

Watch Out!

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2009

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

Happy Birthday Watch Out!

We are celebrating our five year anniversary of Watch Out! Newsletter. We thought it would be interesting to revisit some of our favorite stories and see how everything turned out. So, the theme of this issue is **TAKING A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE!** We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed following-up on the story!



Say What??? What we think about “Disaster Preparedness”

By Shelly Anderson, Glen Pollock, Meghean Skinner, and Cory Smith

All around the state the latest buzzzzzz is about planning for disasters. Many regional centers and service providers are helping people with disabilities make plans in case there is a disaster. We think this is a great idea! But what the heck is “disaster preparedness” anyway?

We think words like “disaster” and “preparedness” are too hard to say and way to hard to remember. Plus, most of us don’t understand what the words mean! These words sound like lawyer language to us. Is it a good idea to get ready for an emergency like a fire, a flood, or really hot or really cold days? **YES!** But if you want to teach us something, please say it in everyday words!

The theme of the next issue of Watch Out! is “PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES” like fire, floods, or no electricity. What will you do if your lights go out or if there is a fire or flood or some reason you have to leave your house quickly? What will you do with your pet? If you are separated from your family, where will you go? Who can you call? Write a story about your emergency plans for home, work, or at your day program. We’ll print your story in the June issue of Watch Out!



We’re confused! From left: Editors Cory Smith, Meghean Skinner, Glen Pollock and Shelly Anderson.

FNRC Consumer Advocates: What do they do?

Shelly Anderson: I am a member of the FNRC Quality Assessment Team for the Redding area. I go to group homes and talk to consumers about their life and how they like living in the home. Sometimes no one will talk to me. Other times everyone in the home wants to talk to me. It depends on how many people live in the home and what is going on that day.

I'm also a member of the Consumer Advocacy Awareness Team (C.A.A.T.). We go out to day programs and group homes to teach staff how to tell when someone has been abused. We give lots of presentations every year.

I also have my own program which is called *Clean Hands*. I go to different places in the community and teach people the proper way to wash their hands. I find a lot of staff don't even know the right way!

I have been a consumer Advocate for nine years, and I love it.

Sherri Douglas: Over the last 9 years, I have had many jobs working as a Consumer Advocate. I had my own program called L.I.S.T.E.N. which helped all consumers learn more about protecting themselves and keep themselves safe.

Right now, I am the facilitator of the Abuse Prevention Team, a group of self-advocates who teach other people with disabilities about abuse prevention in everyday life. I'm also a member of C.A.A.T. which helps staff learn more about abuse of people with disabilities and how to prevent it. This way they can help stop abuse at day programs or care homes. I also work as an editor of the *Watch Out!* newsletter.

My job helps others to be better self-advocates and to believe in themselves which, in turn, helps make the world a better place for all of us.

Meghean Skinner: I've been a Consumer Advocate for a little over one year. My main job is to go to people's homes, and I interview them as part of the FNRC Quality Assessment project. I ask questions about how they live. If there is a problem in their home, I report it. I like my job because I like to meet different people.

My work is very important to me. I'm also an editor for *Watch Out!* newsletter.



Sherri Douglas and Shelly Anderson

I help to make decisions about what goes into the paper. I like to read stories about people. I do enjoy what people say and how they think.

I also work at Little Red Hen and the Euró Café. I'm a very busy person!

Cory Smith: Hi, my name is Cory, and I am a Consumer Advocate for FNRC consumers who live in Butte, Glen and Tehama counties. My job is simple, I come to visit individuals with a wide range of needs, in their homes, and find out what is working for them and what they would like to have different. I then advocate, or help their voice be heard. I use a list of special questions to know how best I can help. I think one of the most important things I do in my job is to listen.

Mostly I visit with people who live in care/group homes, but occasionally I even visit with people who live in their own homes.

So next time a consumer advocate comes to your home, know that he/she is there for you. This is the time to let Far Northern and the service providers hear your voice.



Meghean Skinner and Cory Smith

Chico Conforms to ADA Standards

The city of Chico is going to have community members help get the city up to date with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Teams of people both with and without disabilities will be going through the town and giving their ideas on how to improve the city sidewalks, parking lots, and public bathrooms. The teams will be made up of volunteers who want to see the city become a better place for people with disabilities to live. Hopefully by giving their ideas to the city, the city will make improvements.

This is a big step forward for all of us. It means that soon other cities in our area will also be improving accessibility.

Save the Date!

February 12: FOCUS Film Festival presents: ***Darius Goes West***, a movie showing at the Sierra Nevada Big Room in Chico. Meet the film's star, Darius Weems, Director Logan Smalley, and all the cast and crew! 7:00-9:00 p.m. Opens at 6:00. \$10.00 each. Call Mary Ann, 222-4791, for more information.

Deadline **March 2:** Scholarships available for the 14th Annual People First of California Convention, **June 12-14** at the Double Tree Hotel in Sacramento. Call Brandi, 223-7771, for more information.

Watch Out! Newsletter: Taking

June 2004: Michael Cooke **By Glen Pollock**

In June 2004, Michael Cooke, of Red Bluff, was elected President of People First of California. As president, Michael wanted to make People First a stronger organization. He said, "People First is about being strong as a group. All of our voices joining together are more powerful than one voice by itself." Well, he accomplished this goal and many others.

Michael worked hard at the State level to find long-term funding for People First. He met with the Governor, State Senators, and with the leadership of key state agencies. He advocated for hiring an Executive Director for PFCA and oversaw several huge grants that helped change People First chapters for the better.

Michael helped to get the California Memorial Project started so that people who past away in institutions were finally recognized. Even though he was able to achieve most of his goals while being president, he is and was always able to be there for all of the people whom he represented.

Michael is proudest that he "made all of the consumers stronger and better self-advocates." He feels that by making people feel better about themselves, he has helped to make all of the People First chapters stronger.



Michael Cooke as President of People First of California

June 2005: John Riva, Working Independently **By Cory Smith**

Back in 2005, John Riva was celebrating his 5th year of working at Tres



Jon Riva

Hombres restaurant in Chico. Now, nearly four years later, Jon is looking forward to his 9th year as of April 1st, 2009! During my visit with John at his workplace, John couldn't have summed up the mood better, "They love me there!" As far as retirement, he isn't making any plans, but he did say, "When I get retired you won't have anybody to change the light bulbs!"

Changing the light bulbs is only a part of John's effect upon his work place; he fills the restaurant with his positive upbeat attitude, and everybody knows his name. Whether it's making chips, cleaning the taco bar, or making customers feel welcome, John is the man for the job.

a Trip Down Memory Lane...

June 2006: D.O.G.F.I.T.E. By Cory Smith

We first wrote about D.O.G.F.I.T.E. (Disability Organizing for Initiating Total Equality) following a march on the state capitol on Capitol Action Day in June 2006. At the time, the only branch of D.O.G.F.I.T.E. in our region was in Redding. Since then, Chico and Paradise have started chapters. It's been nearly a year since the start of a new D.O.G.F.I.T.E. chapter in Paradise. Before that, Paradise members had to travel all the way to Chico.

The state budget is an issue that concerns many of us, especially as it relates to IHSS and Medi-Cal. D.O.G.F.I.T.E. is a group that doesn't wait for a crisis; when issues such as cuts in IHSS or Medi-Cal come up, D.O.G.F.I.T.E. goes into action! On December 12th, five members of the Redding chapter visited Jim Nielsen's office, their local representative. According to Rosie Johansen, a chapter officer and one of the five, "we talked a lot about Medi-Cal, IHSS, and Social Security." Although nothing is for certain, D.O.G.F.I.T.E. worked to make their voices heard. See <http://www.ilsnc.org/newsletter.php>

Concerning the battle with the capitol, Rosie mentioned, "We need to get more people involved." So let your voice be heard! Contact Sor Lo at 893-8574 to find out where your local chapter of D.O.G.F.I.T.E. meets.



June 2008: Michelle Phillips Graduates from College By Michelle Phillips

Hi my name is Michelle Phillips. I graduated from Butte College in 2008. I took no more than three classes at a time. I had a D in one of my classes in the rest of my classes I got A, B, or Cs. It was hard at times: I had to take the bus back and forth to school and work which was an hour away from home.



Michelle Phillips

It has always been a dream of mine to work with young children. While I was a student, I worked as an intern at the Butte College Child Development Center. I was making \$8.50 an hour, and I worked 8 hours a day, Monday through Friday. It was a great job, but since I graduated, I can't work there anymore. So now I am looking for a new job with children. I really love what I do. I love seeing kids learn and grow.

I really enjoyed my job at Butte College. I know I will like my new job too.

Watch Out! Newsletter: Taking

2005: Susan Hess, Working Independently By Cory Smith,

Susan Hess has been employed with the Rowell Family Empowerment Center in Paradise for 8 years. Since we last visited her in the 2005 issue, Susan has some great news to share.



Susan Hess holding her award

So what's new with Susan these days? To begin, now she uses the taxi to get to work which works better with her schedule. She also has her own key to the office and now is in charge of shutting down the office in the evenings after her shift. Perhaps what needs to be mentioned most at this time is that Susan was awarded Employee of the Quarter for Oct.-Dec. 2007. Now when you walk into the office you can see her plaque up on the wall! Speaking of her employment for the past 8 years, Susan stated, "Rowell Family has been a good home, it's been super."

What lies in store for the future? One thing is for sure, Susan is going to continue to do an outstanding job for Rowell and for the many lives she touches daily.

June 2007: FNRC Board Members By Glen Pollock

A story in the June 2007 issue of *Watch out!* talked about how the consumers on the FNRC Board of Directors were becoming more active board members. During the past five years, not only have we become valued members of this board, but also, more and more consumer members are being elected as officers on the Board of Directors.

In the last 5 years, **Steve Sharpe, Carole Burke, Beth Banks, Peggy Englert, Julie Ralston, Dyvonne Washington, Michelle Phillips, Rosie Johansen, Ella Slep, Margo Madson, Terry Morton, Glen Pollock,** and **Andre Economopoulos** held offices on the board.

By becoming board members, we, people with developmental disabilities, are able to have a stronger say about how we are recognized by the regional center and service providers. As elected officers, we prove that people with disabilities are capable. We contribute to the meetings and people listen to all we have to say.

We have many people with developmental disabilities on the Board of Directors, and they have plenty to say about how we should be treated and cared for.



*Former Chairman of the Board
Steven Sharpe*

ng a Trip Down Memory Lane...

People First Members Give to Community **By Shelly Anderson**

Some community members see people with disabilities as people who are always getting hand-outs wherever they go. There is not a lot taught about doing for yourself or fellow citizens. Always getting handouts does not make us feel like equal and valuable members of society.

In People First, we are trying to change how people see us and even how we see ourselves. As a region, we started to change that view some time ago. In November 2002, **People First of Shasta County** donated ten turkeys to a local organization, Western Service Workers, that assists families in need.

People started talking about what we did in Shasta County and how good it made us feel. Other chapters started talking about what they could do in their communities. In 2004, **People First of Plumas County** put together a food bank. That winter they were also the base group for a local coat drive.

People liked being equal members of their communities, so they looked for more ways to give back. In 2005 People First of Shasta County donated \$50.00 to a Jones Valley family who lost their home in the Bear Mountain Fire. That winter, they again donated turkeys and hams to Western Service Workers. Also, **People First of Trinity County** donated \$50.00 to the Red Cross to help their community after the French Gulch Fires. **People First of Lassen County** sent \$30.00 to help a member of People First of Alabama who lost his home in Hurricane Katrina.

Last summer **People First of Chico** had a fundraiser to help members of their community who were burned out after all the fires. **People First of Yreka** is currently joining with a community group that has a clean-up project.

Members of **Region 2 People First** voted at our last meeting to spend up to \$800.00 to replace an oven in someone's home. The group is also going to help this person clean up outside their home. Members who drive are going to give other members a ride, so more people can help. Also, in Shasta County, we voted to give a family a \$100.00 gift card so they can have a good Christmas.

Anyone can give back. You don't have to be in People First. You never know when someone needs a helping hand, but not a handout. We should give back all year. You can donate to a local organization, church, or your local People First chapter. Being generous and doing for others feels good—try it I think you'll like it!



John Wilson volunteers as Santa for the Salvation Army

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Taking a Trip Down Memory Lane con't.

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By Margo Madson

A year ago I wrote about a new care home, in Redding, which was having trouble opening. Some of the neighbors wrote a letter to the local paper that said they didn't want people with disabilities living in their neighborhood!!!

I went back to the home to see how things were going. The home is beautiful and looks well cared for. Five women live in there now. One of the women told me that the people who live in the home are happy, and they are like a family now. She said, "Our neighbor Bob is nice and always says 'hi' to us." She also told us that not all of the neighbors are as friendly as Bob, but there are no problems.

The people that live in the house are like a family now, and they love their new home. I interviewed them just before Christmas, and they were excited about going to Disneyland.



Like a family: Theresa, Carrie Ann, Francis, Mary Jane, and Michelle