



EXTRA EXTRA....READ ALL ABOUT US!!

August 2008

ARO (located in the King building) provides advocacy and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities in partnership with: Advocacy Coordinator, Area Board IV (Clients' Rights Advocate and Volunteer Advocate Coordinator), Parent Hospital Association, Regional Centers and Sonoma Regional Project.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

By Betsy Stark

I would like to welcome you to the first quarterly issue of the ARO (Advocacy-Rights-Opportunities) newsletter. In this issue we will be talking about what has been occurring at ARO and introducing the departments who occupy the building, with a brief description of what they do. I hope you enjoy reading the ARO newsletter.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the People First of California Statewide Convention in Sacramento. People First is an international organization run by and for people with developmental disabilities. The members learn to speak up and make decisions for themselves. People First members plan fundraisers, social events, community projects and conferences. The members have been instrumental in advocating for their rights and assisting with the passage of legislation that ensures their rights.

The theme for this year's People First Convention was "Do The Math: People First + Speaking Up = Change." This three day convention in June was attended by 13 clients and 11 staff from Sonoma Developmental Center. Keynote speakers included Karen Gaffney and Norman Kunc. Karen is a Northwest athlete who can swim for miles in some of the coldest waters around the world, including Lake Tahoe and the English Channel. This is a young women with Down Syndrome who is dedicated to promoting the amazing capabilities of people with disabilities.

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Norm Kunc, who holds a Master of Science degree in family therapy, was born with cerebral palsy. He is a well known advocate within the disability rights community. He is an engaging speaker who uses humor to initiate social change.

The Convention offered delicious meals; just ask Jeanine who lives on the Bentley residence. The desserts were “scrumptious” and during dinner Jeanine didn’t only have seconds, but thirds on the dessert! Anya who lives on the Malone residence renewed an old acquaintance with Kim, a high school friend. Kim was chosen as one of the three bachelorettes during the dating game. She was not chosen, however both Kim and Anya had loads of fun meeting new friends and dancing the night away.

This was the Thirteenth Annual Convention. Mark your calendars for June 2009 to attend the next People First Convention!



The hallways, the multipurpose room, and the conference rooms are decorated with art from the residents of Sonoma.

Advocacy Support Groups have started at ARO with members from Program 4 and 6 attending.

Town Hall meetings and monthly court house hearings have been occurring in the multipurpose room with other meetings occurring in the other two conference rooms by various committees, workgroups, regional centers, area boards, blood drive, etc. Trainings have also been occurring at these sites.

ARO has three conference rooms available for use. Contact Robin German at Sonoma Regional Project to reserve a room, (707) 938-6518. You can view the Calendars for these rooms on the SDC intranet web page.

Coming soon...a living room area will be available for residents of Sonoma and in the community, for relaxation, television viewing, People First information, etc.

AREA BOARD 4

Area Boards were created to make sure people with developmental disabilities and their families get the services they need. They work with individuals and their families who reside in developmental centers and in the community. There are 13 Area Boards serving people with developmental disabilities as defined by federal law. Area Boards protect the legal, civil, and service rights of persons with developmental disabilities. Each developmental center has both a Clients' Rights Advocate and a Volunteer Advocate Coordinator hired by the local Area Board. Here at Sonoma, we are represented by Area Board 4.



CLIENTS' RIGHTS ADVOCATE

The Clients' Rights Advocate (CRA), Gerald Corradi, is responsible for ensuring that the rights of each resident of the developmental center are guaranteed, protected and asserted. Like all residents of the United States, people with developmental disabilities have the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed all other individuals.

Anyone who has a question, complaint or problem can call the CRA. This could be a resident; their family; advocates; staff; conservators; regional center representatives; or concerned community members. Mr. Corradi can be reached at 707-938-6501.

VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE COORDINATOR

The Volunteer Advocate Coordinator provides advocacy services for people living at Sonoma Developmental Center who do not have family or conservators to represent them. Individuals can refer themselves or be referred by the Inter Disciplinary Team. The Volunteer Advocate Coordinator and team of volunteer advocates act as authorized representatives, attending planning meetings and advocate with residents when issues arise regarding rights, choices and service options.

SONOMA REGIONAL PROJECT

The Regional Resource Development Project (RRDP) concept was initially piloted in 1987 and authorized by the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act. There are five RRDP offices through out the state that assist developmental centers in activities related to admissions, transition planning to the community and related activities.

Our local RRDP is known as Sonoma Regional Project (SRP). SRP facilitates information sharing regarding the continuum of services and supports available to Center residents, families, Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) staff, regional centers, and community care providers, with the goal of advancing choice, independence, dignity, and health, in the least restrictive environment.

The Sonoma Regional Project assists consumers, their families, SDC staff, and regional centers in facilitating the delivery of supports and services for a successful transition to and integration with the community. The Project ensures necessary communication occurs between SDC staff and the community. The Project also provides training for community providers and follow-up services to the individuals who move to the community to ensure continuity of the program plan.

If a person is in jeopardy of losing their community placement, the Project provides crisis intervention services. If an admission to a developmental center is likely, the Project conducts an assessment, which includes specific recommendations, and then ensures that all other alternate living arrangements, services, and community supports have been exhausted before the client is admitted.

PARENT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

The Parent Hospital Association (PHA) has been devoted to advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities for over fifty years. It was established in the 1950's by parents, family members and friends of developmentally disabled people living at Sonoma Developmental Center. As a non-profit organization, the PHA provides monetary support for a variety of programs and services at SDC.

The Mission Statement of PHA is to promote the general welfare of people with developmental disabilities by encouraging the development, enhancement, and maintenance of programs supporting their needs.



REGIONAL CENTERS

Regional Centers are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services to coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. They are responsible for providing service coordination for over 230,000 people with developmental disabilities in the state of California with approximately 2,540 of these individuals, currently living in Developmental Centers. Regional Centers assist persons with developmental disabilities and their families in securing those services and supports, which maximize opportunities and choices for living, working, learning, and recreating in the community. There are 21 Regional Centers with more than 40 offices located throughout the state.

When an individual is assessed and identified to be eligible for Regional Center services, they become a client of their local Regional Center. The majority of Sonoma Developmental Center residents are from Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB), Golden Gate Regional Center (GGRC), and North Bay Regional Center (NBRC). A fewer number of residents are represented by Alta California Regional Center (ACRC), Far Northern Regional Center (FNRC), North Los Angeles County Regional Center (NLACRC), Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC), San Andreas Regional Center (SARC), San Diego Regional Center (SDRC), South Central Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC), Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC), and Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC).

There are Regional Center offices at ARO to promote collaboration and partnerships. Service Coordinators from GGRC have set up their offices, are connected to the GGRC web site and are available by phone. FNRC and RCRC access their office when on campus. We are looking forward to NBRC and other Regional Centers utilizing the offices.



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