We are in the midst of sweeping change—as an organizational entity of the Department of Developmental Services and in the continuum of services and supports for people with developmental disabilities.

Through change, our core values continue to resonate—serving others through timely, considerate, competent and committed actions; respectful relationships, honoring choice, rights, trust and communication; responsible management of fiscal, physical and human through planning and preservation; promotion of leadership at all levels. Each day, I observe Sonoma Developmental Center’s talented workforce embrace these values in all settings and venues.

On July 1, we begin a new fiscal year with changes that are both known and unknown to us at this time. Individually and as a team, our values will support us in approaching each new day as a fresh opportunity to learn and improve on past accomplishments.

Happy Independence Day.

The fifth annual Sonoma Valley Footrace and Festival held on the grounds of the facility on May 14, 2011 was a huge success. The event included a footrace, game booths and carnival attractions, a raffle, classic car show, live music by Harvey and the Wallbangers, food vendors, and beer and wine tasting for those over 21 years of age.

The vendors for the beer and wine tasting event included Eagle Distributing, Lagunitas, Lost Coast Brewery, Bear Republic, BR Cohn Winery, Valley of the Moon Winery, Cline Cellars Winery, Ravenswood Winery, and other independent winemakers. Food vendors included, the Eldridge Fire Department which sold hot dogs and hamburgers, Uncle Bill’s Corn Dogs, Shaved Ice Treats, Hot Dog on a Stick lemonade, and the ever popular Chicken and Fries by Arshad Ali.

There were also opportunities to purchase raffle tickets for hotel packages, restaurant packages, gift baskets, 49er tickets and more. Many residents from the facility as well as many visitors from the community and their family members attended the event.

The event started off at 8 AM with a 5k run/walk and advanced 10k run throughout the streets of SDC, with the advanced 10k run going off road at times. There were over 180 runners and walkers participating in the footrace, which offered a scenic view of the beautiful Center’s campus. Awards for the top three male and female finishers for both 5k and 10k races included medals, a bottle of wine, beer, and running shoes from Avia. Race results are posted online at www.dds.ca.gov/svff.

There was also a free kids’ fun run with ribbons and goody bags given to all those who participated. There were contributions from the Sonoma Valley Sun; KSVY; Mary’s Pizza Shack; Redwood Credit Union; Synergy Race Timing; Heart and Sole Sports; Michelob Ultra; Starbucks; and Avia.

Committee members of the Footrace and Festival, made up of SDC employees, are already planning the sixth annual Sonoma Valley Footrace and Festival for next year on May 12, 2012!
Ms. Dodds worked for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for a little over twenty-five years. She started her career at Sonoma Developmental Center as a Music Therapist. She also worked at Agnews Developmental Center and the Sierra Vista Community Facility. Other job roles included Individual Program Coordinator, Standard Compliance Coordinator, and Program Assistant.

When asked what she loved most about her job, Ms. Dodds says, “The greatest part of working for DDS has been the opportunity to provide and teach advocacy. We implemented a self-advocacy program at Sierra Vista that was just downright exciting. Watching a person achieve in life what had always seemed to be but a dream for them truly fills your heart with wonder and amazement.”

Describing another memorable moment at Sierra Vista, she said, “We were once called upon to assist some developmentally disabled folks living in community homes who had been evacuated due to raging wild fires. The clients and staff of Sierra Vista worked together to set up a shelter in our gym. The folks who lived at Sierra Vista were deeply concerned for the welfare of their community peers, checking in on them, talking with them, wanting to help them cope. They completely reached outside of themselves; it was deeply touching.”

Ms. Dodds has accepted a position in her hometown as Executive Director of a non-profit in her community: A Woman’s Friend Pregnancy Resource Center. She plans on spending more time with her family, volunteering with the homeless and biking and hiking. When asked what she will miss most, “Of course it will be the people I have worked with throughout the years. But memories are more tangible than we realize; I don’t know that those folks will be that far away.” Ms. Dodds went on to say, “Turn hope into action by believing in dreams.”

While at SDC, Ms. Oncea worked in the Nelson Treatment Center Core and the Judah residence. “In those days the teachers were assigned to specific programs and residences.” Ms. Oncea goes on to say, “The Judah residence was eventually relocated to the Bentley residence. I worked with this team for 15 years. It was a wonderful experience and it truly felt like family. Teachers were then centralized and I had the Assistive Technology class on Snedeger. I continued to serve many Bentley residents, as well as others from the entire facility. In 1999 I took a job with Central Program Services coordinating the services for ATRS. This department serves the adaptive needs of our clients, focusing on access. We provide services to the entire facility. It has been a wonderful, talented and creative group of people to work with.”

What Ms. Oncea loved most about her job was, “Being able to work with people. Providing a service that improves the quality of life for others is very rewarding. What I will miss most are the people. Having been at SDC for so long, I feel, in many ways that I have grown up out here. This place is truly a little community in and of itself. The connections are strong.”

Some of her most memorable moments include, “The Harvest Dinners on Bentley and the snow trip to Tahoe! Working with the Performing Arts group and helping Wes with the stage coordination and props. Very good memories! The residents really get so much out of that experience. Also, running the Flinger* at special events. Wes, Mike, and I had so much fun doing that.”

Ms. Oncea looks forward to a more flexible schedule and being able to choose how to spend her time. She plans on visiting family more often. “I have also completed docent training for the Valley of the Moon state parks. I have already begun volunteering at the Jack London Museum and the Sugarloaf Visitor Center. I will be substituting for Sonoma County Office of Education classes at SDC and volunteering at special events. I can’t completely let go of the connections.”

When asked if there was anything she would like to add, Ms. Oncea states, “I’ll miss you all, but look forward to the next adventure.”

*The Flinger is a catapult. Push a big button and the equipment flings a rubber object (whatever is appropriate to the event) at a target. Everyone who tries, wins something.
Sonoma Developmental Center was host to the Statewide Approaches Workgroup—Healthcare on February 7 and 8, 2011. The group, which consists of members from all the Developmental Centers, the Community Facility, Headquarters, and the Consortium, spent two days working diligently on their subject matter.

The workgroups continue to meet and discuss input from the Developmental Centers Division leadership, executive liaisons and consultants to assist in the provision of quality services for each Developmental Center (DC) to utilize, evidenced by best practice guidelines, with the ultimate goal of providing the individuals who live at DC’s with world-class service.

Jim Rogers, Executive Director, had this to say, “I commend the workgroup members from SDC and statewide for their work and commitment to identifying and achieving excellence in areas that will have a measurable impact the people living in developmental centers and Canyon Springs Community Facility.”

Career Awareness Day/Job Shadowing

Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) Acorn teacher Christy Delucchi and Hanna High School teacher, Joe Felice, have collaborated for the last five years to develop a program that benefits students from both schools as they interact with each other in a variety of educational activities. The curriculum that has been developed encourages understanding and acceptance of individuals with special needs.

The teachers have also partnered to develop a program for the Hanna students to offer them an opportunity to explore a variety of vocational programs at SDC. Delucchi has coordinated with several departments at SDC to arrange for job shadowing in a variety of work environments, as well as a Career Awareness Day.

On March 16, 2011 Career Awareness Day was held at SDC for the Hanna High School social justice class. A variety of guest speakers discussed their chosen career at SDC and talked about what their job entailed an the training and/or education that was required.

Speakers included a Psychiatric Technician, Recreation Therapist, Firefighter, Plant Operations personnel, Registered Nurse, Teacher, Physical Therapist, Nutrition Services personnel, Adaptive Technology Services, and a Speech Language Pathologist.

On April 12, 2011, the Hanna students were paired with Sonoma staff in four departments: Adaptive Engineering, Nutrition Services, Plant Operations and the Fire Department. Students shadowed SDC staff for a half-day as they performed their duties and were able to get hands-on experience with job tasks. SDC staff also coached the students on job interviewing skills and the importance of first impressions. The teachers hope the experience will encourage the teens to explore their potential and to give thought to future career choices.

Emergency Drill

The emergency drill occurred on May 26, 2011. Sonoma Developmental Center activated a simulated earthquake at approximately 10:00 AM. The primary focus of the training exercise was to test the readiness and effectiveness of the major emergency procedures for accounting and reporting for clients, staff, and all others as well as implementing building ownership responsibilities. The scenario included damage to buildings, but there were no injured victims.

All programs and departments fully participated in the drill. Buildings were assessed to identify major structural damage and/or life threatening injuries. All persons on the campus were accounted for through a standardized reporting system. The Incident Command Center was fully activated and the Resource Room provided up-to-date information that enabled appropriate plans to be executed.

Karen Clark, Administrative Services Director and co-chair of the Emergency Preparedness Committee, said, “All programs and all departments were prepared and responded quickly and appropriately. Great job by all!”
**Recognition**

**January Employee of the Month**
The Employee of the Month for January is Sara Tickel, Psychiatric Technician from Program Three. Her nominator says, “She was asked if she wanted to act as the AM Shift Lead, which she did. She exceeded all expectations, ensuring all the clients were well taken care of. She also helped on another unit with meetings when asked, and did it with a great attitude and professionalism.” Ms. Tickel is also a CPR instructor and has expressed interest in becoming an ER2000 instructor. Her nominator goes on to say, “I feel very happy to have Sara as a part of our team.” Way to go Sara!

![Sara Ticket](image)

**February Employee of the Month**
Tiffany Irons, Office Assistant for Program Four, is the February Employee of the Month. “Tiffani is a hard-working, dedicated employee that consistently meets timelines and keeps the Program Four front office running like a fine oiled machine,” states her nominator. Ms. Irons has fostered relationships with not only the staff in Program Four but also with other departments and with the residents. “We believe Tiffani embraces the Sonoma Developmental Center values of ‘building respectful relationships’ and ‘serving others,’ and is deserving of this acknowledgement.” Congratulations, Tiffany!

![Tiffany Irons](image)

**March Employee of the Month**
The March Employee of the Month is Laura “Lolly” Heller, Office Technician from the Fiscal Department. Her nominator says, “Lolly has worked at Sonoma Developmental Center for over two years, but has quickly learned the majority of the desks in Accounting, as well as taking on other tasks— with a smile.” She is described as kind, with a generous nature and is always conscientious towards everyone. Her nominator goes on to say, “In addition to her good attendance, she is dependable, well organized, courteous to others and offers to assist wherever needed in our busy Fiscal Department.” Nice job, Lolly!

![Laura “Lolly” Heller](image)

**April Employee of the Month**
The Employee of the Month for April is Lisa Coleman, Psychiatric Technician from Program Six. “Lisa always extends herself far beyond the outer limits of service. She has introduced new opportunities to the people living on the Bentley residence including an interactive afternoon snack program.” Everyone in the group has fun while being encouraged to be as independent as possible. Her nominator goes on to say, “She has provided exceptional service to those in her care, displaying boundless support and enthusiasm.” Congratulations on your award, Lisa!

![Lisa Coleman](image)

**May Employee of the Month**
David Kosnick, MD, Medical Services, is the Employee of the Month for May. His nominators state, “He is always an agreeable and trusted colleague who puts the welfare of the patients first. He is one of the best doctors I have ever worked with.” He is described as someone who is, “positively cheerful and approachable and is calm and efficient in times of crisis.” Another one of his nominators says, “Dr. Kosnick has consistently been the epitome of what a doctor should be. He is thorough and proficient at his craft, while maintaining a personality full of genuine compassion and generosity for both clients and staff.” Way to go, Dr. Kosnick!

![David Kosnick, MD](image)

**June Employee of the Month**
The June Employee of the Month is Rebecca “Becky” Majors, Psychiatric Technician from Program Six. Her nominator says, “The clients and staff on the Bentley residence are lucky to have such an honorable, hardworking, and committed staff person.” Many of her peers express what an honor it is to work with someone of her caliber and skill. “Her obvious commitment continued next page...
ment to our values of service, respectful relationships, and demonstrating leadership are paramount to our success within Program Six. She values what each person brings forward to the experience and motivates many to bring their A-game each day.” Nice job, Becky!

Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Recognition Day

The 39th Annual Foster Grandparent and 33rd Annual Senior Companion Recognition Day occurred on April 15, 2011. Members of the Executive Team, as well as other managers and supervisors attended the special event. Father Patrick Leslie gave the invocation and Cindy Nelson, Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Coordinator (FG/SCC), served as master of ceremonies. Other speakers included James E. Rogers, Executive Director; Walt Hickey, former SG/SCC; and Laurie Parish, RSVP Coordinator Volunteer Center.

The event started with Cindy Nelson welcoming all those in attendance and talking about the program that has been in existence for many years. Fifty-nine volunteers, ranging in length of service from 26 years to just a few months, were honored and recognized as they were presented with a certificate of appreciation for the services they provide to individuals that live at the facility, as well as those in the school system, and in the surrounding community. As each name was called it was easy to want to clap and validate their achievement.

What distinguishes a foster grandparent from a senior companion is that a foster grandparent works with children and/or adolescents with developmental disabilities and a senior companion works with adults with developmental disabilities.

Volunteer and Donor Recognition

Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) recognized its many volunteers and donors at the annual Volunteer and Donor Recognition Dinner and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, April 16, 2011, to coincide with National Volunteer Month.

Each year the themed event allows donor organizations and facility volunteers the opportunity to be recognized for their contributions. Facility staff volunteer their own time to work the event to show appreciation for donors and volunteers that support the programs and services offered to those that live at the center. The decor for this year’s theme was “Hawaiian Luau.” From the tropical entryway, to the walkway of sand surrounded by the 360-degrees of ocean, to the white lights dangling above made for magnificent evening.

Speakers included James E. Rogers, Executive Director; Becky Zyskowski, Coordinator of Volunteer Services; and invocation by Father Patrick Leslie.

The honorees were treated to festive music, a picture booth, Hawaiian dancers and a catered dinner with an array of refreshments, followed by an awards ceremony. After the dinner, volunteers and donors received certificates of appreciation presented by SDC’s management team.

Napa Valley College Psychiatric Technician Graduation

On Wednesday, May 25 2011, 26 students, one of which is a Sonoma Developmental Center employee, graduated from the Napa Valley College Psychiatric Technician Program during a ceremony held in the Performing Arts Center at the College. A catered reception followed the ceremony.

Sonoma Developmental Center would like to acknowledge...
Black and White Ball

The annual Black and White Ball was held in the gymnasium on January 19 and 20, 2011. The gymnasium was transformed into a winter wonderland of twinkling white lights, with shimmering silver stars and ornaments.

Upon entering the gala, the guests were greeted by a coat checker and escorted to their seat by an usher. The tables were draped in black tablecloths with a lit up (battery-operated) candle display with shiny silver stars, as a centerpiece. All those in attendance were dressed in formal wear including fancy dresses and suits.

Roaming photographers were on hand to capture that priceless moment or people could go over to the photo booth and have their photo taken with a background of white twinkling lights and silver ornaments. There were waiters on hand eager to take your order and once the band started to play, many could be found out on the dance floor boogying the night away.

Mardi Gras

On February 23, 2011 the residents and staff at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) were treated to a Mardi Gras dance reminiscent of Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

The gymnasium was decorated with colorful flags and oversized masks, with an abundance of bright, glittery draping materials in the colors of green, yellow and purple. The bartenders were on hand, ready to take that special order. There were masks and beads available for all to wear.

There was the ever-so-popular photo booth, which was lavishly decorated with bright colors and with many costume items, including decorative hats, beads and masks. Once the band started playing, there was no holding back. From the colorful drinks, to the festive décor, the SDC gymnasium was the place to be on this cold winter night.

Sock Hop

The Sock Hop dance occurred on the evening of March 30, 2011, a warm spring evening. The gymnasium was transformed into a 1950's high school dance hall with decorative oversized records, music notes and hula-hoops, and sitting areas with black and white checkered tablecloths.

There were hand-painted signs with “pep rally” announcements and “Wildcats are #1” on them. The photo booth was decorated with life-sized cut-out figures of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Elvis Presley, as well as garments from the 50’s for people to wear.

There was a refreshment stand set up with staff dressed as soda jerks, serving root beer floats and fifty-fifties (vanilla ice cream and orange soda). The staff (including those working the event) and residents came dressed in 50’s attire. Once the music started playing, everyone cut loose on the dance floor, enjoying that early rock and roll music.

Art Show/Meet the Artists

The Art Show took place at REACH, the community center on campus, on April 27, 2011 with Meet the Artists happening on the evening of that same day. There were a wide variety of art pieces including paintings, ceramics, mosaics, papier-mâché, and collage art. Some of the pieces will be on display at the Sonoma County Fair.

During the evening of Meet the Artists, visitors had the opportunity to meet the individual who created the artwork displayed and to recognize them for their talent.

The Art Show is a very popular event at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC). The residents enjoy creating the art and then showing it off. The Art Show was not only opened to those residing or employed by SDC, but to the public as well.
Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) celebrated its annual Cinco de Mayo festivities on Thursday, May 5, 2011. Like most communities the Center has been observing Cinco de Mayo for many years. Paul Nieuwenhuis, Rehabilitation Therapist and coordinator of the event has been employed by the facility for thirty-plus years said, “We have four facility-wide type events in which all those residing at the center and those employed by Sonoma, get together to socialize and have fun. It’s a team effort. From the residential programs, to other departments, including transportation, we all work together to make this happen for the residents who live here.”

The festivities kicked off in the morning and continued through mid afternoon. The venue was decorated in red, white, and green décor and a Mariachi band played most of the day. There were photo opportunities with the Eldridge Farm animals, an arts and crafts booth, a temporary tattoo booth and many game booths with prizes.

The celebration continued in the afternoon with more music, games and refreshments.

**Annual Horse Show**

The Annual Horse Show for the people who reside at Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) occurred on Saturday May 21, 2011 from 9:30 AM to noon at the outdoor equestrian arena at the facility. The Annual Horse Show provides Equestrian Program participants a chance to show off the skills they have learned over the past year.

There were approximately 50 people from the center who participated in the Horse Show. All the riders in the event won ribbons, with their families and friends cheering them on. The individuals were judged on how they mounted the horse as well as equitation (the practice of riding a horse). However, the judge does take into consideration the developmental limitations of each rider.

SDC’s Equestrian Program has been in existence since the early 1980’s. The Equestrian Program Coordinator, Nancy Sessi-Tallent, is also the coordinator of the Annual Horse Show. The Equestrian Program provides the individuals who reside here with skills that increase their confidence and pride, as well as instilling a sense of accomplishment. The program also teaches discipline, respect for oneself, kindness towards animals and consideration for others. Horsemanship frees the student to feel independent and provides a common ground for interpersonal relationships.

The program offers riding on Tuesday afternoons, and every other Friday morning, as well as Saturday mornings and occurs all year round. SDC employees referred to as riding instructors, as well as volunteers, support the program. The riding instructors provide assistance with mounting, riding, exercising and dismounting. Students in the program also learn skills in horse care, such as grooming and feeding. All horses have been specially trained to be familiar with physical or emotional limitations, wheelchairs, special mounting ramps and the ability to be mounted from either side. Only horses thoroughly tested for reliability are used for recreational riding.

**End of the School Year Celebration**

Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) clients, staff, families and other guests attended the 34th Annual End of the School Year Celebration for school-age students from SDC and the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE). The celebration was held at the Ordahl Patio on Tuesday, May 24, 2011.

Aleana Carreon, Program Director of Central Program Services, was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced speakers James E. Rogers, Executive Director; Jeannie Knighton, Director of SCOE programs for SDC; and Adam Lane-Basler, SDC Education Coordinator. Teachers Christy Delucchi (Acorn School), and Laura Connors (Altamira Middle School) presented awards to their students and spoke briefly about each student’s strengths and progress made during the year. They also thanked individuals who have helped in their classrooms throughout the year.

Christy Delucchi invited Joe Felice, a high school teacher from Hanna Boys Center, and his students, who volunteer in her class throughout the year. After the ceremony, students and their families continued the celebration with live music, cake and refreshments.
More Community Happenings...

Full Power Workshop

On Wednesday May 25, 2011, approximately 20 individuals attended an empowerment workshop on self-awareness and self-confidence. The class taught the students what their body language is telling someone, either a stranger or someone they know, and how to use the correct body language and their voice to give the right message.

There was also a discussion on “harmful words,” what they are and how to deal with them. The workshop also offered staff the tools on how to help students maintain information they had learned after the class was over. Some of the topics covered included: Staying at arms length, reading the body language of a grumpy person, walking away when upset and practice saying, “No. Go away!”

Opportunity Fair

On Thursday, June 2, 2011, Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Area Board IV, co-hosted an Opportunity Fair from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM at the Nelson Treatment Center Parking Lot on the SDC campus.

The Opportunity Fair featured several vendors that provide services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities and showcased a wide spectrum of work, leisure, and living opportunities within the Center as well as out in the greater community.

Participants included Area Board IV, Golden Gate and San Andreas Regional Centers, Office of Clients Rights Advocacy, Adaptive Technology Resource Services, The Cedars, Mission Day Hope Program, Sonoma Regional Project, Central Program Services, No Barriers, Milestones of Development, Napa Valley Support Services, SDC Wellness Committee, Dungarvin Supportive Living Services, Trips Inc., the Eldridge Farm and many more.

The event included presentations and performances. There was a live dance performance by the Redwood Country Cloggers and former residents Jimmy and Stephen talked about living in the community. The SDC Wellness Committee sold lunch from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM including five healthy and hearty lunch options to choose from.

Sheep Shearing at Eldridge Farm

On June 9, 2011, members of the Executive Team, along with residents, employees, and individuals from the public attended the annual Sheep Shearing event at the Eldridge Farm. Both Loki and Lamborghini, the Eldridge Farm sheep, had their coat of wool shorn for the summer months.

Although the weather had not yet turned very warm, they were ready for their summer trimming. The shearer was also kind enough to answer questions from the people watching. Many of the spectators picked up pieces of wool and were able to feel how much lanolin is in the raw wool. Everyone enjoyed watching the shearer do his job and afterwards most people toured the rest of the farm to say “hello” to the other animals.

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, August 15 is the deadline for the 3rd Quarter 2011 issue).

Eldridge Press
Volume 7, Number 2, © June 2011
Published by:
Sonoma Developmental Center
P.O. Box 1493
Eldridge, CA 95431
Edited by: Jorge (JJ) Fernandez
Office of Planning & Communications
Photography & layout: Nancy Flack
Central Program Services