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Return Service Requested



This issue of the PDS newsletter marks the 20th anniversary for Pacific Diversified Services!



PDS was started under the umbrella of Casa Allegra Community Services. [Chris Bonfiglio](#) and [Eileen Falvey](#), who were the Executive Directors at the time, had the initial vision for PDS, named the program and secured our funding. Chris and Eileen, who ran three group homes at the time, were frustrated by the lack of integrated options for their clients with very severe disabilities. Back then in 1990, there was a small movement towards “integrated work and community inclusion” agencies, and PDS was the first program in Marin funded by Golden Gate Regional Center to provide all of our support out in the community without a program site. Further, we were the first to use private vehicles, not vans, for transportation.

I was hired right out of my special education teaching credential program at the age of 24 to run with Chris and Eileen’s vision and make it a reality. Fortunately Chris and Eileen’s dreams for their clients matched my goals, and one of my instructors at San Francisco State (and current PDS board member), [Kathy Doering](#), had equipped me well to implement all the current best and most progressive practices in the field of adult services. At the time, the idea of providing services without a program site was radical, and there were people who told me they were just waiting to see the program fail.

There were jobs to be developed, activities and routines to be created, staff to be hired and trained, and twelve clients to get to know. We were passionate about community inclusion and meaningful work, and we were determined to prove our doubters wrong. Our goal was for every one of our clients, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, to become employed in real jobs where they would make at least minimum wage. Further, we wanted every single client to be involved in meaningful activities within predictable routines so they would be busy and productive and not just walking in malls or sitting in parks. Lastly, we wanted to make sure that our clients were spread out among a variety of staff and that they were not with the same friends each day. This way we would avoid burnout and ensure that the clients did not become too dependent on any one staff member. It was like creating a big puzzle. It was challenging and exciting. I worked 12 hour days for many years, and there were lots of mistakes made and lessons learned in the process.

Since breaking off from Casa Allegra in 1994, Chris Bonfiglio has replaced PDS with another very interesting and progressive program that is doing customized employment. PDS became an independent non-profit corporation and has flourished and is currently thriving, serving 28 clients. Of those 28 clients, five have been with us for 20 years, seven have been with us for at least 15 years, and four have been with us for at least ten years.

Currently, 25 of our 27 working age clients have paid jobs. The length of employment for our clients ranges from one month to 18 years. PDS clients have been employed an average of eight years with their current employer, and they earn between \$8.00 and \$18.80 per hour. Their average hourly wage is \$9.55 per hour, while the U.S. federal minimum wage is only \$7.25 per hour, and California’s minimum wage is \$8.00 per hour.

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The money that PDS clients earn at their part-time jobs allows them to be active participants in the community alongside people who do not have disabilities. They are able to experience the freedom of having pocket money and choosing how to spend it. As paying consumers, our clients are treated with the same courtesy as any other customers at gyms, stores, restaurants, etc. . .

In the past couple of years, PDS has attempted to address our clients’ physical health disparities in ways that integrated them with the non-disabled public. All of our clients participate in a variety of aerobic activities at least twice a week. We also hired a wonderful weight loss coach to teach our clients about nutrition and better eating habits. She has been meeting with our clients and staff once a month to motivate and reinforce our clients in their quest to develop healthy lifestyles. In order to reinforce the lessons from the nutrition meetings, our staff have been helping our clients learn how to shop for, and cook, healthy meals each week in small groups of three at a client’s home. We have seen our clients gain a true awareness of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Many of them are losing weight!

Recently PDS has developed some new jobs at Play-Well TEKnologies for [John Paul](#), Silver Screen Video for our newest client [Mike McD](#) and Liquid Marin for [Amanda](#). We have also started a dog walking service for [Anne](#) so she would be able to get paid while pursuing her dream to work with animals. Anne is also volunteering for the Milo Foundation, and our newer clients [Brian](#) and [Mike M](#) and others who are not yet employed are volunteering at the Salvation Army. Everyone is participating in awesome age-appropriate activities alongside their non-disabled peers in the community where they are regulars in their neighborhood, rather than visitors on a field trip.

Even clients who have been with us for many years, call us every day just to thank us and to share their joys and triumphs. [Sallie](#) and [Guy](#) are two examples of people whose lives were completely changed in one year as a direct result of joining PDS. When Sallie and Guy presented their stories to a class at San Francisco State University, many students cried. Fortunately, since joining PDS, Sallie and Guy have been able to obtain jobs, take college classes, and learn to advocate for themselves. Their whole demeanor has changed. They laugh and smile more and hold their heads up, appearing to be the proud, happy adults that they now are. Guy has lost weight from eating better and exercising more, and Sallie now dresses like a 35 year old and is starting to view herself as that age too. In part because Sallie and Guy became stronger self-advocates, they are both going to be living in their own apartments, where they will flourish even more. PDS has helped Sallie, Guy, and the rest of the PDS clients gain health, self-esteem, freedom, contentment, meaning, and purpose in their lives.

While our state funding is dwindling, our organization is gaining more exposure and credibility and is thriving. We have expanded and innovated to bring in more revenue, and our support network is growing. We have moved into a larger, nicer office in a great neighborhood. PDS is conducting seminars and creating a training film that will benefit countless people with developmental disabilities in addition to our own constituency. Despite state funding reductions and hard economic times, PDS remains committed to our mission to improve the quality of life for all citizens with developmental disabilities. We intend to inspire and educate others to improve the quality of life of their clients too.

We can proudly say that our clients with developmental disabilities are productive, accepted and valued citizens of Marin, and we thank you for collaborating with us to support this hard working and very deserving population. Here’s to another great twenty years!

Lisa Giraldi - Co-founder and Executive Director

Thank you to the following foundations, organizations, companies and individuals for your incredible generosity in donating to Pacific Diversified Services.

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Client News

PDS has 28 clients now, and we hope to stick with that number and not expand. You have met most of the fabulous people we serve in prior newsletters and can read all about them on the PDS website. Here's our two latest additions:

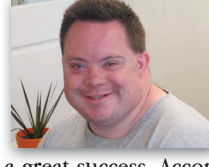
Meet Mike McD



We now have two Mikes at PDS. **Mike McD** has 4 brothers, 5 nieces, and 5 nephews. His hobbies include bowling and going to the movies. He's interested in learning more about photography and computers. He's also excited about his new job at **Silver Screen Video**.

Mike is super smart and has a fantastic sense of humor. We are thrilled to be working with him.

Meet Brian



Brian has been described as "funny," "sweet," and "easy going". PDS staff and clients are thoroughly enjoying his company. Brian just did his first dog walking gig for an employee of **Autodesk**, and it was a great success. According to his job coaches, Pam and Shirley, "Brian lit up around the dogs and was energized for hours afterward." Go Brian!

Staff News

PDS has not had any staff turnover in about a year and a half now. We do have one new addition: **Pam Rosen**, who started with us as a volunteer. It was Pam's idea to create a dog walking service for **Autodesk** employees. Together Pam and Shirley Chao got this service off and running, and it has been fantastic for the clients as well as the dogs and dog owners. Thanks Pam for your creativity and entrepreneurial spirit!



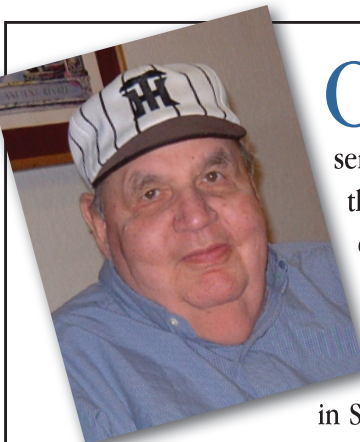
Lisa Giraldi and **Sallie** appeared on ABC 7's Emmy award-winning public affairs show, "Beyond the Headlines," which provides in-depth coverage of the topics and issues facing the people of the Bay Area. With Cheryl Jennings, Sallie and Lisa discussed "Living with Disabilities." We tried, in four minutes, to highlight the importance of community inclusion, integration, choice and opportunities.

PDS Dog Walking Service

PDS has three wonderful clients who love dogs and have set up their own dog walking service! They can walk your dog and scoop their poop for \$8.00 per visit, and they will be accompanied at all times by a PDS staff member. **Anne** is an experienced dog walker who has taken animal husbandry classes. **Kasie** works at **Petco** and loves all animals. **Brian** loves dogs and will patiently throw dog toys forever! Our staff members have also worked with dogs and are dog owners themselves.

Please call (415) 459-6510 or email Shirley at shirleychao@earthlink.net if you are interested in having us walk your dogs near your home or place of business.

Autodesk employee **Julie Wilder** offers this endorsement: "I used this service and my dog came back happy and ready to nap after spending time with Anne, whom he just loved!"



On April 18, 2010 longtime client **Don** passed away after a battle with cancer. Don was a true gentleman in every sense of the word and was gracious and polite right up until the last hours of life. We will never forget Don's chuckle or his sense of humor (all those jokes about fancy cars, booze and food, funny racehorse names, etc.). His zest for life never ceased, and just a week before his death, he took the time to come visit us at our new office in San Anselmo and enjoyed shrimp bisque at a café in the sunshine. Don really was a pleasure and an inspiration.



Check out the new PDS Office!

It's clean! It's spacious! It's cheerful and bright! It's in downtown San Anselmo near charming shops and restaurants, walking distance to some of our client's homes and jobsites, and very convenient for public transportation.

Please drop by to visit!
223 San Anselmo Avenue, Suites 1
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Free PDS Seminar

We at PDS are often asked to help others create similar services for their clients or children with developmental disabilities. We don't always have time to meet personally with everyone who calls, but we are eager to promote meaningful employment and community inclusion, dignity, respect and quality of life for all. So in order to reach a wide audience and to help others with our values to create similar services, PDS has received a grant from the Special Hope Foundation for The Awareness Project. The Awareness Project includes a seminar as well as an enlightening web based training film with vignettes of PDS clients. On July 14 we will be presenting the seminar entitled How to Facilitate Quality of Life for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: Making a Commitment to Best Practices and Maintaining Integrity to parents and colleagues from the San Francisco Bay Area. Along with PDS administrators, our clients, including Guy, Sallie, Cathy and JR, will share their personal stories and perspectives. Hopefully we will inspire and enlighten people to look at adults with developmental disabilities with a fresh perspective, and help them learn new ways to tap the potential of this wonderful, deserving population.

Thanks to The Special Hope Foundation and our other generous listed in this newsletter, the venue for our presentation will be at a lovely location in Sausalito and will include a complimentary lunch for attendees, providing a nice backdrop for the filming of the seminar, for our web based training video.



Wells Fargo presenting PDS with a generous donation. May 2010



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