



S.T.E.P. News

Building on a Foundation of Quality News

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Nothing About Me Without Me

By Jacquie Foss, CEO

Nothing about me without me. A phrase on the wall? A motto? Or is it something more? What does it truly mean, and how does it apply to what we do? How we live our lives? How do we treat the folks we support? I have been giving a lot of thought to what this phrase really means and why is it so important. I think about my own life, what I want for myself, how I want to be included and treated and what if I were the person with the disability. Who decides how I live my life? Who makes those decisions? I know myself and I would say, ME! I decide. I am there, it is my life. This does not change if I have a disability or not, it is my life and I need to be present when those choices are made.

It appears to me that in the haste to get things done we forget it is not our life. We do all the things that need to be done to take care of the person we support but they are not part of the process. We need to slow down, remind ourselves that we are here to support and not take over. When we are doing this without the consumer we are in effect saying it is not their life anyway. How many things do you do for the person? When what we should be always doing is with. We must never forget it is not our life, it is their life. We do not cook for, we cook with, we do not clean for, we clean with, we do not shop for, and we shop with. And if we do enough with, soon they can do it themselves and they can do more for themselves. I am sure this is no more than you would want for yourself; that you are the decision maker in your life. Those we support must be honored and respected with that same power. It is their power and we must never assume it is not. When given the control over what is rightfully theirs you see all the possibility and opportunity the person has within himself or herself. Nothing About Me Without Me is not a phrase, it is not a motto it is what we must live, every day.



Deaf Unit Update

Hello everyone, summer has arrived! Wow can you believe it? Time has really flown fast for us. We only have six more months left to go before the year ends!

On June 20 we had a PA training with over 70 PA's in attendance. We focused on The Five Principles of Supported Living.

1. A Home of One's Own
2. Choice and Self-Directed
3. Relationships
4. Community Membership
5. Flexible and Tailored Services.

We learned from this training that if every day we go to work and remember the 5 principles, we make a difference in the lives of those we support.

STEP VRS roll out party was on 6/21/08. What a success! Over 100 people showed up. Jermaine, Todd and Judy were wonderful ambassadors for STEP consumers. Everyone had a great time and got many of their questions answered.

Sadly our unit experience the loss of Ken Hodge. Ken had a fabulous circle of support. His mother was at the center, always loving and supportive. Vivian showed us what unconditional love really means. Ken's staff focused on Ken being in control and embracing the principle of Choice and Self-Direction. To all of you who touched his life we say thank you, to Ken you will be greatly missed.

Why Keep Score?

Many have asked why keep score? When we look at the 7 Habits one of the things that align with STEP's Wildly Important Goal (Our WIG) : To Meet and Exceed all Regulations and Principles. Is that we hold each other accountability: All The Time. For me the Line of Sight is and always has been long term consumer stability.

How has keeping score mattered?

- **Then:** 10 to 15% of IHSS hours lost
- **Now:** Less than 5% of IHSS hours lost.
- **Then:** 9% error rate to SLS budgets
- **Now:** Less than 1%
- **Then:** ELP's were sporadic
- **Now:** over 40 completed ELP's
- **Then:** No Circle of Support meetings.
- **Now:** 75% of the folks in SLS have had at least one Circle meeting.
- **Then:** No consistent evaluations done on employees
- **Now:** 95% of all employees have completed quarterlies
- **Then:** No system for wage increases
- **Now:** System in place for all employees.

This year more than any year, the goals we have set for ourselves are being met. Keeping score matters because it increases our accountability to the folks we support.

Benefits Info

Did You Know???

If you were to add up what STEP pays for the benefits (medical/dental/vision/life/vacation/sick) for a full time employee in the first year of employment, it adds up to \$3751.80. WOW! That would average out to an additional \$1.80 per hour. STEP is committed to providing the best benefits we can to our employees.



Six Flags Discovery Kingdom

discount passes available... Sterlent Credit Union has dropped off passes for reduced admission to Discovery Kingdom through 12/28/08. Please stop by the bulletin board outside Patti Dixon's office and pick one up if you would like.



A walrus sneaks up on an unsuspecting Jason Kowalski

ILS Report

Hot time, summer in the city....

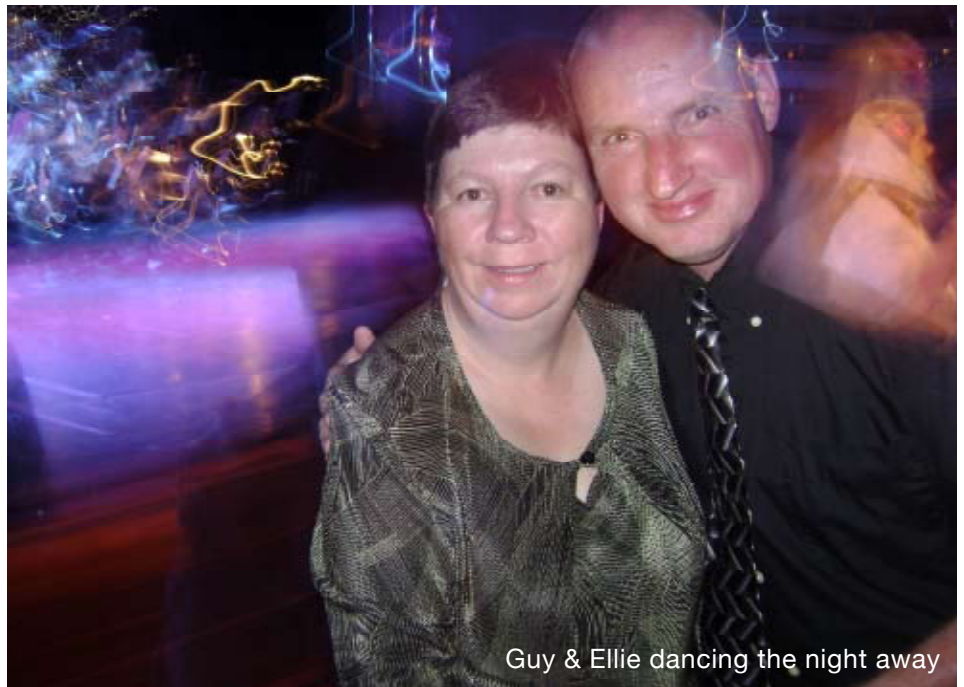
The ILS group welcomes this summer in with fabulous “golden oldies” tunes and a cold glass of lemonade—bring on the heat, we say! What busy little bees we have been this spring, welcoming to our agency several new referrals over the last two months, in addition to the newest member of our ILS team, David Wade! Welcome David, it’s a bumpy ride, but oh what fun you’ll have with us! But before the festivities begin, we’d like to take this time to **Thank the entire ILS unit!** We have an amazing team and we greatly appreciate all the hard work and additional responsibility many

Dan Davies at Formal Night



of you have taken up over the last two months. Your sense of team work and willingness to go the extra mile never ceases to amaze us. Thanks to each of you for making the last two months run smoothly and dare I say, effortlessly!

We’d like to give a “shout



Guy & Ellie dancing the night away

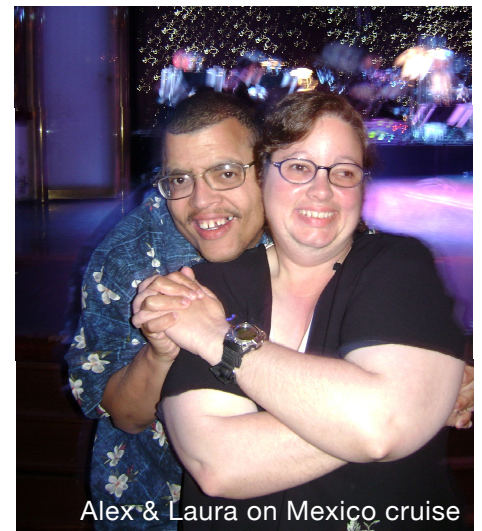
out” to our three ILS Instructors taking the 11-week Supervisor Training Course: Katrina Parham, Tammy Smith and Donna Hernandez. Best of Luck ladies, we know you’ll do well!

Our SLS/ILS team is feverishly working on WIG goals, including several recent Circle of Support gatherings. Who could’ve imagined working on goals could be so much fun? Between bowling tournaments and dinner plans, these gatherings have been a great way to meet the rest of the individuals who support our folks—good times! Thanks to Gloria Goode, Stephanie Tate and Doug Findlay for coordinating these get-togethers.

In April, a group from both our Sacramento & Yuba City offices went on a 3 day cruise to Mexico, stopping in Ensenada and enjoying the never-ending buffets and late-night dancing! Thanks to all of the staff who came along for support—your

hard work made for a memorable time out at sea.

Our Parenting Group welcomed in Spring with our annual Easter Egg Hunt at Carmichael Park back in March. We enjoyed the always exciting egg hunt along with the often cathartic—Pinata hit! We followed with our Mother’s Day activities and are now focusing on creating small gifts for the fathers in our group, along with a trip to Safetyville later this summer.



Alex & Laura on Mexico cruise

The entire Parenting staff would like to congratulate C.J. Chocklin for the recent award he received at his Boy Scouts troop meeting! C.J. has excelled in his troop and continues to provide such a great example of community service at it's finest. You rock C.J., Congrats!

Our Parenting group welcomed ACRC behaviorist, Lisa Heitzler and Rae Ditty on June 4th for a special training session. We look forward to obtaining additional information and skills on how best to support our parenting clients and their children. A huge thanks to both of these individuals for making time to share their invaluable knowledge with us!

Michelle B. Armstrong



C.J. at his awards ceremony

And from our Yuba City office....

Yuba City is still growing and going strong. We have had some position changes due to the growth. Shelly Taylor is now full-time SLS coordinator; Donna Hernandez has a mixed caseload of 3 SLS homes and 4 ILS clients. Vanessa Castorena started with STEP August 2006 as a PA and was recently promoted to ILS instructor and is supporting 7 clients. Congratulations Vanessa!

Most of our SLS clients and a few of the ILS clients recently went on a four-day cruise to Mexico. They all had a great time and have already started talking about future trip planning. Thanks to all the staff who supported our folks on the high seas!

Tracy Cummings

All of the STEP family sends our heartfelt condolences for the loss of Amanda Cummings. She was a wonderful member of the STEP team, a true advocate for consumers. She will be greatly missed

Gratitudes

- Thanks David Wade for jumping in headfirst to your new position and providing great support to your folks!
- Stephanie Tate, Gloria Goode, Anissa Fernandes & June Klock for being flexible when

we needed your support.

- Dante Viney—thanks for taking on additional responsibility,
- Tammy Smith—for your ongoing support of both Carrie & Sarah
- Katrina Parham—for taking on our new parenting client, Geneva!
- Thanks to the tem who is supporting Andrea through some tough times. What you do matters to her.
- Doug Findlay—thanks so much for being a true advocate. Your perseverance in helping your consumer find balance
- Anissa Fernandes—thanks for all your hard work with Reyna.

Vocational

What a busy time for Next STEP and Extra STEP. The North of the Line Cafe is going well, come see us for lunch. “Purties” our jewelry business, up and running, come and buy the beautiful jewelry the team is making. Great gifts for friends and family.

Suzanne and her coffee cart will be up a running in Mid July. The name of her business is “All Shook Up”. Come and order a triple Latte and you will see how you too can get “ All Shook Up”

All the Job Coaches and consumers are really focusing in on community connections and finding work. The Vocational principle of “ A Job of one’s own” is our vision for all.

**Universal
LifeStiles, L.L.C.**
*...Overcoming Life's
Obstacles*

You'll never look at a cup of coffee the same way again...

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life, how things were so hard for her. She didn't know how she was going to make it, and she wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling.

It seemed as one of her problems was solved, a new one popped up.

Her mother took her into her kitchen, where she filled three pots with water. In the first pot, she placed some carrots, in the second, she placed some eggs, and in the third pot, she placed some ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil without saying a word, then in about twenty minutes, she turned off the burners.

She fished out the carrots and placed them into a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them into another bowl, then she ladled the coffee into yet another bowl. Turning to complaining daughter, she asked, "Tell me, what do you see?" "Carrots, eggs, and coffee," her daughter replied.

She brought her daughter closer, and asked her to feel the carrots.

She did, and noticed that they were now soft. She told her daughter to break an egg, which she did, and after removing the shell, she saw that the egg was

now hard-boiled.

Finally, she told her daughter to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted the rich flavor, then asked, "What's the point, mother?"

Her mother explained that each of the three objects had faced the very same adversity, boiling water, but each had reacted differently:

The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened, and became weak.

The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior, but after sitting through the boiling water, its insides became hardened.

The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, they had changed the water!

"Now, which are you?" she asked her daughter, "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

Think of it like his... Which am I? Am I a carrot that appears to be strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt, and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I an egg, that starts out with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship, or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff? Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I better, and tough, with a stiff spirit and a hardened heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean?
The bean actually CHANGES
THE WATER!

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Jeremy gettin' down



The goal of Partners in Policymaking is to educate participants to be active partners with those who make policy. Partners graduates can change the future by influencing public policy today. There are now 5 courses available online:

Partners in Living:

Concepts of self-determination, family support, community living and assistive technology.

Partners in Time:

History of society's treatment of people with disabilities from ancient times through the present.

Partners in Education:

Understand and maximize the special education system.

Making Your Case:

Create positive change through advocacy. The course helps participants understand the legislative process, the essential elements of good advocacy, identify and research personal issues, then advocate for systems change as individuals and as part of larger community efforts. The course includes opportunities to put what has been learned into practice through a series of interactive exercises.

Partners in Employment:

Meaningful jobs and plan a career. In this course, participants will create a resume or portfolio of their strengths, skills, and interests; learn how to network and identify potential employers; prepare for an interview; and understand the hiring process.

Please visit <http://www.partnersinpolicymaking.com/online.html> for more information and registration information. Any individual STEP supports can use the computer and online access at the office to participate in these courses.

Direct Support Professional Column

What is a Direct Support Professional?

STEP has started using the DSP Code of Ethics in staff training and orientation. Developed by the NADSP, the Code is intended to serve as a straightforward and relevant guide for DSPs as they resolve the ethical dilemmas they face every day, and encourages them to achieve the highest ideals of the profession. We will explore one element of the Code in each subsequent newsletter.

1. Person-Centered Supports

As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.

As a DSP, I will:

Recognize that each person must direct his or her own life and support and that the unique social network, circumstances, personality, preferences, needs and gifts of each person I support must be the primary for guiding the selection, structure, and use of supports for that individual.

Commit to person-centered supports as best practice.

Provide advocacy when the needs of the system override those of the individual(s) I support, or when individual preferences, needs or gifts are neglected for other reasons.

Honor the personality, preferences, culture and gifts of people who cannot speak by seeking other ways of understanding them.

Focus first on the person, and understand that my role in direct supports will require flexibility, creativity and commitment.

An employee who provides person-centered support and lives this ethic demonstrates it through

- Full attention to the person they are supporting
- Recognizing that only a small percentage of communication is actual words
- Planning work based on the individual's preferences and needs

- Speaking up when services, meetings, reports are not person-centered or lose sight of what the person wants
- Going above and beyond to help the person they support discover their potential

For more information, please visit www.nadsp.org

Community Resource Corner
by Lisa Barrows ~"Lisa B"

Housing

Recently, many people have been impacted by the rental increases and are considering moving. I have several property management lists available to view, to assist you with finding more affordable housing. Also now is the time to make every effort possible to cut these financial burdens where we can. PG&E, SMUD, and your phone company have many programs available to assist those who qualify. We all must make every effort possible to be fiscally responsible and cut costs wherever and whenever possible. If you or someone you are supporting are living in a 2 bedroom but do not have a Live-In Personal Attendant – get one! This will assist with reducing the rent and also might keep them from having to move. If you or someone you support need assistance come see me.

STEP has obtained a great repair crew; BGM Construction, to do client house repairs and any modifications that may be needed. So if there are any repairs needed please follow the repair request procedure. Repair forms are located in the black file cabinet at the STEP office. The repair crew is there to do repairs that were approved to be done, do not ask them to repair anything else that was not submitted and approved by me prior. All repair costs will be based on client-needed repairs and based on health and safety concerns. It is everyone's responsibility to report any health and safety repair concerns immediately!

Pointer:

If you or someone you support are living in an apartment, always submit your required repairs in writing to the Property Manager and drop a copy off to me.

Position Available:

Community Resource Assistant (Full-Time Position)

Please leave your Resume and application (for non STEP employees) at front desk for my review.

IHSS

Many of you have been asking for it... and it's finally here! IHSS Direct Deposit. You should have received the forms in the mail to enroll for this and it was scheduled to go into effect in the May 1-15 pay period. So those who have completed that

required paperwork to enroll should be receiving their IHSS paychecks deposited directly into their bank accounts. Those who have not completed the paperwork will continue to receive their checks via the US Postal Service.

As always, if you have any suggestions or ideas please contact me at:

Lisab@stepagency.com

I will review and research your suggestions and possibly post in my next article.

Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and support!



Amy and friend in Cozumel

Debbie Moreno
**“A true
inspiration”**

One day, sitting in her front room frustrated about life's twists and turns, Debbie received a phone call. It was a neurologist's office stating Debbie had an appointment that next afternoon. This was a referral from her Primary care physician who thought it would be good for Debbie to be seen as a candidate for a baclofen pump. Debbie was surprised and thought “Wow, another doctor, another trip down medicine lane.”

The next day arrived and Debbie was excited and concerned, thinking out loud “I'm frustrated, why do they want to see me?” Arriving at the appointment Debbie said to the kind receptionist, “I'm Debbie, let the doc know I am here!” Then there was the wait, five minutes, and ten minutes, then a solid “Deborah Moreno” was called.

Debbie approached the doorway and down the hall she went, waiting and wondering if this appointment would just be a waste of time. The neurologist came in and said “Hi Deborah, nice to see you, do I have good news for you!” Debbie, the sceptic, replied “Oh yeah, what?” The doctor cleared his throat and then said, “Well, you're in!” Debbie looked at him with concern, Debbie you have an appointment! Debbie was still



looking around the room; eyes wide open waiting to hear what the heck this doctor was talking about. “I got you an appointment to see Dr. Conard, he does the baclofen pump!” Debbie looked again, “What does that mean?” she replied. “That means you will be on a consistent pump which will distribute medication called baclofen throughout your body, through your spinal cord!” Debbie looked at the doctor and said “Cool!”

Soon everything was a fast and furious game of ‘get this done, go get these blood tests, call me back, and your appointment date for surgery is...’ “It was always a dream of mine to be out of pain. I have always wanted to feed myself, control my chair better, and have more independence.” Debbie stated at the appointment. Dr. Conard laughed and said “You

are a very nice woman, Deborah, and it makes me happy and is my pleasure to assist you with your dreams.” Smiling, he said “You are the perfect candidate, and I am certain that this is the thing for you, with a 98% chance of working.” Debbie was beside herself, shedding a tear, saying over and over again “Thank you doctor”.

One week later Debbie was in a pre-op office with Dr. Conard getting prepped for a small insertion of baclofen, to be put directly in her spinal cord, to see if Debbie had a reaction to the medication. All went well, and just after the procedure Debbie was able to have control of her spasms and able to incline straight up in the hospital bed with no pain and could sit up, and move!

Surgery day came and anticipation was at its peak. Debbie arrived extra early to get set up for the procedure, which was explained to her as being about two hours long. Debbie arrived into pre-op smiling and blissfully wondering what was next. Then she heard "Deborah, it's time!" Debbie looked at her friend and job coach with intense eyes, and said with a little frog in her throat, "Okay".

Next thing Debbie knew, it was over. Waking up out of surgery Debbie was sore and tired. Within five minutes of being out of surgery, Dr. Conard was at the end of Debbie's bedside with a grin from ear to ear, "How are you doing?" he asked, Debbie replied "Tired, but okay".

Debbie has recovered well, with high expectations and self-goals, and follows through with weekly meetings with Dr. Conard and weekly physical therapy appointments which motivate her even more. Since the baclofen pump insertion, Debbie has noticed changes with her spasms and speech, making things unlimited instead of limited. Debbie strives every day to improve more. In her own words I remember her saying, "This will change my life".

Angela Olsen

Credit Counseling: Becoming Debt Free

If you've accumulated a large amount of debt, you're probably going through stressful times right now. You may feel overwhelmed and uncertain about the future. You may be dealing with collection agency calls and correspondence to your family and employer. You may be considering credit counseling. This type of debt solution can help with budgeting and debt repayment.

Most companies that offer debt relief and debt counseling work in a confidential manner, so you don't have to worry about the privacy of your information and finances. If you contact a company that does not include confidentiality in their service, do not use their service. Debt help through consumer credit counseling can be done through the Internet, telephone, or in person for a fee. The fees are generally set based on income and total amount of debt. Debt solution doesn't have to be expensive and should not add to your financial burden. Debt relief through debt counseling is reasonable route to take, especially if you have no idea how to go about the process on your own.

Companies that offer debt solutions to their clients work to lessen debt by communicating with creditors to get rid of or reduce interest charges, eliminate late payment fees and/ or lower

monthly payments. Counselors can educate you on how to better manage your money, and develop a debt repayment plan that works for both you and your creditors.

You're may be wondering if this type of debt solution affects a person's credit. It can, but if you make a few regular payments and show that you are taking responsibility and can be trusted again, your debt reduction counselor may be able talk to all your creditors and negotiate to have the accounts re-aged, which means the status will be updated on all your accounts - this should improve your credit score. It's not easy to eliminate debt but if you make debt control a priority in your life, you can achieve your goal of being entirely debt free. It won't be easy, but it will definitely be worthwhile in the end. If you want to start the process and eliminate debt from your life, credit help through a counseling agency is the easiest way to work with creditors and find a solution. It's almost impossible to negotiate with creditors on your own - this is why counselors exist. They talk to creditors on your behalf and get you the credit help you need.

If you can get your credit rating back to its original status, nothing will hold you back in life. You won't regret it.

This Month's CAC Meeting

With a record number of attendees with various disabilities, the CAC will be changing its format. We will be electing a "President" or "Committee Chair" to facilitate the Consumer Advisory Committee. We talked about the importance of regular attendance because constantly explaining what we are up to becomes redundant and impedes our progress as a committee. Members will not be paid solely for attending the meeting, but for what they contribute to the committee. Although the CAC can be a forum for consumers to vent about what was going on in our homes, we found that we were doing too much complaining and not enough contributing for the good of the company that supports us. One can only hope that the CAC continues to have such a turnout of people with various disabilities because we have a lot to learn from each other, it's rather refreshing to see that we are no longer submerging ourselves in one disability.

The CAC will be taking notes from a member of Alta's CAC to better serve STEP as a whole. David Lopez will be instructing us on how we as consumers can help STEP become a better agency. We would appreciate the return of some of our veteran members so we can restore consistency in the CAC and share the history. We will also be taking turns in aiding with

the employee orientation as we have various disabilities and a lot to teach our up and coming staff members. The time has come for the CAC to give back; and make the agency proud of its consumers.

Melanie has also enlisted the help of some staff members to help our new members articulate themselves properly.

Part of being a consumer means that we are willing to teach, one must teach the evolution of writing this article. Even though it is difficult for a writer to give up what was originally their project, one must recuse herself to the idea of teaching a prodigy. I have really enjoyed writing about the CAC but I am interested in possibly providing leadership to the committee as the Chair. Meredith has expressed interest in taking up the CAC newsletter article and we are excited about her energy. If you are interested in taking on a leadership role of just getting involved with the CAC, please contact Melanie at the STEP office.

The next CAC meeting will be Wednesday July 30, 2008 from 4p to 5:30p at the STEP office.

'Ms. Tarah Wood'



BUILDING ON A FOUNDATION OF QUALITY

S.T.E.P. Family and Friend Advisory Committee, 2008 Meeting Schedule

Meetings will generally be on the third Wednesday of the Month at STEP from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Dates with an (*) are not due to scheduling conflicts.

It is always helpful to have RSVP's so I can provide some snacks...

- July 16 "Planning Ahead" Workshop with Joe Donofrio
- August 20
- September 17
- October 15
- November 19
- December, most likely no meeting due to holiday happenings

melanieb@stepagency.com

Clumsy Hands

By Leigh Penny

I feel the silence.

I can almost touch it.

My fingers grope for the words.

The words are so difficult to "SAY."

Beauty and grace flow poetically through the fingers of the deaf.

But me, the grace is lacking, but the desire is still there.

Please accept my clumsy, simple gestures as gestures of love and acceptance.

STEP Stars

We would like to recognize Mike Dyda's PA's, Mike Morris and James Collins. They have given Mike the support and encouragement to have his best year with STEP. He has grown in confidence and flexibility. He is happier and enjoys his life. Mike Morris has learned to understand Mike, is always dependable, and works with us to resolve concerns. He takes his responsibilities seriously, and he always does his best. James shows Mike that he enjoys his company and makes an effort to find new community experiences. Much appreciation and thanks to Mike Morris and James Collins from Mike and his family! They are great team members.

Mary Anne Dyda



Mike Dyda and his mom at the Christmas party

Jen's Summer Word Search!

Y U T I E M G B K X B S Y I S
Y L U J K N A R K H E Z B C D
L S A M I R A N O Z A X F E N
P T O P B P M T O N C D Z C E
M I M E U S N I O I H P R R I
X A C N U S P L W E T U L E R
C U D N G I E R Y S Z A C A F
E V M N I M F A I R E X C M Y
T R E R R C I I B N O C U A N
X E O E A U G U S T K P V J V
F I T E L C I C P O P L U T J
D A F I R E W O R K S N E H W
W X A U S A W C L V E L M R H
S W N G A W V O Y V Y L T E V
F L L E X P K B F A K S N G D

AUGUST
BARBECUE
BEACH
BIKE
CAMPING
FAIR
FAN
FIREWORKS
FRIENDS
HOT
ICECREAM
JULY
JUNE
PARK
PICNIC
PLAY
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SPRINKLER
SUN
SWIM
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