Many of you have suffered hardship and uncertainty associated with the complex economic situation that we have experienced. Nonetheless, the incredible strength of spirit and dedication that has been demonstrated by Sonoma Developmental Center employees, families, and community partners has been nothing short of astonishing. In addition to a great deal of hard work, this kind of ongoing dedication ensures that the countless services, supports, activities and events are provided to the individuals we serve with a high level of quality. As our planning continues, I am looking forward to the future with a great deal of optimism. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation for your support to each of you.

Musical Time Travel

The Performing Arts Company at Sonoma Developmental Center is pleased to announce this year’s performance of Musical Time Travel, a journey through time during which one experiences a few different time periods through song.

The Performing Arts Company, a committee made up of Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) employees and cast members who live at Sonoma, 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 The Best of Broadway, which featured a variety of Broadway hits; in 2007 it was The Music Man, and in 2008 it was The Wizard of Oz.

Jim Tallent, Chairperson of the committee and Director of the play, says, “Everyone is working very hard to get down their lines, actions and songs. We have had great rehearsals, and we have had some stinkers, but overall, everyone is contributing and all the actors are trying their very best. What else could you want?”

Open auditions for this year’s play began in early spring, with rehearsals occurring throughout the summer months, and live performances scheduled on September 23, 24, 30 and October 1 at 7:00 PM at the Sonoma Developmental Center Gymnasium. The cast is comprised of approximately 40 singers, dancers, actors and musicians. Tallent goes on to say, “I just hope everyone enjoys the performance as much as I have the journey to get there.” Two new actors join the cast this year in minor roles: Jim Rogers, Executive Director, and Dawn Percy, Clinical Director.

Volunteers are needed for this year’s performance of Musical Time Travel to assist backstage, with rehearsals, props, costumes, and more. Anyone interested in helping out should contact Becky Zyskowski at (707) 938-6713.
Lanterman Developmental Center Gets New Director

On May 5, 2009, the Department of Developmental Services announced the appointment of Cheryl D. Bright as the new Executive Director (ED) at Lanterman Developmental Center (LDC). Cheryl had been serving as the Acting ED since January of this year following the retirement of former ED Pamela Meeker. Cheryl holds a Masters degree in Clinical Social Work and a Bachelors degree in Psychology and has approximately 27 years experience working within the developmental center (DC) system. She began her career as a Psychiatric Social Worker and has acquired a broad range of experiences as a clinician and a Program Manager. In her most recent assignment, prior to Acting ED, Cheryl served as the Director of Quality Assurance and, in collaboration with the Executive Staff, provided necessary leadership, oversight and direction in the care and services provided at Lanterman. She has demonstrated through her day-to-day work and most recently in her acting assignment essential skills in management and communication, as well as a solid understanding and appreciation of the issues confronting the developmental center.

Patricia Flannery, Deputy Director of the Department’s Developmental Centers Division, said that Cheryl displays a caring and sensitive approach to consumers, staff and families and a commitment to improve relationships with all stakeholders. Additional strengths and skills include her clinical experience, and her strong knowledge and expertise in licensing and certification requirements. Cheryl has been involved in important initiatives that have addressed system-wide performance improvements over the years, especially in the area of developing quality management systems. “Her knowledge and experience will be invaluable at Lanterman DC.”

Tony Schapero Retires

After 34 years working at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma), Tony Schapero has a piece of advice for anyone just starting out on their career, “Try to keep your mind open to the opportunities coming up.”

In 1975 Tony had graduated from UC Berkeley and was waiting to get into a teacher training program, when he thought he would work as a psychiatric technician while he waited; after all, the psych tech program was only a year long and his wife, Sally (who retired last year), had already decided to enter the program. So Tony took the opportunity, becoming a licensed psych tech in 1976. The Schapers, each working full time as psych techs, earned about $750 a month each. They were rich!

Seeing the opportunities here, Tony stayed and in only three years he was promoted to Senior Psychiatric Technician. In 1984 he was promoted to Unit Supervisor, and in 1987 to Nursing Coordinator. When asked where he had worked during these years, Tony said he worked in many places. He added that in all his time at Sonoma, he has never had a bad assignment.

In 1999 Tony had the opportunity to become Assistant to the Medical Director, where he stayed until taking on the assignment of Acting Program Director of Central Program Services in September 2006. He looks back on his years working for Dr. Bjorndal, Medical Director, with fondness. The Assistant to the Medical Director is a member of the Executive Committee, and Tony really enjoyed the more global perspective.

Tony can’t think of a more worthy task to fulfill during one’s career than to help improve the lives of the people who live at Sonoma. In addition, there are many jobs where a person works independently to accomplish an independent goal, but at Sonoma almost everything we do is the result of teamwork. He has loved working with others to accomplish a meaningful task.

Tony plans to continue keeping his mind open to the opportunities, except that he will now be able to accept opportunities that don’t involve earning money. He plans to do more camping, hiking, bicycling, as well as improving his golf game, spending more time with his granddaughter, and maybe doing some volunteer work.

Lisa Storment Moves On

Lisa Storment, Standards Compliance Coordinator, said goodbye at the end of April this year. Lisa began working at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) in 1979 as Historian and Eldridge Gazette Editor. Since that time, she held various positions, including Social Work Assistant, Social Worker, and Adult Education Teacher. In 1992 Lisa became Standards Compliance Coordinator where she co-developed the centralized Individual Program Coordinator (IPC) and Recorder services which included Individual Program Plan (IPP) development and supervision of the IPCs and Recorders.
Continued from previous page

She also assisted the facility to stay in compliance with regulations and to maintain certification. She participated in the recent strategic planning process, as the chairperson for the Self-Advocacy Committee.

What she loved most about her job was being able to work with the people who live at Sonoma, being involved in their lives and working with the interdisciplinary teams and family members in creating meaningful plans. “I spent the majority of my adult life at the Center. The people who live and work here became my community of friends and colleagues,” which is what she says she will miss most about working at the Center. She goes on to say, “I enjoyed being a resource for and working as a team with people who have become my dear friends over the years.”

Some of Lisa’s most memorable moments at Sonoma include creating a garden on the hill across from the Bemis residence in 1980 and taking the clients to social events. As a Social Worker, she and the residence Psychologist and team—including a family member—helped one client to get through her anorexia. She enjoyed being a part of the first annual Self-Advocacy Awareness Month as part of the strategic planning process and feels like that focus has been one of her greatest passions. As an Adult Education Teacher, she fondly remembers playing bingo on the Bentley residence and helping them learn to self-advocate “way back when it wasn’t so politically correct to do that.” Lisa adds, “…and of course the surveys! The intensity of the survey process that brings people together with a common goal of improving services! This is just the tip of my memory iceberg. There are so, so many good and grand memories!!”

Lisa is now working for Napa County Health and Human Services as Assistant Manager of Quality Management, where she works with Division Managers to create Quality Management plans using databased processes, and investigates and responds to the client grievances within the Agency. She has also been appointed to be a member of the Diversity Steering Committee that is carrying out the Diversity Strategic Initiative, which promises to be a very rewarding and exciting part of her new job.

In closing Lisa says, “Sonoma has been a very important part of my adult life, and has provided my family and I years of support and security. I am grateful for that, and hope I was able to give back even just a portion of what I received. Making a change after a total of 27 years at Sonoma Developmental Center is something that I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to do, but now I feel that I have been able to take my experiences and transition into a new career opportunity. But, the Center will always hold a very special place in my heart.”

**Farewell, Betsy Anderson**

Betsy Anderson, Unit Supervisor, retired from Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) in May. Betsy started her career with the Department of Developmental Services 27 years ago with 26 of those years, spent at Sonoma. For the last five years, Betsy has been working as a Unit Supervisor in Program 7 (Vocational Services) in a variety of worksites including Sunrise, Harkrader-Bush, Turner, Grove House, Second Impressions and, most recently, Parmalee.

She has been a member of the Program 7 team since 1991 and prior to that worked on various residential units. She remembers all the residences she worked on with fondness, including Nelson D, De Anza House, Manzanita, The Oaks, and Regamey C. Besides working at Sonoma, Betsy spent part of her career at Agnews Developmental Center.

What she loved most about her job was, “Working with loving, caring staff that have the capability to find humor and professional work ethics even in the most difficult times.” She goes on to talk about the many, many memorable moments that would take pages to write. She talks about the fond memories of the clients who eagerly came to their day program with enthusiastic attitudes and “an uncanny ability to have perfect attendance.”

Now that she is retired, Betsy plans on doing volunteer work “to explore future employment at Valley of the Moon Children’s Home, Children’s Village, Kid Street Theatre, Sutter/Sonoma County Hospice and Habitat for Humanity.” She is very excited about joining an artist group that makes fire-breathing metal art sculptures.

She hopes to spend more time hiking, biking, listening to music and biodynamic gardening at her homes in Santa Rosa and Redwood City, and “spending more time with my husband and our family of five.”

When looking back on all the friendships she has made at Sonoma through the years, she says, “Remember, I will miss you everyday. Please stay in touch and I will also. I have always valued the magnificent wealth of friendships I’ve developed over our years working together.”
Recognition

April Employee of the Month

The Employee of the Month for April is Kelly Woodle, Psychiatric Technician Assistant from Central Program Services. Her nominator states, “Kelly has faithfully run the Eldridge Farm for the past 22 years. She has consistently demonstrated a commitment to maintaining and promoting opportunities for the clients and the public to develop the special bond and therapeutic relationship with the animals.” In the past 2½ years she has assisted with decreasing veterinary costs by almost 80 percent. “Kelly’s commitment has never wavered despite an increased workload. Although she is moving on to greater challenges, she will also remain a faithful volunteer to the farm and all the creatures who reside there, in her own special way.” Way to go, Kelly!

May Employee of the Month

Laura Crafter, Senior Psychiatric Technician from Regamey A residence, is the Employee of the Month for May. “Laura is very respectful, considerate and competent with the services delivered to the clients. She was instrumental in training level-of-care nursing staff to follow all necessary policies and procedures prior to our most recent Department of Justice visit.” Laura has held many assignments since her arrival to Program 2 approximately three years ago, including acting shift lead on a couple of residences. “You are a very skilled and dedicated employee. Your commitment to the clients, Program 2 and the facility exemplifies the Sonoma values of building respectful relationships, effective leadership and managing resources.” Nice job, Laura!

June Employee of the Month

The June Employee of the Month is Vicki Crowe, Registered Nurse/Discharge Planner from Medical Services. Her nominator describes her as someone who provides outstanding service to the clients during their transition from acute care to their residential home unit. “Vicki ensures that all aspects of medical care, emotional care, and staff supports are in place prior to discharge. She continues to support the client’s needs through the transition by educating staff on how to best utilize facility resources, continuity of care, maintaining a high standard of care within the facility.” Her coworkers describe her as knowledgeable, reliable, conscientious and dedicated to the clients she serves. Congratulations on your award, Vicki!

Nurse of the Year

The Nurse of the Year for 2009 is Debbie Murray, Registered Nurse/Health Services Specialist. Debbie was bestowed the honor during a luncheon celebrating National Nurses Week in May. During Nurses Week, Sonoma nurses nominate and vote for a member of the staff they feel exemplifies their profession, and then give the Nurse of the Year award to the nurse with the most votes. Her nominators state, “Debbie has an ability to approach her duties with a caring attitude toward both clients and staff. She can be trusted to use good judgment and she draws sound conclusions based on her assessment.” Debbie is also known for communicating effectively with all levels of staff and keeping the Unit Supervisors and Program Management informed of nursing issues. They go on to say, “She has a positive attitude and a calm demeanor. She is a leader, a team player and an educator. She is conscientious and goes beyond her duties without expecting anything in return. Her peers and the clients she cares for enjoy her company, as she has a winning sense of humor and contagious laugh.” Congratulations, Debbie!

Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Recognition Event

The 37th Annual Foster Grandparent and 31st Annual Senior Companion Recognition Day was held on April 24 this year. Becky Zyskowski, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, welcomed everyone and talked about the program and all the wonderful work the volunteers do while serving the residents at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma). Fifty-five individuals were recognized during the ceremony.

Other guest speakers included an invocation by Father

Continued next page
Leslie, the Catholic Chaplain; the pledge of allegiance, led by Pam Patterson, Advisory Council Member; and acknowledgment from Dawn Percy, Clinical Director. Becky Zyskowski presented certificates of appreciation to the Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions with help from Jeff Patterson, Office Technician for the program. Becky wanted everyone to know that “None of this would have been possible without Jeff.” Of those being honored, one individual was recognized for serving the individuals at Sonoma for thirty-one years!

Foster Grandparents work with adolescents with developmental disabilities, while Senior Companions work with adults with developmental disabilities. A Senior Companion or Foster Grandparent also receives a tax-exempt stipend, a meal, paid holidays, earned sick and vacation time, and an annual health appraisal.

**Volunteers & Donors Honored**

Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) recognized its many volunteers and donors at the Annual Volunteer and Donor Recognition Dinner and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, April 25 to coincide with National Volunteer Month.

Each year the themed event allows donor organizations and facility volunteers the opportunity to enjoy the pleasant outdoors at Sonoma House where an outdoor party tent is erected. 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 event this year had a 1950s theme.

Speakers included James E. Rogers, Executive Director of Sonoma; Becky Zyskowski, Coordinator of Volunteer Services; and an invocation by Rabbi Bob Kraus.

Guests were treated to a catered dinner prepared by Chef Zack Leventis, and live music performed by Plan B. After the dinner, volunteers and donors received certificates and gifts of appreciation presented by Sonoma’s management team.

**Kudos**

- Kudos to Lisa Glover, from the Shoe Department, who was observed picking up some trash in front of the Sonoma gymnasium and throwing it away in a garbage can. Her action demonstrated three of SDC’s values: service to others, responsible resource management, and effective leadership.

- Kudos to Mary Antone, Program 3 Director, who was observed picking up a glove on the ground in front of McDougall and disposing of it appropriately. Her action demonstrated three of SDC’s values: service to others, responsible resource management, and effective leadership.

**Psych Tech Graduations**

Employees from Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) graduated from the Psychiatric Technician Program at three colleges including Napa Valley College, Santa Rosa Junior College, and Gurnick Academy of Medical Arts College.

The students enroll in an eighteen-month program at Napa Valley College and Santa Rosa Junior College and a fourteen-month program at Gurnick, that teaches them pertinent skills that are used in the care, treatment, and rehabilitation of mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, or developmentally disabled individuals.

Santa Rosa Junior College held its graduation on May 22. The graduates included: Nitzy Black, Susan Greene, Wallace Mueller, Maricela Osegueria, Xiaoquiang Peng, Fazal Rehman, Sara Tickel, Joehl Torres, and Alfredo Zamudio.

Napa Valley College held its graduation on May 27 and included the following graduates: Amechi Agboli, Jomarck Area, Angela Cendejas, Innee Crisostome, Ferdinand Dato, Carrie Desoto, Jeannette Horne, Lindsay Gentry, Cora Lagundi,
Graduations, continued from previous page

Darla Little, Rudy Marasigan, Carolyn Marek, Kashif Mushtaq, Florence Palaganas, Bengel Perion, Jeff Salcedo, Alphonzo Singleton, Rio Sumagang, and Winnie Yuson.

Gurnick Academy of Medical Arts College held its first Psychiatric Technician graduation on June 12 in front of Sonoma House with seven students graduating in caps and gowns including: Gerard Aguiluz, Cecilia Crawford, Susan Clayton, Kathy Gaffney, Dexter Lopez, Paula Meyer, and John Nazareno.

Members of the Clinical Management and Executive Committees at Sonoma attended all three graduations, along with family and friends of the graduates. Upon graduation the students are eligible to take the state board exam and become psychiatric technicians licensed by the State of California.

Johnsons’ Easter Celebration

The staff of Johnson C and Acorn School put together a structured 1-to-1 interactive egg hunt for the residents of Johnson B and Johnson C and their families. During an Easter party held in April, residents and their families enjoyed the springtime weather outdoors while searching for eggs hid by the staff. LVN Ongela Buchanan dyed eggs at home the night before the party, and bells were placed inside plastic eggs to aid those with visual impairments in finding the prized eggs. Residents also received plastic eggs with personalized messages inside.

Everyone involved really enjoyed the activity. Unit Supervisor Sally Lamore said, “Words cannot express my appreciation for everyone’s efforts on this special occasion!”

Train Day

The annual Train rides occurred on Saturday, April 11. Organized by staff member Nancy Sessi-Tallent and members of the American Legion from Sonoma and Vallejo counties, the trains provided those who live at the Center with half-hour rides around the grounds. The trains arrived at the pre-scheduled residential units and with the assistance of the unit staff, as many clients as possible loaded the colorful vehicles for a fun-filled ride.

They went around Brent and Roadruck and around Farrell, Turner, and the Van Horn buildings and back down to the other side of Sonoma Developmental Center. They cruised around the baseball field and REACH, and up behind the Administration Building, exiting out by the firehouse. They rode up around the Eldridge Farm, Sunrise Industries, and along the roadway by the soccer fields; all the time the train horns and whistles blowing as they rode.

Arts Galore

Sonoma Developmental Center’s Annual Art Show was held from Tuesday, April 21 through Friday, April 24, 2009, at the Advocacy, Rights, Opportunity (ARO) center in the King Building on the Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) campus.

The Art Show consisted of pieces created by the residents of Sonoma. The residents enjoy creating art and then showing it off, and a variety of paintings, pottery, and sculptures were on display. A private “meet the artists” reception was held on the evening of April 21, and the gallery was open to the public for viewing from 8 AM to 4:30 PM each day.

Jim Tallent, a Recreation Therapist at Sonoma, organized the Art Show and said, “There were a number of spectacular pieces.” The Art Show is a very popular event at the Center, with groups of people visiting the show throughout the four days it was open.

Spring Fling Fashion Show

Residents from Sonoma Developmental Center had the opportunity to strut the catwalk as they modeled the latest fashions from First Impressions, the facility’s clothing store. Fashions from Second Impressions, which receives donated clothing, were also included in the show. The theme for this year’s show was “Spring Fling,” so models were sporting lots of pastels as they wore their springtime best.

Teresa Murphy, Assistant Administrative Services Director at the Center, was the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Teresa has a particularly creative style in
Fashion Show, continued from previous page

introducing each model and providing a lively description of what they are wearing and where they might be going in their ensemble.

Approximately forty residents of the facility modeled clothing and accessories that they choose for the fashion show. Selections and fittings were held in the weeks prior to the show, which was held at REACH, the facility’s community center. A packed audience was present including family members, other residents, and Sonoma employees.

First Impressions offers individuals a great variety of new clothing and accessories that are purchased from catalogs, clothing stores and private vendors, specifically for the residents of Sonoma Developmental Center.

Cinco de Mayo

Mother Nature put a damper on the Cinco de Mayo celebration this year with the occasional rain, bringing the day’s events indoors. However, most were happy to see the late rain and made the best of the showery day.

During the morning hours the mariachi band made its way throughout the Program 2 residences and Program 3 Nelson Building. At every stop clients and staff eagerly awaited the start of the live music, often putting in requests for a song or two, which the mariachi band happily played.

There was also a mariachi band playing inside the gymnasium during the morning hours and in the afternoon. The gym was decorated in red, white, and green. There was also a picture booth, as well as a couple of game booths with prizes. Snacks included cheese quesadillas, nachos, flan, fruta, and a variety of drinks to add to the festive occasion.

Students Hold Year-End Celebration

Central Program Services (CPS) Education program, in conjunction with Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), held its End of Year Celebration on May 27, 2009 at a ceremony held in the courtyard off the Ordahl residences. Jim Boika, CPS Program Assistant, was the Master of Ceremonies and introduced speakers Jim Rogers, Executive Director, and Jeannie Knighton, Director of SCOE programs for Sonoma Developmental Center. Teachers Christy Delucchi (Acorn School), Laura Connors (Altimira Middle School), and Mekiele Perkins (Powers Portable) 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. The Hanna students were also recognized individually for their efforts in the Acorn classroom as well as their own academic achievements.

After the ceremony, students and their families continued the celebration with a barbecue luncheon.

Annual Horse Show

The Annual Horse Show for those who reside at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) was held on Saturday, May 30 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and on Tuesday, June 2 from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the outdoor equestrian arena.

There were approximately 70 residents from Sonoma who participated in the Equestrian Sporting event. All the riders 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 did take into consideration the developmental limitations of each rider.

The Equestrian Program Coordinator and planner of the event, Nancy Sess-Tallent, has provided the individuals who reside at Sonoma with skills that increase the student’s confidence and pride, as well as instilling a sense of accomplishment. The Equestrian Program 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 Center’s Equestrian Program has been in existence since the early 1980s.
Sonoma Valley Footrace & Festival

Approximately 170 runners participated in the 5k and 10k footraces held on the grounds of Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma) for the 3rd Annual Sonoma Valley Footrace and Festival held on Saturday June 20, 2009.

The event, a fundraiser for Sonoma’s Performing Arts Company, raised money to support approximately 50 residents to enjoy a live theater experience as cast and crew of the Performing Arts Company annual production. (See Musical Time Travel on page one for more information about this year’s production).

Runner awards were announced during the Festival after the races, where the top 3 male and female finishers in both races were awarded sport bags from Avia, running gear from Heart & Sole Sports, and for the adults, wine donated by Ty Caton Winery, Eric Ross Winery, and Ravenswood Winery. Medals were also awarded to the top 3 runners in age divisions.

Also during the festival, crowds entertained themselves with game booths for the kids, a classic car show, music performed by Harvey and the Wallbangers, a raffle with prizes donated from businesses throughout the bay area, food by Uncle Bill’s Corn Dogs and Rubio’s Fresh Mexican Grill, beer tasting from Lagunitas, Lost Coast, and Sonoma Springs Brewery; and wine tasting from BR Cohn, Ravenswood, and Kunde wineries.

For race results and information on the 2010 event, visit www.dds.ca.gov/svff.

April
Romina Bagaygay, Food Service Technician I
Jeannie Beltz, Custodian
Jack Caratachea, Custodian
Jesus Caratachea, MSOT*
Rianna Damsten, Custodian
Glen Delman, Teacher
Michael Folliard, Custodian
Myrna Garcia, Registered Nurse
Samantha Richards, Custodian
Timothy Weygant, MSOT*

May
Victoria Alejandro, Assistant Director of Dietetics
Cynthia Dinglasan, Teacher
David LaCourse, Custodian
Joseph Smith, Psychiatric Technician Assistant
Richard Winter, Sr., MSOT*

June
John Forsythe, MSOT*
Diane Kane, Teacher

* Maintenance and Service Occupations Trainee (Custodian work)

Note:
If you would like to receive the Eldridge Press electronically, please e-mail your request to Karen.Litzenberg@sonoma.dds.ca.gov.