

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 7

S.T.E.P. News

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

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

New Year's Eve has always been a time for looking back to the past, and more importantly, forward to the coming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want (or need) to make and resolve to follow through on those changes. According to About.com, the top 10 New Year's Resolutions are 1) Spend More Time with Family & Friends 2) Fit in Fitness 3) Tame the Bulge 4) Quit Smoking 5) Enjoy Life More 6) Quit Drinking 7) Get Out of Debt 8) Learn Something New 9) Help Others 10) Get Organized. As I am writing this, Jacquie says we should add "Get rid of guilt" and I will be working on that one in addition to many of the others listed.

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When I "googled" the word 'resolutions', there were many links to articles about how to actually follow through with them. I began making a list of the resolutions of I have made over the years and I ran out of paper. Actually, many were similar year after year and that made me think that instead of a New Year's Resolution, this year I will focus on forming a new HABIT. Steven Covey says that Habits ultimately create our destiny. Proactive people are responsible for their choices so I am going to strive for Habits instead of momentary pledges. I hope your holiday was everything you wanted it to be and wish you the best of luck in 2007!

*- Melanie Bazile
Executive Director*

GOOD DEEDS & GOOD PEOPLE

Toy & Food Drive

Michelle B. Armstrong

The entire ILS team would like to thank everyone for their generous donations this year to our annual Toy & Food Drive! As a result of your generosity and support we were able to provide holiday food boxes to those clients most in need this season, as well as bring smiles and elicit screams of excitement from the kids of our Parenting program. This perhaps was the most exciting part of all. A heartfelt thanks to each of you who took the time to read our kid's "Dear Santa" letters and purchase them the gifts they requested. These acts of kindness are yet another testimony to the amazing sense of community and "second family" we, as an agency, have created for the kids in our Parenting Program and the impact of your generosity will no doubt be felt for years to come- thank you!

This month the entire ILS team will be going on their annual retreat in the foothills to review the unit progress of the 2006 year; strengthen team unity and establish the new unit goals and objectives for the 2007 year. A special "Thank You" to our team member, **Mike Kelley**, for providing us with the facility for this year's retreat in the beautiful Soda Springs area- we are incredibly grateful!

We would once again like to take this moment to recognize both **Stephanie Tate** and **Katrina Parham**, who were both recognized as "Instructors of the Year" at this year's annual S.T.E.P. Holiday party. Both of these ladies have gone "above and beyond" in providing ILS services to the clients they serve ; maintaining a standard of professionalism through challenging situations and exceeding the set standards and expectations of their positions- congratulations ladies!

Lunch & Socks

J. A. de la Concepcion

Early in the holiday season I had already told myself that I would discontinue the Lunch & Socks program this year. I was feeling tired and selfish. For once I wanted to have a completely decadent Christmas day by lounging around in my pajamas and eating Chinese food and chocolates. I wanted to have a nice fire and watch movies all day and not leave my house, nor do good deeds for others.

But as Thanksgiving passed and the winter holidays approached, several individuals asked me when I would start collecting for Lunch & Socks. I couldn't bring myself to tell them, "Oh, that silly thing? Please, I'm collecting Christmas present on Christmas day and laying on the couch. And that's that!"

So I forced a smile and said, "Oh yes. I'll be collecting donations very soon. Thanks for asking!" Darn! Did I just commit to doing good deeds after promising myself a totally selfish Christmas? Bah, humbug!

But truth be told, I was glad that I was gently encouraged by the voices of **Claudia Loveless, Sandy Jones, and Anna Shands**. Without their inquiries I wouldn't have been able to participate in "random acts of loving kindness", a characteristic that is deeply buried in human nature.

With this year's Lunch and Socks, I was able to collect a total of \$230. With the donations, my partner and I made fifty bags filled with: a 16 oz. container of raviolis and vegetables, a 12 oz. bottle of pure orange juice, a breakfast bar, a bologna and cheese sandwich, and two pairs of brand new, white, athletic socks.

On Christmas day we loaded up our truck and drove through the downtown area during the late morning. We were able to give all fifty bags away to members of the homeless community. We met two families on C Street, close to the levy, with one family living in a tent. We gave them several bags and they wished us a Merry Christmas. There was another man who set up his area at the end of a park, up against a backstop. He was asleep on the ground and so I just place two bags close to him so that I wouldn't disturb him.

Then there was a lady who was lying on the ground in a walkway to a dental office off of K Street. I approached her with two bags and she looked at me and immediately greeted me with a smile. "Good morning. Merry Christmas!" she said. I gave her her bags and she wished me well. I told myself that she remembered me from the last three years that I've given her lunch and socks, even though maybe she didn't. There were several people who were so excited to receive brand new socks that all they could say was, "New socks! New socks!" And also memorable was a group of young men who yelled, "RAVIOLIS!" when they opened their food container.

The one thing that surprised me this year was the amount of young people who were out on the streets. Like the young man I found sitting in a parking lot with his garbage bag full of things. He was incredibly thin and looked lost. I offered him two bags and he seemed confused. I said, "Here you go" and I placed two bags next to him. He never broke eye contact with me but I turned around and said nothing else. Perhaps I could have stayed a bit longer and talked with him. Maybe next year.

Moments like these always humble me and help me remember that my life is really good. No matter how frustrating or mundane my life may seem, the truth is that I can create the goodness in my life by changing my perception. I simply need gentle reminders like the ones from Claudia, Sandy, and Anna to recognize my goodness and the goodness I can share with others.

Thank you all for making LUNCH & SOCKS possible!

* *STEP Stars* *

Jude would like to THANK all who participated in Lunch & Socks:

Melanie Bazile
Mike Martin
Heather Campbel
Jaime Young
Diane Benton
Claudia Loveless
Sheryl Jones
Megan Drown

Donations ranged from \$1 - \$150. Thank you all!!!

Melanie Bazil would like to give a special thanks to the following individuals:

Thank You David LaRue for your incredible service throughout the year to our consumers in the Eureka area. A shining example of how you really focus on consumer need is how you left the STEP Christmas Party to run out to support a consumer. You are amazing and we really appreciate your dedication!

Thank You Shahida Shabbir for the way you supported Atif and the staff recently during a traumatic situation.

Patti Dixon- thanks for the work you do behind the scenes to help STEP deliver an impressive benefits package. I think there are few people who truly understand the magnitude of your job and how much your efforts impact the whole of STEP. Thank You!

Jacque Dillard-Foss- Thanks for taking care of the employees at STEP. You have an incredible gift for balancing the needs of staff and consumers and I am very proud to say I work for STEP.

The ILS Department would like to give a special thanks to the following individuals:

The entire ILS team who assisted their clients with arranging for transportation to and from this year's STEP Holiday Party! Thank you for taking the time and effort to ensure your clients were able to safely attend this annual event!

Stephanie- thanks for all your assistance with helping Karla apply for citizenship.

Mike M.- thanks for recently taking Brent onto your caseload, as well as providing advocacy and support to Rick in his recent team meeting!

Doug- thanks for all your help in assisting Jason with finding and hiring new staff!

Melani- thanks for recently taking on both Kimbo and Kimberly and providing them with needed assistance during this challenging time!

Shelly- thanks for the ongoing support you provide to both Kim B. and Romilda, especially over the last several weeks!

William- thanks for assisting both Jaime and Tim with their recent move to Roseville!

Patti D.- thanks so much for accommodating our staff in Yuba City by traveling there to provide them with the needed benefits information and ensuring that they receive the ongoing support of the HR department. We greatly appreciate this!

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