

# Newsletter

## *From the PDS Executive Director*

Dear PDS Friends, Families, Clients, Colleagues and Supporters,

We are keeping this newsletter short and sweet since everyone is so busy this holiday season. I just want to thank all of you who have been pitching in with extra help and generous donations at a difficult time. Your loyal support and encouragement have been so motivating and gratifying. The clients of Pacific Diversified Services, who have severe disabilities, are thriving in their jobs, confidently participating out and about in their neighborhoods, laughing it up with their friends, and experiencing peace and contentment because of you!

Happy Holidays to all of you who in some way are part of our little PDS family.

Warmly,  
Lisa Girdali

## *The Angels of PDS* by *Pati Stofiar*

It's the end of another year. Time to note the passage of time and reflect on those people that bring my family and me joy. And that list has long included Lisa Girdali and her PDS team.

PDS is the groundbreaking and exceptional organization that gives my daughter, Robin, a life with purpose, passion and delight. Thanks to the support of Lisa and her team, Robin has worked part-time at Banana Republic for over eight years and formed deep friendships in the process. For PDS to provide an opportunity for Robin to get out into the community and experience a sense of independence, rather than isolation, gives me such pride and peace of mind, I wish there were a way to pay them back. With the budget struggles they currently face, I wish I could establish an enormous endowment so that Lisa and Dave and Shirley and all the other selfless PDS staff could just focus on their wonderful program instead of the scramble for funding.

I'm not sure the clients' families and

friends of PDS know the back story. Lisa Girdali has led the organization for its entire 15 years. She has dedicated her life—giving completely of her heart, time, money and resources—to helping severely developmentally disabled adults.

Lisa's dedication to the developmentally disabled population has deep

young to influence her Grandpa to let Lena try these experiences. Her great-aunt and others like her were kept out of sight, not expected to lead "normal" lives, hold jobs or have friends.

Lisa vowed to make this her life mission: to create lives filled with purpose and joy for individuals with developmental disabilities. Instead of giving up on those who had been labeled unemployable, Lisa's determination led to success in finding companies willing to take a chance with her clients, who were ready and eager to step out into the community and contribute.

The success of PDS is measured in the enrichment of the lives of these community members, and the excitement is seen in their faces now bursting with pride and beaming smiles. But beyond the benefits to the clients is the gratitude expressed by

their employers, because these dedicated workers add so much.

Lisa has said that this work is so intertwined with who she is that she can't imagine not doing it. As the mother of one of her clients I say, "Thank God for that."



*In appreciation for their continuous support of PDS, client and board member, Robin Sloan, presented a plaque to Douglas Martin at Fireman's Fund Foundation*

roots. When she was young, Lisa would go with her grandfather to take her great-aunt Lena, institutionalized due to Down Syndrome, shopping and out for lunch. She longed to do more with Lena, such as have her spend the night for Christmas or take her to the movies, but Lisa was too

## *Client Spotlight:*

### *Joe Argueta*

*by Katy St. Clair*

When PDS founder and Executive Director Lisa Girdaldi endeavored to start our progressive day program fifteen years ago, she knew that one of the first clients that she wanted sign up would be her own "brother," Joseph Argueta. Though there are no real blood ties between her and Joe, their relationship is as solid as family and goes back almost as far. After learning that Joe, a developmentally disabled orphan who had been raised in Sonoma State Hospital, had no "people," as he called them, Lisa and her family adopted Joe as one of their own. This was nearly twenty years ago, and ever since then Joe spends the holidays the same way everyone likes to, at home with a loving family.

But it's not just during holidays that the bond between Lisa and Joe is strengthened. Joe frequently accompanies Lisa to various talks she gives to help raise awareness of people with disabilities. Using Joe's own amazing life story as a template, audiences learn about some of the inspiring things that disabled adults are doing in their lives on the road to greater independence.



*Executive Director, Lisa Girdaldi  
and Client, Joe Argueta*

In November, Lisa and Joe gave a presentation to graduate students of special education at San Francisco State University. Entitled "Joe's Journey from Segregation to Inclusion," the students viewed slides of Joe's life and heard his story about growing up in an institution with no contact with his real family. As an adult, he moved into various group homes and experienced lots of different types of employment programs. These days Joe lives in his own apartment with a paid roommate in San Rafael. In addition, he has a steady job working at Pasta Pomodoro several times a week. Most importantly, Joe is more independent than he has ever been, and he is truly happy.

The class at SFSU was impressed with how far Joe has come and how successful he has been in advocating for his rights. We are very proud of Joe too!

## *Generous Donors for 2005 - 2006 Fiscal Year*

**Thank you to the following foundations, organizations, companies and individuals for your incredible generosity in donating to Pacific Diversified Services so far in the 2005 - 2006 fiscal year:**

### **\$10,000 or More**

Marin Community Foundation

### **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Herbst Foundation

### **\$1,000 to \$4,999**

Autodesk

Betty Burns

Doering Family Foundation

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### **Up to \$999**

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Ann Jessup

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Connie Jahnke Perry

Jerry Peters

Richard Reubin

William Sloan

Mr. & Mrs. William Smiley

Bob Smith

Rob & Tracy Smith

Rocio & Carl Smith

United Way Bay Area

Juanna Villacorta

Laura Wheeler



*PDS client and board member, Robin Sloan, presented plaques to Julie Wilder at Autodesk (left) and Sondra Wuthnow at Marin Community Foundation (right) to thank them for their generous contributions and ongoing support of Pacific Diversified Services*



For more information about PDS or to make a contribution, please contact:

Lisa Girdaldi, Executive Director

Tel (415) 459-6510 Fax (415) 459-0270

Website: [www.pdsmarin.org](http://www.pdsmarin.org) E-mail: [pdsmarin@earthlink.net](mailto:pdsmarin@earthlink.net)