

D E C E M B E R 2 0 0 6

S.T.E.P. News

Bringing you stories and information from around the office and our community.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

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I would like to begin by wishing everyone a safe and peaceful holiday season. I know this time of year can feel crazed, so I hope you all find time to enjoy the gift of each moment.

S.T.E.P. has completed an internal evaluation of our services for the year period between October 2005 and September 2006. We compiled the information into a year-end summary and have attached it to this newsletter. We were very pleased with the results of the satisfaction surveys and look forward to another year of building proactive relationships.

S.T.E.P. has also developed our Strategic Plan for 2007. We are continuing two of the main goal areas, *Health and Well-Being* and *Long-Term Stability*. Last year's goal area of *Quality and Continuous Performance Improvement* has been altered to *Progressive and Innovative Supports*. We wanted to place the focus on providing services that really meet the current and future needs of the people we support. We also want to invest in the recognition of innovation.

Below are the three areas of focus for the 2007 Strategic Plan with some of the areas of focus selected agency-wide.

Progressive and Innovative Supports

We are committed to relationships and proactive habits developed with the end in mind.

- Full implementation of the College of Direct Support
- Enhanced staff training curriculum
- New and innovative vocational opportunities for all consumers
- Comprehensive consume training curriculum

A Christmas Tale

by: Deborah L. Miller

We are leaving on a train ride to the North Pole. It is a lovely scene with people's homes decorated in holiday cheer.

Now it is snowing and we hope we don't get stuck on the train on Christmas. There are several people on the train wondering if we will make it to the North Pole because the train is running rough and it sounds like it is out of gas.

The person who drives the train stopped at the next town and we got gas and the train moved on.

We made it to the North Pole and saw Santa Claus, and his castle, and the children receiving presents. We helped Santa in his workshop.

THE END

Health and Well-Being

We are dedicated to promoting a culture that inspires a commitment to healthy lifestyle choices

- Comprehensive plan in place for emergency and disaster preparedness
- Increased awareness and education for end of life planning
- Comprehensive plan in place for health and wellness

Long-Term Stability

We consistently demonstrate high reliability and dependability through proactive strategies that empower us as a community

- Proficient in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People throughout the agency
- Proactive, responsive financial strategy in place
- Continue to demonstrate a proactive presence in the political arena
- Synergistic relationship between program management and executive management

We would love feedback on the strategic plan. Please direct your comments to Melanie at melanieb@stepsite.com.

*Melanie Bazile
Executive Director*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff Development Managers Positions Available

We are going to be hiring 2 people to fill these positions. 1 for the Deaf Unit and 1 for the Hearing Units. We have taken out the Quality Assurance portion of this job as we want these managers to be able to concentrate on hiring and the College of Direct Support. There will be a lot of support for these positions from the HR department. If you are interested in possibly applying for this, please get a complete job description from the Front Desk and submit your current resume to Sandy Jones. And remember, NO Q.A.!!

- Sandy Jones
HR Director

Benefit Information

401k Plan:

Many of you have your money in the Cash Management Fund, rather than Mutual Funds. That is great if that is where you want your money to be, but if not your funds can easily be moved on-line. Last year our available funds changed, and folks that did not actively elect new funds were put in the cash management fund. You may check and change your funds via the internet at www.invesmart.com. Your password when you enter for the first time will be your date of birth (6 digits ex: MMDDYY). You may also access using the Voice Response Option at 1-800-370-9601. For more detailed information, contact Patti Dixon.

401k Open Enrollment meeting will be held *December 13th at 1:00 PM*. Following the Open Enrollment meeting an additional meeting regarding fund elections and options will be held for those interested. **ANY AND ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THESE MEETINGS.** We would love to see you there!

All employees are welcome to attend any meetings, please do not bring clients, as it is not beneficial to them and violates our policy. Make arrangements with your supervisor for coverage if necessary.

- Patti Dixon

DATES TO REMEMBER

Monday - December 11

CAC Meeting
Mimi's Cafe
1:00 PM
\$5.00

Wednesday - December 13

401k Enrollment
STEP Office
1:00 PM

Monday - December 25

Christmas Day
STEP Office will be
CLOSED!

Monday - January 1, 2007

New Year's Day
STEP Office will be
CLOSED!

FEATURE

Winter Holidays

J. A. de la Concepcion

I grew up in a Catholic-Filipino household where Christmas was intensely honored with rules like “No presents until after midnight mass”, and at the same time heavily celebrated with lots of rice and lumpia. When we lived in the Philippines I recall decorating our home with lights, a fir tree (fake of course, seeing that fir trees are not indigenous to the tropics), and stockings (woven with tropical grass blades). We were told stories about St. Nick and how he would fly around the world in twenty-four hours, dropping off gifts for the “good” children. One time my older sister said she didn’t believe in Santa Claus (aka Saint Nicholas) and that year she got a rock in her stocking.



I told my parents that I believed in Santa Claus. The thing that I was having trouble believing was how Santa got around the world so quickly in a red sweat suit and a sleigh designed for snow travel. Didn’t he get hot as he approached areas close to the equator? What happened to his sleigh when he reached the deserts of Africa or the rain forests of South America? Plus, Santa went down chimneys which most of the world does not have.

Anyway, I disclosed these concerns to my mother and she quipped back, “Well, Santa is magical and he can get in through anything.” My mom then proceeded to inform me that Santa came down through the exhaust fan in the kitchen. “Huh?” I thought, “The exhaust fan?” Hard to believe, but okay. I didn’t want a rock.

As I grew older and started traditions of my own, I learned a thing or two about the Winter Holidays. For one, there is more than just one holiday. My best friend from high school is Jewish and he and his family celebrate Chanukah (Ha-nuk-kah) which has absolutely nothing to do with the baby Jesus or Santa Claus. Hanukkah is the Jewish Feast

of Lights or Feast of Dedication. The Hanukkah holiday begins on the eve of the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev (approximately December) and lasts eight days. The story of Hanukkah is based on an event in 165 B.C., when Jews fought for three years in a struggle to be freed from a vicious tyrant. After their triumph of freedom, the Jews held festivities in the Temple in Jerusalem, and dedicated it to God. (World Book, 2004).



Then there is Winter Solstice which came about even before Chanukah and Christmas. It is an old pagan (non-religious) tradition of celebrating the seasonal change and the longest night of the year. A traditional pagan ritual for Winter Solstice is cutting a fir tree down and decorating it with lights (sounds familiar). As a matter of fact, many of the Winter Solstice traditions have been adopted to celebrate Christmas. Burning a Yule log, hanging mistletoe, lighting Advent candles, and placing a wreath on your front door are all Winter Solstice traditions and are now part of modern Christmas celebrations. (www.Equinox-and-Solstice.com)

One of the most recently created winter traditions is that of Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa is an Afro-American holiday based on the traditional African festival of the harvest of the first crops. It begins on December 26 and lasts for seven days. The word Kwanzaa, sometimes spelled Kwanza, comes from a phrase which means first fruits in Swahili, an East African language. The holiday was developed in 1966 in the United States by Maulana Karenga, a professor of Pan-African studies and black cultural leader. It combines traditional African practices with Afro-American aspirations and ideals. (World Book, 2004).

These are only a handful of winter celebrations in the month of December. With so many cultural events going on, the concept of the “American Melting Pot” runs strong in my house. I celebrate a mixture of all of these traditions: decorating a tree, hanging a wreath, lighting candles, and hanging stockings by the chimney (yes, I have a chimney because my kitchen exhaust fan does not work). In addition, I honor not just the one day of Christmas, but thirteen days from December 24th to January 6th, which is the traditional day my family celebrates our family’s name, *de la Concepcion*.

May you have traditions that are celebrate for yourself and with your family.
Be sure to spread peace and love throughout the year and not only in December. Happy Winter Holidays!

DEPARTMENT NOTES

ILS

Independent Living Services

We wanted to remind you to check out the Client Spotlight board. It's located outside of Heather's office and features an inspirational client each month. This month's spotlights were Anna Dubach, Vicki Henson, and George Basquez.

The 4th Annual Food and Toy Drive has gotten off to a good start. The "Dear Santa" letters on the wall with the kids pictures are written by the children we serve here at the STEP Parenting ILS program. The kids wrote down some ideas for things they would like from Santa, so if you want to buy something for a specific child, please bring it wrapped with the child's name on it and give it to Anna Shands.

If you wish to donate toys, please drop them in the box across from the employee mailboxes. We appreciate any and all toys.

If you have a client who is in need of food, please make sure you get their name, the name of the instructor/coordinator and any dietary restrictions to Michelle Armstrong (michellea@stepstie.com). The toys and food will be ready to be delivered on December 20th.

This month the ILS team has been focusing on "Keeping first things first". This can sometimes be a struggle for us, learning how to truly prioritize and not let "emergencies" get in the way. We will continue to strive towards staying focused and keeping the end in mind.

We here in the ILS Department, hope that you all have a wonderful Winter Holiday!

- Heather Campbell

H-SLS

Hearing - Supported Living Services

Our unit continues to grow. We want to welcome Mariska Brinkley. She is our 9th coordinator. Mariska has been with STEP many years. She has been a roommate, PA, PA-2, and now coordinator. Congratulations!

We also want to welcome a new client, Larry Vance. Larry lives in the Antelope area and will be starting with SLS services December 1st.

Congratulations to Debbie Moreno. After 8 years of wishing and wanting, Debbie has finally gotten her own van. She is very excited!

For the last 11 years Ricky Fuller has shared a house with another client. Ricky has moved to his own apartment. He is very happy. Ricky is now the "King of his own castle"!

Congratulations to Leigh Penny. Leigh recently took 3rd place at the Toast Master's regional "table topics" competition. "table topics" is a spontaneous topic. The speaker has no time to prepare for presentation.

Dyna Vox training Nov. 13th. Thank you Jamie Crum for the wonderful training provided to clients and staff about communication devices.

SLS-Hearing unit is looking to fill several roommate positions. Many clients and locations. If interested please contact Sandee Nieves or Carol Nolan.

- Carol Nolan

VSS

Vocational Services & Support

YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO ME

Have you ever heard the expression, “ I know PEOPLE who know PEOPLE”? It means I am important because I am connected to important people through my work, church, family, school, etc. Our STEP family has been STEP Vocational’s biggest supporter, but at this time I’m going to ask you for some help and direction. Can you think of someone you know that has a business, or works for a company that is looking for dependable hard working staff? Let us know. Introduce us. Talk to your connections about STEP Vocational. You know who we are. You know we are dedicated, proud and work hard. The expression IS true - “I know PEOPLE who know PEOPLE” I know YOU, and you know other people. So call me, email me, page me – you know where to find us!

BRRRRRR I’m getting cold!

Winter is on it’s way. That means changes are coming soon if you are a STEP Vocational Landscaper or a STEP Landscaping customer. The grass will soon stop growing as the weather gets colder. The trees will soon be naked of leaves. The flowers are gone and many plants are sleeping. Winter landscaping means dawn comes later so landscapers may start work a little later in the day. Now we are picking the fall fruits of apples, pears, persimmons, and pomegranates. In January those fruit trees will need to be pruned for a great harvest next year. Roses need pruning in January too. If you want beautiful tulips, daffodils, or Iris in the spring you should plant them now. If you are a landscaping customer we will soon be completing the Fall/Winter fertilizer treatment for your lawn. All the winter rain will help it soak deep into your soil so when the sun is back in the Spring your lawn will be lush and green. If you have any questions about your existing service or you would like and estimate for new service please contact us here at STEP Vocational.

- Lynn Vaughan

CAC

Consumer Advisory Committee

The CAC met on 11/14/06 for a productive meeting led by Leigh Penny. We discussed the role of the SLS Coordinator and ways to communicate. We worked on the Supervisor Training class and planned the first class called, “What does it mean to be a supervisor”.

Leigh talked with us about the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and the CAC elected to have a 10 minute discussion/presentation on the 7 Habits each month. Tara had a support situation she was dealing with and we went through it together using the feedback form what we developed last year. Tara agreed to follow through and use this process and report back to us next time on how it went.

The next CAC meeting will be our holiday party on December 11th at Mimi’s Café on Alta Arden Way. The party begins at 1:00pm with a nice lunch. If you want to participate in a gift exchange, bring a wrapped gift costing no more than \$5.00.

- Melani Bazile



*Season's greetings from
our STEP family
to yours!*

* Step Stars *

“Great Job!” - **Alex, John, Laura, Ka Ying, Suzanne, Donna, Leah, Judy, Melissa,** and their Vocational Coaches who worked so hard on the Navis/ Intel T-Shirt project.

If Santa brings you a new computer with a Centrino 2 processor – Intel sends you a T-shirt. Wear it proudly knowing that it was a job well done by STEP Vocational!

- Lynn Vaughan

Thanks to the whole **Program Support** team. You really have been working as a team and your efforts increase the effectiveness of the agency as a whole. I appreciate all your efforts and recognize your talent!

- Melanie Bazile

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For questions, comments, or to submit an article and/or pictures to the STEP Newsletter, please contact our editor:



J. A. (Jude) de la Concepcion
judec@stepsite.com

DECEMBER Birthdays

Nancy Morales	1 Dec
DiKeisha Peoples	2 Dec
Jason Austin	2 Dec
John Krieger	2 Dec
Willis Abney	2 Dec
Christi Lessard	3 Dec
Kristin Hart	3 Dec
Bill Fischer	4 Dec
Thomas Alderman	4 Dec
Brian Sharp	5 Dec
David Bess	5 Dec
Guy Wooten	5 Dec
Kathy Rogers	5 Dec
Kimberly Simpkins	5 Dec
Luke Pardee	5 Dec
Stacey Carrithers	6 Dec
Bridget Dorsey	7 Dec
Shirley Schonewald	8 Dec
Deborah Waters	10 Dec
Rion Markley	10 Dec
Kusinya Owens	11 Dec
Mike Martin	11 Dec
Kenneth Burk	12 Dec
Larry Taylor	12 Dec
Christy Schoneman	13 Dec
Dennis Lauraya	13 Dec
Sarah Wombold	13 Dec
Leah Curtis	14 Dec
Patricia Mahony	14 Dec
Jimmy Richards	15 Dec
Linda Lantz	15 Dec
Maynard Aamold	16 Dec
Erica Ervin	17 Dec
Ricky Fuller	18 Dec
Renee Mikbel	19 Dec
Alex Nero	20 Dec
Jermaine Murray	23 Dec
Robyn Fulton	23 Dec
Anna O'Brien	25 Dec
Darin McDaniel	25 Dec
Noel Harris	25 Dec
Pamela Jordan	25 Dec
Ramon Vega	25 Dec
Amy Green	26 Dec
Billy Haddix, Jr.	28 Dec
KarenHicks	28 Dec
OpaleneTheriot	28 Dec
RandyDinsmore	28 Dec
MaryBusher	29 Dec
Alene Chocklin	30 Dec
Daniel Davies	30 Dec
Randall Merlo	30 Dec

STEP

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Building on a foundation of quality.

Jen's Tricky Trivia

**On Christmas 1939 what department store introduced to the world to
Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer?**

JEN WILL START ACCEPTING TRIVIA ANSWERS ON DEC. 15.

The first person to answer this question AFTER DEC. 15 will win a PRIZE!

Please see Jen Jones and collect you winnings!

