



Eldridge Press

Message from the Executive Director

by James E. Rogers

Karen Litzenberg, Assistant to the Executive Director (AED) at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC), was the leader of the creators and publishers of this newsletter—*Eldridge Press*. Karen recently accepted a promotion in a leadership capacity at a nearby state agency. We are very proud of her and she can be proud of her accomplishments as AED over the last four years, exemplifying all four of our values—service to others, respectful communications, responsible resource management and effective leadership!

We will miss Karen, but are pleased about her new opportunity and expect to see her often. We have celebrated the careers of many other staff over the last months. Several of them are highlighted in this publication.



L to R: Karen at the Volunteer & Donor Dinner, April 2010; with Jim Rogers, May 2010 [photo by JJ Fernandez]; at the Awards Luncheon play, October 2009; with JJ Fernandez at Celebrate Sonoma, September 2007; with daughter, Mary, at the Sonoma Valley Footrace & Festival, May 2010.

Adventures with Mary Poppins

It's that time of year again! The Performing Arts Company at Sonoma Developmental Center is pleased to announce this year's live performance of *Adventures with Mary Poppins*.

The Performing Arts Company, a committee made up of Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) employees and cast members who live at SDC, was founded in 2005 as a way to involve the individuals who live at the Center in a meaningful theatrical experience. Anyone living at the facility is welcome to audition and is guaranteed a part in the play.

In 2005, the inaugural production was *Grease*; in 2006 it was *Best Of Broadway*, which featured a variety of Broadway hits; in 2007 it was *The Music Man*; in 2008 it was *The Wizard of Oz*; and in 2009 it was *Musical Time Travel*, a journey through time where one experiences a few different time periods through song.

Jim Tallent, chairperson of the committee and director of the play, says, "We're really looking forward to again putting on a great show for all the folks that reside at Sonoma Developmental Center and hopefully they'll enjoy everything we do."

Open auditions for this year's play began in early spring, with rehearsals occurring throughout the summer months, and live performances scheduled on September 22, 23, 29, and 30 at 7:00 PM at the SDC Gymnasium. The cast is comprised of approximately 30–40 singers, dancers, actors and musicians.

Volunteers are needed for this year's performance of *Adventures with Mary Poppins* to assist backstage, with rehearsals, props, costumes, and more. Anyone interested in helping out should contact Becky Zyskowski, Volunteer Coordinator at (707) 938-6713.



Have You Heard?

Dr. Bjorndal Retires

Dr. Judith Bjorndal was appointed as Medical Director of Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) on September 25, 2000. She retired in July 2010, ending her 10-year career with the Department of Developmental Services.

Dr. Bjorndal operated a private pediatric practice in Sonoma Valley for approximately 17 years. She is an expert in the field of mental health and addiction; has served as Medical Director for Parkside Recovery Center, Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, and Women's Recovery Services of Santa Rosa, California. She has been an Instructor for Mills College and the University of San Francisco, is an Assistant Professor for Oregon Health Sciences University, has served on a number of boards, and has been a consultant for various organizations including the Medical Board of California. She is currently a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

As Medical Director of SDC, Dr. Bjorndal has been a leader among leaders and exemplifies the facility values of service to others, respectful relationships and communication, responsible resource management, and effective leadership. Through her many connections in the healthcare world, Dr. Bjorndal has recruited some of the finest doctors in the area. Executive Director Jim Rogers said of her, "Dr. Bjorndal was one of the longest-serving members of my Executive Committee and Governing Body, bringing great expertise and knowledge, as well as helping bring about progressive changes in all areas of SDC." Congratulations on your retirement, Dr. B., you will be greatly missed!



Judith Bjorndal, MD

Carmen Tomek Retires

Carmen Tomek's state service career spans nearly 40 years—all with the Department of Developmental Services. She began her career at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) as a hospital worker in 1971. Next, Carmen worked at Stockton Developmental Center as a Pre-licensed Psychiatric Technician, Psychiatric Technician, and Senior Psychiatric Technician.

She spent the next 20 years at Agnews Developmental Center, where she promoted to Unit Supervisor, Nursing Coordinator,



Carmen Tomek

Program Assistant, and eventually Program Director. Carmen returned to Sonoma just over two years ago as a Program Director and retired from that position on June 30, 2010. Over her career, Carmen has served numerous individuals in various capacities.

Jim Rogers, Executive Director of SDC, presented Carmen with a career "Bookend Award" recognizing her for starting and ending her career at SDC.

Ruby L. Striplin Retires...

After 25 years of working for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Ruby L. Striplin is retiring. Ruby started her career at Agnews Developmental Center (ADC) as a Psychiatric Technician Training Candidate, quickly promoting through the ranks to a Senior Psychiatric Technician and to her present job as Psychiatric Technician Instructor at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). Ruby has been at SDC for one year and eight months. Jim Rogers, Executive Director of SDC says, "Ruby has been at Sonoma for less than two years and quickly was embraced by the Sonoma staff. It is hard to imagine what it will be like without her."

Ruby taught SDC employees and college students enrolled in various health occupation programs and taught community-based care providers for the developmentally disabled. She was also the liaison to the community colleges for the students in the psychiatric and nursing programs at SDC. She was a Master Trainer for the Preparatory Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians Class for Psychiatric Technician Assistants preparing to take the Board exam to become licensed Psychiatric Technicians. Ruby says, "I loved being the President of the Agnews Chapter of California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT) for over 20 years. I loved my job!"

What she will miss most about her job is, "Being the contact person for the junior colleges and working with the instructors, students and talking to the new employees at new employee orientation classes. I wanted to instill in them our facility's mission—Embracing a Future of Possibilities. I wanted them to embrace a future of possibilities for themselves and the clients they are about to serve." She goes on to say, "I leave them with a feeling that I loved my job and if I can do it, they can do it—no matter what position they are working in."

Ruby talks about two of her most memorable mo-

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Ruby Striplin

Have You Heard?

ments, "One of my most memorable moments was my first day working on a unit at ADC in 1985. It was a life changing experience and I will never forget it. It is really rewarding to see an individual that was once in my care, happily living or working in the community and even remembering my name!" She talks about another memorable moment at SDC, "I saw, for the first time, a deer walking around the grounds at McDougall Training Center and ran for my life." She talks about the many friends she has made during her working and traveling years to the different facilities.

Now that she is retiring, Ruby plans on volunteering in her community through her church, Calvary Chapel, in Stockton, California. She will be doing some traveling, including going to Disneyland with her grandchildren. She intends to go fishing, working on 1000 piece jigsaw puzzles, do Facebook on the computer, dance, and play bingo.

When asked if there is anything else she would like to add, Ruby states, "I am truly thankful to God that I have had a good working experience for over 40 years of my life, that I have a good retirement plan, and that I am old enough to collect Social Security! YAHOO!!! Retirement is a good thing!!"

New Hires

January

William Carrano, Senior Psychiatric Technician
Carol Dodds, Program Assistant
Fanita Presberry, Senior Occupational Therapist
Jerry Traub, Senior Psychiatric Technician

February

Rafael Garcia, Peace Officer I
Maryann Gillham, Peace Officer I
Ashley Guizar, Peace Officer I
Willard Jennings, Custodian
Carlo Mediati, Peace Officer I
Lucy Xie, Custodian
Joanne Bender, Staff Services Manager I
(Retired Annuitant)

March

Jean Monsalud, Food Service Technician I
Ian Twyford, Custodian

April

Jonathan Baker, Custodian
Chester DeLeon, Psychiatric Technician
Tina Maldonado, Dispatcher/Clerk
Xiaogiang Peng, Psychiatric Technician

April, continued:

Elizabeth Sanchez, Registered Nurse

May

Manuel Cabugao, Stationary Engineer
Rayna Gull, Psychiatric Technician
Timothy Molinari, Food Service Technician I
Jessica Naria, Registered Nurse
Mark Ramos, Psychiatric Technician

June

No new hires

July

William Huls, Psychiatric Technician
Vicki McKenzie, Psychiatric Technician
Rodnery Rohrbacher, Custodian
Rana Steele, Psychiatric Technician
Hea Ja Timoney, Psychiatric Technician

Kudos

Paul Nieuwenhuijs, Recreation Therapist in Central Program Services, was headed to the Eldridge Store one morning when he noticed a lot of water running down the gutter. He followed the trail upstream to find a sprinkler head that had not receded when the sprinklers went off, and was leaking water. By tapping it back down to ground level, he stopped the leaking water and eliminated a potential trip hazard. Thanks Paul, for being "on it"!



Left:
The Program 6 (etc.)
garden at the
Sonoma County Fair.
See article on back
page. [Photo by JJ
Fernandez]

Note:

If you would like to receive the *Eldridge Press* electronically, please e-mail your request to Jorge.Fernandez@sonoma.dds.ca.gov.

Recognition...

January Employee of the Month

The Employee of the Month for January is Cindy White, Office Occupation Clerk from Impressions. Her nominator states, "She exemplifies all the qualities that you would hope for in an Employee of the Month. Her dedication to her work is surpassed only by her enthusiasm and strong work ethics. She brightens up any room she enters, and truly seems to enjoy all of the tasks she has been asked to do." Cindy is an active member of several boards and committees that promote increased independence for people with developmental disabilities. Congratulations on your award, Cindy!



Cindy White

February Employee of the Month

The February Employee of the Month is Joanne Bartolomei, Office Technician for Psychology Services. One of her nominators says, "She has always been completely and consistently reliable, dependable, competent, diligent, helpful, cheerful and tactful. She always goes the extra mile in extending assistance to others." Another nominator goes on to say, "I think it is a great time to honor her years of single handedly making sure the Psychology Department, the Behavioral Intervention Review Committee and other committees ran smoothly." Way to go, Joanne!



Joanne Bartolomei

March Employee of the Month

Divina Serraon, Pharmacy Technician from the Pharmacy Department, is Employee of the Month for March. One of her nominators says, "Divina is a diligent worker who shows her commitment to Sonoma's values of serving others and having respectful relationships, by maintaining a high level of professionalism with her peers and when interacting with staff who phone or come to the pharmacy." Her coworkers describe her as someone with a cheerful, smiling attitude, and who is great to work with. "She responsibly manages resources by being very conscientious about her work, completing any



Divina Serraon

task asked of her, including assisting with the scheduling of workloads in the pharmacy." Nice job, Divina!

April Employee of the Month

The Employee of the Month for April is Lydia Moller, Medical Transcriber from Clinical Records. "Lydia exemplifies the Sonoma values of 'building respectful relationships' and 'effective leadership.' She is always respectful and courteous to others and consistently has shown an above average work ethic," states one of her nominators. She is described as someone who is always there to lend a helping hand with a smile on her face and "her attitude and work habits are exceptional." Another nominator goes on to say, "She is an excellent transcriber who performs her job professionally and accurately. She has been a major asset to the department for many years." Way to go, Lydia!



Lydia Moller

May Employee of the Month

The May Employee of the Month is Sebastian Escano, Acting Food Service Supervisor. His nominator states, "Sebastian has gone above and beyond. He not only quickly gained the respect of the side work crew of seven employees and smoothed out the challenges in that area, he also continued to pitch in with his previous work load, and then voluntarily took on some needs of the distribution crew as well." Sebastian's personal skills have facilitated employees responding very well to him. "He has succeeded in imparting a philosophy within both work groups of assisting each other where needed and generally has fostered a mentality of working together for the greater good." Nice work, Sebastian!



Sebastian Escano

June Employee of the Month

Pat Barker, Automotive Equipment Operator I from Motor Pool, is Employee of the Month for June. Pat consistently demonstrates exemplary teamwork and leadership skills, and he is respected throughout the facility as someone who gives 100% effort in every situation. His nominators say, "Pat has been an invaluable member of the Motor Pool since 2002 and he has been a

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Recognition...

true pleasure to work with. We all believe he is well deserving as he is great to work with and goes out of his way to meet the needs of the clients who live here and the staff that work here." Congratulations on your award, Pat!



Pat Barker

July Employee of the Month

The Employee of the Month for July is Chris Gephart, Health Services Specialist. Her nominator says, "She is non-judgmental, fair, clear on her expectations, and willing to work with anyone having difficulties. Chris constantly demonstrates excellent leadership skills, positive communication, and great teamwork. She is very thorough with her documentation and reports." She is described as someone who is calm and professional and who brings a positive energy to the department. "Chris is very client oriented and always puts their needs first and often asks her supervisor and co-workers, when she has spare time, if she can assist them with anything." Way to go, Chris!



Chris Gephart

Supervisor of Excellence

A surprise presentation was held on January 11, 2010, in the General Services offices. Unbeknownst to Karrie Hubbenette, members of the Executive Committee and staff from several departments gathered to witness her receive the Supervisor of Excellence award for her efforts in her role as Acting Clothing Center Manager, as well as her assistance to the Housekeeping team. Good job, Karrie!



Karrie Hubbenette

While the Employee of the Month program recognizes staff in rank and file positions, the Supervisor of Excellence award is given to a staff person in a supervisory role for his or her exemplary performance and demonstration of the facility values.

Foster Grandparents & Senior Companions Recognized

On April 23, 2010, a recognition ceremony was held in the McDougall building in appreciation of our Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents and their dedication to the individuals they serve.

Cindy Nelson, Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Coordinator, was Master of Ceremonies for the event during which 54 volunteers, ranging in length of service from 25 years to just a few months, were recognized and presented with a certificate of appreciation.

We are thankful that so many retired individuals continue to provide services to the residents of Sonoma Developmental Center in such a meaningful way.



Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Project Coordinator Cindy Nelson (far right) speaks to the group at their recognition event in April.

Recognition Dinner for Volunteers & Donors

The annual Volunteer and Donor Recognition event was held in the gymnasium on the evening of Saturday, April 24, 2010. This year's theme was a 1920s speakeasy with cityscapes and white lights converting the gym into a downtown hot spot.

Servers were dressed as flappers and gangsters and the live band played music from the era. Our volunteers and donors were treated to a catered dinner followed by an awards ceremony emceed by Volunteer Coordinator Becky Zyskowski. As Becky thanked each honoree for their contribution to the lives of those that live at Sonoma Developmental Center, members of the Executive and Program Management Teams distributed token gifts to them.



At the Volunteer & Donor Recognition Dinner

Community Happenings...

Casino Night

On the evening of Wednesday, January 27, 2010, Casino Night festivities were held in the gymnasium.

The gym was strung with lights and decorated with giant playing cards and glittering decorations to put folks in the gaming mood. Game tables included black jack, horse racing, a dice game and roulette.

Staff dressed in white shirts and black aprons served as waiters to take drink orders as patrons played and accumulated gambling chips. At the end of the evening, patrons cashed in their winnings for prizes, such as key chains, necklaces, and other costume jewelry.



The horse racing game at Casino Night

Mardi Gras Celebration

An evening of Mardi Gras was the theme for a dance held on Wednesday, February 24, 2020. Participants braved a cool winter evening to join a hot party in the gymnasium, which was made over to create a feel of Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Décor included colorful flags, oversized masks, and plenty of bright glittery draping in greens, yellows and purples.

Staff “bartenders” served refreshments, while others assisted patrons in choosing from a variety of masks and beads to wear. While a live band completed the festive mood, individuals could dance the night away and many took the opportunity to “glam” for the cameras at the photo booth where they chose from a variety of costume items, including decorative hats, beads and masks for that perfect portrait.



Zydeco musicians at Mardi Gras

Sock Hop Dance

On Wednesday March 24, 2010, Sonoma Developmental Center broke out the time machine and transported back to the 1950s. The gymnasium was the scene for anyone “cool” to attend the annual Sock Hop Dance, which was decorated with oversized records, music notes, hula-hoops, and banners that read, “Wildcats are #1” or “Pep Rally” and other announcements.

The photo booth was decorated with life-sized cardboard cut outs of Hollywood icons such as Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Elvis Presley, and guys or dolls could pose with them in various costume attire from the 1950s.

The center of the room contained tables decorated in black and white checks and soda jerks or “car hops” served root beer floats and fifty-fifties (orange soda with vanilla ice cream). Meanwhile, out on the dance floor, the live band kept everyone swinging.



Delivering 50-50s to thirsty dancers at the Sock Hop

Art Show at ARO

The annual art show was again held in the ARO Multipurpose room this year. The three-day show, held April 20–22, 2010,

included a “Meet the Artist” evening on April 21, attended by Patricia Flannery and Julia Lowe from the Department of Developmental Services in Sacramento. During the evening those in attendance could sip sparkling cider and discuss art pieces with the individuals that created them. The show included a wide variety of art pieces including paintings, rubbings, collage art, and more.

It was obvious the many talented artists took great pride in displaying their work.



Clinical Director Dawn Percy (L) helps staff reset an overturned display at Meet the Artists

Sonoma Celebrates Cinco de Mayo

Our annual Cinco de Mayo festivities were held at the Richardson Building and Sonoma House on May 5, 2010. As you

may know, Cinco de Mayo marks the victory of the Mexican Army against French occupation at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Here at Sonoma Developmental Center, it marks a day of fun! Games and activities, including bowling, photo booths, and other amusements, entertained staff and clients as they listened to live music and enjoyed refreshments at both locations. The weather was great, and everyone had a wonderful time!



Serving nachos at Cinco de Mayo

Community Happenings...

Fun in the Sun Fashion Show

On May 18, 2010, Impressions hosted their annual Fashion Show in the dance hall at REACH. The show's theme, "Fun in the Sun" was evident as approximately 44 residents of Sonoma Developmental Center could be seen strutting the catwalk modeling the latest spring fashions from Impressions and Second Impressions. The models were obviously basking in their moment in the spotlight! Afterwards, the models and clients from the audience were treated to light refreshments. The afternoon was indeed fun for everyone!



Assistant Administrative Services Director Teresa Murphy narrates the Fashion Show

Sonoma Valley Footrace & Festival

The 4th Annual Sonoma Valley Footrace & Festival, a benefit for the SDC Performing Arts Company, was held on Saturday, May 18, 2010, and attracted nearly 200 runners. Participants registered for either the 5K run/walk on mostly level pavement around the streets of Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC), or the challenging 10K that winds through stunning scenery, both on- and off-road, past both lakes and through woods in the hills above SDC. Both races started and ended on Harney Circle near the facility's gymnasium.

During the festival, awards, including Avia running shoes, were presented to the top runners in each category. All runners received a T-shirt, and adult participants received a commemorative glass and tickets for beer and wine tasting. The festival featured a variety of Northern California breweries and wineries. Other activities included a car show, food vendors, carnival games and attractions, a kids' fun run, and live music by Harvey and the Wallbangers.

Becky Zyskowski, SDC's Volunteer Coordinator and Chairperson of the Footrace Committee said, "This was the most successful event of the four years we've been doing it and we hope it will grow even bigger next year!"



*Left:
The 10K run
near Fern Lake*



*Right:
The festival*

Students Graduate

On Wednesday, May 26, 2010, a Graduation and End of School Year Celebration was held for the students of Sonoma Developmental Center and Sonoma County Office of Education. Three graduating students were recognized and other students were acknowledged for their individual talents and progress during the school year. The event, held at the Acorn classroom in the Johnson building, was attended by students, their families, staff, and special guests from the Hanna Boys Center High School who volunteer in the Acorn classroom throughout the year. After the recognition ceremony, the festivities continued with a barbecue and potluck luncheon in honor of the students.



Program Director Aleana Carreon addresses the crowd

Recreational Riders Mount Up

Horse shows were held on June 1st and 5th, 2010, to accommodate the many participants of Sonoma Developmental Center's Equestrian Program. The program, offered on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, is designed so that while learning to ride horses, students also learn self-discipline, respect for oneself, kindness towards animals, and consideration for others. Riding also frees the rider to feel independent, and provides a common ground for interpersonal relationships. Students in the program learn skills in horse care, such as grooming and feeding the animals, as well as equitation skills like mounting and dismounting the horse, posture in the saddle, keeping feet in the stirrups, etc.

The high point of the year is the annual horse show where participants demonstrate and are judged on the skills learned, with judges taking into account individuals' disabilities. This year, over 60 riders competed in one of the two shows and were awarded a first, second, or third place ribbon. Nancy Sessi-Tallent, Equestrian Program Coordinator, reflected on this year's shows, "We had a lot of great competitors and big support from the horse owners who board their horses on grounds; they came out to volunteer as leaders and side walkers." Nancy was pleased that it was a safe and successful competition and added, "It was really nice to see the thrill and enjoyment (on their faces) at their success as the riders received their ribbons. I really want to thank our CPS staff for their help in putting on this event."



Nancy Sessi-Tallent at the Horse Show

More Community Happenings...

Independence Day on the Green

Sonoma Developmental Center began celebrating Independence Day a bit early with a fireworks show held on June 30, 2010 at the Gazebo near the Butler Pool. A dazzling display of safe and sane fireworks were presented by the Eldridge Foundation and expertly choreographed by Recreation Therapist Jim Tallent.

Festivities continued on July 1 with an all-day celebration, dubbed by Recreation Therapist and event coordinator Paul Nieuwenhuis as "Independence Day on the Green" at two campus locations. The Nelson parking lot was the venue for a morning celebration that included performances by an all female barbershop quartet, refreshments, tattoos, and game booths with prizes.

On the other side of campus, the Sonoma House lawn offered similar experiences for residents during the morning hours of 10 to noon and again after lunch from 1–3 PM. Refreshments included fresh fruit, ice cream, shaved ice, lemonade, tea, or fruit punch. The activity booths included a photo booth, tattoos, firecracker bowling, the Fling It (a switch-activated catapult), Clown Squirt, and a variety of other games in which prizes, such as patriotic bandanas, beaded necklaces, hats and wristbands were won for participation. Live music played as individuals danced under the shade trees, or listened from the seating area under the canopies.



Scenes from Independence Day on the Green

Sonoma County Fair

The theme of the 2010 Sonoma County Fair was "The Grape Escape." The Fair ran from July 27th through August 9th and was attended every day by groups from just about every residence.

The Sonoma County Fair claims to be among the most popular in the state and we can see why! With support from staff of all disciplines, fair goers attended the largest themed flower show in the United States, watched live horse races, visited junior and professional livestock shows, rode carnival rides and won prizes at the games, and ate wonderful fair food from a large variety of vendors! They visited exhibit halls, purchased souvenirs, and had the opportunity to participate in art activities for young and old.

This year, several SDC residents entered ceramic pieces and paintings that were displayed in the Arts and Crafts Pavilion and won ribbons for their work. A group from Program Six and other areas entered a display in the amateur section of the flower show, and won "Second Place" as well as "Best Use of Impatiens." (See photo on page 3.)



*At the Sonoma County Fair:
Left photo by JJ Fernandez
Above photo by Scott Shepherd*

Submitting articles to the Eldridge Press:

The *Eldridge Press* gladly accepts submissions of articles about events at Sonoma Developmental Center, news about the Center's departments and programs, employee recognition, and other information of interest to the Center's employees, consumers and other stakeholders. Articles may be edited for grammar, punctuation, and clarity. To submit your article, send it to the Office of Planning and Communications, Room 102, Sonoma Developmental Center, P.O. Box 1493, Eldridge, CA 95431. Deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to the publication date (for instance, September 15 is the deadline for the 4th Quarter 2010 issue).

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