



HARBOR HAPPENINGS

A PUBLICATION OF HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER

SUMMER 2011

HRC AND OUR FAMILIES: TOGETHER FROM THE START

Together From the Start, HRC'S new program for infants and toddlers ages birth to three years, has been busy developing an exciting range of early childhood development activities for these children and their families. At our recent Open House, we marked the grand opening of our new Family Center and the introduction of our new monthly schedule of activities for families of HRC infants and toddlers.

All Together From the Start sessions involve parents engaging with their child in activities designed to enhance their development. The sessions also provide opportunities to meet other parents. The program is facilitated by HRC staff specializing in early childhood development, including Counselors Betsy Jennings, Maria Rivas and Vel Roman, Speech and Language Pathologists Melissa Greener, Natalie DiMora, and Risha Armstrong, Occupational Therapist Pam Hellman, and Educational Specialist Barbara del Monico.

The HRC Resource and Assistive Technology Center also offers a variety of new materials of particular interest to parents of infants and toddlers on such topics as parenting, childcare, motor skills, feeding, sleeping advice and much more. These items are displayed in the Family Center for families to take home. Many new books and DVD's are available for checkout for families and service providers.



Guests enjoyed touring the Family Center and sampling activities at the Together From the Start Open House. Aidan Vincent and mom (top) enjoyed a variety of activities in the HRC Courtyard while Owen Shin and mom (middle) interacted with HRC staff in the new Family Center. Behaviorist Rebecca Asdel (bottom) discovers family-friendly toddler equipment.

together
from
the start

A Program of Harbor Regional Center

STATE BUDGET DEFICIT IMPACTS DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

As a result of the ongoing fiscal crisis in California over the last few years, the budget for developmental services, along with the budgets for many other state services, has been reduced.

After taking office, Governor Brown presented his proposal for a balanced budget, with deep spending cuts to a variety of state services. Legislators were moved by the extensive testimony of clients, families, service providers, regional centers, and other advocates at Budget Hearings, and trimmed the proposed cuts to developmental services from \$750 million to \$577 million. But when combined with the loss of associated federal funding, this will amount to a devastating 25% reduction to our service system overall.

\$577 Million in Developmental Services Budget Cuts Became Effective in March.

The portion of the budget package signed into law by Governor Brown in March continued the temporary 4.25% payment reductions for regional centers and service providers, and imposed a number of administrative reductions to regional centers and developmental services. DDS was directed by the legislature to come back with specific proposals for achieving reductions. These additional measures were signed into law with the Budget in June. Some of the most significant changes for our community will include, but are not limited to:

- A new Annual Family Program Fee of \$150-\$200 for families of minor children who live at home, and have income of at least 400% or more of the federal poverty level. Some families will be exempt, e.g., if the child receives Medi-Cal or does not receive services beyond eligibility determination, needs assessment and service coordination.

- Elimination of the regional center Prevention Program. Children under three who are currently in this program can continue to participate until they reach 36 months or until June 30, 2012. Effective July 1st, infants “at-risk” of developmental disability will be served by Family Resource Centers for information and referral, while regional centers will continue to provide services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays (who meet Early Start criteria).
- A new requirement for families to provide the regional center with a copy of any health benefit card at the time of assessment or at the individual service planning meeting, to promote access of any available benefits.
- A requirement to access education-funded day services, rather than regional center-funded programs, for 18-22-year-old adults.
- Requirements for adult day services to offer flexible or half-day schedules (for fewer funds).

The Possibility of Deeper Cuts

The Budget that passed is counting on increased state revenue. But if this anticipated revenue does not materialize, the budget includes a “trigger” to cut more services, including an additional \$100 million reduction to developmental services. Additional reductions to our system, following several years of cuts and rate freezes that have already been absorbed, would be devastating. Harbor Regional Center parents, service providers and staff have been taking this message to our representatives in the legislature, in our local districts and at the Capitol. ■

FAMILY-RUN RESTAURANT SCARDINO'S ADDS HRC CLIENT TO THEIR CLAN

Phil and Pauline Iorillo, owners of Scardino's Italian Restaurant treat their loyal customers like family. The first time Andy Greenstadt had dinner at the Italian eatery with his family, he felt an instant connection to Scardino's.

"If you're bored, I can put you to work," Scardino's Manager Tracy Arcos said to Andy. Andy jumped out of his chair, asked for an apron, then started cleaning tables and getting water for the customers. Guess you can say it was "family at first sight."

Months later, as Harbor Regional Center Employment Specialists brainstormed places Andy could work, Andy's mother Jean mentioned Scardino's. Tracy remembered Andy's enthusiasm and within weeks, Andy was hired.

Andy has been working at Scardino's since August, 2010. He sets up the dining room and patio prior to opening. Andy fills salt and pepper shakers and other condiment containers with precision. He arranges napkins and placemats to ensure perfect table settings. He cleans menus, counters, tables and chairs. Andy also vacuums the floor, positions heat lamps and is assigned anything else necessary to prepare for the first hungry guests.

Observe Andy, and you'll see a level of enthusiasm that every employer loves to see in their employees. He's always smiling, sometimes humming, even dancing while busily working away.

"I like everything about my job. Papa (Phil) makes me feel great and I'm treated like family here. When I get up in the morning, I can't wait to get to work," Andy explains.

"He's just a regular member of the crew. I saw a lot in him. Andy knows what to do. He's got it down, provides the help we need, is very attentive, and likes helping

out. I have confidence in him to do more at Scardino's. We'll let him keep growing."

Andy's meticulousness is rewarded by customers that leave him tips. Andy handles the details, and the Iorillos are able to focus on the bigger picture.

Besides completing the tasks required of him, Andy brings a tender calm in the midst of controlled scurry. En route to fetch a few menus, it's common for him to lightly put his head on a shoulder or offer a quick hug. Andy's type of thoughtfulness is in sync to the family environment at Scardino's and helps to contribute to a positive morale.



"I look forward to work. He makes everyone feel good, is protective and loving," says Tracy.

Andy is self-motivated to get up in the morning, pack his own snack and ride the bus to work. He has embraced the challenge of change. Andy's family is proud of him, but most importantly, "He is proud of himself," Jean Greenstadt stated. ■

After meticulously cleaning the salt and pepper shakers, Andy reviews his list of duties.

PROJECT SEARCH FINDS A HOME AT THE LONG BEACH COURTHOUSE

By Danielle Heck, Employment Specialist, Harbor Regional Center



The Project Search Interns are ready for their first day!

As Aaron Fenderson gingerly stepped into the crowded classroom at the Long Beach LA Superior Courthouse, I gave him an inquisitive and disapproving look. Immediately, Aaron realized that I was wondering why he was late today.

“Oh, no,” Aaron explained with a smile, “I wasn’t late. I was at a party – a party for me! Look, the Traffic Department gave me this card of appreciation and everyone signed it!”

Aaron, a Harbor Regional Center client and Long Beach Unified School District student, was moving from the Traffic Department to the Civil Department. His co-workers in the Traffic Department were going to be sad to see him go.

Aaron is among six other students who will be the first group to successfully complete an internship program at the Long Beach Courthouse called Project SEARCH. The Project SEARCH employment training model has been very successful in health care, banking, and manufacturing settings, the public

sector, and a variety of other private sector businesses. Individuals with developmental disabilities have been surpassing typical expectations and obtaining a wide variety of non-traditional jobs as a result of the program.

Project SEARCH’s unique model is based on collaboration and partnership. Harbor Regional Center has partnered with Long Beach Unified School District and PathPoint, an adult employment program, to develop employment training opportunities in our area. The Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles has taken a lead to be one of the first entities in Southern California to host Project SEARCH.

Since starting Project SEARCH at the Long Beach Courthouse in January 2011, Harbor Regional Center clients have also been surpassing expectations. “We have seen the students develop independence, confidence, and important work skills,” explained Terri Wargo, LBUSD teacher for Project SEARCH.

The LA Superior Court in Long Beach provides internships in the Traffic, Civil, Jury, Judicial, and Criminal Departments. PathPoint supports the students with intern coaches, funded by HRC, and job development paid for by the Department of Rehabilitation. The ultimate goal of the program is competitive employment for the students, utilizing the skills learned during their time at the Long Beach Courthouse.

“I used to have poor attendance, but now that I am in Project SEARCH, I understand that Renee and other court employees are counting on me, and I have had almost perfect attendance since starting,” Curtis Sudol explained.

There is a variety of reasons the program works. One of the reasons is the total immersion of students in the

(continued on page 5)

Project SEARCH finds a Home at the Long Beach Courthouse (cont. from page 4)



The Interns receive classroom instruction in the Courthouse.

workplace for internships and classroom instruction, where students practice employability skills including problem solving, communication, and team work. Students develop independence by utilizing public transportation to get to and from the internship site.

“I find it to be rewarding to be in a program that teaches not only work skills, but life skills as well,” stated PathPoint Coach Carla Friedrich.

While at their internships, students work with a mentor who is an LA Superior Court employee, who provides natural support and constructive feedback to the Project SEARCH interns.

“I have observed Project SEARCH providing a pathway for the interns to make better decisions and overcome challenges faced in the workforce,” commented Renee Y. Walker, Secretary to Judicial Officers and a mentor for the Project SEARCH interns.

Deanna Suarez, one of the Project SEARCH interns, summed up the most important point. “I am learning skills that will help me get a job.” ■

% RECOGNIZING EXTRA EFFORT!

HRC is dedicated to providing support, information and choices to our clients and their families. Our staff, from the receptionists to our psychologists, strive to demonstrate our core values through their interactions with you.

You can help us recognize those individuals who have provided you with outstanding care and service. When you see an HRC staff member who is demonstrating respect by treating people considerately, working collaboratively, looking for ways to be helpful, responding quickly and explaining any delays, listening, sharing information, or any other assistance you found helpful, simply fill in this form and mail it to: Office of Information and Development, 21231 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503 or by e-mail at cheryl.perez@harborrc.org

We will make sure that the HRC Counselor, support staff, clinical staff, Resource Center staff or other members of the HRC team receive your note along with our special recognition.

Name of person you wish to recognize: _____

Your name: _____

How that person demonstrated outstanding service or fulfillment of our core values: _____

We appreciate your support in helping us acknowledge these outstanding individuals.

FAMILY *matters*

KATHY AND BRENDA: THE NEXT STAGE IN LIFE Welcome to the Coleman Home



Brenda Cabral (left) and Kathy Driemeier (right) were warmly welcomed into Lynetta Coleman's home. The family dog even helps the ladies wake up on time every morning.

This is the story of two women, Kathy Driemeier and Brenda Cabral, who live in the home of Mentor Lynetta Coleman. HRC and California MENTOR matched Kathy and Brenda with Lynetta, who has become not

just a mentor, but a role model, teacher, advocate and most importantly, family.

For about ten years after the death of their mother, Kathy lived with her loving sister Deborah. But Deborah began to realize that as she struggled to take care of Kathy's physical, emotional, and social needs, their sisterly relationship was becoming strained. She did her best to "handle everything" until her own health began to suffer. Her HRC Counselor Amber Hernandez thought that Debbie and Kathy could find the right solution through the new program that HRC had developed with California MENTOR. After learning more and spending a trial weekend in the home of Mentor Lynetta, Kathy was ready to move in.

Kathy's sister Deborah wrote, "I'm assured my sister is now living in a warm, secure environment with a loving person who is trained and ready to take on Kathy's next stage in life."

For some time, Brenda had longed to be seen as a capable and self-sufficient

adult. As much as she desired to become independent, she was also full of doubts that she would be able to do it on her own. She turned to her HRC Counselor Vivian Galaviz, and together they looked into MENTOR homes.

Lynetta recalls that Brenda was shy when she arrived. She did not push Brenda to talk about her past, or what she wanted for the future – but she was always there to provide support and encouragement when Brenda needed it. Gradually, Brenda disclosed her hopes and dreams for becoming more independent. Though she faced challenges along the way, Brenda is now happily employed at a Chipotle restaurant, and recently graduated from UEI College as an "A" student. The new, more self-confident Brenda now looks forward to someday becoming fully independent, with a job in a medical field, a car, and her own place.

Both women continue to grow, and to inspire and motivate everyone around them as they look forward to the next stage in their lives. Lynetta feels that during everyone's lifetime, each one of us might need a mentor, to share their experience and to be a counselor, teacher or just a trusted friend. She is happy to be that person for Kathy and Brenda. ■

California MENTOR's Adult Family Home Agency is a program of certified foster family homes. "Mentors" open up their homes to provide a home and support to adults with developmental disabilities.

Has your child wanted to be on a flag football, softball or soccer team, or learn another sport, or learn cheer? Are you a client that wants to participate in sports, go to dances, meet some new people, make new friends? What about taking a dance class that is offered through your city's Recreation Department? Is your high school student looking for a new elective? Do you know anyone who is in a wheelchair and would love to experience going to a "Sports Camp" for the weekend? Read on for just a few ideas of fun things to do in the community.

Challenger Softball and AYSO's VIP Soccer are just two programs that are offered locally for children and adolescents with disabilities. These programs are a great way to get everyone moving and interacting on and off the field. The ball fields are also a great place for everyone to make new friends!

Palos Verdes Pop Warner has started a Challenger Flag Football and Cheer program! This is a structured football and cheer program for participants with special needs ages 5-18. The new season will begin August 1st, 2011 and the games will be played at local high schools in Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach and Torrance.

The City of Torrance Special Needs Sports and Recreation program offers a variety of options for youngsters ages eight through adulthood. The sports offered range from bowling to snowshoeing. There is an afterschool program for ages 14 -22 and dances for ages 14 and up!

Many of our cities offer a variety of classes year-round through their Recreation Departments. One of our clients, a teenage girl who has Down syndrome, took a Polynesian dance class

with her mother through the City of Torrance. Mom and daughter practiced their dances together at home. When it came time for the big performance at the James Armstrong Theatre, the mom watched proudly from the audience while her daughter performed a beautiful and flawless dance routine on stage with others from the class.

When considering an elective for the upcoming school year, is your high school student looking for something new to do? Why not consider JROTC as an option? One of our South Bay high schools has had several years of amazing success with their inclusion of male and female Special Education students in their JROTC program! The students have thrived in this appropriately-disciplined and physically active setting.

There is an ADA accessible camp just a couple of hours away where the activities are sports related and tailored specifically for people who are in wheelchairs and have other mobility issues. The weekend camp is staffed with caring volunteers and run by SPORTS 4 Exceptional Athletes (S4EA) which is a terrific non-profit organization whose office is in San Diego. What a great opportunity!

There really is a vast array of exciting social and recreational opportunities for our clients in our local communities (and a short distance away) if you just look for them! One place to start your search is on our Web site: www.harborrc.org Click on the Resource Center Tab then click on Resource Directories and then click on Social Recreation.

It's time to start having some fun!

IN MEMORIAM **HARLEY RUBENSTEIN**

We are deeply saddened by the sudden loss of our good friend and Board of Trustees Member, Harley Rubenstein. In addition to serving for many years on the Board and Client Advisory Committee, Harley has made a tremendous contribution to a variety of community organizations, as an active advocate for community awareness and support for people with disabilities.

HELPING YOUTH DEVELOP “SOFT” SKILLS FOR JOB SUCCESS: TIPS FOR PARENTS

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What are Soft Skills?

“...being dependable, responsible, punctual, adaptable, honest, honorable, well-mannered, positive toward work, and appropriately dressed and groomed. Soft skills also refer to such attributes as the ability to get along with others, work in teams, attend to tasks, work independently, and provide excellent customer service, both within the company and externally.”

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth

Most parents of youth approaching adulthood want to know what they can do to help their sons and daughters succeed in the workplace. One way family members can help is by working with and encouraging youth to develop traits known as soft skills.

Even though many parents may be unfamiliar with this term, they will discover that they are actually very familiar with these everyday, commonsense skills that are important in all aspects of life. Soft skills can help youth succeed in life no matter what they are doing. By improving these skills, a youth can enhance his or her social life, do better in postsecondary education settings and be more successful at finding and maintaining employment.

For youth with disabilities who face much higher unemployment rates than their peers without disabilities, soft skills are especially important. Families of youth with disabilities play a key role in helping their youth learn expected behaviors, understand the unspoken rules of the workplace and deal with personality conflicts.

In addition to promoting these skills at home, families can make sure that the development of soft skills is adequately addressed in their child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the transition-planning process of high school.

What soft skills should parents focus on? Work readiness standards include communication skills, interpersonal skills and lifelong learning skills.

Youth who have these skills are more likely to be hired and less likely to be fired.

Families can use several strategies to help their child develop soft skills.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A considerable amount of communication is nonverbal. However, some disabilities make it difficult for people to read the nonverbal communication of others, such as eye contact, facial expressions or gestures. Family members of youth with such disabilities can use a variety of techniques to help their youth learn to perceive and better understand nonverbal social cues.

How You Can Help

- When watching a movie or television show, point out facial expressions and body language used by the actors. Explain how actors use gestures to convey their emotions.
- Encourage your youth to ask questions when he or she doesn’t understand what someone says. Asking questions shows people that your youth is listening carefully, even when not making eye contact.
- Help your youth look at a person’s nose or cheek if looking in someone’s eye is too distressing. It will appear as though he or she is making eye contact.
- Demonstrate an acceptable distance between two people who are not family members. Have your youth practice this. In Western culture, the acceptable amount of personal space between two people is 1.5 to 4 feet, depending on how well you know the other person.
- Have your youth join a self-advocacy social group outside of school to improve communication and active listening skills. Such groups are often offered by centers

for independent living, self-advocacy or other disability organizations.

- Enlist the help of other people in your youth's life to provide guidance in social standards. For instance, a teacher might need to tell your youth that he can shake her hand instead of hugging her.
- Discuss other potential strategies with your youth's IEP team. Include a related goal in your son or daughter's IEP.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Good personal hygiene and appearance promote social interaction with others, while poor hygiene can give employers and co-workers a bad impression.

How You Can Help

- Discuss personal cleanliness with your son or daughter, stressing that most workplaces require employees to dress appropriately and to be clean.
- Require that your youth be dressed appropriately and have good hygiene when attending school, family functions or places of religion.

Employers are also looking for employees with good people skills. While especially important in jobs where employees interact with customers, these skills can also help youth interact with their co-workers, avoid conflict and stand out from other job applicants or employees.

How You Can Help

- Teach youth phrases they can use on the phone: "May I please speak to Mr. Smith?" or in the workplace: "I'm Deborah. It's nice to meet you."
- Teach youth to allow others to finish speaking before beginning to talk.
- Have your youth answer the phone at home in a professional and courteous manner.
- Identify areas of social difficulty for your youth and role play how to handle new or unfamiliar situations. Role-playing gives youth an opportunity to practice what they would say and do in various situations.
- Sign your youth up for social skills trainings at school, centers for independent living, disability groups or self-advocacy organizations. These trainings provide youth with a structured opportunity to learn and practice social

skills such as taking turns or giving compliments. Have them practice what they have learned with you at home.

LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

Personal responsibility, initiative, self-management and perseverance are other important qualities employers look for in a new hire.

How You Can Help

- Have youth take responsibility for waking up on time, setting an alarm clock and getting ready for school or work.
- Find opportunities for youth to take on a project from start to finish, such as planting a garden.
- Have youth visit a parent's workplace if the job allows this. Youth can learn different tasks associated with the job or follow other employees to learn what is involved in their jobs.
- Enroll youth in a mentor program. Mentors can help youth on many levels: building self-esteem, learning to stick with challenging activities, managing time and communicating with other adults.
- Ask youth to identify a simple, fun skill to learn. This could include cooking a certain recipe, working with a specific computer program or learning a new game. Have a young person research information on steps for learning the skill, and then help him or her follow and complete the steps.

This article was adapted from an Information Brief and series of podcasts PACER originally created for the National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD-Youth) with support from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. "Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families," published by NCWD-Youth, will be available at www.ncwd-youth.info.

A PACER CD titled "Top Secret Job Skills: Declassified," is also helpful and can be ordered by calling 952-838-9000. View a clip online at: PACER.org/publications/transition.asp.

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Client focus

ROBERT LEVY: Worthy of Presidential Recognition

Robert Levy had been in the work force for a number of years. He worked for 12 years at a bank performing clerical duties. Then he changed gears and tried out other options, such as working in a car wash or attending a regional center day program, but nothing felt quite right for him. Over the years Robert's motivation dwindled. He stopped



Robert proudly shows off his letter from President Obama.

caring about his job, his attendance was poor and he was depressed. He even quit driving. Eventually, he decided to retire and stay home. His HRC Counselor and his supported living instructor began noticing that he was falling into an even deeper slump. Sitting around his apartment day after day, he developed an increasingly discouraged and negative outlook.

Patricia Conover, Robert's supported living instructor, encouraged Robert to do some volunteer work. As it turns out, volunteering is exactly what Robert needed to get back on track. Robert now volunteers for several organizations, including two days a week at the Aquarium of the Pacific where he assists visitors at the door and as an Aquarium Host.

Robert has logged so many hours of volunteer time that the Aquarium referred him to be a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award. Robert met the highest criteria for Gold level, for over 500 hours of service at the



SLS instructor Patricia Conover works with Robert on his budget.

Aquarium, or the equivalent of two years of volunteer work!

In recognition of this accomplishment, Robert received a Volunteer Service Award and a letter from the White House that was signed by President Obama! He has framed both of these and they hang prominently on the wall in his living room.

He hands out food to the homeless and families in need through Catholic Charities. At Meals on Wheels, Robert helps pack food for the meals that he delivers to people that are "shut-ins." During these deliveries, Robert enjoys taking extra time to visit and establish friendships with the people that he delivers the meals to.

Robert is also involved in People First of Long Beach where he holds the position of President. Through this affiliation he teaches people with disabilities about self-advocacy. Robert has assisted in fundraisers through People First and helped raise money for the Seal Beach Animal Shelter.

Niima Radford, Robert's HRC Counselor, sums it up nicely by saying "Since Robert began volunteering his time, his attitude changed completely. He is happy and positive. I am so proud of him and I know that he is proud of himself."

Congratulations Robert on a job well done! ■

The South Bay Sunrise Rotary Club is one of Harbor Regional Center's newest community partners. They recently partnered with us by sponsoring a needy HRC family for the 2010 Adopt A Family program, which they found was a "heartwarming experience," and they complimented HRC on the good work that we do for our clients and their families.

Shortly after the Holidays, Mary Tabata, President of the South Bay Sunrise Rotary Club, contacted HRC and asked if we had any clients that would benefit from a new, free, all-terrain wheelchair. The Rotary Clubs in our area were working on a district-wide service project and they put together enough funds to purchase wheelchairs from the International Wheelchair Mission. These wheelchairs have been designed to travel on dirt and gravel terrain and they are usually distributed abroad in rural areas. This year the District Rotary Club's plans were to distribute these 72 chairs locally to various service organizations and they wanted to include four Harbor Regional Center clients!

The HRC clients that were selected were all able to attend the distribution event with their families. The event was held on Saturday, March 12, 2011 at the Hacienda Hotel in El Segundo. Each recipient was called up to the stage individually to be introduced and then to be presented with their new chair. The smiles, cheers and excitement were non-stop!

Twenty-two-year-old Tysen Lucas will now be able to get onto the beach in his new light-weight yet extremely durable all-terrain wheelchair and watch as his brother Tyler coaches and competes in beach volleyball competitions.

Michelle Garcia is 13 years old and her family has wanted to take her to the beach, go camping and introduce her to a wider range of activities. Michelle and her family will now be able to get outside and get moving!

Jesus Mejia is an eight-year-old who loves to go to the park and the beach

with his family but his old wheelchair does not work on that type of terrain well enough to access it. Jesus can now be comfortable and enjoy the park, the beach, anywhere the family wants to go!



(above) Tysen Lucas waits excitedly for his new wheelchair with his brother Tyler, their mom Trina and Todd Cruser from the South Bay Sunrise Rotary Club.



(left) Jesus Mejia and his family are looking forward to having fun outdoor adventures with his all-terrain wheelchair.

Brandon Neri is an active nine-year-old who plays softball on a Challenger team and his mom excitedly said that he will now be able to access the field more easily and really "play ball."

Harbor Regional Center sends sincere thanks to the South Bay Sunrise Rotary Club and all of Rotary District 5280 for providing these all-terrain wheelchairs to our clients and opening up their lives to a new world of outdoor opportunities! ■

resource center

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LAB POINTS THE WAY TO INCREASED INDEPENDENCE WITH TOY AND EQUIPMENT LENDING LIBRARY

*By Barbara del Monico, Resource Center Manager
Elizabeth Green, Assistive Technology Specialist*



The Harbor Regional Center Resource and Assistive Technology Center is committed to helping HRC clients of all ages to live more independent lives through the use of assistive technology, or "AT."

Play is Child's Work

Play is the way that children learn, and the developmental toys in the HRC Toy Lending Library are selected to help them to do just that. The toy collection has an emphasis upon

interactive toys which help to promote the development of developmental skills and language acquisition.

Each toy in the library includes a Toy Dialogue which identifies:

- A skill area – such as language, cognitive, motor, etc. – that the toy helps to develop
- Actual dialogue that the parent can use to introduce the toy and play with their child in such a way that they are working on that skill development.

Our selection of toys for use by HRC children ranges from crib toys for infants, to toys that promote beginning reading. Examples include interactive puzzles, toys with built-in reinforcement, switch-activated toys for children with motor challenges, and read-along books.

Communication, Computers, and Activities of Daily Living

Assistive technology can provide the

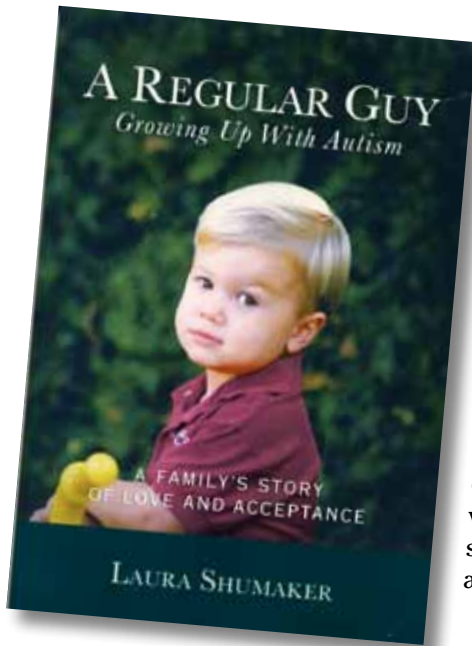
support people with developmental disabilities need to participate in their homes, schools, and communities. The broad umbrella of AT covers augmentative and alternative communication devices, as well as computer access and use, and electronic aids to daily living.

Once a client has received an evaluation from the AT lab and a device has been recommended, he or she can actually borrow a device to try it out. This special AT lending library program is available to HRC clients. The Lab offers technology equipment such as speech generating devices (Dynavox V Max, I-Chat), software (Switch Kids, Old Mac's Farm), and a variety of computer access hardware. All of these items are available to lend to qualified clients.

In the near future, the Resource and Assistive Technology Center is hoping to purchase some of the most current and popular technology, the iPad, just as soon as we are able. The iPad can be used as a speech-generating device, and has applications for providing reinforcement, teaching cause and effect, and more.

Once a client receives a loan item, Elizabeth Green, Assistive Technology Specialist trains the user and family/caregiver in appropriate use of the device. In addition, on-going training and support is provided to each device user.

The AT Lab offers ongoing training in the use of BoardMaker software to families who wish to utilize activity schedules and picture communication systems with their family member. We hope you will visit our lending library very soon! ■



A Regular Guy – Author Laura Shumaker, a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle and nationally-recognized autism advocate and parent, visited Harbor Regional Center in April to read excerpts from her new book **A Regular Guy**. Ms. Shumaker's book is about her son who has autism, and her family's story of love and acceptance. After her reading she engaged in a lively question-and-answer session with parents and staff, and signed copies of her book for audience members.



Author Laura Shumaker signs books for audience members.

Save the date for best-selling author Rachel Simon who will be visiting HRC on Tuesday, November 8, 2011. She is best known for her critically acclaimed memoir **Riding the Bus with My Sister**. Following the presentation, Rachel will sign your book or you may purchase a book for her to sign. The presentation will be held from 10:00 am-12:00 pm at HRC Torrance, Conference rooms A1 & A2. ■

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: ANN BRAKEL

Ann started volunteering at the Resource and Assistive Technology Center in February 2010. Ann is a long-time resident of the South Bay and is the mother of six children, the youngest a daughter who has a diagnosis of Down syndrome and is a client of HRC. Ann brings a wealth of experience to the Resource Center as she has been employed as a para-educator and as a teacher in Special Education. Ann is committed to providing information and support to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Ann completed the HRC Parent Mentor Training and has provided support to parents as a Parent Mentor. In the Resource Center, Ann welcomes parents and HRC Staff and is readily available to provide tours and to locate books, DVDs or other materials that will address the needs of the client and or their family. On an ongoing basis, Ann keeps the materials on the shelves organized and accessible for patrons. Ann's experience and knowledge are invaluable to the Resource Center and we are grateful to have her as a member of our team. ■



Ann provides friendly assistance and experience when volunteering in the HRC Resource Center.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE RESOURCE CENTER?

By Dominique DeBorba

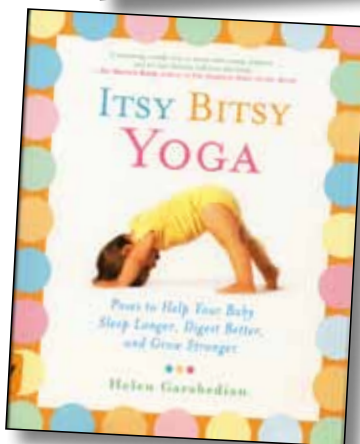


The Baby Bond – This book gives the many unknown benefits of a responsive, nurturing parent and important facts for a happier, healthier child.



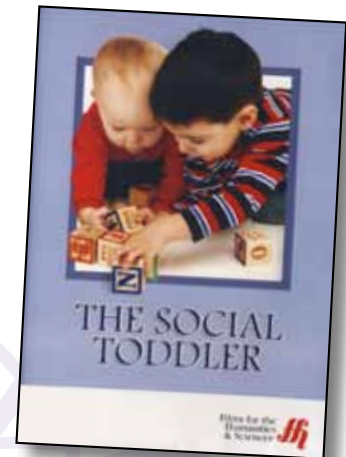
Baby Signing Time! – The creators of the hit series Signing Time! present Baby Signing Time! Research shows that signing allows babies to communicate long before they can speak, reduces tantrums and frustration, and increases bonding between parent and child. It's also been shown to increase

baby's vocabulary and may even increase IQ.



Itsy Bitsy Yoga – If you've been searching for an excellent way to bond with your baby and improve his or her health, this book is a great resource. Learn the many benefits of yoga, posture by posture in this accessible guide, with seventy beautiful black- and- white photos, at-a-glance reference charts, and memorable Itsy Bitsy Yoga rhymes.

The Social Toddler – This video sheds light on toddler behavior and presents strategies for coping with children in the 1-to 3-year-old range. It explores the basics of toddler growth and learning, looks at the world from a small child's perspective, and examines the needs of especially challenging children. ■



Off We Go to a Haircut – These books gently walk the reader through everyday events and outings that might confuse or upset him. This particular book takes the reader through all the steps of going for a haircut.

SIBLING CLUBS

The HRC Family Support Program has been fortunate to offer Sibling Clubs for siblings of HRC clients since 2004. Sibling Clubs are intended to give the typically-developing brothers and sisters, (ages 6 to 15), opportunities to meet with other siblings in a recreational setting, to obtain peer support and education about developmental disabilities.

Sibling groups are formed with children within a three-year age range. Group meetings are held at the HRC Torrance office and the HRC Training site in Long Beach, and run for six months, with meetings monthly or bi-weekly depending on the age of the group members. HRC staff members who serve as sibling club facilitators have a special desire to work with children, as well as formal education or training in psychology, counseling, child development or education. Club meetings may include art projects, exercises and games for fun and for a purpose. The exercises have a variety of objectives including getting to know one another, talking about and accepting similarities and differences, talking about feelings, sharing experiences of having a sibling with special needs and having fun. A parent meeting is arranged after at least three meetings in which parents can meet each other and also be informed in a general way about what topics have been covered and issues that have been raised by the participants.

What our participants and families have to say:

“ My son loved it and he can’t wait for it to start again!”

– Parent of an 8- year-old sib club participant

“My most favorite thing about the group was making friends.”

– 7-year-old sibling

“ My daughter told me that she understands what her brother is doing as she learned about it in a Sib Club.”

– Parent of a 6-year-old sib club participant

“ Sibling Club was a great thing for my daughter. She felt special having her own function to attend. She learned some coping strategies for situations with her sister that sometimes are unpleasant. Also, she realized that she wasn’t going through this alone.”

– Parent of a 6-year-old sib club participant

“My most favorite thing about the sibling club was being with other kids who have siblings with disabilities.”

– 11-year-old sib club participant



An all-boys Sibling Club created a name for their club, *The A-Team*.

MEET OUR BOARD: JOE CZARSKA

Joe and Mary-Jo Czarske's daughter Mattea was just 4 months old when Early Childhood Counselor Patricia Crook knocked on their door. At that time, baby Mattea was receiving Occupational Therapy through Little Company of Mary Hospital for problems related to sucking and swallowing, but the Czarske family didn't really know what the future held for their daughter, much less what a Regional Center was.

As time went by, Mattea was diagnosed with West Syndrome, and it became clear that we would be lifelong partners.

Joe recalls, "I realized Mattea was going to need a lifetime of services. I wanted to become more involved, with a focus on the greater community and not just my own child."



HRC Board Member Joe Czarske, with Mattea, Mary-Jo and Zack, on a recent family vacation.

Today Mattea is three years old and attending Jefferson School. Joe has served on the HRC Board of Trustees for two of those years, and is now entering his third year.

"From the time I joined the board, I have seen three years of massive cuts, year after year. I have learned

that in our service area, we have an incredible number of selfless people – parents, clients, service providers and staff – who are very giving of their time and energy, and who devote an incredible amount of involvement to make this Regional Center work... especially in this time of such limited resources."

Joe has given quite a lot, too. In addition to his perspective as a parent, he brings his professional expertise as a Program Manager at Cisco Systems, Inc. to the table. He has served as the Board Treasurer, and as the leader of a committee that has helped HRC to update and refine our policies.

Joe traveled with us to meet legislators in Sacramento this year, as part of a three-person HRC team participating in the Association of Regional Center Agencies' Grass Roots Awareness Day. Joe shared his own family's experience, but also spoke movingly on behalf of the community he had vowed to represent. "Being able to go to Sacramento showed me we do have a voice. Legislators may not always take the action we want, but they do listen."

We are very glad that Joe decided to get involved, and we look forward to a long partnership. ■



Joe Czarske, and Patricia Flores of Life Steps Foundation, Inc. traveled to the State Capitol to represent the HRC community.

HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER HOSTS POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

By Antoinette Perez, HRC Program Manager

In January, Harbor Regional Center was fortunate to host the California Consortium for Postsecondary Education for People with Developmental Disabilities. This all-day event brought together 175 different community partners and parents with the common enthusiasm for paving the way to a future of change.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Olivia Raynor from UCLA's Tarjan Center, spoke about the vision that "students with developmental disabilities will have access and support to pursue postsecondary education (PSE) for personal, social, vocational, and economic fulfillment."

In addition, there were presentations by three California colleges and universities that were recently awarded 5-year federal grants to implement Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID). This included the Taft College program out of Kern County, the Wayfinders Program at Fresno State, and the Pathway Extension program at UCLA.

TPSID provides grants to institutions of higher education to create or expand high quality, inclusive model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities. The afternoon was filled with breakout sessions that provided a "think tank" forum about what the future may hold for individuals with disabilities.

This working meeting was yet another remarkable reminder about the many opportunities that are unfolding for our clients and we at Harbor Regional Center continue to feel excited about being part of this movement.

HRC is currently working in collaboration with Long Beach City College and HOPE on the development of a new Post Secondary educational option in this area. Watch for more information in the near future. ■

Consortium participants brainstorm to promote opportunities for adults with disabilities



Keynote speaker Dr. Olivia Raynor of UCLA's Tarjan Center shares her vision for postsecondary education for people with developmental disabilities



NEW MEDI-CAL RULES

Important Changes for People with Disabilities and Seniors in Los Angeles County

California Department of Health Care Services

Most people with disabilities and seniors who have Medi-Cal only must enroll in a Medi-Cal Health Plan (also referred to as “Managed Care”) by the end of your birthday month, between June 2011- May 2012. Check with your Regional Center Counselor if you are not sure if this requirement affects you.

Some Medi-Cal beneficiaries are not required to enroll into Medi-Cal Health Plans:

- People with both Medi-Cal and Medicare
- People living in Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) and Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)
- Most children who have Medi-Cal and California Children’s Services (CCS)
- People in certain Home and Community-Based Waiver Programs

You can choose which Medi-Cal Health Plan in your county you want to enroll in.

If you live in Los Angeles County, you must choose Health Net or L.A. Care Health Plan. You will still have Medi-Cal in both of these Plans.

To learn about these Medi-Cal Health Plans, call:

Health Net: 1-800-675-6110

L.A. Care Health Plan: 1-888-839-9909

What is a Medi-Cal Health Plan?

In a Medi-Cal Health Plan, you get care from the doctors, hospitals, and providers in your Plan. You do not pay anything to be in a Medi-Cal Health Plan. You are still on Medi-Cal.

Do I need to change doctors and hospitals?

Maybe. You might be able to stay with both. Ask your doctors and hospitals which Plans they take, or call the Plans

and ask. When you enroll, choose the Plan that your doctors work with. Even if your doctor is not in your Plan, you may be able to keep seeing that doctor.

When do I need to enroll in a Medi-Cal Health Plan?

Medi-Cal (Health Services) will mail you more information 60 days before your birth month. You must choose a Medi-Cal Health Plan before or during your birth month. Your membership starts the following month.

What about the care I get through a special Medi-Cal program?

If you get care through a special Medi-Cal program (like CCS, GHPP, or Waiver) your care for those conditions will not change. But, you will get other care through a Medi-Cal Health Plan.

What if I don’t do anything?

If you do not enroll in a Medi-Cal Health Plan by the end of your birth month, the California Department of Health Services will choose one for you. Then, your new Medi-Cal Health Plan will send you a membership card.

I’m already in a Medi-Cal Health Plan.

Do I need to do anything? No, you do not need to do anything. Your health care will stay the same.

What if I have a problem with Medi-Cal, my Plan, or getting the care I need?

- Call the Help Center: 1-888-466-2219
- Call the Medi-Cal Managed Care Ombudsman: 1-888-452-8609
- Ask for a Medi-Cal State Hearing: 1-800-952-5253

For more information or to enroll in a Medi-Cal Health Plan, call Health Care Options: 1-800-430-4263 ■

AID FOR JAPANESE EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS People and Families with Developmental Disabilities Extend a Hand

Members of the family support group, Japanese Speaking Parents Association of Children with Challenges, realized that there were people and families with disabled members in Japan, who have been displaced or in need of support following the triple disaster of the massive earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear plant crisis. They learned that some of these families are not able to stay in the Evacuation Centers due to special challenges, such as behaviors, of their family member with the disability.

They have created the Japan Tsunami Victims with Disabilities Relief Fund to lend them support in this time of need.

At the same time local adults with developmental disabilities, with the help of their service providers, decided that they too wanted to help.

Clients and staff of Canyon Verde have always looked for opportunities to “give back” to others, through projects such as their “Make a Difference Day.” In addition, one of the friendships they had developed in their community is with a group of Japanese mothers, who visit them regularly to teach origami art. Therefore, when they learned of the Japanese Tsunami disaster, it was natural that Canyon Verde clients, staff and families wanted to respond.

“I am proud to share that Canyon Verde clients, staff, and families, through pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters, managed to raise \$753.94 to send to the Red Cross for the Japanese Tsunami Relief which we mailed off last week!” said Nancy Langdon, Executive Director, Canyon Verde.

Upon hearing about the relief efforts for people impacted by the multiple

disasters in Japan, the adults with developmental disabilities who participate in the Life Steps Seaside Learning Center Program in Long Beach also wanted to help. Dennis Hall had an idea, and offered to bring the entire contents of his change jar. Donation jars were put out at the center, and although the amount that the participants were able to raise was not large, “they were very proud to be able to help,” said Kristine Engels, Life Steps Director.

Hiromi Ashmore, HRC parent and member of the Japanese Speaking Parents Association, paid a recent visit to the adults at the Life Steps Seaside Learning Center. She told them about the Japan Tsunami relief fund and about people with disabilities served by the El Faro organization, in the evacuation area, who are struggling with the total disruption to their daily lives. The JSPACC has raised \$7000 to send to the group, which will include every penny of what was raised by the Seaside Learning Center clients. Ms. Ashmore added, “Thank you so much for making this effort. I am so touched...speechless.” ■



(above) Hiromi Ashmore and Dennis Hall, collecting funds for Japan at Life Steps' Seaside Learning Center.

(below) Matthew Parun deposits his donation at Canyon Verde in Redondo Beach.

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BOARD MEETINGS

- July 19, 2011 - 6:30 p.m.
- September 20, 2011 - 8:00 a.m.
- October 18, 2011 - 6:30 p.m.
- November 15, 2011 - 8:00 a.m.

The Board of Trustees of Harbor Regional Center meets on the Third Tuesday of the month, with the exception of June, August and December, when the Board does not meet.

All regularly scheduled business meetings of the Board are open to the public and visitors are welcome. The meetings are held in Conference Room A4 at Harbor Regional Center.

Harbor Happenings is a publication of Harbor Regional Center, a program of the Harbor Developmental Disabilities Foundation.

Join the HRC E-mail Network!

Receive e-mail bulletins from HRC on important news. Simply send an e-mail to **enetworksubscriber@harborrc.org**, provide us with your name and your e-mail address, and ask to be added to our electronic mailing list.

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