



Spring 2005

Newsletter

Letter from the Executive Director

In June Pacific Diversified Services will have been in operation for 15 years! When we began PDS, we wanted to provide a service that would help people with developmental disabilities obtain jobs, use their own spending money, make non-disabled friends, and have a quality of life that others might think impossible for people facing these challenges. We set out to help these individuals lead rich, active, fulfilling lives where they could be included members of their community--not just as visitors on a field trip, but as customers in local hangouts like everyone else. We wanted the program to follow along and accommodate the clients with any necessary services and moral support that they might need throughout their lives. They would never be required to "graduate" or move on. Furthermore, all of the clients' time would be spent in regular environments in Marin County. We would not have a "program center" and our staff would utilize private vehicles rather than vans for transportation.

In 1990 when we opened, many people doubted that these new practices would be effective or sustainable over the long term. Even some of our clients' parents were cautiously skeptical that we would be able to obtain, let alone maintain, employment for their children.

Well, we are proud to have proven any doubts wrong! Many of the original clients from 1990 are still receiving support from PDS, and over 95% of our clients maintain part-time jobs in places like **Banana Republic, Costco, Cost Plus, Whole Foods and Pasta Pomodoro**. This is an unusually high employment success rate, considering that the national employment rate for the specific population we serve has been approximately 8% for decades. It is also standard for people with severe disabilities to be segregated into a variety of facility-based programs (77% nationwide).

Rather than taking large groups on field trips, we have created individualized schedules for every client that are tailored to their interests, age, and need for support. Despite the complicated nature of this task, every client is encouraged by PDS to engage in stimulating, purposeful activities as part of normalized daily and weekly routines. Our clients use their own earnings to participate as active consumers in Marin.

Our biggest challenge has been to remain successful without straying from the values that drive the organization. We never want to compromise on quality. As a result, we have sacrificed extra revenue, by intentionally keeping our program small, so we can focus on the clients we serve and not become too "bureaucratic" or get spread too thin. We have equally high standards for our clients' employment. We will not accept jobs for our clients that are subcontracted or pay below minimum wage, even though such jobs are readily available.

Despite the fact that we have all gone years without salary raises, our current team of staff members is comprised of intelligent, experienced people who treat our clients with compassion and respect. We have managed to become fiscally solvent by raising \$73,286 in 2003-2004, even without any staff devoted solely to fundraising. In this fiscal year (2004-2005) we hope to raise \$89,188. I know we can do it!

There have been times when I really didn't know if PDS was going to make it, or if I could continue as Executive Director due to all the stress and financial hardship. We could never have come this far without the monetary and moral support from all of you who are receiving this newsletter. Hopefully with the collaboration of our community and so many kind, giving individuals, PDS will keep going strong for another 15 years.

With my sincere thanks for a fantastic 15 years!

Lisa Giraldi



PDS Contributors

The following foundations, organizations, companies, and individuals are recognized for their incredible generosity in donating to Pacific Diversified Services in the 2004-2005 fiscal year:

\$10,000 or more

Marin Community Foundation
Anonymous through MCF

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Herbst Foundation

\$1,000 to \$4,999

Doering Family Foundation
Stuart Leeb
William Sloan

Up to \$999

Bank of Marin
Costco Employees
Golden Gate Bridge District Employees
Levi Strauss Foundation
Lucasfilm Ltd.
Fred and Annette Bernardini
Betty R. Burns
Peggy Drew
Donna Franzblau

Noriyuki Fujii
Ron and Jo Ella Hart
Ann Jessup
Ginger and David Koel
Gloria Mattioli
Theresa Olson
Connie Perry
Richard Reubin
Doris Sabraw

William and Mitzi Smiley
Bob Smith
Rocio and Carl Smith
Stan and Gail Sollid
Larry Toney
Juana Villacorta
Warren Werthheimer
Laura M. Wheeler

Unfortunately we did not receive some of the grants we had applied for this fiscal year. Therefore, to our loyal supporters: We are really counting on receiving your annual contributions before June 30th, in order to break even.

Holiday Fun by Katy St. Clair

In October we held our annual Halloween party at the Corte Madera Rec Center, where clients and staff alike arrived in costumes for the big event. It was a raging success, and we would definitely like to thank the young students from Dominican College that volunteered their time to help with the event. Our director, **Lisa Giraldi**, placed an ad asking for help with the party at the **Center for Volunteer Nonprofit Leadership** in San Rafael, and the group from the **Equality Theory Club** responded.

When we arrived, they had decorated the entire place beautifully (well, "spookily"); laid out sandwiches, cookies, and yummy snacks; and had set up a sound system for dancing. By the end of the party we all had a conga line going! The



Conga line with PDS clients, staff members and Dominican College volunteers

volunteer students were full of smiles and joined in whenever they could. The clients and staff were very impressed with all their hard work, and honored for the help.

Everyone also had a blast at the various holiday parties thrown by their employers. These eagerly anticipated get-togethers are always a time for our clients to let their hair down with their co-workers, dance, and celebrate the season. This year's round of parties were better than ever with many of our clients winning great prizes. **Kevin Peak**, who works at **Woodlands Market**, was very touched to have received a personalized apron with his name stitched into the bib. He is a popular member of the Woodland's crew, and everyone expressed their appreciation for his hard work.

Eric Alonso and **JR Jahnke** both work at **Costco** in Novato, and anyone who knows these two guys are aware that they aren't going to miss a party! Eric and JR's job coach **George Clark** accompanied them to the holiday event, and JR won a DVD player in a raffle.

PDS's cutest couple, **Mary Krauss** and **Don Mangrubang**, both work at **Whole Foods**. They got decked out in their finest duds and dug in their heels on the dance floor. Don won a sewing machine at the end of the evening.

Dana Sparrow has been working at the **Meridian Sports Club** in Novato for four years, and he always hits the holiday party. This year he danced with PDS lead staffer **Corinne Amare**.

Employment News by Katy St. Clair

At the beginning of this year, **Fresh Choice** in Corte Madera closed its doors. **Don Smith** had been working there for five years, and **Joe Argueta** had been there for ten years! Both of these PDS clients were sorry to leave, but excited at the new possibility of working somewhere else. After a brief search, they found great jobs at **Pasta Pomodoro** in Novato. Both Joe and Don roll silverware and set the tables at the beginning of the day. They just finished training and are doing such a great job that their boss has already added another day to their schedule. Drop in for lunch and say hi to them!

Lisa Toney got quite a surprise when her coworkers at **Banana Republic** threw her a party to celebrate her five-year anniversary of working there. They brought her a cake, presented her with a placard, and gave her a really cute watch. Lisa was moved to tears! She said it felt nice to be honored by her fellow employees in that way.

Robin Sloan also works at **Banana Republic**, and just passed her seven year mark. They gave her a \$25 gift certificate to Starbucks. To quote a phrase that she often uses, "Robin, you go girl! You are on!"

Eric Alonso makes more per hour than any other PDS client (or staff member for that matter!), recently getting a raise to \$14.67 an hour.

Community News by Katy St. Clair

Kevin Peak joined an exercise class at the **College of Marin** and has found it to be fun and challenging. The class is very difficult, with obstacle courses, kickboxing, and other aerobic activities. At first he was intimidated by keeping up with all the younger people in the class, but on the day they hiked all over Kentfield, guess who was the first one back in class before everyone else? He was very proud of himself and says it feels great to workout on a regular basis.

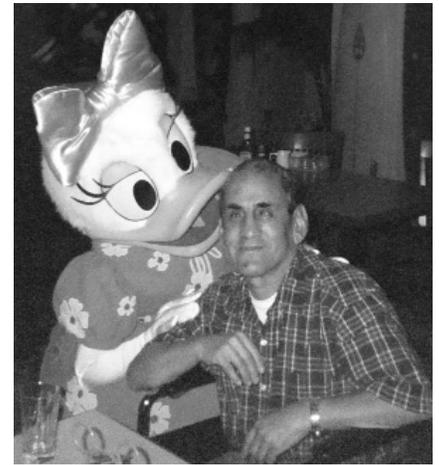
Eric is also very athletic, but in September he used all his muscles for something other than weightlifting. Instead, he danced all night at a Prince

concert in San Jose. PDS Coordinator **Dave Murphy** got to join him and they had a great time.

Joe and Cathy had the time of their lives at Disneyland earlier this year. **Corinne** and **Dave** escorted them down to LA for a weekend of fun. "Are you going to miss me?" Joe kept asking the staff. We sure did, but we knew they would have an awesome time on all the rides. Cathy loved It's A Small World, where she surprised Corinne by singing along. Joe was all smiles too, just happy to be in the same place as his hero, Mickey Mouse.

Something nice happened to **Betsy**, **Berta**, and **Kelly**. All of them work at **Cost Plus** in Larkspur and that location was voted best overall store by the

company. As a result, all the employees got \$25 gift cards. Congratulations to all of you for your great work!

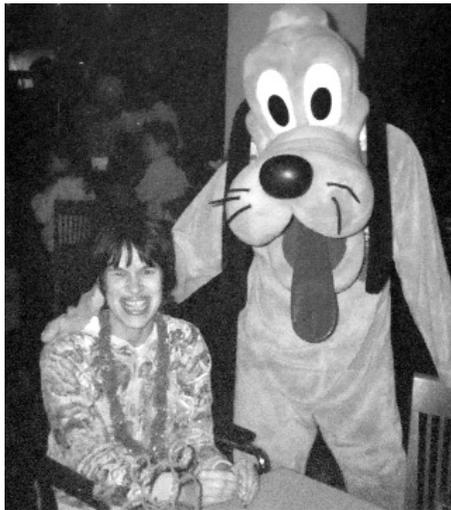


Joe Argueta gets a smooch from Daisy Duck at Disneyland

Client Spotlight: Cathy Adams

by Stephen Yeh

Cathy Adams is one of the most happy-go-lucky clients in PDS. Cathy loves life and is full of sunshine and playful friendliness. She has a very strong personality, a very positive atti-



Cathy Adams and Pluto at Disneyland

tude, and a unique sense of self.

Despite her significant disabilities, Cathy has impressed everyone by retaining a part-time position at **Borders Books and Music** in San Rafael since April of 1996. Her job is to strip the covers off of unsold magazines so that they can be redeemed for credit by the manufacturers. Finding this job for Cathy was kismet since she has always had a "thing" for magazines, often keeping a collection of them under her mattress at home. Now she gets to be surrounded by magazines all day long! Cathy would probably love her job even if she didn't receive a paycheck.

Cathy is always listening to the sounds and conversation that are going on in the room. She understands language better than she can speak it, but that doesn't stop her from expressing herself. Her vocabulary is limited to few words that for her have multiple meanings. For example, "Moose" is a word that Cathy uses to describe almost any

animal. When someone calls her co-worker "Kat" over the intercom at Borders, she eagerly calls out "Moose!" Luckily Kat doesn't take it personally!

She loves meeting new people, and often greets strangers with her trademark "I'm Cathy!!" and "How ya' doin?!" She loves children and can be heard exclaiming "Baby" when she sees one. She likes parties, especially when there is cake. Although she has some difficulty with her walk, Cathy nevertheless tramps around with her friends at a vigorous pace along the shoreline at Pickleweed Park, one of her favorite spots. But movies are probably Cathy's favorite activity of all. She claps loudly when there is applause in the movie and has been known to make kissing noises at the screen during love scenes.

Cathy gets along with everyone, and everyone gets along with her. Her excitement and unusual joie de vivre are infectious blessings for those of us lucky enough to work with her.

Staff News by Katy St. Clair

We lost employee **Pattina Steele** last October, but gained a new staff member in her place, **Nicole Freeman**. Nicole is a Marin native who has a lot of experience working with people with disabilities. Eventually, she would like to start her own day program, and the knowledge and know-how she is gathering at PDS will help her towards that goal. The clients clicked with Nicole's plucky but professional personality immediately, and she is a great addition to our team.

We've had some sad goodbyes to say lately. **George Clark** worked with us for a little over a year, and he developed special relationships with all the clients, especially those that he job coached. **Eric, JR**, and **Alex** were all very sad to hear that he was leaving. We threw him a going away lunch at **Round Table Pizza** and everyone told him how much they appreciated his work. **George** is moving up to Washington to build a house with his wife, and we send them good thoughts.

Emily Melvin said goodbye to us at

the end of last summer, and it too was a tearful parting. She had been here for a year, and is now going to law school in the Midwest. She will always remember her time in California with PDS fondly. At her going away party, both **Betsy** and **Mary** spoke of how much they cared about her, and **Dana** even recited an amazing and funny poem about her that he wrote himself. Emily has stayed in touch with some of the clients over the phone and through email. We miss her but know she will go on to do great things.

Staff Spotlight: Justin Burke

by Stephen Yeh

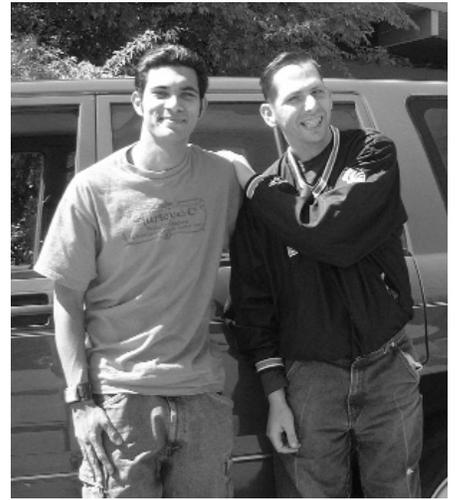
This issue's staffer in spotlight is **Justin Burke**, one of our most experienced direct-service staff members. Justin Burke began working at PDS three years ago, but started working in the field during his sophomore year in high school. Upon graduation, he began working in a group home.

Justin is often referred to as one of the "cooler" members of PDS. He is 27 years old and has a son named Tristan. Outside of work and family, he enjoys an active lifestyle of athlet-

ics (snowboarding, hiking and mountain biking), music and art. He has introduced several of our clients (Minh Tien, Don M, and JR) to hiking and fishing at local lakes, as well as keeping our clients in shape with regular basketball games.

Justin has a great heart and credits his family environment as the biggest influence on his work. "I grew up with unconditional love," he says. He takes pride in doing his job well and gains great satisfaction from his work with Pacific Diversified Services.

PDS staff member Justin Burke and client JR Jahnke are good friends



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

Lisa Giraldi, Executive Director
Pacific Diversified Service
911 R. Irwin Street
San Rafael, CA 94901

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

Website: www.pdsmarin.org E-mail: pdsmarin@earthlink.net

911 R. Irwin Street
San Rafael, CA 94901
Pacific
Diversified
Services

