

Watch Out!

VOLUME 1, ISSUE VIII

JUNE 2007

THIS NEWSLETTER IS WRITTEN BY AND FOR CONSUMERS WITH A GRANT FROM FAR NORTHERN REGIONAL CENTER. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.

My Best Friend

In the last issue of Watch Out!, we asked our readers to write a story about their best friend. We promised **dinner for two at the Olive Garden** as a prize for the best entry.

By reading your stories, we learned how important friendship is to people. Most people want friends they can do things with, and also someone they can trust. Many readers said their friends made them feel happy. We agree!

We received a lot of stories, and it was hard to pick the winner. We voted three times before we finally decided on **Tom Sowerby**, whose story about his friend **Dee Nobel** is on page 5. Tom will receive a \$30 gift certificate to take his friend to dinner. Congratulations Tom!

We thought all the stories were winners, so if we used your story in this issue, you will receive a \$5 gift certificate to Jamba Juice! —*The Editors*



Dee Nobel and Tom Sowerby

What Does Friendship Mean to You?



Valerie Tracy

"It means helping people to know that they have a friend they can rely on and trust."



Mike Nickell

"The best friendship is the one you have with the person that brought you into this world."



Ricky Sedillos

"Friends are when you get along, you think the same way, and you are willing to help each other."



Brooke Pico

"A friend is a part of my family. A friend is nice. A friend is nice to visit. I like my mom's friends."

Pathfinders Invited to South Carolina

By Brandi Totten

In March, Pathfinders was invited to speak at a conference in Charleston, South Carolina called "Reinventing Quality." Ted Cottini and I represented Pathfinders.

The session that we presented was called, "Putting the Person Back into Person Centered Planning." We informed the audience about our experience in creating Life Plans and shared how these plans help Service Coordinators make a better IPP. We explained that Service Coordinators have heavy case loads and reviewing a Life Plan can give them a better idea about the person they are serving and may offer a better idea of what services the person needs.

When I was not presenting, I attended breakout sessions. One of the sessions was about a lady that could not find a job because she only had use of a couple of fingers. One of the businesses in town got wind of this and created a job for her as a typist in their office so that she could be productive in her community. She took the job and has worked there for several years!

South Carolina has great people and food and interesting buildings. The people there were very polite, and "y'all" was a commonly used phrase. I remember going into a souvenir shop and a woman greeted me by saying, "How y'all doin'?" She made an extra effort to be polite. The food was deep fried and greasy, but great. I had some fried green tomatoes and grits. The fried green tomatoes were not so great but the grits, mmm. I also remember the scenery, which was lovely. It has a lot of old structures. One of my favorites was the statue in the park it said "Truth in Justice and the Constitution."



Brandy Totten and Ted Cottini

Computers and Training

By Amanda Higgins



Amanda Higgins

I have been using computers since the first grade. In the beginning, I used them for games or sometimes for mathematics. Now I use my computer for writing stories and for browsing the internet. I am so grateful that I have my computer. Using my computer is my favorite thing to do!!

Far Northern Regional Center has a new deal to get a computer and computer lessons. The teacher comes to your house and sets up the computer and teaches you how to use it. You must be 18 years or older. Talk to your Service Coordinator if you want a computer too.

Consumer Advisory Committee to ARCA

By Glen Pollock

On Friday, June 1, I went to the ARCA Consumer Advisory Committee meeting in Los Angeles. This committee meets three times a year to advise the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) about statewide issues that are important to consumers such as employment, affordable housing, and improved transportation.

We had representatives from 17 different regional centers. The president of ARCA also came and spoke to us about several different things that are happening. We talked about having a mentoring program that would help younger people with disabilities to better adjust to any problems that they might have. Things like transfers for people who use wheelchairs and for people who need certain things to make their life a little easier. Someone who has been through this could mentor a younger person and let them know what the challenges are for the future. Life would be a lot easier for them in the future, and it would be a nicer thing for everyone.

We discussed the different regional centers websites and the chairperson of CAC had gone to every regional center, and she said that Far Northern Regional Center's website was the best she had seen. She tipped her hat to us.



Glen Pollock

Mary Lake Sounds Like a Nice Place . . .

By Margo Madson



Margo Madson

But is it really? In February, some people who live in the Redding subdivision of Mary Lake started a petition to keep a new group home from opening in their community. They also wrote a letter to the editor of the *Record Searchlight* that said they didn't want "those" kind of people living in their neighborhood. Believe it or not, they were talking about people with disabilities.

They had a meeting one Saturday afternoon, and I went to it because it was just down the street from me. I told the people that they were wrong in doing this. I told them that people with disabilities have the right to live wherever they want, and that they are just like everyone else.

Editors' Note: On June 11, Karen Hagaman and Rosie Johansen gave a presentation, about teasing and living with a disability, at the home. Karen and Rosie are members of SAY (Same As You). People that live in the neighborhood were invited, and some came to hear their presentation.

Who is Your B

A Good Friend **Desarae Childress**

I think a good friend means that you have to start by being nice to the person. The person that is my friend is Meghan. We have been good friends for three years now. I like her, and I know that she likes me.

I also have many other friends at ELC that I like. They are cool friends. I like them because they are nice and kind to me. If I had to pick a friend, I would pick one of them. I share my feelings with my good friends.



Meghan Gibson and Desi Childress

My Best Friend **By Katie Sue Robertson**

Hi! My best friend is my boyfriend—Jon Eide. The reason why I like my good friend is because he makes me feel very safe and loved all the time. He loves me for who I am, and he also does special things for me.



Katie Robertson and Jon Eide

My friend is always funny, but serious when it comes to his job and me. We go shopping together. We like to watch T.V., go on rides, read to each other, buy things for each other, go to our family's house together, and play with our cat together.

I love him no matter what! We've been together for four years now!

Friendship **By Debra Salyers**

I have a friend,
Her name is Nicki.
She is as sweet as she can be,
And she can sing like a bluebird in a tree.
Her life can be like sunshine for all the world to see,
This is why she is such a great friend to me.



Nicki Goold and Debbie Salyers

Best Friend?

My New Best Friend for Life **By Terry M**

Since 1992, my friend Debbie has been good company. I met her while checking my mail at our apartment building. We always go out together to the movies or go shopping. She always helps with my barbecue dinners. She doesn't get mad. She takes walks with me when it's nice weather.



Debbie Courtney and Terry M

When I go out of town, Debbie baby-sits my babies—my cats Easter and Whisker. I trust her to be in my house. It's hard to trust anyone to be in your house.

We've gone to People First conferences together. We hope to be roommates at the conference in 2008. We would also like to go on vacation together some day.

We depend on each other. It's important to have a friend you can depend on. We help each other get to the grocery store and keep each other busy. Best friends are never lonely, especially if they are neighbors. If either of us ever move the other will always be in her heart.

AND THE WINNER IS. . .

What Friends Mean to Me, **By Tom Sowerby**

Friends are very inviting. They are also very respectful. I like to show people how much fun it is to be a friend.

My good friend is Dee. He is a good "show shiner" (a star!), and he sings out the tunes when he sings his song at Karaoke. Dee would rather smile than be mad all the time. Seeing that helps me have a better day so that I am not feeling down all the time. He makes me feel happier!



Dee Noble and Tom Sowerby

My Best Two Friends **By Elva Mae McKinney**



I am writing about my two best friends. Gina and Ollie Davis are special, and we have become very close Christian friends. Gina is my worker now, but we are like sisters, as we share the things that we are going through, and we pray together and sometimes go out.

(continued on next page)

Elva Mae McKinney and friends Gena and Ollie Davis

Who is Your Best Friend?

(Continued from page 5)

In 2002, I came back to Oroville. I didn't have a place to live, so they opened their home up to me. Gina wasn't my worker then. When my home was ready, Ollie hooked things up for me. They never judge me or treat me as disabled. I can trust Gina with anything.

Gina and her husband took me fishing on their boat for the day, and we had fun. Ollie took time to show me how to cast a rod. He's just like a big brother.

This couple will help anyone if it is in their power to do so.

What Does Friendship Mean to You?



Jens Nielsen

"You need to be nice to them. A friend is when you need help. A friend is somebody you like."



Dee Noble

"A friend would be like family. Someone to help when I need help, and willing to do things with me."



Tracy Salinas

"I have lots of friends at ELC, and they really care for me. They have nice things to say."



Cathy Maikranz

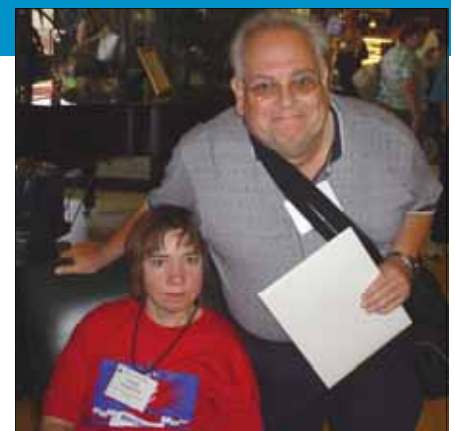
"Friends make me feel happy!"

People First of California Conference

By Glen Pollock and Sherri Douglas

On June 8—10, People First of California (PFCA) held a statewide conference in Sacramento. The conference was sold out! It was also the 31st conference for PFCA. People from different People First chapters from all over the state attended.

One of the main ideas for this year's conference was how we can help to start a small business. We all talked about how we wanted to work and have a good job.



Rose Roberts and Arlen Lowery

(continued on next page)

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The keynote speakers, Doreen Rosimos and Jodi Love, told us all about how we could build up a business for ourselves and what we needed to do to make the business work. They had several good sessions to attend. One of them was the Abuse Prevention Team which talked about how to stop abuse. Another great presentation was by Ben Geare who talked about how to become a more powerful person.



Jodi and Scott Winfield dressed for the dance at the PFCA conference in Sacramento.

The PFCA President, Michael Cooke, also spoke to us. He introduced us all to Joe Meadours, the new Executive Director of PFCA.



PFCA President, Michael Cooke

There were a lot of new faces there. These were people who were going to their first conference. On Saturday night there was a dance that many of us attended. We all had so much fun!

Support Groups

People First of Chico started a support group. "A support group is a place where we can be open and have privacy," explained Scott Winfield, a member of the group. "It's a safe place where we can share stories in our lives that we would not usually share in public."

Scott Douglas agrees. "I like it [the support group] because I'm able to open up my heart. I can share, and it won't go anywhere. I like to be able to talk to my peers." James Smith also agrees adding that "... #1, it helps me cope with Christy's death (his wife of many years); #2, I feel safe because of the confidentiality; and #3, [it] helps me to be open with others."

Support groups are groups of 8-10 people who meet once a week for one hour. Groups can meet anywhere: in a day program, residential facility, or in this case, before a People First meeting. Members of the group learn to respect and talk to each other better, make new friends, and practice problem solving.

Support groups can be used as a training tool as well. "Our support group is another way to reach out to new people who are coming into the group," Winfield said. "Support groups can be used to build confidence or to help someone who is having a bad day put a smile on their face," he added.

Asked why it is important to talk to your peers, Douglas summed it up perfectly. "Maybe they can relate to you and have ideas and different ways of looking at a situation, or maybe they have gone through something like it," he said.



Members of People First of Chico

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By Shelly Anderson and Rosie Johansen

Some of you may not know, but our California State laws use words like idiot, imbecile, and lunatic when talking about people with intellectual disabilities. These words were commonly used in the 1800s when the laws were first made.

This may be changed soon thanks to Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa.

Assemblyman LaMalfa introduced a bill, A.B. 1640, on February 23, 2007. He suggested to California lawmakers that the old language be taken out and changed to "mentally incapacitated." "Mentally incapacitated" is a legal term that only refers to a person's ability to understand the difference between right and wrong. It does not mean all people with disabilities.

We asked some people how they felt about the change, and this is what they said: "Thank God," said a smiling Ella Slemph. "It's about time," added Michelle Humphrey. "I feel really good about it," said Arlen Lowery. "I'm glad they finally changed it." We think changing these words in the law is all about respect.



Rosie Johansen & Shelly Anderson