Childrens Hospital. Marsella is the father of Joseph and Mary, two adult children with autism, and considered his late wife, Beatrice, the source of his strength and inspiration for his dedication and commitment to Lanterman.

Over the years, he has remained actively involved with Lanterman, holding a number of positions, including several terms as president of the board, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. He has also served for many years on the Administrative Affairs Committee, including more than one term as chairman. During the periods that he was not on the board, Marsella acted as an advisor – a special position reserved for individuals who have provided extraordinary service both to the Center and the board of directors.

He served as the chair of the second Lanterman Leadership Forum planning committee, and has been instrumental in raising funds to help underwrite special projects and events, such as the Perspectives International Film Festivals and Forums, The Roberta Happe Memorial Internship, and the Lanterman Leadership Forums. In the words of Executive Director Diane Anand, “Because of our complex budget, finances and significant fiduciary responsibilities, we have been privileged to have a financial and business person of Al’s caliber and experience giving so generously of his time in service to the board and the Lanterman community.”

He has been a tireless advocate, valued advisor and the ultimate volunteer. Whatever the task, Marsella has always stepped up to help in any way needed. For his selfless service, dedication and commitment to the Lanterman community, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 40th anniversary gala dinner held on Thursday, March 16, 2006 at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

Upon accepting the award, Marsella shared: “This award I accept in the name of and on behalf of all of you. It is as well your lifetime achievement award. Thank you for giving of yourselves in this “giving” – in this “loving” – in being here to speak for justice. We must be ever vigilant to keep this spirit alive, for the moment it ceases, indifference takes hold – and justice for all our sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, cousins and grandchildren is extinguished.”
Save the Date!

Lanterman’s Clients to Compete in the Get Fit! Games at the Home Depot Center

On Saturday, November 4, 2006 pack your oversized foam fingers, your hand painted signs and your team spirit, and make your way to the Home Depot Center to show your support for Lanterman’s adult clients, as they compete in the Get Fit! Games against Harbor Regional Center’s clients. The Get Fit! Games will cap the yearlong Get Fit! Program that was funded by a $300,000 Wellness Initiative grant to Lanterman and Harbor Regional Centers from the Department of Developmental Services. The Get Fit! Program is a multi-faceted approach designed to improve the health status of adults with developmental disabilities by focusing on nutrition and exercise.

“We want the Get Fit! participants to feel confident about their new fitness levels, to stay motivated, and to continue their commitment to an active and healthy lifestyle,” shares Margarita Blanco, project manager of Lanterman’s Get Fit! Program. “We want our participants to feel like ‘superstar athletes’ and ‘champions’ by allowing them to display their new fitness skills and athletic abilities in a world-class venue like the Home Depot Center.”

Objectives of the Get Fit! Program

- To educate adult regional center clients about how to start and maintain a healthy lifestyle that emphasizes exercise and nutrition.
- To provide education on these same topics to independent living skills/supported living services (ILS/SLS), day program and independent living skills workers, stretch after a body movement class at Pacific Community Center and Park in Glendale.
- To engage clients in regular physical activity.
- To provide clients with ongoing support.
- To provide education on these same topics to clients participating in the Get Fit! Program at Goodwill Industries in Los Angeles test the accuracy of their new pedometers. Each of them has the final goal of walking 10,000 steps each day.

The Get Fit! Games will recognize participants in Harbor and Lanterman Regional Center’s Get Fit! Programs for their hard work and effort towards improving their health and making better lifestyle choices. Endorsed by the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, the Get Fit! Games are tentatively scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and will offer fun for the whole family.

In a social and supportive atmosphere, Lanterman’s clients will engage in friendly competition with their peers from Harbor in walking races, running relays, basketball, volleyball, tennis and many other activities. All participants will receive a medal, an official Get Fit!’s shirt and a free lunch.

Everyone is invited to participate in a Family Fun Walk. In addition, Harbor Regional Center will be hosting their annual health and resource fair during the morning. The event will also feature music, entertainment and demonstrations by professional athletes.

For more information about the Get Fit! Program and the Get Fit! Games, and to make a donation to support the Get Fit! Games, visit www.lanterman.org/getfit.

If you are interested in sponsoring the Get Fit! Games, you can also contact Lanterman Get Fit! Project Manager, Margarita Blanco, at margarita.blanco@lanterman.org or 213.383.1300, x. 747.

Interested in Helping Out with the Get Fit! Games?

Would you like to be a sponsor for the Get Fit! Games? Do you know an organization that would? Sponsors are needed for the prizes, medals, breakfast, lunch, snacks, water and other refreshments, towels and various other event-related supplies. For more information about sponsorship levels and opportunities, visit www.lanterman.org/getfit. If you are interested in sponsoring the Get Fit! Games, you can also contact Lanterman Get Fit! Project Manager, Margarita Blanco, at margarita.blanco@lanterman.org or 213.383.1300, x. 747.

All Great Sporting Events Have Sponsors…

Early Intervention Spanish-Speaking Support Group Celebrated Mother’s Day Luau Style

In what is becoming an annual event, the Early Intervention Spanish-speaking Support Group celebrated Mother’s Day with a fun-filled luau. As they arrived, floral leis were strung around their necks. The mothers were treated to tropical inspired food, including chicken, black beans and rice, and plantains. The mothers also received a presentation by Author Eduardo Cholula.
Remembering Phyllis Ann Jackson

D uring her time at Lanterman as a nurse and in a variety of health-related roles, such as giving medications.

In our lives, Phyllis became the ultimate professional and most accomplished nurse and trusted her opinion. She knew her trade, was really professional and really cared. She was a very realistic person and helped us understand Nancy’s situation at this home right away. She truly understood the relationship between oral health and systemic health.

Not only was Jackson incredibly knowledgeable about nursing in the field of developmental disabilities; she was also a compassionate and caring person. Julianne Merriman, whose daughter, Nancy, lived at Villa Esperanza, met Jackson shortly after her daughter was diagnosed with cancer. “During that time, she was very supportive and helped us understand Nancy’s situation and gave us hope.”

In addition to her primary responsibilities, Jackson was also a member of the American Nurses Association Minnesota, providing for the health care needs of individuals with developmental disabilities that lived in community care homes, a responsibility she continued during her time at Lanterman. Jackson was a great resource for the staff that she worked with at the Intermediate Care Facilities and Skilled Nursing Facilities that served Lanterman’s clients. She was there for the staff and in informal instructional settings, about a variety of health-related topics, such as giving medications.

TillmanPink, executive director of Glen-Park Retirement Community, shares: “As a service provider who worked with Phyllis during the last five years, she supported us in keeping at least 35 regional center clients healthy. She was a registered nurse extraordinaire. We called her the ‘teacher,’ and we made sure to hire a qualified person so that we were sure to leave with new knowledge and wisdom. For example, she helped us develop a system for handling lab results that put pressure on the physician to interpret the results for us in a timely fashion. Like your favorite fifth grade teacher, we were never embarrassed to ask her a question for there was no such thing as a stupid question. At her memorial service, I can into a lot of other providers that I have met over the last 16 years in the field, and no words can say more than the presence of all these providers paying their last tribute to Phyllis. We know it’s selfish to want her back, but we providers know that her presence could be filled – the going to see our Florence Nightingales.”

Jackson was also a valuable resource for her co-workers in the Clinical Services unit and for Lanterman’s service coordinators. Ashley Hooks, a Lanterman service coordinator, says: “Phyllis was absolutely inspiring. She truly set a standard and exemplified the phrase, ‘Lead by example.’ She is one of the few people who really made me think and she truly had an impact on how I think it’s a success.”

Jackson recognized what it takes to be an excellent nurse in this field. We all feel the loss of Phyllis and are going to miss her. Her commitment, energy, enthusiasm and leadership will be very hard to replace. She was a friend and a colleague, and I am privileged to have known Phyllis on so many levels.”

Nicknamed “Auntie Flash” by her nieces and nephews, Jackson lived a male a minute. A resident of Glendale, Jackson considered her dog, Topher, her best friend and constant companion. “And now it’s happening all over again. Somehow we don’t learn from history,” explains Gwen Jordan, director of Clinical Services, “and we are now going to have to go through this again.”

In our lives, Phyllis became the ultimate professional and most accomplished nurse and trusted her opinion. She knew her trade, was really professional and really cared. She was a very realistic person and helped us understand Nancy’s situation at this home right away. She truly understood the relationship between oral health and systemic health.

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In addition to her primary responsibilities, Jackson was also a member of Lanterman’s Community Living Options Placement Committee, which is responsible for getting nurse representation from all around the United States for the development of nursing care guidelines for lay caregivers, and was always up for giving a presentation, her most recent one being a joint presentation with Jordan on bioethics at Lanterman Hospital in Pennsylvania that focused on the end-of-life care recommendations for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Jackson was a long time member of the Developmental Disabilities Nurses Association, recently serving as secretary of the organization’s national board. From 2003 to 2005. From 2000 to 2003 she served as vice-president and president for the Southern California D.D.N.A. Network. Jackson was so committed to D.D.N.A. that prior to accepting a position with Lanterman she stipulated that she be allowed to attend D.D.N.A.’s annual educational conference so she could stay current on the latest diagnostic, treatment and care needs of people with developmental disabilities, and so she could share this new information with caregivers in the Lanterman community. Jackson was also a member of the American Nurses Association California.

Annie Seis, owner of Vaghto’s Residential Care Center, Inc., herself a long-time member of D.D.N.A., shares: “The Southern California D.D.N.A. Network will never be the same without her. She was very passionate about developmental disabilities, and truly respected and had an understanding of what it takes to be an excellent nurse in this field. We all feel the loss of Phyllis and are going to miss her. Her commitment, energy, enthusiasm and leadership will be very hard to replace. She was a friend and a colleague, and I am privileged to have known Phyllis on so many levels.”

The purpose of this study is to improve the understanding of how typically developing siblings perceive their relationship with a sibling with special needs, and also how their parents perceive those relationships. The researcher is recruiting the following individuals:

- Caucasian parents having a child with special needs of any age and at least one non-disabled child between 18 to 30 years of age
- Caucasian young adults between 18 and 30 who have a sibling with special needs and whose parents are still alive
- The study is focusing on both Korean and Anglo-American families.

Participants will be asked to complete several questionnaires, and in return, will receive $10 in compensation.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Sun Young Ryu, the researcher, directly at sy4@columbia.edu or 718.672.2634.
The third Perspectives International Film Festival and Forum took place on March 17 to 19, 2006 at the Laemmle Music Hall in Beverly Hills. The festival featured an exciting and diverse program of domestic and international features, documentaries, and short films that explored the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Most screenings were followed by lively and thought-provoking discussion between the filmmaker, a disabilities expert and the audience.

Perspectives opened with little man, Lanterman parent Nicole Conn’s moving documentary about her micro-preemie son. Other films include the premiere of the How’s Your News? Special Election and Convention Coverage; A Child is Waiting, John Cassavettes’ last studio film with Judy Garland and Burt Lancaster; and Serbian Director Goran Paskaljevic’s drama, Midwinter Night’s Dream, featuring a young actress with autism.

This year’s Forum addressed the issues surrounding humor and developmental disabilities, and we were delighted with the outcome. The Ringer’s Eddie Barbanell, one of the lead actors; Director Barry Blaustein; Screenwriter Ricky Blitt; and Executive Producer Peter Farrelly, along with Los Angeles Times columnist Joel Stein, joined Moderator David Streit for a lively and informative discussion about comedy and disabilities. Following the panel, Filmmaker and Council of Advisors Member, Ted Braun, presented Blitt with the third Perspectives Media Award for his hilarious, yet always respectful, script for The Ringer and for his perseverance in getting the film made. The Kids of Widney High played a rousing show during the closing reception at the Friars of Beverly Hills.

Once again Perspectives drew people from across Los Angeles, providing insight into the lives of people with developmental disabilities and inspiring conversations that continued well beyond the theatre exit.

For more information about Perspectives, visit www.perspectives-iff.org.
Perspectives 2006 Council of Advisors
Russell Goldsmith, Honorary Chairman,
City National Bank
Ted Braun, University of Southern California
Bobby Farrelly, Writer, Director
Peter Farrelly, Writer, Director
Melissa Gilbert, Actor
Joe Mantegna, Actor
Olivia Raynor, Tarjan Center at the University of California, Los Angeles
Jason Ritter, Actor
David Streit, AFI Conservatory
Gail Williamson, Down Syndrome Association of Los Angeles

Perspectives 2006 Festival Staff
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Marielle Farnan, Festival Director
Alissa Simon, Programmer
Maureen Wilson, Event Coordinator
Jacquelyn Ashman, Volunteer Coordinator
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Janet Burgos
Kristin Conder
Davonna Jenkins
Jodi Kurland
Joe Perales
Kelly Vencill Sanchez

General Working Group, Graphic Design
Marc Katzschner, Web site Design

Special Thanks
Karen Ingram
Lanterman Leadership Staff
Frank Lara
Al Marsella

A warm thank you to all of our volunteers who gave so generously of their time and energies.
In June, 10 individuals from Russia came to the United States through the USAID Community Connections Program, which is designed to promote public diplomacy through the exchange of cultural ideas and values between participants, U.S. families and local community host organizations. The International Visitors Council of Los Angeles coordinated the three-week trip for the visitors, all of whom work in various disability-related fields, and were here to look at the U.S. approach to disability issues, including developmental disabilities. Lanterman hosted the visitors for one day. Rose Chacana, assistant director of Family Support Services, provided an overview of the regional centers, focusing primarily on the regional centers. Visitors were treated to a screening of “We’re Here to Speak for Justice: Founding California’s Regional Centers” and each of them were given a copy of the “Guide to Lanterman Regional Center” to take back home.
complex’s common space. Not surprisingly, it was an “American Idol” finale party. I just needed to have a party,” adds Klein.

Klein, who is now sporting a mohawk, had the opportunity to visit the “American Idol” set. He met Ryan Seacrest, Paula Abdul, and the top six finalists. “I have an autographed photo from my visit to American Idol out on display in my apartment,” says Klein.

“It was a lot of fun for Nick to go shopping for furniture and decorations for his apartment. He went with a red theme for his living room and a blue theme, in honor of the Dodgers, for his bedroom. It was such a wonderful experience watching him try to figure out what he wanted in his apartment. He sat on every single couch in the store until he found the one he wanted,” says Kelly. Other than a few posters, Klein is saving much of his wall space to display photographs. “I go and buy a picture frame every week,” adds Klein, usually at the 99¢ Only Store.

“It’s amazing the changes and experiences that can happen in a four month period,” shares Kelly. “I was worried that Nick would have a hard time adjusting to living on his own, but he’s flourishing at the apartments. Every day he makes the rounds with the UCP coordinator who works at the apartments and tells me that he needs to be prepared in case they need another coordinator. I’ll call him and ask him if he wants to do something and he tells me that he’s busy or on his way out, but that they’ll call me back.”

Klein has made friends with the other residents of the apartment building. He enjoys helping his neighbors whenever he can. “Doing something for others has really given Nick a sense of accomplishment and has boosted his self-esteem,” notes Kelly. “It’s the little things that an accessible apartment has enabled Nick to do on his own that have had a huge impact, things like having a modified bathroom that enables Nick to wheel right in and brush his teeth at the sink or take a shower without fear of pulling off the towel rack. He used to have to adapt to his living environment but now it is adapted to him.”

Kelly is definitely enjoying having her apartment back and being able to develop a relationship with Klein as his older sister rather than as his primary caregiver. “I like it more than when I was living with my sister, but I miss her sometimes. We try to hang out at least once a week when she’s off work. I like living in Burbank and it’s made me more independent living on my own,” shares Klein.

“Nick is very proud of himself and helping Nick become as independent as possible is also an accomplishment for me,” adds Kelly. Another nice thing that has come out of Klein moving into the apartments is that Kelly has been able to meet other families in similar situations. “You tend to think that your experience is unique, but then you meet other families with whom you can share support and trade ideas. Everyone has someone who loves them a lot, and it can be hard letting that person learn to care for themselves, but sharing, Nick’s story has helped other families see that there are other options available,” says Kelly.

Klein and Kelly are both completely confident that they made the right choice. It was a difficult time for them both as they waited for the opportunity that the UCP apartments presented. “There were other opportunities that were presented to us, but in retrospect, we are both glad that we waited and didn’t jump at the others,” shares Kelly. “I have every bit of faith that UCP cares about Nick and that waiting for the Burbank apartments was the absolute right thing to do, and that this is the absolute right place for him.”

As for Klein, he is busy juggling a schedule that includes hanging out with his new friends, going out to dinner, seeing movies in Burbank, attending UCP’s Special Olympics Program, and grocery shopping down the street from his apartment. He may also be taking a trip to New York this November to participate in the 2006 ING New York City Marathon as part of the Achilles Track Club.

For more information about Achilles Track Club, visit www.achillestrackclub.org. For more about UCP of Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, visit www.ucpla.com. For more information about the Special Olympics program at UCLA, visit www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/specialolympics. For more information about Performing Arts Studio West, visit www.pastudiowest.com.

To read the first story visit www.lanternman.org/news/ Viewpoint/spring_2006.pdf.
I

the working world, it is important to acknowledge those who are on their own or with a disability. These individuals have a right to be included in the workforce, and they are valuable contributors to our society. The Lanterman Regional Center, located in Los Angeles County, provides services and support to individuals with developmental disabilities. The center works to help these individuals find gainful employment and to support the organizations that employ them. This is a strategic goal of the center's mission statement, which states: “Lanterman’s strategic initiatives is to help the individuals we serve find gainful employment and to support the organizations that are employing people with developmental disabilities.”

The “Employer Spotlight” is a recurring “Viewpoint” feature in the center’s newsletter, “The Viewpoint.” This feature asks employers why they made the decision to hire individuals with developmental disabilities. This month’s spotlight features a store manager at Vons, a supermarket chain in Los Angeles County.

Vons has been at the forefront of including people with developmental disabilities in their workforce and they should be commended for it,” shares Radovich.

For more information about Vons, visit www.vons.com.

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The Festival was a celebration of all that is spring and a fun performance from a group of young hula dancers. Courtesy of Mr. Balloon, an Easter egg hunt, and a balloon show featuring face painting, a balloon show to jealously guard the 'Gone Fishing' booth had to jealously guard the food and beverage stations. “The volunteers at Rosenthal LLP, their families and friends, and from the law firm of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, LLP, were a significant developmental disabilities. In many cases, programs in an open, unstructured environment for children with special needs that require one-on-one coaching. All of the hard work and efforts of the volunteers paid off, and the 170 plus athletes had a fun-filled spring afternoon. “Thank you with all of my heart to all of the KEEN volunteers,” said one of the parents who was moved to tears by the efforts. “I’m sure she echoed the feelings of all the parents who attended, and as for the KEEN athletes and prospective athletes, the laughs and fun they had will be memories they will treasure for a long time,” shares Heller. “Thank you again to all of the volunteers who brought much joy to the children with special challenges and their families at KEEN LA’s first Spring Festival.”

KEEN LA's First Spring Festival a Fun-filled Success

In a mild afternoon, the Easter bunny, a bright yellow chicken, a group of volunteers, and children with special needs and their families converged on the Adaptive Recreation Center in Elsin Park for the first Spring Festival hosted by Kids Enjoy Exercise Now Los Angeles. Held on Sunday, March 5, 2006, the Spring Festival was a free event staffed by 65 volunteers from KEEN LA, including attorneys and staff from the law firm of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP, their families and friends, and students from the University of Southern California and from the Rotary Club of Los Angeles, known as LAS. “It was two LAS Rotarians that dressed up as the bunny and chicken. They definitely took ‘Service Above Self,’ the Rotary Club motto, to a new level,” notes Marjorie Heller, executive director of KEEN LA. Volunteers did everything from constructing the balloon arch over the KEEN banner hanging outside the Recreation Center to creating and staffing a “Games Zone,” setting up, and manning the food and beverage stations. “The volunteers at the ‘Gone Fishing’ booth had to jealously guard the goldfish from the sushi lovers,” says Heller. In addition to the activities above, the Spring Festival featured face painting, a balloon show, courtesy of Mr. Balloon, an Easter egg hunt, and a performance from a group of young hula dancers. Heller adds, “Our volunteer face painters created such works of art that some of the children refused to wash their faces at the end of the day.” Everyone indulged in the carnival-like food which included pizza, hot dogs and lots of delectable sweets.

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About KEEN LA

KEEN LA meets twice per month, usually on the first and third Sunday of the month from 11 a.m. to noon. KEEN LA is recruiting additional athletes, especially children whose special needs require one-on-one coaching for their successful participation in various athletic activities.

KEEN is an international, non-profit tax-exempt organization started in the United States in 1992 that is dedicated to providing specialized athletic programs in an open, unstructured environment for school-aged children and young adults with significant developmental disabilities. In many cases, the KEEN program frequently constitutes the only recreational and social activity for some athletes who are unable to participate in other programs. KEEN LA, now in its second year, complements programs in the Washington, D.C., Chicago, Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri metropolitan communities, as well as programs in England.

For more information about KEEN LA and to get a copy of the application for the KEEN LA program, call 213.892.2935 or e-mail info@keenlosangeles.org. Information about KEEN LA is also available at www.keenlosangeles.org. Information about KEEN USA is available at www.keenusa.org.
I enjoyed and loved this class very much because it helps me to be more independent by exploring the Internet sites safer. I learned how to look up interesting fun art crafts shows, stores, and to look for new jobs that are more interesting to me on the computers. I learned about Area of Interest Skills that interest me. And, I also have more driving safety skills in driving education. We also learned more about money in shopping. We met a lot of new friends to hang out with and talk on the phone with. And, I hope this class continues next year because I got a lot out of it and I learned a lot out of it.

--- Jihan Rabadi

Digital Histories Help Lanterman Clients Preserve Their Memories

One of the goals of a $35,000 grant, awarded to Lanterman by the California Consumer Protection Foundation this year, was to identify a network of community organizations that provide services related to technology and computer skill development. Lanterman contracted with Computer Access Center to help develop relationships with community technology centers, or CTCs. About this same time, the CTCs also received a grant from the California Consumer Protection Foundation, which had the goal of including individuals with developmental disabilities at their sites to complete a two-month, computer-based, autobiographical, digital storytelling project.

Graduates from the adult computer classes offered through August were highly recommended for inclusion in this special project, which offered an opportunity for people to gain digital media skills and to learn and use the technology tools for creative self-expression and the preservation of personal, family, and community history. Armin Frundzhyan and Robert Anderson attended the

from left: Steve Wong of the Diskovery Center, Karen Wade from the California Consumer Protection Foundation, Armen Frundzhyan, Jerold Kress of the Breeze Foundation and Enravd Kestenian with a certificate of completion at the end of the two-month project.

The program, which featured short videos from the nine participants in the digital storytelling class, was included as part of VC FilmFest 2006, the 22nd Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival. Project T.E.C.H. hosted a special screening party. "Preserving Your Memories – Four Stories of Person, Family and Community" was the first of a series of events to be held in Rigo’s digital history.

At the end of the two-month project, Project T.E.C.H. and the Diskovery Center hosted screenings of the digital stories created during the classes. Frundzhyan shared how he "thought the first thing I learned from the project was how to make a Mission Possible.

Karen Wade from Project T.E.C.H. added: "We value the opportunity and experience gained from participating in this project. We gained an understanding of people with developmental disabilities that interest me. "

--- Jihan Rabadi

Participants in the first functional literacy skills class held at the La Portenstein Branch of the Pasadena Public Library improved their skills by about 80 percent in the three key curriculum actions: reading for information/living skills, reading for a job and reading for pleasure.

The curriculum was goal driven and lessons were measured during the next five months. At the very end of the class, students were given a post-test to see how their literacy skills had developed, and the average increase from pre- test to post-test was 39.4 percent. The functional literacy class was a pilot and on the first day, we just didn’t know how it was going to successful," notes Darakjian. He is hoping to be able to offer the functional literacy class once per year in the spring, over a 16-week period rather than 20 weeks.

--- Carson Wilk

I like the class. I learned a lot about banking skills and community skills. The volunteers are very helpful to me. I met nice people in the class. I learned a lot about computers from Tom Peters. I learned how to fill out applications. I made a lot of friends at the computer class.

--- James Kounales

Continued from page 1
C A C N E W S

Service Coordinator Marie McGinley to Serve as Assistant Staff Advisor for CAC

Several months ago, Service Coordinator Marie McGinley was asked to serve as an assistant staff advisor for the Consumer Advisory Committee. “I asked Marie to serve in this capacity since she has had a lot of experience working with adult clients both as a direct service provider and as a service coordinator in our Glendale Service Coordination unit,” says MJ Kienast, assistant director and CAC staff advisor. McGinley will attend many of the CAC meetings and in the event that Kienast is unable to attend, McGinley will be able to step into the advisory role. “Viewpoint” met with McGinley to find out why she accepted the position and what experience she brings to her new role as an advisor to the CAC.

A graduate of California State University, Northridge, McGinley first started working in social work in 1990 at a day care program that worked with gang members. After a couple of years, she decided to change over to the field of developmental disabilities. “Although the work may be more challenging, it is far more satisfying to me,” says McGinley. Her first job was with Work Training Programs, Inc., where she worked with adults with developmental disabilities to transition them to independent living. Although McGinley’s focus was on independent living skills, she has a strong background in supported employment, including work as a job coach and as a team member at Lincoln Training Center, which offers a supported employment program. After almost 13 years working as a direct service provider, McGinley joined Lanterman as a service coordinator three and one-half years ago. Currently, 25 clients on her caseload are living independently in the communities of Burbank, La Crescenta, Pasadena and Glendale. One requirement of service coordinators is that they visit their clients who are living independently more frequently than clients who are living within their homes. “One of the great things about being a service coordinator is that I get to see first-hand how individuals need support and help them become independent,” she said. “I enjoy being able to share my experiences from before and from Lanterman with parents, and to show them shining examples of what can also happen for their children when the right services are put into place and when their children have really strong support,” adds McGinley.

McGinley’s firsthand experience working directly with adult clients and her interest in the issues Lanterman’s adult clients face regarding advocacy, clients’ rights, independent living and transportation, among others, makes her a great match for her role as assistant staff advisor to the CAC. “I’m very much looking forward to listening to the concerns of four clients and being part of the process of the CAC,” shares McGinley.

McGinley’s first major project with the CAC will be conducting a survey, similar to the one the CAC did regarding independent living skills workers, with adult clients who use Access Services. “We are hoping to use the survey to help clients figure out the best way to let Access Services know their grievances,” adds McGinley. McGinley shares her philosophy towards life: “Keep your sense of humor about yourself and others. Keep your work productive - not the other way around. And try to remember that creative thinking is critical.” In her free time, McGinley enjoys drawing and painting, going to the movies and spending time with Marie to serve in this capacity.

Contact the Consumer Advisory Committee at Lanterman

If you are a client of Lanterman Regional Center and have an idea or issue that you think other clients would be interested in, and would like to share it with the Consumer Advisory Committee, you can write the CAC at: Lanterman Regional Center CAC Armen Frushidian c/o MJ Kienast 3303 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700 Los Angeles, CA 90010 or call CAC Staff Advisor MJ Kienast at 213.383.1306, x. 606 or e-mail mj.kienast@lanterman.org

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 the Regional Center for clients and their families. The CAC meets on the second Monday of the month at 4:30 p.m. at Lanterman.

Wanted and Needed: Life Experiences of Adults with Developmental Disabilities for a New Book

Kathie Snow, author of “Disability is Natural: Revolutionary Common Sense for Raising Successful Children with Disabilities,” is writing a new book about the life experiences of adults with developmental disabilities. Snow is issuing a Request for Stories from adults with developmental disabilities who would like to share their experiences for the possible inclusion in her new book. For more information, visit www.disabilityisnatural.com. “The wisdom and life experiences of adults with developmental disabilities have helped me become a better parent to my son who has a developmental disability. I want to continue learning, and I also want to give parents and adult clients with parents, teachers, service providers and others the opportunity to share their wisdom with parents, teachers, service providers and others.”

If you’re an adult with a developmental disability, age 18 and above, please share your life experiences. Your story can help educate parents, teachers, service providers, health care providers, and others, including people with disabilities, about what’s really important for today’s adults with developmental disabilities.

Stories can be about both the “good” and the “bad” experiences, since just as much can be learned from negative experiences as from positive ones. Snow would like to include real-life experiences that focus on any or all of the following topics:

• Experiences with your family
• How you felt about growing up with a disability
• Experiences with therapies, interventions and medical care
• Experiences in school
• Experiences in the community
• Experiences as a young adult
• Relationship experiences
• Experiences with assistive technology, supports, modifications and/or accommodations

Stories do not need to address all of the topics mentioned above, they are just topics that adults with disabilities may have had experience with. Stories can focus on any of the topics above, and also on experiences that are not described above.

Over the years, many books about parenting children with disabilities have been written and published. Most are written by professionals, and a few have been written by parents, but a "book that includes the real-life childhood experiences of adults with developmental disabilities in their own voices will be a very valuable addition." Snow hopes to hear from adults with any and all types of developmental disabilities.

Download Snow’s Request for Stories at www.disabilityisnatural.com. The request is available in PDF format and rich text format for screen readers.
Meet the People Behind the Titles: Steve Garcia

As manager of the Client Revenue Management unit at Lanterman Regional Center, Steve Garcia is an integral member of our leadership team. We feel it’s important for our employees in our community to have a better idea of the person behind the title and his responsibilities, so “Viewpoint” recently met with Garcia and asked about projects in the works, as well as the biggest challenges and most rewarding aspects of his job.

A graduate of the Keller Graduate School of Management with a master’s in business administration, Steve Garcia found his way to Lanterman in August 2002 as the Center’s manager of Client Revenue Management. Although he was new to the field of developmental disabilities, Garcia brought with him 10 years of experience working in private manufacturing where he worked his way up from an entry level position to become a manager.

“I believe that my experience of moving up through the corporate world has helped me see how each piece of the puzzle fits together, and I feel that broader understanding has benefited me in my current position at Lanterman,” explains Garcia. “In looking back, I’m happy that I made the shift from a profit-driven environment to one that is ‘not for profit.”

Garcia’s team consists of himself and two client revenue coordinators, responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the unit, which include helping children and families navigate government benefits for clients of Lanterman Regional Center, maintenance of benefits for the approximately 1,200 clients for whom the Center acts as representative payee, and coordinating the transfer of benefits when clients move so as to prevent an interruption in service. “We divide the responsibility for the maintenance of client’s benefits alphabetically,” adds Garcia, “making each of us responsible for about 400 clients.” As a manager, Garcia is also part of Lanterman’s Leadership team, which is responsible for steering the Center towards achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the Center’s five-year performance plan.

Initially, the biggest challenges for Garcia were learning the intricacies of the various public benefit systems from scratch, and translating bureaucratic jargon into regular everyday English. Now that he has a firm grasp on the myriad of benefits available, he feels that the biggest challenges for himself and his team are making sure that the large amount of paperwork that passes through their unit gets processed on time, so that new clients begin receiving benefits as soon as possible and that existing clients don’t lose their benefit. ”Everyone expected that advances in information technology would make our work lives easier and eliminate paper, however, the paper is still around, and the expectation exists that we can now push paper faster,” shares Garcia.

Given the complexities of the public benefit systems, it’s no surprise that clients and families have difficulties with these systems. In most instances, service coordinators are able to help their families resolve any problems that arise, however, in those situations where service coordinators cannot, Garcia gladly assists. Garcia says, “One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is being able to assist a service coordinator who calls me on behalf of their client or family and needs help working out a situation that may have arisen with one of the public benefit systems.”

Since coming to Lanterman, Garcia has diligently worked to make the Client Revenue Management unit more open and responsive – bridging the gap between service coordination and the unit.

Looking towards the future, Garcia doesn’t see too much change in the direction of his unit, as long as the public benefits “do not change.” “I think the biggest change coming our way will be the ability to apply for benefits online. Initial attempts have been clumsy so I’m not holding my breath,” adds Garcia. A challenge that Garcia and his team have is that other public benefit agencies don’t necessarily know what Lanterman does and why the payees themselves may not be calling, which is further complicated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, better known as HIPAA.

Garcia adds a business twist to the saying, “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” He shares, “We are business owners, either internal or external, and if you provide good customer service, then one day, when you become a customer you will get treated well in return.”

Garcia’s favorite memories of his time at Lanterman center around the annual staff appreciation event held in December. “I enjoy seeing how much the staff appreciate the event, as well as how much the managers enjoy preparing for it and seeing how much the staff appreciate the event, as well as how much the managers enjoy preparing for it and seeing how much the staff appreciate the event, as well as how much the managers enjoy preparing for it and seeing how much the staff appreciate the event, as well as how much the managers enjoy preparing for it.”

A native of New Mexico, Garcia now lives in Whittier with his wife, Sherri, and his 3-year-old daughter, Lily. He enjoys photography and spending as much time as he can with his family.
I have been working at Lanterman since 1972. The worst of fiscal times and the not-so-bad of fiscal times, we’ve seen the public benefits system change over the years and she’s been a constant at the Center as many of her co-workers have come and gone. Keaotamai, who grew up in Bangkok, Thailand, came to the United States in 1972 after finishing her high school degree. She shares: “My goal in coming was to continue my education and obtain a master’s degree from Emporia State University in Kansas and then return to Thailand to teach. Plan A fell through when I decided to stay in the States. I found a job as an assistant bookkeeper two years later, when my supervisor retired I took over.”

Shortly thereafter, Keaotamai met her husband and returned to Thailand to get married. Upon returning to the United States, Keaotamai joined Lanterman in October 1979 as a fiscal assistant in Accounting. She worked in Accounting for one year, and when the Center created the client revenue coordinator position, she applied for the position and has worked in it ever since. “I believe that my background as a bookkeeper has benefited me in my job, but I also credit my mentor and former supervisor, Charlotte Sunakano, who is now Lanterman’s fiscal monitor, with teaching me much of what I have learned about revenue management,” she says.

As a client revenue coordinator, Keaotamai works with clients and their families whose last name falls within P to Z on the alphabet. She explains, “I am responsible for identifying the public benefits that our clients are entitled to receive, for getting them approved and activated, and for maintaining eligibility for those benefits for which Lanterman acts as representative payee.”

Staying on top of things and keeping everything current is what motivates Keaotamai. “When you’re working on the annual re-determinations, it’s rewarding to see our clients get all the required paperwork and submitted it before the due date,” she adds. “It’s important to be able to prioritize when you receive a call from a client, parent or service provider, and to know which situations require you to act upon them first.”

Keaotamai has worked diligently to get everyone, including clients, enrolled in SSI, SSDI, Medi-Cal, and Medicare. With work and under-staffed, they are just bombarded with work and challenges of agencies. “The biggest challenge of this job is working under the public benefits agencies. They are just bombarded with work and understaffed, which can make it a challenge when you have to face an issue that may arise with one of our client’s accounts,” Stewart explains. He finds that attending the various trainings offered directly by staff from the different agencies helps improve the long-term working relationship.

If he could change one thing about his job, Stewart would greatly reduce the amount of paper and filing required. He jokes, “I can’t even imagine how many trees we go through in a week.”

Stewart’s most memorable moments of his time at Lanterman center around the annual staff appreciation party. “They have all been an experience, and the Halloweens parties, when we used to have them were a hoot too,” he adds. His favorite memory is of celebrating his 10 year anniversary with Lanterman.

“The time I’ve spent at Lanterman has been great,” says Stewart. If it was possible, he would like to experience what it’s like to work in each of the other units at Lanterman so he can gain a more complete picture of how the Center works to meet the needs of the people with developmental disabilities that we serve.

Stewart grew up in Texas, and studied at both Texas Southern University and the University of Houston, but has been in California for 20 years. In his free time, Stewart, who currently lives in Palmdale, enjoys spending time with his family and reading. He is an avid fan of basketball, football, baseball and soccer, and enjoys participating as much as he does watching the games.
**Insert for School-Age Years Now Available for “Guide to Lanterman Regional Center”**

In the works for over a year, the latest insert for the “Guide to Lanterman Regional Center” focuses on all important school-age years, completing a critical gap in the information the Guide provides by complementing the “Early Intervention,” “Transition to Adulthood” and “Community Living Options” inserts.

“Your Child’s School Years” focuses on the very important transition that occurs when a child turns 5. It is at this time that responsibility for service coordination shifts from Lanterman Regional Center’s Early Intervention unit to a unit specializing in school-age children. This time is also a child’s entry into a new era of growth and discovery during which he or she will gain new skills and knowledge that will help the child take his or her place socially, emotionally and occupationally in the adult world.

This section of the “Guide to Lanterman Regional Center” was written especially for parents who have a school-age child, age 3 to 14. It begins with a brief review of the changes that occur when a child turns 5. A large part of the section is then devoted to a discussion of special education and how your child and family can make the most of the school years. The section also discusses the educational program that guides your child’s education, the Individualized Education Program, or IEP, including how it is developed, implemented and modified. It also addresses the rights and responsibilities that you have with regard to your child’s education, and what happens if you don’t sign the IEP, including how to prepare for a hearing.

Finally, this section presents some of the steps that you can take during your child’s school years to better prepare him or her to take on the responsibilities of adulthood, and to better prepare yourself to be an effective advocate for your child.

To get your copy of the latest insert to the Guide, “Your Child’s School Years,” contact your service coordinator or pick one up from the Koch-Young Resource Center. If you are a new family joining Lanterman, the new school-age insert will be included in the Guide distributed to all new families as part of their welcome kit.

**Your Child’s School Years**

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**To order the insert, call 213.383.1300, x. 753 or send an e-mail to vinita.anand@lanterman.org.**

**Photo Credit:**

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