

POMEROY PRESS

LATE SUMMER 2016

Strategic Planning Positions Pomeroy Ahead of the Curve





THIS PAGE: CEO Ken Jones and Gabby Apolonio enjoying Fun Day
ON THE COVER: PRRC's Gene Dove and Matt Lam roll on to victory!



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a note from **CEO Ken Jones**

Greetings to all from the Pomeroy Center, where the sun is [finally] shining! I am very pleased to announce that the Center's Board of Directors recently approved an inspiring and ambitious three-year Strategic Plan; the articles in this issue of Pomeroy Press outline the plan's four central goals and the areas where the Center must focus to stay ahead of the curve in supporting the people we serve. Here are the basics of the plan:

- Our overarching goal, **to become a compelling Community Center that serves a diverse population**, will truly revolutionize disability services and will create a hub of activity that draws our non-disabled community into the center, fully integrating both communities in a positive way.
- Our three main initiatives to expand our services:
 - By providing a structured path to employment for interested clients, **we will expand opportunities for our clients to demonstrate their value by working and volunteering in the community.**
 - We will **become a leader in health and wellness services to people with and without disabilities.** We will meet the needs of clients by expanding occupational, physical, and speech therapy services. At the same time, we will offer an array of health equipment, workout classes, and swim lessons for all people in our community.
 - By expanding our music, drama, and art programs and marketing them to the larger community, the Center will become a vibrant arts hub on the west side of San Francisco - **a leader in expressive arts programming for people with and without disabilities.**

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is beginning just as my time at the Pomeroy Center is coming to a close. What started out as a 3-month assignment as the Interim Director of Finance and Human Resources for PRRC turned into a longer engagement. The more I stayed, the deeper my connection became with the staff and participants. I particularly appreciated the staff's selfless dedication to our participants and I admired the visionary leadership of Eric Zigman, our CEO at the time. So, when Eric announced his decision to join the Golden Gate Regional Center as its Executive Director, and I was asked by the Board of Directors to take on the role of Interim CEO, I was apprehensive at the thought of following in his footsteps. What I quickly learned was that with the innovations Eric and his management staff had implemented during his tenure and the newly approved Strategic Plan, I had a comprehensive roadmap ideal for someone with limited experience in disability services.

Looking back on my career as a consultant for many nonprofit organizations, Pomeroy Center is one of the most exceptional groups I have encountered. The combination of dedicated professional staff, strong leadership from the Board of Directors, a solid financial foundation – and now an exciting Strategic Plan – have set the stage for inspiring improvements in the Center's programs.

By the time you read this newsletter, a new CEO will have taken the helm at the Center. Just because I won't be CEO anymore doesn't mean I'll be far away, though. My experience here has been truly magical and I will always work to support the Center in any way that I can – and I hope you will, too!

Meeting the Center's goals will take creativity, hard work, and considerable funding. If you can help PRRC with your time, talent, or treasure, please do!

With gratitude,

Ken Jones
Interim CEO

GOAL 1: Become a compelling community center for a diverse population

Decades ago, individuals with developmental disabilities were essentially invisible and disempowered. Janet Pomeroy, when bringing her young clients to a playground in the 1960s, recalled being chastised by strangers who feared that just seeing people with disabilities would traumatize their own children.

Fortunately for all of us, society has changed. The people we serve at PRRC are now encouraged to become contributing members of society, to be out in the community, working at jobs and engaging in public activities alongside their nondisabled peers.

For those interested in working, PRRC's Employment & Community Services Program provides the support and training to do so (see Goal # 2). But what about the many people we serve who aren't interested in employment? Currently these folks enjoy a stimulating schedule of recreational and educational activities onsite at the Center throughout the week, benefitting every day from the rich and unique subculture that is the disability community. Yet, as positive as this option is, it is undeniable that our wonderful Center is still mostly segregated; to interact with the larger community, our clients must leave the Center.

TOP: Brian Lee busts open a party pinata while Diane Bernadini and Rowena Anoaia enjoy the spectacle

BOTTOM: Trevor gets sporty with staffer Michele Arzimanoglou



Eric Zigman and Lanier Green being "boss"



What's Next?

Disrupting the model!

You can send individuals with disabilities out into the community; and **you can draw the community in to your facility.** By flipping the traditional model on its head, PRRC can begin to provide services that the public needs – fitness and arts classes, performances, a healthy foods café – and community integration will happen organically – right here! And all of this will enhance the services we provide to our core clientele.

There is a great deal to explore and consider as we build toward this vision, and we will be reaching out to you, our community, in the coming year to find out what you would want out of a community center. Much of this data will be gathered online, so if you want to be surveyed and you think we don't have your email address, let us know at prrcsf@prrcsf.org.

Good Bye Eric, Hello David!

Changing of the Guardian ...

In May, Eric Zigman moved on from his role as CEO at PRRC to take on the leadership of the Golden Gate Regional Center. Reflecting on his time at Pomeroy, Zigman thanked our PRRC family: "Please know that I have cherished my time here. I am deeply grateful for your work and for the way participants and staff accepted me into this incredible community."

During his 2-1/2 year tenure, Zigman helped PRRC navigate through a particularly challenging fiscal period marked by long-frozen state reimbursement rates. He contributed to a healthy organizational culture, mentoring staff and encouraging leadership throughout the agency, and has ensured that we keep our focus always on the clients and their interests and dreams. Thank you, Eric!

After an intensive search, the PPRC Board is now delighted to introduce to you our new Chief Executive Officer, David Dubinsky. David has already had a long and distinguished career serving individuals with developmental disabilities through his 35-year tenure at SourceAmerica (formerly NISH). Most recently, as the Executive Director of SourceAmerica in San Ramon, David developed, staffed, and led the Pacific Rim office of this national nonprofit with more than 800 affiliates across the United States.

David's official start date will be September 26th, after he wraps up some work for his consulting clients over the next few weeks. We can't wait to welcome you into the PRRC family, David!

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for Clients to demonstrate their value by working and volunteering in the community

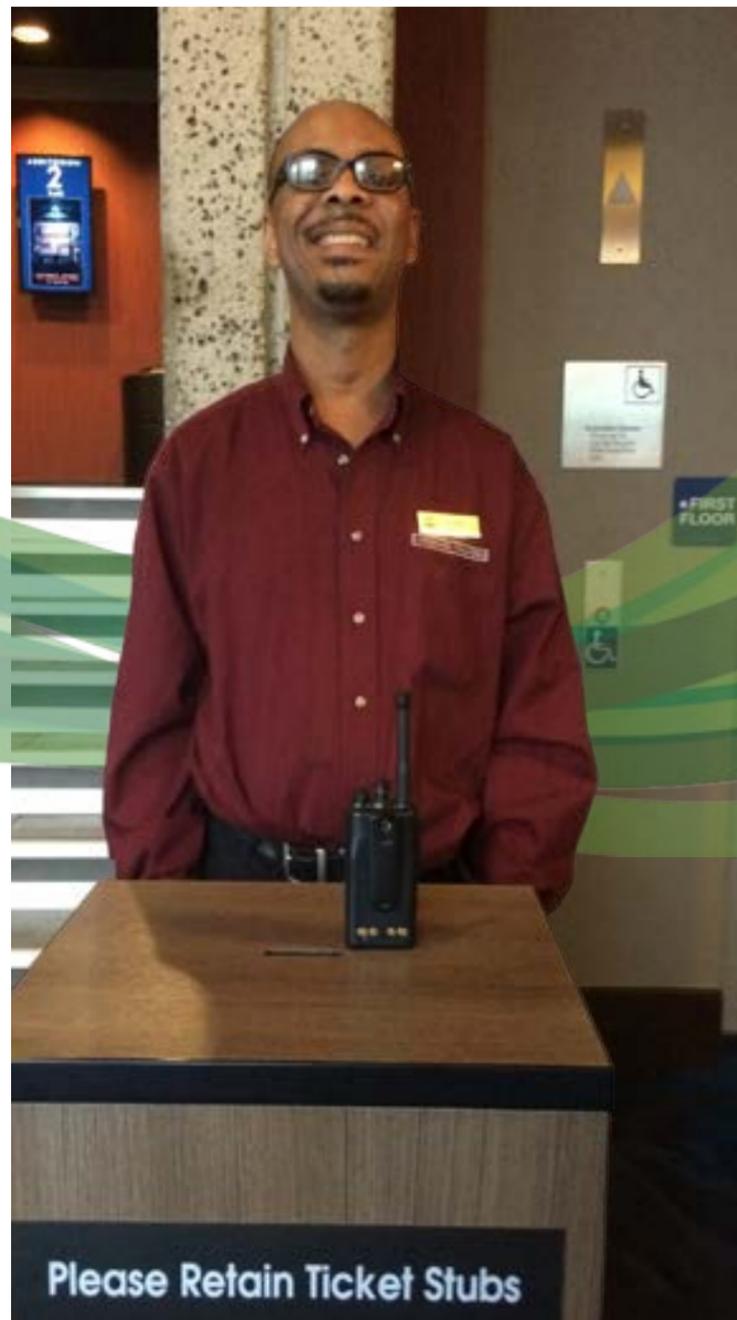
Pomeroy participant Gareth DeCuir has been demonstrating his value in the community for the past 19 years as an employee of Landmark Theaters at the Embarcadero in San Francisco. He started out sweeping up the theater after each show and quickly was promoted to his current position as ticket-taker.

Mr. DeCuir recalls his early days with the Center, through all of its name changes, and how Center staff helped him get and keep his job at the theater. "It was like a whole new world for me." After securing the job at the theater, DeCuir went through the job training side by side with his job coach so he would be able to support him and ensure his success.

When he was promoted, he says, it was easy for him to make the transition between positions. He has much more interaction with the public now. "People ask you questions. I'm more like a concierge." DeCuir has made a point of learning where the restrooms and all the businesses are in the different Embarcadero buildings so he can be of service to the patrons of the Embarcadero Center. People often walk over from the comedy club across the way to ask DeCuir where a particular restaurant is.

He loves meeting and greeting moviegoers and has met actors like Gary Sinise and local luminaries like Willie Brown. He enjoys his coworkers. "They are nice and laid back. They're fun to be around." He is the employee with the longest tenure and he has outlasted as many as twenty managers. "I've seen them come and go, seen them get hired, seen them get fired!"

The hardest thing? "People not understanding me," says DeCuir. He doesn't let that faze him, though. The theater's current General Manager, Steve Cummings, says DeCuir is very friendly and positive. "Gareth brings a great attitude to work every day and says hi to people as they walk through the lobby. Lots of customers know him, since he's been here



so long." He is also a very dependable employee. "He has a solid work ethic and doesn't miss any shifts."

At a time when movie theater services are increasingly provided by machines, the human touch is becoming rare, and jobs for individuals like DeCuir are disappearing. Be sure to patronize the theater at the Embarcadero and let them know you came because you knew DeCuir would be there, taking tickets.

Your contribution to PRRC helps fund programs like our Employment & Community Services that help our participants secure jobs they can take pride in and coaches to ensure their success at those jobs.

What's Next? Major Program Expansion!

In a recent survey, more than 100 of our 350 adult clients said they wanted to work or volunteer. We currently support just a fraction of that number, so we are ramping up our efforts to provide training opportunities to more and more clients through our new "W.O.R.K. Group." This program will provide an accelerated pathway to job readiness. Hire a PRRC client! Contact us at prrcsf@prrcsf.org.

Job Coach Mark Lewicki

What does a job coach do?

Technically...

I will join Gareth on his shift for a couple hours every few weeks; he doesn't need the support every day, but some clients do. I will check in with his manager to see if anything needs to be discussed. Then I'll observe and take notes. Before I leave, I'll see if he needs to talk, or if there are any adjustments, I'll go over those with him. I always like to start and finish with praise and remind him of our motto, "Work smart, not hard!"

And Also ...

Financial Consultant

If a client is on SSI, there's a cap on how much they can earn in a given period without losing their benefits. One of my responsibilities is to keep an eye on this situation for Gareth, having his manager generate a payroll schedule and I'll go over it with Gareth. Those months that have three paychecks I advise Gareth and Steve to make an adjustment to his work hours so he doesn't go over the cap; this has worked out very well. In the past he had a huge ordeal with Social Security and he got cut off from his benefits, which are vital to his ability to get the services he needs; I was able to help get them reinstated.

Healthcare Advocate

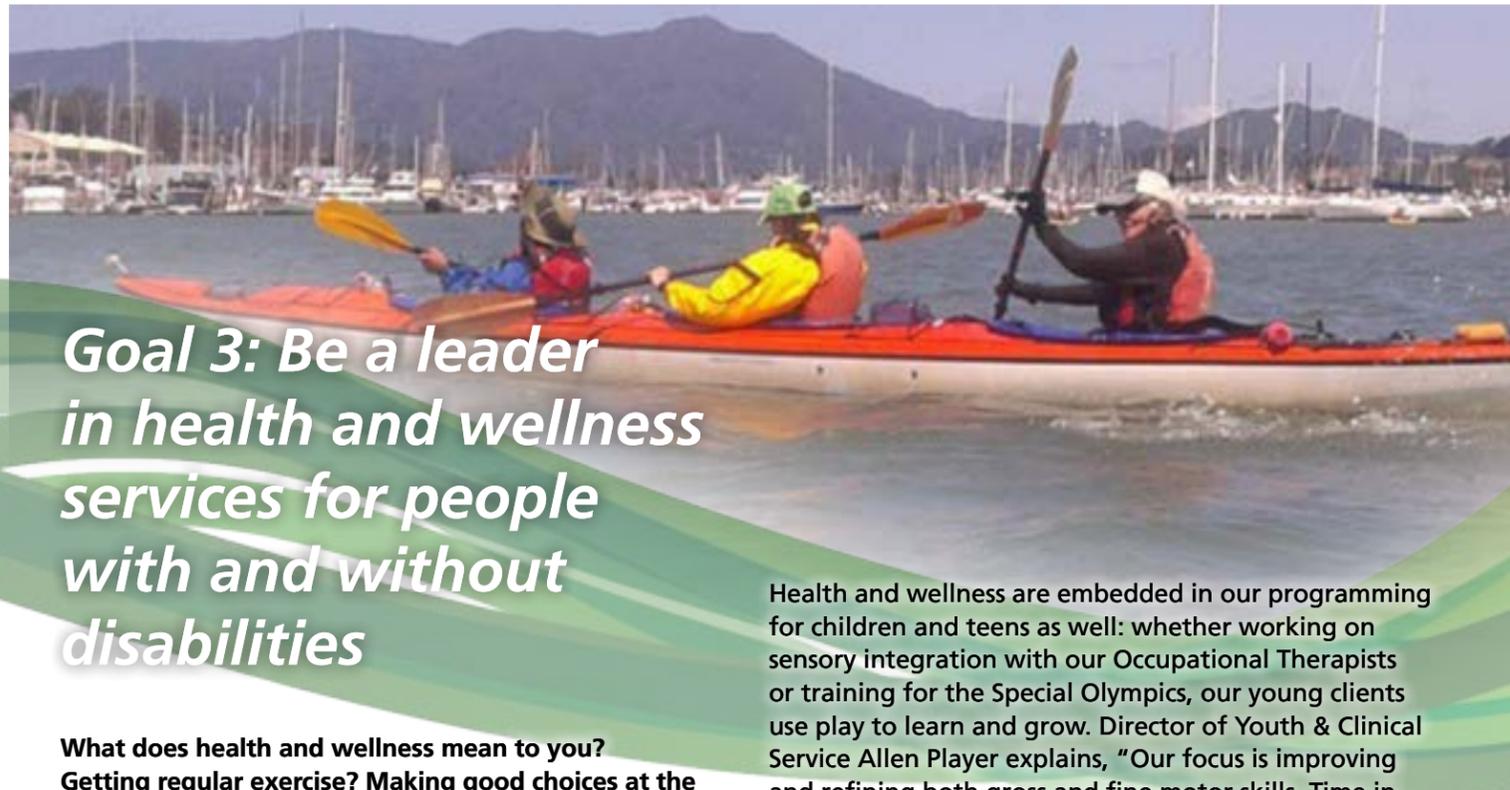
When I have a client who has to miss work because of an illness or injury, I talk to GGRC (the Golden Gate Regional Center) to keep them up to date on the situation. I help ensure that clients are getting enough food, exercise, and medical care. The healthier they are, the sooner they can get back to work; I probably do a little more than I have to, but I take great pride in my job.

Friend

I love all my clients. I tell Gareth if we stop working together, I'm still going to call him up to get together for pizza, because I like hanging out with him!

"Gareth is really good at his job. He's got an uplifting spirit, a positive attitude, something that's hard to find nowadays - especially with someone in an entry level position." – Mark Lewicki, Employment Specialist/Job Coach





Goal 3: Be a leader in health and wellness services for people with and without disabilities

What does health and wellness mean to you?

Getting regular exercise? Making good choices at the supermarket? Talking about your feelings? From the outset, Janet Pomeroy's vision for the Center included health and wellness activities: what we called "recreation" in the 1950s. She was a fierce advocate for her clients' access to every recreational opportunity available to non-disabled residents of San Francisco.

Pomeroy's vision served as the seed for services the Center provides today – and for the goals we have for its future.

Let's Get Physical

For people with disabilities, particularly those who use a wheelchair, a pool can be the perfect environment for exercise; the water supports your body and provides modest resistance. Water exercise has been at the heart of the Center's health and wellness programming since its beginning at the old Fleishhacker Pool Building. Today's Herbst Pool, kept at a deliciously warm 92 degrees, serves about 2,000 people a year - not only our clients but members of the community with disabilities, and hundreds of families whose small children are learning to swim.

Swimming isn't the only form of exercise our clients enjoy, of course. Through the Center's innovative OneCenter curriculum, clients may choose from a range of activities to get their heart rates up and their muscles moving: walking groups, Zumba, yoga, adapted boxing, golf at Harding Park, tennis at Broadway Tennis Center in Burlingame, and outings that include kayaking, horseback riding, and skiing.

Health and wellness are embedded in our programming for children and teens as well: whether working on sensory integration with our Occupational Therapists or training for the Special Olympics, our young clients use play to learn and grow. Director of Youth & Clinical Service Allen Player explains, "Our focus is improving and refining both gross and fine motor skills. Time in the gym, swimming, and playground time are essential to improve health and body mechanics."

Get Lost, Doritos: We Want Veggies!

For anyone who enjoys gardening, you know how much more delicious vegetables taste when you grew them yourself. That is certainly true for our clients, and our gardeners take great pride in tracking the progress of the carrots, zucchini, herbs, and pumpkins growing in our garden. The food we grow isn't just for show – harvested vegetables and herbs are whisked off to the Center's kitchen where participants in our cooking classes peel, chop, sauté and simmer healthy stir fries, soup, and sauces. Junk food looks a lot less appealing when you are eating something you grew and cooked yourself!

PRRC's garden will be dramatically increasing its production of edible goodness in the coming year as we take advantage of a generous \$14,000 grant from SF Environment. A fruit tree orchard, lots more vegetables, and two new raised planter beds will increase the garden's positive impact on the environment. And we just got chickens, so eggs are in our near future, too!

Volunteers Wanted!

We'll need lots of volunteers in the coming year to help construct the raised beds, build up the soil, install drip irrigation, plant, water and weed. Dig in! Contact Volunteer Coordinator Cindy Blackstone cblackstone@prrcsf.org.

What's Next?

Better Health for All!

The community exercises in our pool and plays basketball in our gym, but could we provide more fitness offerings?

What if members of the public were able to take a morning yoga or dance class side by side with our clients, work out in our weight room, or join a fully integrated basketball league? While the garden and kitchen are currently used exclusively by our clients, what if the public had access to composting workshops in the garden? And joined our clients for basic cooking classes in the kitchen?

We are exploring providing onsite clinical services for our clients, beyond the Occupational Therapy we offer to our children and teens; we could have speech therapists and behavioral specialists on our staff; we may engage a nurse to provide case management.

We included health and wellness as one of the pillars of our strategic plan because we believe it meets a growing need in our community for people with and without disabilities. What do you wish the Center would provide in this area? Let us know!

PRRC's Terry Gross officiates tip off between undefeated Pomeroy Wildcats and SF State Gators



Pool User Lenore Naxon Speaks at 2016 Banner of Love

Waxing Poetic About Pomeroy Pool

Remember at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, when the Wizard comes from behind the curtain and he gives Dorothy and all her friends medals? He gives the Cowardly Lion a testimonial. This is my first opportunity, in all my years of public speaking, to actually bestow one.

Let me tell you about the pool. It is the only warm water pool in San Francisco - believe me, I've looked! The first thing you notice when you see people entering the pool for class, is that they are all smiling because of the warmth, relief, pleasure, and fun.

I've done a totally anecdotal survey of participants in the Therapeutic Water Class over the past month. Did you know that some of the folks have lifetime passes from the 1980s? Other people have been coming for 15-20 years. And then there are newbies like me, who just discovered this miracle place.

When I asked my friends to use one word to describe the class and their experience, here is a sample of what they said: restore, delicious, revitalize, escape, camaraderie, a tool, a tonic, better than any drug, an equalizer. And gratitude. Lots of gratitude. Gratitude that whatever you have might not be as challenging as that guy over there or that mother and daughter over there. And gratitude, too, to the Pomeroy Center for carving out time for us, and to its donors for supporting this wonderful place. Without the pool, I would be sedentary, unhappy, and stiff in the joints, that is for sure.

continued page 11 ...



TOP: Sasha completely immerses herself in her art.
 BOTTOM: (L) Sonia Castro shows off her needlepoint project. (R) Michael Derner gives PRRC's evening drama class two thumbs up!



Goal 4: Be a leader in expressive arts programming for people with and without disabilities

The arts are a meeting place – a common ground where cognitive, physical, and verbal differences can become irrelevant. Our current expressive arts programming primarily serves our clients through art, drama and movement classes.

For some participants in our programs with mobility limitations, simply making a mark on a piece of paper is an enormous accomplishment, but PRRC's art teachers and staff will readily adapt the tools of the craft for their hands, adding, for example, some clay around a pencil or pastel so that it fits and stays in the hand. You can move your head but not your hands? No problem - staff will attach a long-handled paintbrush to a bicycle helmet for you. Whether exploring visual or performing arts, every artist receives the attention and care they need so that their creativity can shine through.



What's Next?

Art For All!

As we crafted our strategic plan, we began to consider how we could expand the impact of our arts offerings both for our clients and the general public. We have public performances here from time to time, but what if we developed a performing arts series? We have visiting artists from Notoriety Variety (notorietyvariety.org) already enriching our clients' experience, but what if we hosted an artist residency quarterly with classes for our clients and occasional workshops open to the public? We have an annual art show and sale, but what if we could send a traveling exhibit to local venues and create an online store so people could see and purchase our clients' work without even coming to the Center?

We are excited to expand our community building through the arts – and to take you all along for the ride!

continued from Page 9 Pomeroy Pool Poetry

My word to describe the pool? Necessary. I also say, "Nobody cares – everybody cares." What do I mean by that? Nobody cares if:

- you have cellulite on your thighs
- you bought your suit from Costco or Salvation Army.
- you have tattoos all over your body or have red and purple spiked hair. (Did you ever wonder what 60 and 70-year-olds look like full of ink? Just come to the pool and find out!)
- you use a walker or a cane, or if you have body parts missing or if you are visually impaired.

Because everyone at the pool has a history. Everyone has a story. Some are easily visible. The majority are not. It is a true rainbow of San Francisco. People of every age, walk of life, neighborhood, ethnicity, disability.

But everybody cares. That you take care of yourself. That you are safe. That you feel welcome. That you only exercise as much as you can without hurting yourself.

For me, I had major surgery 13 months ago. I am one lucky lady. I am lucky to be alive. I needed a place where I could exercise in a safe and secure environment. One where I could work out without pain or stress. One where I was not known by everyone. One where I would not feel competitive to push myself beyond reasonable limits, past lots of pain, for which I would pay.

The pool is a magical place. There, six days a week, 30-50 people attend a therapeutic water exercise class. They trade recipes, stories of grandchildren, home remedies for ailments, movie reviews. They sing along to the Beatles and Motown and Rodgers and Hammerstein. And they smile. I smile.

The pool is a magical place.



Ada and Grandpa Lynn love the pool.

The Work Ahead

EVOLVING demographics

Two key issues facing the disability community everywhere are the explosive growth of autism diagnoses in children and the extended life expectancy of adults with disabilities.

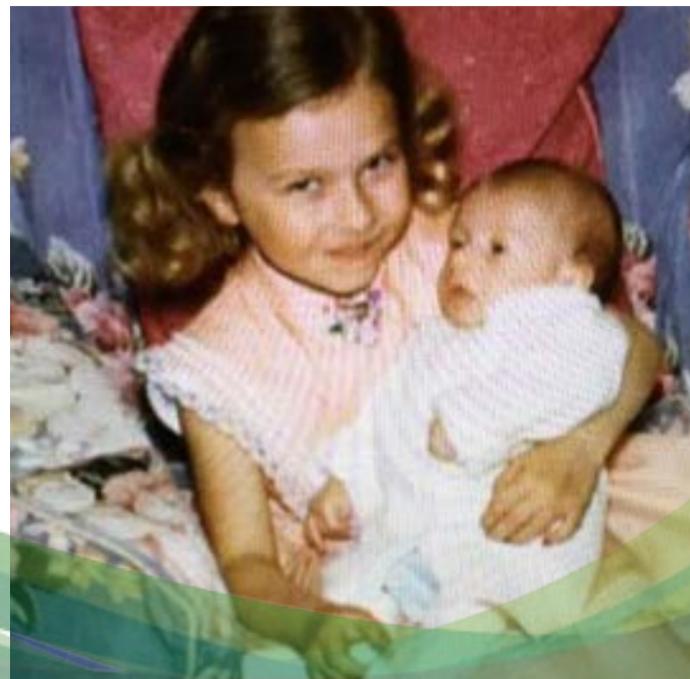
Supporting Elders with Disabilities

A generation ago, a child born with a disability often wouldn't survive much beyond middle age. Today, medical advances have increased the chance that a child born with a disability will live well into adulthood – even to old age. The Pomeroy Center already supports a number of seniors in its program; in the coming years, we will need to be ready to serve more individuals with multiple disabilities, people with complex health issues, and individuals who are living longer with dementia and other complications of old age.

Families of people with disabilities always need special support. Even if parents are able to care for a child with disabilities at home through adulthood, at some point, this will change. Parents will age and die and siblings will be left with the serious responsibility of caring for a brother or sister. These siblings may have considerable work or family obligations of their own. Even those who can take over supporting their sibling need additional resources.

In a 2013 article in *U.S. News & World Report*, Geoff Williams writes: "A recent Easter Seals Sibling Disability Study survey reported that more than 65 million people – 29 percent of the population in the United States – provide care for a chronically ill, disabled or elderly family member or friend in any given year, logging an average of 20 hours a week. Much of that care, the survey noted, is for an adult brother or sister."

Beverly Strada Bushley is one of many Americans facing the reality of caring for a sibling with a disability. The Stradas were an Air Force family and moved a lot, and in general Beverly says her brother Robert was accepted everywhere they went, but she does recall one painful episode from when she was 12 and Robert was 7. "Robert and I were sitting on the curb talking with some new neighbor kids. This woman came over, grabbed her kids and pulled them away from Robert, like he was contagious! It broke my heart."



It broke my heart.

Beverly's mother devoted herself to Robert until he was 21 and she made the excruciating decision that he needed to be living in a setting that would support his specific needs. "My mother placed Robert in the Agnews Developmental Center and then cried for six weeks straight." Over the next few years Robert lived in a few different settings, finally settling into a group home where his mother came and volunteered daily. "She practically lived there!" remarks Beverly. When that home abruptly closed, their social worker found a group home called Rainbow Bright. "Robert moved in there on a Saturday and started at the Pomeroy Center two days later."

Continued on page 14

PIONEERING excellence in employment

PRRC staff are the most valuable asset the organization has. Dennis and Anne Sammut know this intimately. Their daughter, Lara, is a client, and they attribute her development over the past few years to the skill, attention and love of the staff who supports her.

Dennis and Anne Sammut believe deeply in good staff development, both in their own business, Artichoke Joe's in San Bruno, and at the Pomeroy Center where their daughter Lara is a client.

What has the staff at PRRC meant to you and your family?

"The staff has been a blessing from on high. They help Lara have a better quality of life; they help her to do the things that she can't do and to feel good about herself," says Dennis. "The staff gives her a great sense of belonging to a community, too. It's great she's not confined to a very limited home environment. She really enjoys coming and looks forward to seeing all the familiar faces of staff and clients. And when staff rotates, she gets to meet someone new!"

Without this trust in the Center's staff, Dennis and Anne wouldn't feel confident bringing Lara to the PRRC every day. "It's a safe place for her to go and be an individual, to socialize in her own way. It's a gift to us that we know she is loved and cared for as a unique person in her own right. Plus, it gives us parents and caregiver a much-needed break and allows us to work and do the things we need to do to provide for her."

How has Lara developed as a result of Pomeroy staff support?

Dennis and Anne say that Lara really loves the staff, especially Ning Bondoc and Lesley Steele. She enjoys music, swimming, being outdoors and doing garden activities. She's grown socially. She's happier and a lot more alert and aware, more perceptive of her environment. "It's the little things you notice," says Anne, "She waves hello and goodbye now, comes up and gives you a kiss, she's more affectionate. Before, she didn't do that as much – we attribute that to the staff and her time at the Center."



Lara Sammut and her father Dennis at Banner of Love

In its strategic plan, one goal PRRC is focusing on is to be an excellent employer and develop staff. How do you define employer excellence? Why is staff development important?

"To be an excellent employer, you've got to care about and check in with your employees, spend a little time, tell them what a great job they're doing," says Anne. Dennis finds PRRC employees motivated. "This kind of place only attracts individuals motivated to help others – they are filling a definite need. And it's a great place to build experience!"

In his own business at Artichoke Joe's, Dennis emphasizes that everybody is an important part of the team. He tells his staff, "I just happen to be in charge. Who's important? The dishwasher and the janitor! Without them, you have dirty dishes and floors." At Artichoke Joe's, every hire starts at the bottom and works his or her way up. This means that by the time someone becomes a manager, she has done many other jobs at the business and is not afraid to pick up a mop and deal with a spill. "We have no prima donnas!"

PRRC supervisors and directors know this pathway well. Director of Adult Services Lesley Steele still frequently puts in a load of laundry. Ca'trina Johnson, Supervisor of the Adult Development Department, still helps clients with personal care. We have no prima donnas at the Pomeroy Center!

Read "Ca'trina's Story" on page 15

EVOLVING demographics *continued from page 12*

Beverly was sure he would have trouble adjusting to two such big life changes – he is a man of routine. For example, every Saturday night she takes him to Harry's Hofbrau in Redwood City (where he hugs everyone). "If I take a different way on the drive home, he notices and it bothers him - he is not flexible at all!" So Beverly was a wreck that first day at Pomeroy, just waiting for the phone to ring. She was amazed when everything went smoothly.

That was 13 years ago and Robert is still thriving. The time will come when he needs more support than Rainbow Bright can provide; at that point, he will be moved into an IFC (Intermediate Care Facility), a group home with a nurse on staff and more monitoring of residents' health. In some respects, Beverly feels more confident about Robert's future wellbeing than her own. "I have to have confidence in the system. I know he will always be taken care of."

Beverly's mother knew the time might come when Beverly would need to take over Robert's care. "Mom started taking me to Robert's yearly meetings, saying, 'You may have to do this someday.'" Sure enough, her mother began exhibiting symptoms of Alzheimer's and ultimately couldn't serve as Robert's conservator. "I stepped up because that's what I had to do. I couldn't have not stepped up," she says. Many participants at PRRC are "self-conserved," and their families trust that they will be consulted if, for example, a medical concern arises. After her parents died, Beverly didn't want to take that risk, so she purchased a Nolo Press book about becoming a conservator [sadly out of print], methodically going through it and completing and filing all the necessary documents.

Beverly says, "I'm scared a lot of the time. Am I shirking my responsibilities? Robert could live with me, but he has a great life where he is – and, as siblings, we would just be fighting all the time! I feel sometimes that I should be taking care of him. Then I thank God every night for organizations like the Pomeroy Center to take this burden off me."

A CONSERVATORSHIP ...
is a legal arrangement whereby a judge appoints a responsible person or organization (the "conservator") to care for another adult (the "conservatee") who cannot care for himself or herself or manage his or her own finances.



Joaquin makes a selection on our touch-screen computer.

Autism on the Rise

The meteoric rise of autism that we are seeing worldwide is already reflected in the growth of our Children & Teens Program. Allen Player, Director of Youth and Clinical Services, says, "Ten years ago we only needed one classroom for our elementary age students; we've had to expand to three."

While the school district does offer occupational therapy services, they are tightly rationed and focused exclusively on academic issues; parents are looking for more specialized services, particularly help with sensory and social issues. To address this growing need the Center has engaged several Occupational Therapists and has launched a social playgroup for children who may struggle to make friends. Response to these supplemental services has been enthusiastic. For the older teens and adults we serve (with and without autism), life skills, independent living skills, and vocational training are high on the list of priorities.

The changing face of disability requires that we stay one step ahead, developing our expertise ahead of the need. We are exploring providing specialized job training for individuals with autism, creating an integrated preschool, and even modifying our facilities to include a space that is "autism friendly," with minimal sensory stimulation. We are excited about the possibilities for the Center and those we serve!

Sibling, Caregiver & Conservator **ONLINE RESOURCES**

siblingsupport.org
disabilityrightscsca.org/pubs/PublicationsConservatorship.htm
nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/conservatorships-adult-guardianships-30063.html

PIONEERING excellence in employment

Ca'trina's Story

Ca'trina Johnson didn't like how the residents were treated at the board and care home where she worked.

It wasn't that they were mistreated, but it wasn't much of a life. "They stayed at home every day just watching television and went to bed early every night," she says, "The most important thing seemed to be making sure that the residents didn't leave the house."

Ca'trina knew there had to be a better way to do this work and she began to look for a different job. She learned about PRRC from a family member and was hired to be what they called a "Program Aide." That was 20 years ago. The program was simpler then: participants stayed in one group all day, doing tabletop activities, swimming, taking a weekly field trip, maybe visiting a fellow client who was sick at home or in the hospital.

From early on, Ca'trina worked and trained under Lesley Steele and Sandra Nalls, both of whom recognized her passion for the work and encouraged her to take on more responsibility. "Under their training, I was able to jump right in and be a leader."

When she was promoted to Program Leader, she was responsible for the whole group; her biggest challenge was

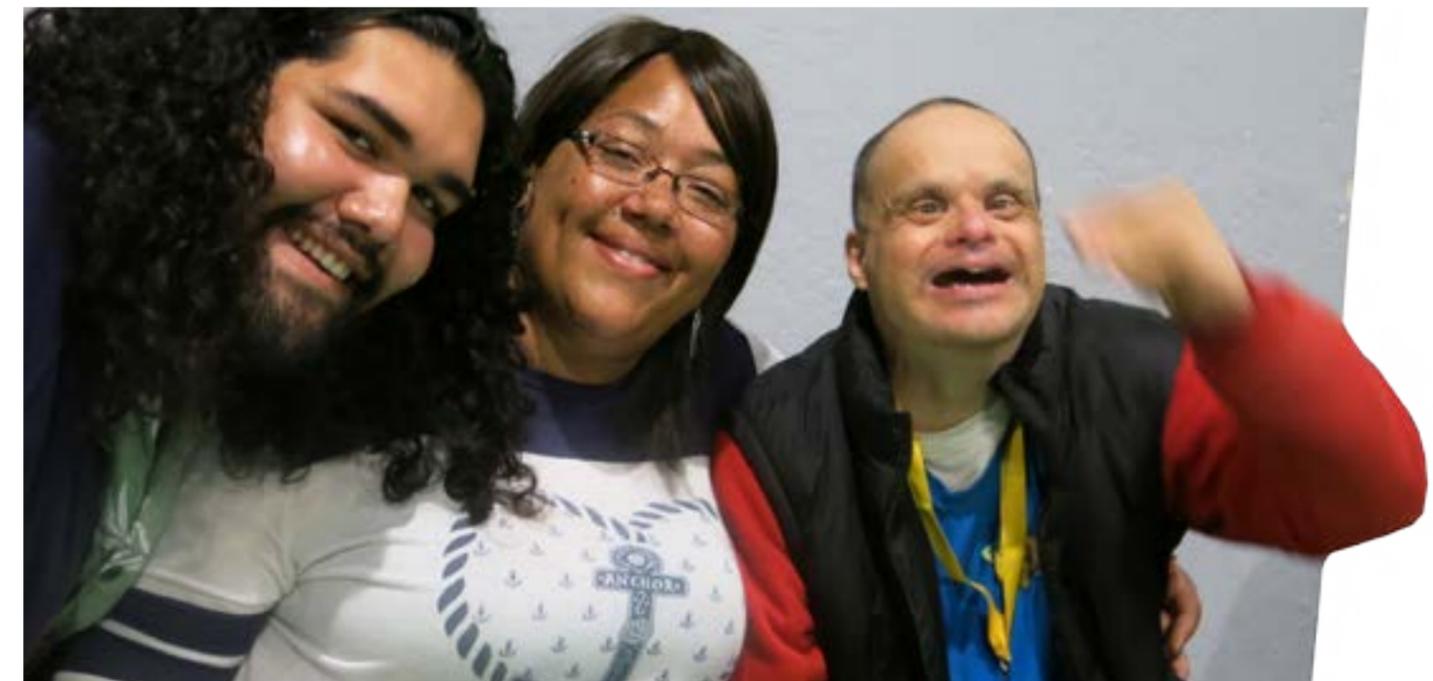
coming up with things to keep everyone busy all day. Without a plan, one could fall into a stale routine, offering the same puzzles and art projects every day. From Program Leader, she moved up to Program Specialist and then served as Acting Supervisor when Lesley was on vacation. "I had a chance to learn what it was to keep the department together then."

Ca'trina became Assistant Supervisor next and moved up to department Supervisor 2 to 3 years ago. There was still a lot to learn in her new position, but Lesley was there to train her. "I learned about being a voice for participants, advocating for them, taking care of paperwork for their doctors, communicating with their social workers."

Now that she's a Supervisor, Ca'trina tries to be a mentor to her staff. "I try to model the way Lesley mentored me. I always want staff to know I'm here to support them, so they know they can come and ask me anything." She emphasizes how important training is for staff, for everything from computer skills to hands on work with clients. "I want to give them tools to interact with clients and have compassion. I try to lead by example to show that we are here for the clients, not ourselves. Lesley modeled this – she is not afraid to jump right in and get her hands dirty."

Beyond training and decent pay, providing people encouragement, positive feedback and recognition is critical for staff. Luckily for her team, Ca'trina is a master at that!

PRRC's Larry Morales clowning with Ca'trina and Derek Fernandez at Fun Day



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