

The Wellness and Advocacy Center News

Issue 1
8/15/10
Summer Harvest
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SUMMER HARVEST

The Wellness and Advocacy Center is a peer-run, self-help program which supports individuals living with mental health challenges to develop and sustain health and well being through self-empowerment.

A Garden is a Sacred Place

By Amy Breckenridge

2000 square feet of what used to be a sandbox, is now a healthy, thriving community garden. Through the hard work of dedicated staff and volunteers, the sand was removed, the area fenced and a lottery was held to give individual members their own 9 by 9 garden plots.

Corn, squash, herbs, peppers

and flowers are all thriving in this beautiful garden. Members work their own plot or work in teams to grow the produce that is most valuable to them. Members “garden art” also graces this garden: you can see paintings, wind chimes, flags and little garden sculptures throughout these plots.

The Wellness and

Advocacy Center now hosts three garden spaces: two grow food for the Center’s kitchen and contribute to healthy meals for 150 people a week. If you want to experience “a little piece of heaven”, come down and visit our community garden. I promise you a moment of sheer peace and beauty!

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Beginning Stages...



To flourishing Garden!

Spotlight on a Volunteer

An Interview with Alexis Wilson

When did you start coming to the Wellness and Advocacy Center?

About a year and a half ago. A Buckelew counselor referred me here who thought it would be good to utilize as a resource. I recognized some people I knew here already. Since I was

interested, I got involved in the art program and then met Naomi (the Art Director) and it rather evolved from there.

So I understand you have been officially volunteering in the Art Room.

It's not just providing supplies, it is like being with

a small sub-community within the larger community, and I encourage people in their art work and socially as well.

What have you learned since volunteering in the Art Program?

I see the value in giving people en-

couragement, discussing different options, and love seeing when someone is growing; I think that the Art studio is very therapeutic for some people, for example, people who experience things through art that they cannot express yet in words.

(Cont. Below)

Continued from column four (Above)

What have you gained from participating and volunteering at the Wellness and Advocacy Center?

I have lost weight from walking to the Center, have opportunities to interact with a variety of people, and I am improving myself crea-

tively... I have "free live models" in the art room. I am learning that this type of work can be natural for me. Though I sometimes feel distress, I am very comfortable with people here.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

I would really like to work with people with psychiatric challenges. I see a lot of beauty in people with mental health issues. I have had personal experience in hospital settings and I would really like to be with people, advocate

for them as they travel their perilous journeys. I feel passionate about the need for respectful, compassionate treatment for people going through a great deal of suffering and believe I could make a difference given my experience and desire.

We believe volunteering is one avenue towards recovery, fulfillment and finding your purpose. Ask us about our volunteer opportunities.

Advocacy Corner

By Linda Kehoe

Advocacy Thrives at the Center! Disability Rights California (DRC) Sonoma Peer Self Advocacy Unit (PSA) is housed here. Having access to DRC and its PSA unit brings training, programs and counsel that offers legal knowledge and advocacy skills where peers learn the ways and means to advocate for themselves. Working together friendships emerge that enhance well being, address stigma, improve communication within our community and bring greater understanding to the community at large.

Linda Kehoe

Advocacy Question

Why Have I Been Put On Conservatorship?

When a court has determined that you are gravely disabled due to mental illness.

What Does "Gravely Disabled" mean?

Gravely disabled means that a court has determined that the person is not able to provide for their own food, clothing, and shelter.

And How Do I Get Off?

Peer Self Advocacy (PSA) provides training so that you can develop an Action Plan to challenge conservatorship.

Ivan's Corner

Mental Health Board Updates

The Mental Health Board meets every third Tuesday of the month.

The next mental Health board meeting will be in September 21st, 2010 @ the West Wing Conference Room located at 3322 Chanate Road and will be starting at 5pm.

September's topic is to be on the Juvenile Hall/Valley of the Moon MH Services.

So, I am welcoming you to show up and be a part of the community and planning experience. And we always welcome feedback and input from you the community and other service providers. If you want more information on what is happening with the mental Health Board, please come see me at the Wellness and Advocacy Center and I'll be glad to update you on what's happening and what is upcoming.

Ivan Anderson

Advocacy Corner

Call or send your questions to Linda Kehoe at the Wellness and Advocacy Center. 565-7822
3400 Chanate Rd
Santa Rosa CA
95404

linda.kehoe@disabilityrightsca.org



"Oppression can only survive through Silence"

Carmen de Monteflores

Creativity Unbound

By Naomi Murakami/ Art Director

The Art Room has been a very popular spot at the Wellness Center, thanks to the members' strong support. I would like to make our two sparkling points from the first half of 2010. The first one is our long time wish come true, our first real outside art show. It

was so special for everyone from the center to see our members' original artworks in a real gallery setting. The Journey Center is a beautiful gallery and progressive spiritual space. The show is over but I encourage anyone to visit just to enjoy tea or coffee.

It is so welcoming. Thanks to **Kalia Mussetter** for introducing our program to the Journey Center.

The second point is that the Art Program has been very fortunate with its dedicated volunteers. **Alexcia** comes and helps almost everyday

(Cont. on pg 5)

SSU Nursing Student Shares

In Spring I had the opportunity to spend a couple of days there at the Wellness and Advocacy Center. I was introduced to loads of amazing artists, gardeners, and all around great people who are doing phenomenal work

there at the center and in the community. I was most impressed with the work being done in the art studio. Puppeteers, painters and illustrators were magically creating for hours at a time while Naomi was there to pro-

vide guidance and insight. Naomi told me about the exhibit in downtown Santa Rosa of some of the artists that I had met on that Thursday. I managed to go take a look that evening and was blown away by

(Cont. on pg 5)



Journey Center Art Show



*Sonoma State
University
Students
Collaborate with
The
Wellness and
Advocacy Center*

Creativity Unbound (cont. from pg 4)

on time. She is very skilled at sewing, and she influenced another volunteer Alexis to do puppet projects. **Alexis** shows her creativity in many different ways but I believe her strongest talent is being herself. Many fellow members admire her up-beat-hyper-positive-

attitude. **Sam** started our website from scratch and took the Work Experience Program at the SRJC while making our site. Now he has a job. He commented that volunteering helped while applying to this job. **Jeff** is a professional level artist who is a crucial person for our art shows. He spends hours

cleaning, matting, framing, and more without being noticed by a majority of people at the center.

I am so proud of all of our super volunteers' generosity. They are donating their talent, skill, and time which is no different from donating money, if not more.

Arigatou!!

By the way, I am having a show at the Sebastopol Library this October. I hope you can visit if you have a chance. Well, that's it from the Art Room for now.

Naomi



Alexis Wilson
Art Room Volunteer

Review from Student Nurse (cont from pg 4)

the sheer talent of work. Much of the art was of a tremendous calibre, able to stand up to any work I've seen at some of San Francisco's finest museums. The sense of community and

dedication that I experienced there at the center was quite moving, and really inspiring. The garden is also something to behold, and I can't imagine how it has grown into something quite

wonderful by now. My two days at the Wellness center were the most memorable two days so far of my nursing program and I am very thankful for it.

Sabrina

“my two days at the Wellness Center were the most memorable two days so far of my nursing program”
Sabrina

Highlights of the Year

The Wellness Center has had a very interesting and productive year this year. Some of the programs we have offered are:

- Expressive Art Therapy:
 - Taught by Arjuna
- Recovery Forum
- Job Search Workshop
- Journey Center Art Show
- Literary Journal

New Groups:

- Social Skills
- Mind Body Stress Management
- Self-esteem
- Telling Your Story

Upcoming Events

Alternatives Conference: The Wellness Center's Literary Journal Committee has been invited to present at this year's Alternatives Conference.

Choices Forum: We are holding a Forum on the Choices we make and how they affect our lives.



If you or someone you know is living with a mental health disorder, we encourage you to visit the Wellness and Advocacy Center.

We will give you a tour of our program and a brief introduction to our friendly recovery-oriented, peer community. We have activities to participate, peer-counselors with resources and support or if you just want a place to relax, have a cup of coffee and socialize, you are welcome to join us.

For more information, visit us on the web at:
www.wellnessandadvocacy.org
or give us a call at 707 565-7800.

The Wellness and Advocacy Center is a program of Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Empire, contracted by Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Mental Health Division with funding from the Mental Health Services Act.



Summer Barbeque