

Newsletter

From The PDS Executive Director

Now that I am a parent, my respect for the parents of our clients with developmental disabilities has quadrupled. My son, Andre, has not even started preschool, and I am already asking myself, "What if my child doesn't make friends or gets teased?" "What if he doesn't learn as well as the other kids or is not athletic or coordinated?" I worry about him getting his feelings hurt or his spirit crushed by the harsh realities of life away from his doting parents and family. These are not just hypothetical worries, but real issues that the parents of kids with developmental disabilities deal with, not just when their children are young, but for their entire lives.

The parents, and in many cases, siblings of my clients, who have intensive cognitive and physical challenges, are truly amazing people with an endless capacity for nurturing and loving. And yet, they have a strength of character that allows them to care without hovering, to be concerned without being obsessed, and to stay involved while also letting their adult children lead their own lives.

We have a client, **Don Smith**, who is a senior citizen and looks to his older brother, **Bob Smith**, to provide the loving support of a parent figure. Don calls Bob every single day, relying on him to dole out his money and make sure all of his needs are met. I am so touched by their relationship and commitment that Bob and his wife Doris have made to Don, as they have dealt with the trials and tribulations of their own lives. But perhaps no family member has touched me more than **Betty Burns**, mother of **David Burns**. David has autism and is a wonderful, complex, and often challenging 43-year old man. Betty is a widow with no other children and is utterly devoted to David, spending every other weekend with him and always assuring him that home is there for him—just as it was when he was a little boy. PDS staff member, **Katy St. Clair**, could not wait to interview Betty for the "Client Spotlight" for this edition of the newsletter. I'm so glad Betty agreed, as she is someone I admire. And I know that after reading her story, you all will too.

Happy Holidays to all of you and to your families. And to the parents and family members of clients of Pacific Diversified Services, this newsletter is dedicated to you. Thank you for inspiring others and for providing us with examples of what unconditional love really means.

Lisa Givaldi

Community Integration

One of the guiding philosophies of Pacific Diversified Services is the idea that people with disabilities should be more fully integrated into society, living, playing, and working side-by-side with their non-disabled peers. Well now we can add "working out" to our philosophy, because **Lisa Toney** and **Robin Sloan** have just successfully completed a semester at the **College of Marin**, taking a bi-weekly Dancercise class. "It was a blast!" says Lisa. "Loved it, dude," says Robin. They made a few friends in the class, including Randy, a professional dancer. "Those girls are fantastic," he says, "They are amazing. They really injected the class with life." In addition to the work-out, the women wrote reports on a dance performance that they had seen. They also choreographed their own steps for the rest of the class to follow. The instructor, **Deborah Graham**, also needs to be commended for her enthusiasm and openness. What's next for Lisa and Robin? "Ballet!"



Lisa Toney & Robin Sloan working out with their peers in Dancercise class at College of Marin

Lisa and Robin weren't the only ones working out at the college. **Don Mangrubang** took a weightlifting course as well. A long-time **YMCA** aficionado, this semester Don decided to really focus with a teacher, and the results have been great. "I'm not gonna lie to you," he jokes, "it was hard work! But it feels good."

Halloween Monster Bash!

This year we once again held our annual Halloween Party at the **Fairfax Women's Club**, and once again we had a real blow-out of a shindig. All the clients and staff dressed up and prizes went out to the best costumes. This year we did something a little different and hired a DJ, **Sean Sullivan**, which meant that even more dancing occurred, which is really saying something. We couldn't have done any of it without the volunteers from **Dominican**



University, organized by **Heather Hernandez** and our intern, **Suzette Toscano**, who for the third year running, decorated, provided food and refreshments, and joined in with a lot of enthusiasm. Thank you so much!



PDS Staff, Clients, and Volunteers all had a fantastic time at the Halloween Party

Client Spotlight: David Burns by Katy St. Clair

There are still so many unanswered questions about autism, but one thing we do know is that we are currently in an autism "epidemic" with diagnosis of the condition rising dramatically in the last decade. According to federal education statistics in 1991, 5,200 children were diagnosed with the disorder. In 2005, 192,000 were. This, combined with movies like *Rain Man*, means that more people have heard about or been touched by autism than ever before.

In 1963, when PDS client **David Burns** was born, things were very different. No one outside of cognitive professionals had even heard of the word, least of all **Bill and Betty Burns**, David's parents. They had taken their son to many different "experts" in an attempt to find out why he didn't sleep, was hyperactive, pulled away when they tried to embrace him, and didn't make eye contact. Finally an expert at Stanford diagnosed David with autism. Betty remembers hearing the word and then writing it down.

"What are you doing?" asked the doctor.

"I am going to go to the library and look it up," she said. The doctor could have just as well said "Quantum theory" for all she knew.

"Frankly," said the doctor to her gently, "I don't understand why you are taking this so well. You should be more upset." But the word was so entirely foreign to Betty that she didn't have any response other than puzzlement.

Once she and her husband learned more about it, she at least began to understand a few things to help her son adapt. For example, the more routine and order David had in his life, the less he would act out and lose control. When he was home, he spent all of his waking hours

setting-up mini gas stations all over the living room floor. (To this day he loves gas stations.) Sometimes he would take over the backyard, cutting out letters of the alphabet, putting them on sticks, and placing them all over the lawn in what looked like a post-modern art installation. This kept him busy and content.

When asked how she bonded with her son, who was so seemingly emotionally vacant, she responded, "I didn't. I felt that in his mind, I wasn't a mommy, I was the Person Who Got Things For Him. He would point to a cabinet or a closet, and I would retrieve what he needed for his activities." Betty says this with a matter-of-factness that comes from years of not taking it personally.

In fact, as David grew up, there were many things that Betty had to swallow and not take personally. First there was her extended family, who didn't understand David's condition, didn't enjoy being around him, and basically abandoned her and her husband. "That still hurts," she



PDS Client David Burns with his mother Betty Burns

says. She misses spending the holidays with her family, who haven't seen her or her son since he was a child. Then there were the teachers and doctors that she had to deal with who were under the very mistaken idea that autism was the mother's fault. She developed a thick skin about this early on. "Any new doctor I took him to, I would first ask, 'Are you one of those people who will tell me this is my fault?'" You would be surprised how many people responded, "Well of course it's your fault. It starts with the parents." Betty would politely stand up, grab David and her purse, and exit.

The schools at the time were also not prepared to deal with someone with David's challenges. By the time he was seven years old, a teacher at his San Francisco school told Betty that he was a hopeless case and needed to be institutionalized. With nothing to compare her experience to and all the years of struggle she had with David, still something inside her said that this was a wrong move. "I wasn't ready to give up on him," she says. They had heard about a good program at a school in San Rafael and moved here to enroll him. With thoughtful attention, patience and expertise, the teachers at the school made an almost overnight change in David. "He began talking almost immediately," says Betty, who notes that he rarely spoke a word before that. David made friends with other autistic children and thrived in the predictable, safe, and stable environment that the school created for him.



PDS Clients Don Smith & David Burns playing Bingo at the San Rafael Rec Center

Over time Betty was indeed able to "bond" with her son. The internal life of a person with autism is still somewhat of a mystery, but we do know from books written by people with autism about their experiences that the desire to make connections with people is very much within them; it is the attempts to do so that are so difficult. Betty first realized this upon the death of her husband, Bill. When Bill first went into the hospital for what they assumed would be a short visit, Betty told David that his dad had gone on a fishing trip. Abstract things like illness seemed impossible to explain to her son. Things at the hospital began to worsen, and after six months Bill passed away.



David enjoying the sunshine at the Marinwood Pool

During the entire time David never asked about his father or seemed to wonder where he was, continuing on his daily routines and detailed building and constructing around the house. Betty chose not to tell David—how do you explain something as profound as death to a child, let alone a child with autism?

When the time came to organize her husband's things, she removed his car from the garage and put it in the driveway for potential sale. That was when she realized that David was indeed missing his father. When he came home from school, he saw his dad's car and went running through the house saying, "Dad! Dad!"

"Oh no!" thought Betty at the time, "what have I done?"

These days, at the age 43, it is apparent just how much David loves his mother, and how attached he is to her. Over the years he has become very affectionate, and he loves to help his mother around the house. Part of his daily routine is a "countdown" of sorts about when he will see his mother again. (He visits her every other weekend). "Ten days, two weeks!" he says. "Home visit!" Both his group home and the staff at PDS have given David a safe, solid, and structured routine in which he lives his life to the fullest. He swims at the **YMCA**, goes bowling, eats out, and plays Bingo at the **San Rafael Rec Center** every week. He also works at **Border's Books and Music** in San Rafael, and his coworkers patiently "connect" with him by repeating his countdown back to him and asking how he is doing. David's self-esteem is high as well. He really feels like a "good guy" (he often speaks in the third-person about himself, an aspect of his autism, saying, "You are a good guy, David!") and he gets a lot of personal satisfaction from helping his friends. For example, he always makes sure everyone has napkins with lunch, and when his friends finish he throws all the trash away.

"Sometimes I think about showing up again with David at my family's house on a holiday," says Betty, who smiles slyly when she says it, but you can still see the hurt around her eyes. "I think they would be very surprised to see him now."

David and Betty Burns are both amazing people and a real inspiration. We are so happy to have them in our lives here at PDS. David, you are indeed a "good guy"!

Staff Spotlight:

Katy St. Clair

We would like to introduce you to the writer of many of the PDS newsletter articles: **Katy St Clair**. Katy has been working with PDS since 2004. She is also a writer with the SF Weekly and she has become well known for an article she wrote about a concert she attended with some PDS clients. For this article, Katy recently won the Deems Taylor Award for music journalism from ASCAP, which stands for American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. The article is also featured in the book entitled The Da Capo Best Music Writing of the Year, edited by Mary Gaitskill.



PDS Staff Member Katy St. Clair and Client Joe Argueta

Katy is a favorite of our clients because of her empathy, her warmth and her direct, "real" approach. She recently lost over 100 pounds and knows what it is like to be different and can empathize with some of the issues our clients face. Katy is good at making other people feel included and at ease. Says client, **Kelly Bernardini**, "Katy is great. She is the best staff. She makes everybody laugh." "I know one thing about Katy," says PDS client **Lisa Toney**, "She is a wonderful person. I always like to be with her. She always cracks me up a lot."

We turned the tables on our resident journalist and asked her a few questions about herself:

PDS: What have you learned about yourself since working at PDS?

K: I have cemented my philosophy of life, which is that everyone has an essential self that goes beyond their outward appearance or mode of expression, a soul, if you will. In short, when I ask myself the question, "Who am I?" I now have a better understanding that the answer has been inside me all along.

PDS: Do you still want to open your own program (serving people with

developmental disabilities) someday or what are your long term goals?

K: Yes definitely. I love the idea of creating a big family and helping people achieve their greatest potential. At this point in my life, I think I can make a better impact for people with disabilities with my writing, and I am working on a full-length book about the clients in PDS. Beyond that, I'd really love to get married and have a child, move the middle of nowhere, and cook.

PDS: What else would you like our readers to know about you?

K: I have lost 120 pounds after having weight loss surgery. So many people, staff at houses, etc., have finally asked me what the heck is going on with me and how I lost the weight. I certainly couldn't have done it without the unconditional love I felt from the clients and my coworkers.

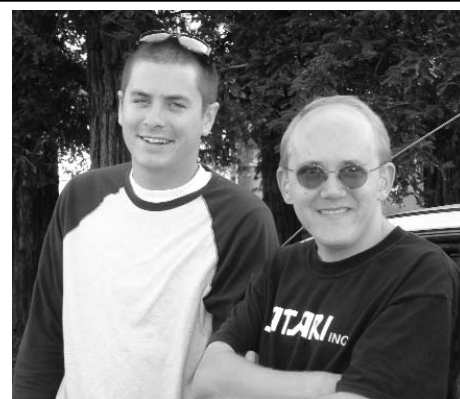
We are very lucky to have such a talented and dedicated staff member among us. Thank you, Katy, for volunteering your time to write such interesting and thought provoking articles for our newsletter and for enhancing the quality of our clients' lives, through your humor, your compassion, and your hard work.

Hellos & Goodbyes

PDS would like to welcome some great new staff people. **Megan Rincon** is a trained dancer who has worked with adults with developmental disabilities in her hometown of Santa Rosa. She is very happy to be working in a more progressive program and says that she can't believe how much fun it is to spend time with our clients. **Scott Blood**, who recently moved to the Bay Area, is originally from the big, wide-open "backwoods" space of Montana (or "Montucky, as he prefers to call it), where he also had lots of experience working with adults with disabilities. **Corrie Johnson** has joined us part-time. She is about to enter grad school to become a high school counselor, and she is an avid basketball player with dreams of coaching. **Jarrod Allen** has also come on board, fresh out of high school.

Jarrod commuted 40 miles each way to school every day, juggling athletics, work and academics. Needless to say he is an energetic and enthusiastic addition to our team! Finally, **Suzette Toscano** is an intern from **Dominican University** who joined us this semester to help out with some of our more independent ladies: **Mary Krauss**, **Kelly Bernardini** and **Lisa Toney**, who needed some extra moral support. Suzette is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Art History and just got back from studying abroad in Italy. Welcome to everyone!

New additions to our staff of course mean that others have moved on. **Lindsay Carlisle** has been a member of our team since 2005 and has reduced her hours to just one day a week, so she can concentrate on graduate school. Another popular member of our staff has moved on,



Staff Member Scott Blood with PDS Client Marc Tucker

Josh Satt. His "just one of the guys" attitude endeared him greatly to our clients. **Shikira Porter** has left as well, and she will indeed be hard to replace. "You always did what you said you were going to do," said **Lisa Giraldi** at her going away party, noting Shikira's reliability and professionalism.

First Annual PDS Raffle

This year something really amazing happened. Many of the parents of PDS clients got together and organized a raffle to raise money for our organization. We made \$5,450! This was a Herculean task, not only in man hours but also in generosity! Many parents and family members of our clients as well as board members organized and orchestrated the entire thing, which was no easy undertaking. It was not only a great way to raise some much-needed cash, but it also made everyone at PDS, clients included, feel like we were really appreciated and taken care of. A special thanks needs to go out to **Don Mangrubang's** step dad, **David Koel** who, as a professional salesman, really rallied the troops and gave us encouragement. We would also like to mention **Marc Tucker's** parents **Dennis and Angela** who organized much of the details of the raffle and worked tirelessly to sell the most tickets! Our staff also did an amazing job of selling tickets, and let's not forget the clients, especially **Robin Sloan, Lupe Rodriguez, and Kelly Bernadini**, who all sold lots of tickets! It was a nice way for the clients to interact with the community and tell people about PDS, too. We'd also like to thank **Woodlands Market** for allowing us to set up a raffle booth out front. It was great fun to meet new people and tell them about PDS. Lastly to all of you friends of PDS who bought tickets **THANK YOU!**

Thank You to All of Our Generous Raffle Donors

Tama Adelman -

Mexico Vacation Package Valued at \$1,000

Banana Republic - \$100 Gift Card

Fred & Annette Bernardini - \$20

Borders Books and Music - \$25 Gift Card

Betty Burns - Electronics Package

Claremont Resort - Overnight Stay Valued at \$500

Ed Conn - National Geographic Books

Costco - \$25 Gift Card

Renata & Tom Dorn / Mar Vista Cottages -

Two Night Stay at Mar Vista Cottages

Leo Giraldi - Tennis Lessons Valued at \$200

Macy's - a \$100 Gift Card

Meridian Sports Club -

One Month Membership to the Meridian Sports Club

Niels Peak - \$100

Stan and Gail Sollid - \$100

Larry Toney & Gloria Mattioli - \$230

Dennis & Angela Tucker - \$200

Dennis & Angela Tucker -

\$100 Gift Certificate to Claremont Resort

Woodlands Market - \$50 Gift Certificate

Congratulations to Our Raffle Winners

Electronics Extravaganza

Lucas Buchanan

Claremont Spa Renewal Get-Away Package

Ron Stolowitz

Romantic Costal Get-Away in Gualala

Justin Burke

Mexico Vacation Package

Nicole Jenkins

Sports Bonanza

Christine Donahue

Bella Italia Gourmet Basket

Ben Holicky

Marin County Shopping Spree

Chris Samet

National Geographic Collection

Bill Hyatt

eScrip

PDS is now enrolled in eScrip. eScrip is a program that allows registered users to have a percentage of their debit and credit card purchases at participating merchants donated to specific non-profit organizations, like PDS. The donation is made by the merchant and does not cost the card user a dime. It's easy and safe to use. We are already starting to see small monthly deposits being made into our bank account. One of the best things about having a small program is that every little donation truly does make a difference. Thank you to the following loyal supporters who have already signed-up:

Angelina Albini	Jean Koye
Corinne Amare	Stuart Leeb
Kevin Baltz	Michele Markey
Lindsay Carlisle	Denise Mautz
Shirley Chao	Linda McCray
Lauren Dennis	David Murphy
Jason Gardner	Shikira Porter
Trevor Gardner	Blair Ryan
Leo & Lise Giralddi	Eulila Sollid
Patricia Herve	Stanley Sollid
Ellen Ingraham	Patricia Stolar
Kevin Ingraham	Dennis Tucker
Ann Jessup	Warren Wertheimer
Andrew Kirmse	Laura Wheeler
Jennifer Kirmse	Stephen Yeh

If you would like to support PDS by signing-up with eScrip, simply go to www.escrip.com. You can register any or all of your existing grocery loyalty, debit and credit cards for use in the program. To designate PDS as your eScrip recipient, all you need is our **Group Name: Pacific Diversified Services** or **Group ID: 500003290**. Thank you for supporting PDS!

PDS Challenge Grant

Please match this challenge grant - PDS needs a van!!!

The Bothin Foundation has generously pledged \$18,000 toward the purchase of a van equipped with a wheelchair lift. As our clients age, they are becoming more disabled, and it has become imperative for us to obtain a van with a wheelchair lift. Some of our clients periodically use wheelchairs already, which is quite difficult for our staff since PDS does not currently own any vans. Our staff are at risk of hurting themselves when they lift wheelchairs in and out of their trunks and the clients are liable to fall when transferring in and out of car seats that are often too low or too high. Some of our clients who have seizures sometimes unconsciously reach out and grab at whatever is next to them, so riding in a van, where they are further from the driver would be much safer. Our whole program would benefit as well by having safe transportation to and from their daily life activities like working in their part-time jobs, going to the YMCA, the bank, restaurants, and the movies. Having a van will allow Pacific Diversified Services to keep clients in our program as they age and become more disabled due to their chronic conditions.

Urgent Call for Help!

On December 13, **Guadalupe "Lupe" Rodriguez**, one of our dearest clients, had eye surgery after a major fall from a seizure. She fell forward and her eye hit the corner of a table. Lupe will now have to deal with vision problems in addition to her other disabilities. It is imperative that PDS raise the funds for a van immediately as Lupe must use a wheelchair for her own safety. PDS cannot transport Lupe in a wheelchair unless we have a van. Many of our clients will benefit from a wheelchair equipped van, but our need for a van has now become urgent because of Lupe.

Much Loved PDS Client Lupe Rodriguez



Pacific Diversified Services encourages everyone to frequent the following progressive businesses that employ PDS' Clients

BANANA REPUBLIC



BORDERS

**COST PLUS
WORLD MARKET**

**COSTCO
WHOLESALE**

★ macy's



OLD NAVY

pasta
pomodoro



**MERIDIAN
SPORTS CLUBS**



**WHOLE
FOODS
MARKET**

PETCO

**Ritter
center**

TARGET



The Marin Safety Net

These businesses have opened their minds and hearts to help people with developmental disabilities become productive, welcomed members of the Marin community.

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

Generous Donors for the 2006 - 2007 Fiscal Year

\$5,000 to \$9,999

The Herbst Foundation

\$1,000 to \$4,999

The Doering Family Foundation
William & Kathleen Sloan

Up to \$999

The Barron Family
Fred & Annette Bernardini
Jacqueline Branch
Betty Burns
Rick Doering
Lori Fromm
Gravenstein Lions Club

Up to \$999 (continued)

The Medtronic Foundation
Ann Jessup
Theresa Olson
Connie Perry
Richard Reubin
Mr. & Mrs. William H. Smiley
Angela Tucker

Generous Donors for the 2005 - 2006 Fiscal Year

\$10,000 or More

Marin Community Foundation
The Thomas J. Long Foundation

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Anonymous
Autodesk
Fireman's Fund Foundation
The Herbst Foundation
The Special Hope Foundation

\$1,000 to \$4,999

Betty Burns
Rick Doering
The Doering Family Foundation
Google
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Stan & Gail Sollid
Warren Wertheimer
Wells Fargo Foundation

Up to \$999

Tama Adelman
Aida Alonso
Greg Baker
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Thomas Bliska & Gray Boyce
Jacqueline Branch
Costco Employees
Peggy Drew
Kathleen Erickson-Freeman
Donna Franzblau
Lori Fromm
David B. Gallard, MD
Golden Gate Bridge Employees
Ron and Jo Ella Hart
Ann Jessup
Candace Johnson
Eddie Kantar
Berlin & Janice Kline
Marlene Knox

Up to \$999 (continued)

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Connie Perry
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Herb & Ellen Ruderman
Martin & Deidre Silverman
Mr. & Mrs. William H. Smiley
Bob Smith
Rob & Tracy Smith
Carl & Rocio Smith
Kathryn Tomlinson
Larry Toney & Gloria Mattioli
Juanna Villacorte
Laura Wheeler
Katherine Wong

We would appreciate being part of your charitable giving plans. Every donation makes a big difference to our small program. Pacific Diversified Services, a non-profit corporation, can accept tax deductible donations either directly, through the United Way payroll deduction programs (donor code: 82632), through memorial donations when loved ones pass on, or through donations of vehicles or other material items. Thank you for collaborating with PDS to help adults with developmental disabilities lead rich, fulfilling lives.

For more information about Pacific Diversified Services or to make a contribution, please contact:

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