

ADVOCACY RIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES

NEWSLETTER 

Self-Advocacy Poster Art

Starting in January 2009, self-advocacy art posters began to be distributed throughout the facility. The artwork was submitted by residents who wanted to “Speak Up and Speak Out” through art. The response has been amazing. Students in the Johnson B Sonoma County Office of Education classroom submitted the artwork for the month of April titled “The Heart Is the Place Love Happens.” Posters from past months are available in ARO room 123.

Speak Up and Speak Out!

The Self-Advocacy Committee of Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma), chaired by Lisa Storment, kicked off the First Annual Self-Advocacy Awareness Month in March.

Activities occurred throughout the month, with the intention of raising awareness and encouraging the residents who live here to “Speak Up and Speak Out” and to advocate for him- or herself. The events included Tuesday Night Self-Advocacy Movies at REACH (our community center), special occasion meals, Town Hall Meetings, self-advocacy questions on the Focus Calendar, and Hopes and Dreams Day.

Every Tuesday night, movies portraying individuals with disabilities advocating for themselves were shown at REACH including:

- March 3: **Marion Rose White Movie**—A made-for-television movie based loosely on the life a woman who lived at Sonoma for many years before leaving, later returning as a volunteer.
- March 10: **I Am Sam**—Portraying the life of a challenged man who has the mental age of seven, fighting to retain custody of his young daughter.
- March 17: **My Left Foot**—Portraying an artist and writer whose cerebral palsy required him to use a wheelchair and the obstacles he had to overcome throughout his life.
- March 24: **Profoundly Normal**—A made-for-television movie based on two individuals who as children are institutionalized and after many years move out together into the community and experience life in a whole new way.

Beginning in February, staff at Sonoma encouraged the residents to develop a “choice meal” based on their requests, using the special occasion food order menu, to be served during the month of March. There was a wonderful response with requests for barbecues with all the fixings and brunches, as well as other special meals requested by a number of residences.

Town Hall Meetings occurred on March 17 at the ARO building and on March 19 at the Nelson



Town Hall Meeting on March 19

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Speak Up and Speak Out, continued from page one

Building. Residents were encouraged to “Speak Up and Speak Out,” and they did. Some of the topics included food requests and activity requests. Others wanted to let people know their future plans or events they would be attending, and some just wanted to get on the microphone and let others know how much they enjoyed coming to the Town Halls. The residents were encouraged to go back to their home units and share the information with their staff in order to achieve their desired outcomes.

The Focus Calendar, a training tool for staff to discuss a topic to focus on for the day, featured self-advocacy questions including: What is a self-advocate? How can we help the clients advocate for themselves? and What does it mean for a client to be fully recognized and included?

All of these wonderful activities led up to Hopes and Dreams Day on March 26. The event was featured at two locations, Richardson Activity Center (in the morning) and REACH (in the afternoon).

There were a variety of booths including: shaved ice treats, cotton candy, Animal Assisted Therapy, an Adaptive Technology Resource booth, a Disability Rights California booth, and a self-advocacy bingo game. There was a refreshment booth at both locations, as well as souvenir tables offering a variety of items including tote bags, wristlets, water bottles, Frisbees, and head visors—all with an imprint saying, “Speak Up, Speak Out.”

The residents and staff participated in a “Clouds Workshop,” where they wrote down their hopes and dreams and tied them to balloons inspiring lots of motivating conversation. Some of the hopes and dreams were to take a cruise, write a letter to a loved one, have a birthday party, to always be able to do artwork, and to be happy all the time.

The following information/biographies were provided by the guest speakers for the Hopes and Dreams Day brochure.

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Ross Long

Ross moved from his home state of Oregon to California in 1983. He attended Santa Rosa Junior College where he earned an A.A. degree in general education. Later, Ross attended Sonoma State University where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Sociology.

In 1994, Ross took his first job as an advocate for Sonoma County Citizens Advocacy. Part of his duties at Citizens Advocacy involved facilitating two People First groups. He also served as a consultant to People First groups at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma).

In 1996, Ross took a position as a student intern in the Advocacy Project at Sonoma. His duties included facilitation of People First groups and doing advocacy for individual residents.

In 1998, Area Board IV hired Ross for the Life Quality Assessment Project. His job was to interview people before their Individual Program Plan meetings to assess their current quality of life. This process helped people identify ways their quality of life might be improved.

In 2008, Ross was appointed Volunteer Advocacy Services (VAS)

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Clouds Workshop
The cloud says, “I want to meet lots of people.”



Animal Assisted Therapy



Selecting a souvenir



Cotton Candy



Ross Long

Speak Up and Speak Out, continued from page two

Coordinator for the Area Board IV at Sonoma. As VAS Coordinator, Ross advocates for the residents that don't have anyone to represent them. He also recruits, trains, and coordinates the volunteer advocates.

Ross lives in his condo in Santa Rosa with his cat, Luna. He receives supported living services through North Bay Regional Center and In-Home Supportive Services.

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Randy Kitch

Randy has a B.A degree in Communication from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. From 1975 to 1978, he was a program director of a group home in Topeka. In 1978 he was appointed Coordinator of a

Nation Project through Kansas University, helping to start self-advocacy groups across the country.

In 1980 Randy moved to California and became Executive Director of Community Resources for Independence, an Independent Living Center in Santa Rosa, where he remained until 1985.

From 1989 to 1996 he was an Assistive Technology Specialist at Stockton and Sonoma Developmental Centers. He was also on the Board of Directors of North Bay Regional Center from 1992 to 1998. In 1996 he became the Branch Manager of Community Resources for Independence in Napa, where he remained until 1999.



Randy Kitch

Presently, Randy is the Consumer Advocate for North Bay Regional Center, as well as being on the Board of Directors for the Supported Life Institute in Napa County, on the Advisory Board for In-Home Support Services, and on the Coordinating Council for Napa County Paratransit.

Randy has spoken to self-advocacy groups internationally regarding human and legal rights for people with disabilities, testified at federal and state hearings regarding bills for people with disabilities, and spoken at various conferences relating to employment, assistive technology, and empowerment.

Randy has worked with people with all disabilities for over 30 years.

His hobbies include chess, poker, bowling, dancing, and politics. He has been married for fifteen years, has three grown stepdaughters, five grandchildren and two cats.

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Yulahlia Hernandez

Yulahlia earned her law degree and Public Interest Certificate at Santa Clara University School of Law in 2002. While in law school, she worked for Bay Area Legal Aid focusing on Supplemental Security Income appeals for people with disabilities and providing advocacy workshops for Spanish-speaking survivors of domestic violence.

She also interned for the Northern California Innocence Project, which provided Yulahlia with experience to advocate for prisoner's claims of innocence. Since 2003, Yulahlia has worked as the North Bay Regional Center, Clients' Rights Advocate and staff attorney for the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy/Disability Rights California (formerly Protection & Advocacy, Inc.).



Yulahlia Hernandez leads a game of "Self-Advocacy Bingo"

Her practice areas include special education, Lanterman Act/regional center, discrimination, investigation of rights denials and abuse, and providing training and advocacy for people with developmental disabilities.





Speak Up and Speak Out, continued from page three

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Daniel Meadows

Daniel Meadows is a coordinator in the Developmental Disabilities Peer/Self-Advocacy Unit of Disability Rights California. Daniel has been with Disability Rights California for seven years. In his experience as an advocate, Daniel has served on the Disability Rights California board of directors, helped found the Self-Advocacy Council VI in the Stockton region, and has led several People First groups.



Daniel Meadows

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Cindy White

Cindy is currently a member of the Advisory Committee for the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. She also helps to promote self-advocacy for the Department of Developmental Services' Consumer Advisory Committee.

Most recently, she has become a member of the Board of Directors for Becoming Independent.

In January 2009, she was hired at Sonoma Developmental Center for her dream job as an Office Occupations Clerk for Impressions Clothing Center.



Cindy White

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Marcia Dinkelspiel

My name is Marcia Dinkelspiel and I live on the Cohen unit at Sonoma Developmental Center (Sonoma). I like living on Cohen. I go on a vacation almost every year and my next vacation is a cruise to Mexico. I am very excited.

I work at Agilent on cutting paper and put it in a big barrel.

I like doing arts and crafts in my room in my spare time. I like to go shopping. I like going to the advocacy groups at Sonoma. I like to go out to eat and to get coffee and muffins.

I'm very good at advocating for myself and telling staff what I want and need. I enjoyed speaking at the Hopes and Dreams Day.

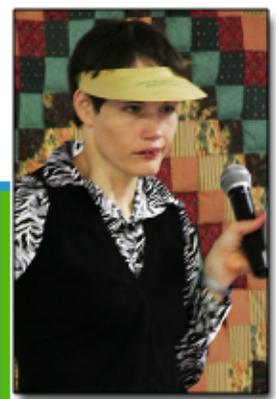


Marcia Dinkelspiel

Hopes & Dreams Day Speaker: Anya Peskin

Anya has been active in self-advocacy for 10 years. She states that she would like to stay at Sonoma Developmental Center for the rest of her life. She feels that the Center has good doctors and good medical care, and feel that they know her needs very well. Anya feels that she has been very successful at the Center.

She works at Sunrise Industries as a secretary and is looking for more work and more money so that she can go to Mexico to visit her mom.



Anya Peskin

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