



S.T.E.P. News

Building on a Foundation of Quality News

Number 57

www.stepagency.com

Fall 2008

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Design/Production: John Foss

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Production Assistant: Jen Jones

Printing: Carmichael Printing

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We invite editorial submissions of all kinds. Stories, pictures, milestones, events, art, poems! Send your materials to the address above, or via e-mail to melanieb@stepagency.com

Copy deadlines: We try to follow these deadlines for receiving your stories for the next issue.

Spring – February 1

Summer – April 15

Fall – July 15

Winter – October 15



Libby, Lucy and Cindy on the beach

Eleven people represented STEP at the International Conference on Diverse Abilities and Innovative Supports 2008 in Waikiki, August 11-13th. Charlotte Barnes and Gloria Goode represented the ILS department. Cindy Allen, Libby Drake, Angela Olson and Lucy Ferguson represented the SLS-H department. Suzanne Sarrette, Bibiana Alvarez, Wendy Spanton and Diana Miller represented the SLS-D department and Melanie Bazile tagged along.

On the first day of the conference, Ollie Cantos, Special Counsel to the acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, US Department of Justice, discussed issues of civil rights for people with developmental disabilities. Ollie is blind and has an impressive list of both personal and professional accomplishments. He talked about the power within the disability community and gave a lot of great national resources.

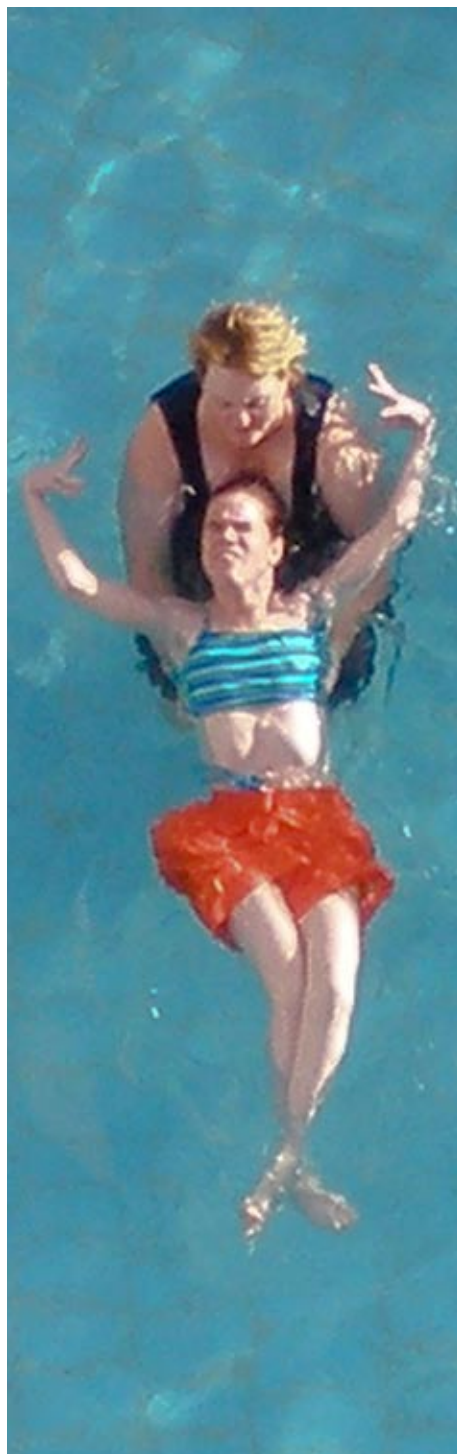
There were over 400 people attending the conference from 12 different countries. There were several Deaf people in attendance from organizations in Hawaii and there were many great interpreters. One of the interpreters

had the fortune of interpreting for Barack Obama while he was in Oahu on vacation. We also saw our old friend Al Condeluci, who gave two sessions on building community.

Attending the conference brought us some new ideas but it also reminded us that we work for a terrific and very progressive agency. And, while in Oahu, there were great dinners, lots of swimming, snorkeling, dancing, a north shore visit, a ride on a boat called the "Screamer", beautiful sunsets, a luau, lots of laughs and a few pina colodas. We are all very thankful for this opportunity.



Uh... Charlotte, I think that's a purse.
Below: Diana, Bibiana, Suzane, Charlotte, Wendy and Gloria



Not for the birds: Suzane Sarrette poses with feathered friends in Waikiki Beach.

Gratitude (SLS Hearing)

Recently, during the weekly Hearing SLS unit meeting, the discussion turned to gratitude. What does being grateful really mean? What are the things we truly appreciate? The conversation evolved to include a discussion of what are the things we are grateful for about our jobs. We then proceeded to make a "gratitude list" of those things.

Some of the responses were camaraderie, long-term relationships, friendship, bonding, and everyone feels valued. The significance of this is that we did not simply apply that to ourselves as employees



but to all levels of the company. Some of the longest-term relationships at STEP are with the people we support. Many of those people have been with STEP from its onset. Friendships have developed from those relationships, which are mutually beneficial.

Other areas of appreciation included, fun, generosity, quality, no ivory tower, unity and integrity. This is an awesome statement about the leadership we have at STEP. There truly is no ivory tower at STEP; all levels of the company are greatly involved with both the people we support and the employees. Again, relationships have developed from these involvements. STEP is also a generous company. We highly regard the idea of Good Enough for Me (G.E.M.) when we look at the lives of the people we support and the people who work here. We also feel that our leadership operates out of the highest degree of integrity and this trickles down to all levels of the company.

In regard to the "fun" concept, one only has to come visit our office to see how much we laugh and joke. It is often stated to people at a job interview that if you don't have a good sense of humor and a positive attitude, this is probably not the company for you.

Another area our unit discussed at the meeting was that we feel we have positive representation in the community. You can travel all through the state of California and people who work in this field know who we are. If you are part of the

deaf community then we are known nationally!

As a unit, we apply these beliefs and values in our work every day. There is a tangible passion that runs through STEP and all who are supported by STEP and who work here, feel this. Our unit decided, despite many challenges that we face daily, we all love to get up and go to work in the morning. How many employees can say that about the company where they work?

Sandee Nieves

From Carol Nolan:

STEP sends a warm *welcome* to Kelly Turner and Laura Black and an enthusiastic *welcome back* to Jimmy Richards.

We also congratulate Teresa on her move to a beautiful new apartment. She had assistance from Patti Uplinger. Very smooth quick transition with section 8.

Gratitudes and Recognition

Recognition:

Lei Bauman - I appreciate how you put thought into your work and the individualized support you give to people. You really think things through and put so much effort into finding a solution that will work for the person and help improve the quality of their life. The way you are helping

Reyna to create her own journal demonstrates the principle of "choice and self-directed". If I ever needed support, I would be lucky to have someone like you!
- Melanie Bazile

Thanks **Roger Wright** with Arden Arcade Payee Services for running Vickie's check over to the office with 20 minutes notice! She is so grateful! - *Melanie Bazile*

From the ILS group:

- **June Klock** - For jumping right in with helping Tawa get ILS Services started!
- **Donna Hernandez** - Big thanks for thinking "outside the box" with Andrea and getting her started with a reading and swim class. Also, thanks for assisting Sharon with starting her "recycling program" as a means for self-employment.
- **Mike Martin** - for your many years working with Stan and ensuring his success while living independently. Your commitment and dedication to him all these years is greatly appreciated and has no doubt improved his quality of life tremendously. Thank you!
- **Charlene Beck** - for all your hard work and dedication with Sandra--your commitment to her is greatly appreciated.
- **Shelly Taylor** - for all your support with helping Nick smoothly transition into a home of his own.
- **Katrina Parham** - for your willingness and support in

helping Jose access the community and build the life he's imagined.

- **Tammy Smith, Nicola Summers, William Marks & Annette Butler** - For all your help and participation in making our Parenting Pool Party a great success. Thanks for the Team Work!
- **Anissa Fernandes** - For your ongoing commitment to helping Lisa move towards greater independence, despite the many obstacles. Your dedication to all of your clients is greatly appreciated.
- **William Marks** - for the ongoing guidance and direction you offer to Rashae, thanks!
- **Susan Thompson** - We can't thank you enough for helping us out during the recent Mini-ELP training. You're the best!
- **Heather Campbell & Anna Shands** - Thanks to both of you ladies for your commitment to the ILS, Parenting Team and Yuba City office. Your leadership and guidance is greatly appreciated by all of us.

From SLS Deaf:

- Rob would like to appreciate **Tony Earnest** for empowering Noel Harris in being creative.
- Wendy would like to recognize, **Linda** for helping Noe create a picture schedule to help Noe eat better and know when to take his medication.
- Dianne would like to

recognize **Dom** and **Mark O.** for good redirection skills during a crisis.

- Kelly would like to recognize all the staff that were able to coordinate State Fair.
- Jan would like to appreciate all of the staff that have been working with Scott Wirth during his difficult times.
- Cheryl would like to recognize **Joshua** for riding Amtrak independently without staff assistance back to Sacramento from a family visit.
- Wendy would like to appreciate the teamwork at Tom C's house for taking him out to the State Fair and having him enjoy his time there.
- Sam would like to recognize **Carl Poulin** for moving into his own house and choosing his own staffing; interviewing and speaking up for himself. He is training his own staff and empowering himself.
- Sam would like to appreciate **Rachel** for helping ensure that quality training is provided with CPR and First Aid.
- Dianne offers her appreciation to all of the staff that work with Kim Kuzma.
- Artye would like to recognize **Phil** for empowering John by establishing his finances and helping coordinate John's daily schedule.
- Jan would like to appreciate **Trish** for improving the quality of life for Sarah Wombold.
- The Deaf Unit would like to welcome **John Hicks**,

Alejandra Aguilar, Helen Virgen. John Crisci, Dianne Olafson, Lei Bauman and Artye Morriese.

- The Deaf Unit would like to say a fond farewell to **Marcus Gunter** and wish him luck in his future. Thank you for all you have done for Joey Aguilar and the smooth transition.

Success Story: **John Wood** *By Lisa Langley*

This is the story of John Wood and his amazing journey over the last year in supported living services with the S.T.E.P Hearing SLS Unit.

John is a 24-year-old man with Autism. He has a wonderful



sense of humor and is full of energy. John loves motorcycles, eyeglasses, going for car rides, exploring his community, listening to music and eating at McDonald's. He has limited verbal communication, however he is able to say a few words and sign a few words to communicate his wants and needs. John's

SLS Coordinator Lisa Langley has been working on a picture communication board for him to use to increase his ability to express himself.

Before John started supported living services with STEP he was living in a care home in Redding. Homer, the owner of Fagan Homes, took John into his care when no other agency would. Homer's dedication to John and his ability to see what others could not supported John for three years before he was accepted into SLS. John's mother Suzette Helgeson advocated for John to make the transition to Sacramento and SLS, so he would be closer to her and his family in the Sacramento area. John has two family members working right here at STEP; Jen Jones is John's aunt and her daughter Shauntae is his cousin. Shauntae is new to STEP and is working as a roommate and personal attendant for the Hearing SLS Unit.

John's transition to Sacramento and to supported living was not an easy one for him; change is very hard for John and even harder when your ability to communicate is limited. All the familiar faces John was used to were no longer there, replaced by new faces, a new place to live and a new routine, or lack thereof, had to be very scary for him. John and the people who supported him in the beginning were be faced with many challenges, but over the last year and a few staff changes later, John has settled into a comfortable living

environment and a home in North Highlands that he can call his own. John is making his own choices on a daily basis; he is helping to maintain his home and he is exploring his community regularly. He goes bowling every Wednesday with Access Leisure, he attends dances at Los Sierra Community Center through TRS and participates in many other community activities daily. I want to take the opportunity to shout out a big thank you to Wendell Dondonayos, Cheo Kelley, Jon Newcomb, Robert Johnson, Adam Crowder and Geraldo Oseguero for all the work they do every day to make it possible for John to live a safe, happy and fulfilling life. John truly has a team that provides flexible, tailored services to him on a daily basis.

It has been my pleasure getting to know John and his support team and I look forward to seeing John reach more milestones in the years to come.

Deaf Unit: StepVRS Services

Todd Drake, Mike Morris and Sam Holden proudly present a new service called StepVRS. This new service is all about providing the people we support with the best possible relay services. StepVRS is a Video Relay Service that Deaf people can visually see when communicating their needs. Deaf people can call Deaf people directly and be able to see each other through their TV or Computer screen. They can have normal conversation. Also Deaf people can call the relay service and communicate through the TV or computer with an interpreter.

We have to tell you, if you don't have one you must have one! It's as simple as that. For people who have this service, it quickly improves their lives and helps them connect to the hearing world a little better. This

John Wood: on the run from an angry goose?



relay service is not like the old TTD or TTY. StepVRS is much faster and when a hearing person is on the line with this relay service, it has been proven that the conversation feels more normal than the old way. So please strongly encourage anyone who will benefit from this service to sign up for StepVRS.

People are asking what is StepVRS? Why use StepVRS instead of another VRS service? The answer is there is nothing wrong with other VRS services and StepVRS is not going to change the STEP Program. StepVRS is an additional service that the people we support can use. StepVRS interpreters have been trained to better understand the people we support when they make phone calls. They are aware that sometimes they may need to draw pictures or use body language in order to communicate with the people we support. Other VRS relay service interpreters do not do that.

Each month StepVRS will earn some money for people using the StepVRS services. We will be encouraging people to use our services so that way it will help support the consumers in our program. The more people that sign up for StepVRS, the more it will increase the monthly fund for our consumers each month. STEP has agreed to use the extra funding to assist clients with their internet service cost because we believe this is an important tool for any Deaf person to communicate in today's world.

We have three types of

program under StepVRS that people can use:

* **StepVRS.TV**

Video Relay Service

Call your doctor. Call your neighbor. Order a pizza. Call the family. With StepVRS, you can call any hearing person--and any hearing person can call you! StepVRS makes communicating easy for you.

* **VCO.StepVRS.TV**

Voice Carry Over

Let your own voice do the talking with StepVRS VCO. Voice Carry Over(VCO) is a service for Deaf or hard of hearing people who prefer to speak directly to the hearing caller while viewing the video interpreter.

* **SPANISHVRS**

Spanish.StepVRS.TV

The language barrier is no longer an obstacle. A Deaf or hard of hearing person can communicate with a hearing Spanish speaker, with a Spanish translator between sign or spoken English.

If you have any question regarding StepVRS please feel free to contact Todd Drake at toddd@tmail.com, Mike Morris at mike.stepvrs@gmail.com and they will be more than happy to assist you.

Vocational Services and Supports

Wahoo! Summer has been non-stop fun, learning, and full of employment opportunities for STEP Vocational Services and Supports. One of the sessions attended by Vocational Coaches this quarter was part of the 5 Principals and Outcomes of STEP Vocational entitled A Job of One's Own. During this training and discussion we each committed to the ideal and reached the following determinations;

- Clients will have a job that matches their abilities and interests like other members of the community.
- Clients will choose where they work and with whom. They also control their own productivity at their job.
- Clients are secure in their jobs and do not need to quit if their needs, services, or their service agency changes.
- Clients are safe at their jobs because they are appropriately placed, trained, and supervised.





Mai Vang has been employed with Hosteling International, Sacramento for the past two years!

Suzane Sarrette: Professional Barista!

Ever heard the phrase, "Be careful what you wish for because it might come true?" For client Suzane Sarrette and Phil Bonnet, Executive Director of ACRC when their dreams met they became bigger and better than anyone could imagine. I'd love to tell you how—it's a great story.

Back in the winter of 2007 Alta California Regional Center's new Executive Director, Phillip Bonnet accepted an invitation to tour STEP Vocational job sites. While on that tour Phil commented, "I wish there was a way clients could sell good

coffee at Alta. The coffee we make is awful and I hate going out to buy coffee!" Well, Stephanie Sgro, Program Manager jumped right on the idea. Suzane as a barista was an obvious choice for us because she had been informing us that her dream job was to become a gracious hostess with a uniform (and a name pin) that served coffee.

That spring Alta California Regional Center in conjunction with California's Department of Disabled Services advertised about a Request for Proposals for start-up funding for new Micro-enterprises where the owners have a Developmental Disability, but the deadline was coming fast. Stephanie Sgro, with some direction from a vocational coach, found the sales department of Java City Coffee. What nice people, and smart too in helping folks to open their own Java City franchises. We never dreamed that big—so exciting and scary, but let's go for it! What is the worst that could happen, Alta saying "No thank you"? Well, Alta said YES, because of the well-written and thought out proposal.

Time passed, connections were forged, and work of starting a business began. We have learned so much about the

good people of our business community, and ourselves. I am proud to say that the launch date for Suzane's business, All Shook Up, proudly serving Java City Coffee was September 2, 2008. The beautiful Coffee Kiosk is located in the lobby at 1860 Howe Avenue in Sacramento. Proprietor Suzane Sarrette and her Baristas Tyx Pulskamp, Monica Soares, Bonnie Fuchs, and Ka Ying Vue will be happy to make your favorite. Would you like an espresso? A Latte? A Mocha or maybe a Fruit Smoothie?

There are so many people to recognize, first and foremost Suzane. If everyone involved had not met her and gotten inspired by her enthusiasm it would never have gotten off the ground. Thank you to Stephanie Sgro for writing a great grant proposal. Stephanie is also responsible for bringing together all the players, Ryan of Kennedy of Wilson Property Management; Kathy, Mark, Carol, & Shay of Java City; Tim at Coffee Cart Biz, Inc., Carol at Massa Peal Catering, and of course the Board at Alta California Regional Center Regional.



Left: Suzane Sarrette with Michael Fruci, Mayor of Carmichael - Congratulations on your new business!

Opposite:
What's your favorite? We can make them all.



Community Resource Corner

First off I would love to give a huge appreciation for those who applied for the Community Resource Assistant Position. It was great to see so many people showing interest in it. There were many well-qualified applicants, but of course I could only pick one. So I would love for all to give a very warm welcome to Sarah Nixon, my new Community Resource Assistant!

Sarah has worked for the agency for over 4 years and has held several different positions at STEP; she will be assisting me with the IHSS along with all of the other responsibilities our unit takes on. Congrats and welcome to IHSS Sarah!

For those who have been concerned about the State

Budget Cuts--IHSS pay rates are not being impacted yet, your IHSS rate will remain the same.

We have had a lot of new consumers getting accepted on the IHSS which means more people getting paid by IHSS. I wanted to appreciate all those who have shown patience and professionalism regarding their IHSS over the years and recently. As always, STEP and its employees are committed to being fiscally responsible for what we can and should do and doing it with the professionalism and grace we are known for.

Lisa Barrows

Circle of Support

We need your help! You may not be aware but the Deaf Unit has a goal to make sure each client has at least 4 Circle of Support meetings per year. We've been working hard trying to get this done for the people we support in our unit. Time is running out, and to meet our goal each person must have at least 4 Circle of Support meetings before 2008 is up. We only have 4 months left!

Circle of Support meetings are not official meetings, they are not a place to discuss goals or concerns about the people that we support. This is a gathering to celebrate the good things in their life and show support to the people we support. The real purpose is to increase friendship, have more non-paying support staff in the people's life, and most of all to become a member of their community by being part of something. We believe if each person follows through with the Circle of Support gatherings, we believe the people we support will increase their friendship and get more diversity of people in their lives. When this happens, the people we support will learn new things from other people.

Your SLS coordinators are well aware of the Circle of Support; we have discussed how to do this and given them the tools. What we need from each Personal Attendant and the people we support in our unit is to take action in assisting the people we support getting

the Circle of Support gathering done. Here are some tips to help you get started with the people you support that may not have any Circle of Support gatherings.

Circle of Support Tips:

1. Sit down with the consumer and ask them directly who they want to invite to their Circle of Support meeting.
2. Have the consumer make the list of all the folks he or she wants to invite.
3. Discuss a place the consumer would like to hold the gathering (can be at their favorite place like Starbucks, pizza place or park etc.).
4. Arrange a date and time, and assist the consumer in making invitation cards and sending them out to the right people.
5. When having the Circle of Support gathering, be sure to discuss positive things and try to celebrate any new things the person did in their life. Also discuss future things the person wants to do, such as meaningful things to do.

We are looking forward to getting this done for the year 2008, and please, with your help, if any of the people you support has not yet had one, ask the consumer and assist him or her in planning a Circle of Support gathering. If you need any help please feel free to contact your direct supervisor which is the coordinator. If you cannot get through them please contact Sam Holden or Diana Miller.

Once the Circle of Support gathering is done, please feel free to contact Diana Miller at djmiller@tmail.com or Sam Holden at samjr@tmail.com and let us know the Circle of Support gathering has been done and we will make a record of it to keep track of how many each consumer is doing. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

Thanks, Deaf Unit

Roger Niello Visits STEP

We had met Assemblyman Roger Niello through his community meeting for Carmichael and Fair Oaks and soon after invited him out for a tour. On September 4th he spent an hour and a half learning about STEP services, employees and, of course, the people we support.

He met Stuart and Alex along with David Wade, the ILS Instructor at their duplex. Stuart and Alex were paying bills while Assemblyman Niello was there. Stuart happily showed his wall of pictures and Alex excitedly showed him the rest of the home and the pictures of his family.

The tour also visited Aaron and Alex with their support team of Eric, Dom, and Jan. Alex and Dom showed how VRS is used and Aaron showed him his theme-decorated home.

Assemblyman Niello was extremely gracious and easy to talk to. We discussed the current State budget situation and asked that he use STEP as a resource for information in the future.

Photo: Stuart, Jacquie, Assemblyman Roger Niello, David and Alex at Stuart and Alex's place.



ILS Report

***"To fill up or not to fill up,
that is the question."***

By Michelle B. Armstrong, ILS

Gas Prices got you down? Still debating on whether you should trade in that SUV for a Hybrid? Let's put it all in perspective, shall we? How about a few fun facts to get you through that sinking feeling the next time you fill up at your local gas pump?

Which country currently pays the highest gas prices per gallon? The answer: Eritrea. Erit- what you ask? Don't worry, I was asking the same question myself. Thank heaven for Google. Eritrea is an Eastern Africa country, bordering the Red Sea between Djibouti and Sudan, and they currently top the list at \$9.58 cents per gallon (and you thought \$4.45 was hard on the pocket book?). That's about one movie ticket and a kernel of popcorn here, and I imagine by next year you can forget the kernel!

Now for the million dollar question: Which country pays the lowest gas price? Drumroll please... It's Venezuela at 12 cents a gallon! They are followed by Iran at 40 cents, Saudi Arabia at 45 cents and Libya at 50 cents. Can you even imagine? Didn't think so. So, how does the United States rate, in terms of gas prices? In a survey done on 155 countries of the "Most expensive places to buy gas", the US rated number 108. So all in all, although we're all feeling

the pinch at the pump, the US is still paying relatively less compared to most countries (data obtained from CNNMoney.com)

Our staff attended the "End of Life Planning" event on July 16th to obtain a better understanding on how best to prepare and support our clients in planning for that inevitable last chapter of life. This is certainly an area no one likes to focus on, but one that must certainly be given consideration, so that individuals requests are respected and honored. From personal experience, I certainly think that preparing for this event, which we will all eventually experience, allows everyone involved the opportunity to be fully present with their loved one, rather than having to focus on the "technical details" during a difficult time.

On a lighter note, our ILS Team had their Summer Team Building Party on August 8th, in the lovely home of one, Heather Campbell (thanks Heather). We engaged in some serious team building, reviewed our yearly WIG goals and partook of the most delicious potluck potpourri one might imagine! Who's got the dip?!

***"Harvest Moon...
Ghosts & Ghouls...
and all things Turkey"***

By Michelle B. Armstrong, ILS

The ILS unit is happy to announce the 5th annual Toy & Food Drive which will begin at

the STEP office on November 3rd and continue through December 19th. Our Toy Drive currently benefits the children of our Parenting ILS Clients, as well as children at the Sacramento Receiving Home (check out the "Dear Santa Letters" posted at the STEP office). Our Food Drive benefits many of our ILS and SLS clients who, due to financial hardship, greatly benefit from a little extra food over the holiday season. Thank you again, in advance, for your generosity this holiday season and HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Our ILS team completed the Mini-ELP training as part of our annual WIG (Wildly Important Goals) in July and will be participating in an upcoming RESPECT refresher in October to ensure that our team continues providing quality and consistent services. In addition, several staff and supervisors will be taking advantage of the ACRC sponsored "Diabetes Training" in September, as part of an ongoing team goal to expand our knowledge base, as a means to better serve our diverse clientele.

As part of our ongoing focus on "The 5 Principles", more specifically "A Home of One's Own", our entire ILS team would like to congratulate Mario Zamudio for recently being accepted by Housing Choice Voucher Program after many years of being on their waiting list. Congrats Mario!



Our Parenting Group recently held their Annual Pool Party at the Folsom Aquatic Center in August and what a blast we had! A huge thanks both to our President Ruby Keefe, and Vice President Cynthia Yuhuaca, for your ongoing commitment and leadership to our Parenting Group. The Parenting Team will be planning some upcoming "Play Dates" in the community, as well as preparing for our Annual Trick or Treat Party and Potluck Thanksgiving celebration.



On a sidebar, a big congratulations to our Eppie's Triathlon Team, aka "The STEP Divas" (Jacquie Foss, Melanie Bazile and Michelle B. Armstrong) for their performance at this year's triathlon! The race, in its 36th year, is the world's oldest triathlon. This year's event was on July 19. Michelle started, with the 5.8 mile run followed by Jacquie biking the 12.5 miles and Melanie was the finisher with the 6.35 mile

Parenting Group president Ruby Keefe and VP Cynthia Yuhuaca



kayak run. It was great fun and this fundraising event benefits programs presented by the Sacramento County Therapeutic Recreation Services (SCTRS), which provide programs for the mentally- and physically-challenged. Congrats Ladies!



STEP Divas Jacquie, Melanie and Michelle pose after Eppie's Great Race

Profile: Frank Bracamonte

Frank was born September 1, 1969. A middle child, Frank had an older sister and a younger brother, Jesse. Frank went to San Juan High School in Citrus Heights.



Frank Bracamonte with Vanessa & Tracy

Frank met his wife Kim in 1988. They met at Pride Industries, where both of them worked. Frank and Kim were married in 1989. They have a son named Nick, age 17, their only child. Nick lives in Missouri with Kim's parents.

Frank lived with his mother until he was 19 years old. After that Frank and his wife moved out on their own, with the support of both their parents. They lived on their own until 2000. Frank and Kim went to Light House Living Services until 2006. After Light House they came to S.T.E.P.

Frank works at Sierra Vista through Quest, doing janitorial work. He's been working there

since 2007. Franks enjoys his work there.

He recently moved to a 2-bedroom apartment with a pool! Frank really likes to swim as much as he can. He also likes to surf the web, looking for news and sports. Starting in August is paying his own cell phone bill.

The Essential Lifestyle Plan

What are our daily rituals, habits, and preferred ways of doing tasks or how we like to be treated? These are the types of questions that we ask the people we support when completing an essential lifestyle plan (ELP). This then becomes a guide as to the best way to serve that person. It can literally be used as a personal training manual. This goes hand in hand with the supported living principles of flexible, tailored services, and choice and self-direction.

It has been an interesting and enlightening experience to complete an ELP. There are often many surprises that arise; information we may not have had prior to this, preferences we did not know about, future plans, dreams and desires. It is truly an intimate look into each individual that we support.

As we approach, with a new-found perspective, better ways to provide services and quality to these individuals, a more fulfilling life experience can be had for those we support. Without going through this process, we may never have learned this person's dreams, desires, dislikes, and preferences.

Part of how we live our life includes planning for a quality ending of life. Although this is often a difficult subject to broach, it is a necessary and inevitable phase through which we will all pass. As we discuss those ways that the people we

Yuba City Update:

Not much has changed here in Yuba City since we last reported. We are currently serving a total of 19 clients. We have 9 SLS arrangements and 10 ILS Clients. Our staff count is at 36. As I sit here and think about where we were three years ago, I am totally amazed at our growth. This issue contains a short bio of one of the clients we are providing ILS services for. Hope you enjoy.

Tracy Cummins

support want to live their lives we must also ask the question of how they want to plan for their ending of life. Many of us have very specific ideas and desires for this phase of life and if the questions are never raised then how will we discover the best ways to support those we serve? The essential lifestyle plan provides us with a tool to learn this information.

Again, it has been surprising to learn some of the ways that those we support envision their ending journey. Without this vital information, we would be left wondering if we are truly providing for their wishes and desires and, at best, would be guessing. When we attempt to guess about these wishes, we can be left with a sense of concern that maybe we did not do things in the manner the person we support would have wanted. Because so much of our time spent with the people we support is about helping them achieve their goals, their desires, their having the highest quality of life, it only makes sense that we are able to provide them with the most satisfying plan for their journey into their next experience.

As STEP strives to achieve their wildly important goal to meet and exceed all principles and regulations, we plan to exceed in this particular area. As we complete more and more ELPs, we will have a greater knowledge of the wishes of those we support. It is also part of STEP's goal to develop a policy and procedure for this planning. Since this is an area

that is often not addressed by both supported living agencies and regional centers, we hope to work in conjunction with Alta California Regional Center as partners, in numerous ways, for those we support.

WIG Update



Did you know that people have been scrambling around working on STEP's WIG? What is a WIG? It is something that is so important it renders everything else meaningless if not accomplished. It is a Wildly Important Goal. STEP's Wildly Important Goal for 2008 is to meet and exceed all regulations and principles to ensure the highest quality support. Some of the regulations we are referring to include The SLS Regulations, the Lanterman Act, Title 17, and HR/Labor Laws. Principles include the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, the 5 Principles of Supported Living, STEP's Vision and Values, and the Direct Support Professional Code of Ethics. Each department set objectives to help STEP reach the overall goal and they are tracking their progress monthly. This is an important part of the

WIG process because we know we all play the game a little differently when we are keeping score.

The Vocational department (Next Step and Extra Step) are working to increase the number of hours people spend in paid employment and meaningful activities. There have been several new exciting jobs and businesses developed this year including the "North of the Line Café" at STEP, "Purties" jewelry business, Suzanne's "All Shook Up" Coffee Cart, and many others. Please read the Vocational department's column for more information. The Vocational department is looking at ways to assess, improve and maintain customer and stakeholder satisfaction. They have also greatly improved the attendance of their employees to work and staff meetings.

The ILS department is making strides to insure there is a Mental Health Support plan available for those who need that support. Almost all those receiving ILS now have an ISP goal related to emergency response and/or disaster preparedness. Another focus toward achieving STEP's WIG was to insure employee training and so far this year we have exceeded the initial goals that were set in this area. In ILS alone, there has been training by Dr. Tom Pomeranz, medical and disability training, parenting related training and RESPECT class.

SLS has been very busy as they have over 100 people receiving services and over 250

employees in their unit. SLS has been planning additional learning opportunities for folks receiving services in small group settings. SLS is also looking at ways to build long-term supports relationships and offering dynamic Personal Attendant training.

Quality Assurance is also a focus for both the ILS and SLS units. Alta California Regional Center has spent time with both Hearing and Deaf folks receiving SLS completing their own QA. The feedback so far has been very positive!

All departments at STEP have been focused on providing consistent feedback and training to their employees. We have begun a quarterly feedback system with employees and have crafted a new performance appraisal that focuses on the 5 principles and competencies necessary for each position. Everyone has also been scheduling ELP's and more have been completed in the last few months than in 2007 altogether. We have been learning more about Circles of Support and having these gatherings on a more regular basis.

There has been incredible progress on the Wildly Important Goal and everyone is working very hard in a shared direction. We know it has been a lot of extra work and changes but in the end, providing the kind of quality services we do is worth it!



National Preparedness Month 2008

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Ready Campaign. Join the Ready Campaign and our DHS partner Citizen Corps this September for the fifth annual National Preparedness Month (NPM). Register now to be a part of the 2008 NPM Coalition—visit <http://ready.adcouncil.org>.

This year the focus of NPM is to encourage citizens to take important preparedness steps:

- Get a Kit
- Make a Plan
- Be Informed
- Get Involved

For information on these steps, go to www.ready.gov/america/npm08/index.html

Being a child at home alone in the summer is a high-risk occupation. If you call your mother at work thirteen times an hour, she can hurt you.
~Erma Bombeck

Day Program Update

What a Summer we all had and it's been pretty good for our clients and job coaches, who were sure follow the safety rules of heat. Thanks to all those job coaches for their wonderful support, meeting the needs of the client.

Some special good news: Lynn and I were out shopping for beads for Purties, and Lynn overheard the store person talking about wanting a Sign Shaker. Now we have that job and seems like the clients and job coaches really enjoy it. Come on down and visit our Sign Shaker in action at Bead Babe, 5710 Auburn Blvd. That's a little south of Auburn and Manzanita. Go by and see them working and also shop there too and tell them how you learned about them—from the Sign Shaker!

I would like to welcome a new client in our program, Carl Poulin. He is now working with Roger Miller in the landscaping crew. Go and give him a warm welcome on board to Next STEP Vocational. - Debbie Waters

STEP Vehicle Use Procedure

Driving is always a serious matter. Driving a company vehicle is even more serious, and involves the following:

1. Drivers requesting use of a STEP vehicle must be added as an approved driver. To be approved, you must meet the following requirements:
 - Be 25 years or older.
 - Have completed 90-day introductory employment period.
 - Have a clean DMV record and valid Drivers License.
 - Be accepted by the insurance and added to the active drivers list.
2. Fill out the vehicle reservation form found in Jen Jones' office. The form must be approved and signed off by the unit Director.
3. After Director's approval, write the time you need the vehicle on the appropriate calendar in Jen Jones' office (example: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM) and the name of the employee driving (not the client name). Please be considerate of the next driver and return vehicle at or before the time specified.
4. **DO NOT RETURN THE VEHICLE WITH AN EMPTY FUEL TANK!** It is the responsibility of the driver and/or client to put fuel in the vehicle. See your unit Director if fuel money is needed. The vehicle should

have a minimum of ¼ tank when returned. If the tank is on empty when you pick up the keys, inform Jen Jones for follow-up.

5. If you are returning after the office is closed, bring the keys in first thing the following morning unless other arrangements are made.

Free Fishing Licenses for Consumers

The California Department of Fish and Game offers a free 5-year fishing license to those who qualify:

- Any person, with central vision acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the aid of the best possible correcting glasses, or central vision acuity better than 20/200 if the widest diameter of the remaining visual field is no greater than 20 degrees. Certification of blindness by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist is required.
- Any person who is a resident of the State and who is so severely physically disabled as to be permanently unable to move from place to place without the aid of a wheelchair, walker, forearm crutches or a comparable mobility-related device. Verification by a licensed physician or a copy of the previous year's free fishing license is required.

- Any developmentally disabled person. Certification by a licensed physician or the director of a State regional center is required.

Application forms can be picked up at the STEP office in the staff forms cabinet. You can also request application forms from the Department of Fish and Game either by phone: (916) 928-5805, or e-mail: LRB@dfg.ca.gov. When you request the form, please include your full name, mailing address and the type of application you want (free five-year).



STEP News is Going Electronic!

To make sure you don't miss one packed issue, send an e-mail with "E-mail Newsletter" in the subject line to jenj@stepagency.com and you will be added to the STEP News e-mail list. This will help cut printing and mailing costs, and save trees!

C.A.C.

The S.T.E.P. CAC met on August 20th and had a great conversation about what SLS is really about. We discussed the idea of “do for” vs. “do with” and how easy it can be to just sit back and allow people to do things for us. It was brought up that with rights there are also responsibilities and we don’t earn the respect of others if we don’t participate in our own lives in the fullest way possible. The SLS Coordinator is not in charge of our life and does not hold the power--we direct our life and that means taking responsibility for even the difficult things like giving feedback to our attendants. It was suggested that we develop an orientation for people new to STEP services so we can talk about responsibilities and agency philosophy right away. Libby, who is the CAC member newest to STEP Agreed some kind of orientation or welcome from the CAC would have been helpful. The CAC decided to plan and present a peer training on self-directed lives and what SLS really is about. This training will be on Saturday October 25th from 10am to noon at STEP. The training will be lead by the CAC members and will include a discussion and role-play and Chad will make sure food is available too!

Thanks to Chad, Tom, Meredith, Carol, Libby, Mike, Debbie, Chuck, Deanna, Courtney and Mel for such a great conversation!

Amanda Michelle Cummins

May 8, 1982 - May 21, 2008



Amanda Michelle Cummins, 26, passed away at her home on May 21st. Amanda was born in Yuba City, CA to Mike and Tracy Cummins and attended Yuba City schools. Amanda’s most memorable accomplishment in life was the birth of her son Noah C. Franco, who she adored and loved unconditionally.

Three years ago, Amanda met her soul mate, Greg Narducci. He was lead singer for “After the Silence” she was

his greatest supporter and his biggest fan and was so proud of him.

Amanda worked for Strategies To Empower People (STEP) as a personal attendant; however her ultimate goal in life was to go back to school to become a police officer.

Amanda leaves behind her son Noah, her soul mate Greg, parents Mike and Tracy Cummins, sister Kristy McCartney, brothers Casey, David and Cody Cummins, Grandmother Lavern Cummins, aunts Robin Ponciano and Shelly (Ray) Taylor, uncles Dave (Darlene) Cummins and Buddy (Diane) Cummins, cousins Sal Molina, Shayna Crabb, Daniel Godinez, Chvarity Fletcher, Jacob Fletcher, Sarah Fletcher, Jackie Perez, Lisa Lacey, Jamie Cummins, Heather Cummins and nephews Devin and Logan McCartney.

Her grandmother Winifred J. Ponciano and her grandfather Mack Cummins preceded Amanda in death.

The Cummins family would like to sincerely thank all who sent cards and owners donated food, and shared their special memories during this difficult time. Special thanks to the STEP Family and Yuba Sutter People First for helping out during this grieving process.

“...I am going to prepare a place for you. ...I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am...John 14:2,3”

Zest

By Leigh Penny

I awaken each morning with a great zest for living.
Everything is in focus.
Looking outside, I see nature's colors are brighter, clearer.
I can see where life is taking me.
At first, I think I want to get there as fast as I can.
Then I realize the journey is the adventure.
I am afraid I might miss something important along the way.
I am glad I live life at a slower pace.
That way, I can take my time and use all my senses, my total being,
to fully appreciate life and truly live.

STEP Star

Mack Block - Thanks for your innovation and initiation in helping Allen to make choice and self-direct his life. You have a real talent for print media and I appreciate you following through to support Allen in that way.

Melanie Bazile

Web Resource:

www.cozi.com

This is an organization website that is free and easy to use. The features include a Family Calendar, Shopping Lists and a general list manager, Message capability, a Photo Screen Saver, a Family Journal and more. It was designed for families but any busy household would benefit from this website. Check it out!

Save the Dates:

S.T.E.P. Holiday Party

Friday, Dec. 12th, 5PM-10PM

Watch for your invitation in the mail!

California Supported Living Network Leadership Conference

April 16 & 17, 2009

Pre-conference April 15

Keynote Speaker Dr. Ruth Ryan

www.supportedliving.com

401k Questions?

For those of you with concerns about your 401k account, visit the website at www.invesmart.com. Given the recent troubles on Wall Street, some employees have had questions. There is also a

great article that will be put in mailboxes of all participants.

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 different, due to scheduling conflicts.

- October 2008 - 10/15/08
- November 2008 - 11/19/08
- December 2008 - Most likely no meeting due to holiday happenings

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

Melanie Bazile

Jen's Summer Word Search!

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

BOOKS
CIDER
COOKIES
CORNUCOPIA
FALL
FAMILY
FOOTBALL
GOURD
HALLOWEEN
HAYRIDE
PENCILS
PIES
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