

# ***TOWARD MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE, INC.***

***Issue #15***

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*This newsletter is published quarterly for program participants, family, friends and colleagues of TMI, a non-profit organization*

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***Employer  
Interview  
By Brent  
Ramsey***



Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting John Larson, the

managing partner of Chili's Restaurant located on Lusk Blvd. in Mira Mesa. John has been involved in the restaurant business for twenty years and has worked at Chili's for the last six of those years. John was approached by Louanne Davis, TMI's Director of Community Employment Services, after he attended a workshop on hiring folks with disabilities. The one thing that John found appealing about the agency's employment programs was the philosophy - it was very much like his own. Since his early involvement with Chili's Restaurant, John's positive attitude has opened many doors of opportunity to people who receive supports from our agency. Currently, Chris Hopper and Errol Simpson (supported employment program) are both part of the working team that provides some of the finest in Southern California dining.

Both Louanne and John have played an integral part in establishing a great working relationship. John feels that this is his way of giving back to the community. According to John, "a sense of pride, accomplishment and contribution are the key ingredients that make the individuals at Chili's so successful." He really enjoyed seeing the Hopper family win the trip to Mammoth Mountain at

***Employer Interview - Continued***

last year's Christmas party. I sure do feel that John is "tuned-in" to his philosophies and is seeing to it that they're developed in the work environment.

If you are ever in the Mira Mesa area, stop by and see John and the Chili's team - I'm sure they'll be happy to satisfy your hungriest need. Bon Appetite'!

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## **A Word From Our Co-Executive Director**

For anyone who may wonder what some of us really do in the administrative office, especially in Light of the fact that there is often just a little too much laughter in ~he office to be taken seriously, I bought I might try to piece together a recent week or two.

?t might include interviewing the op ten candidates out of seventy applicants for an administrative support position, a VR-WAP expansion meeting for Community Employment Services, )r putting the finishing touches on a Family Support grant - one that proposes to really support natural families. It might include incessant hounding by that persistent newsletter editor, even though two conference presentations and a written commentary to the State's new Supported Living regulations loom pressingly before you. It might mean planning a presentation video and public relations strategies with the agency's new Development Committee or brainstorming new ways of doing business in Community Living so CSLA (Community Supported Living Arrangement) meets the federal guidelines. It might mean a meeting of directors, devoted to professional growth and renewal as we try to incorporate Covey's *Principle-Centered Leadership* into our organizational practices. Of course, no week would be complete without a few minor and not-so-minor crises in Community Living. There is always a

## **A Word From Our Co-Executive Director - Continued**

legislative fax or two to disrupt the calm complacency that we are tempted to - heaven forbid that we ever take funding for granted!

In spite of it all, there always seems time to celebrate big and little occasions. Most recently we gathered to give Daisy a fond farewell. We wish her all the best! Not long after we came together again to celebrate the people we all rely on for administrative support - one of those Hallmark traditions. We held a lunch in honor of Gloria, Sandra, Shana and Tina as a small token of our appreciation. Of course, this group gathering was a brief interlude, for the bell sounded for the CARF Committee - a grand example of "planning ahead," since accreditation is a year and a half away.

So just in case you wondered about all the fun and laughter in the office, we do try to "squeeze" in quite a bit of real work in a typical week!

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## **Supported Life Success Story**

*By Tom Ruffino & Ollie Robinson*

My name is Ollie Robinson. I've always loved California. I live with my roommate, Tommy, and I have a big library in my room. I love geography and maps. I also know every capital to all the states. I go to school during the day. I love school because they help me with my speech and my walking. I also learn lots of things and I like doing art projects. When I come home from school, I like to go on walks in my wheelchair and see my friends. I want to be able to walk again someday because I'm really sick of my wheelchair.

I have fun with Tommy and John when we play cards. I also like Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. Someday I want to be on a quiz show in Hollywood, hopefully answering questions on geography. On the weekends I like to go on drives and watch football. I also go to church every Sunday. I'm Catholic. I like my life . . . it's fine and very nice. I love my roommate Tommy - he's like a brother to me.

Hi! My name is Tom Ruffino. Ollie truly is a success story! As some people know, when I started at TMI with Ollie as my roommate, he was in a "home" (which he calls "Nazi Camps!") and he is right about some of them. The staff at the "home" had Ollie on about 7 different drugs (mostly depressants) which I think were probably used to keep him quiet. Ollie was in a comatose state and literally needed 24 hour care. After the first 6 months and being taken off of 4 of the drugs, he finally woke up. From that point, he started to become very independent and started successfully completing the goals we had set for himself.

I feel very lucky to have Ollie as a roommate. He's a wonderful man with very interesting life stories and I do feel that he is happy with his life now! Love you, Ollie!

## **In The Spotlight**

*By Nancy Medaglia*

Although many of the individuals referred to TMI's Supported Employment program have had previous job experience, our goal is to find them a job they will enjoy to ensure their job success. There is one individual that comes to mind when I think about supported employment and her name is Debra Hutchinson.

Debra has been employed at Savon Drugs in El Cajon since May 1991. It is a true success story as far as supported job sites go. She is part of the stock team, and works a few evenings a week, helping face and restock shelves. Ask any of her co-workers and they'll tell you that Debra is a big help around the store. She has a lot of friends at work and all of them know Deb's great sense of humor! (Sorry Deb, I let the secret out!)

Store Manager, Lee Sennett has played a vital role in Debra's success. He clearly demonstrates to his employees how "natural supports" can benefit Debra. He's worked closely with Debra and her coach to see that her needs are met, and also pushes Debra to keep her job performance up to par - he's been known to get her to smile too!

Like everyone else who has been at a job for any length of time, Debra gets vacation time at work. She has visited Las Vegas and San Francisco and is planning another trip in April or May of this year. One never knows just where Debra has gone until she comes back sporting a new T-shirt depicting where she has been. Deb loves to travel and hopes to see Europe someday. Knowing her, she'll make it there soon!

I personally want to congratulate Debra on a job well done for the past two years. Keep up the good work! In parting, I'll leave you with a true Debra quote, "Asta La Vista, Baby!!"

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## **FSS Families Of The Year**

*By Tracy Bingham*

Family Support Services (FSS) has been in existence now for almost three years. We continue to support sixteen children and teenagers living with alternative families. Everyone involved with FSS is outstanding and committed to their children and families. Dema, Dan and I extend a special thanks to ALL of you, as you are all Families Of The Year to us!!

As you can imagine, it was more than a little challenging to choose one family to receive the TMI award for "Family Of The Year." On top of that, another family was to be chosen from the previous year, 1991. This was, indeed, a true testimony to the fact that "all children belong in families."



## **FSS Families Of The Year - Continued**

The 1991 recipients of the TMI Family Of The Year were Ana and Manuel Fuentes and their family. They were one of the original families certified by TMI. They are always there, whether it be an emergency or a celebration. Thank you Ana, Manuel, June, Manuel Jr., Miguel, Cha-Cha, Peter, Barbara and Ryan.

The 1992 TMI Family Of The Year was awarded to Mickie and Andrea Cochran and their family. They are celebrating their one year anniversary with Family Support Services. They jumped into the program with a dedication and enthusiasm that was exceptional. Thank you Mickie, Andrea, Shawny, Alycla and Tarel

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## **Viva Las Vegas**

*By Darin Trammell*

On March 13 the group of 38 TMI employees and their friends went on a “turn-around” bus trip to Las Vegas. At 7:00 a.m. Saturday morning the group was ready to roll - everyone reved up to get to Vegas. I could just feel the luck ooze out of me! Call it a “gut feeling” or male intuition, but I knew I was going to be in synch with the pulse of Vegas (kinda’ like a “Zen State” of Vegas!) Our bus driver was a kindly older fellow named Dave. Dave’s appearance suggested that he’d been driving for quite a number of years. As we departed the TMI parking lot, the morning brought hope and anticipation of a great day! The bus ride was basically uneventful. At one point we all played ,a “guess who” of Las Vegas entertainers.

Some of the rowdy riders acted out their entertainer, however most just gave clues and the rest of us guessed. Soon enough we came into beautiful Barstow - our rest stop which was approximately half way to Vegas (the mere thought intoxicated me). Well, the rest stop was filled with every other bus tour in the world that was going to Vegas that day. The lines to the bathroom were, to say the least, real kidney stretchers. Everyone got their refreshments and within an hour we were back on the road. Oh, I seemed to have forgotten a small detail as my story unravels here about our bus driver, the kindly, older gentleman, Dave - well Dave had a penchant for speed! Dave drove that bus like it was a Lamborghini - weaving in and out, passing autos right and left, the bus responding with an occasional sway. Throwing all caution to the wind we were once again on our way to Vegas! Go, Dave - Go!!

Well we’d already played our “guess who” game and the group was getting restless. Connie offered to talk on the 7 Habits, but Mark saved the day and talked about his book that he’d read - no, studied - no, memorized - on the game of Craps. He related the preferred, the semi-preferred and the non-preferred strategies and even the history and evolution of the game. You name it - he knew this game! You know, we’re all different. Some people learn as they go and some people buy books to analyze first - well, I felt “who needs that, when you have ooze, gut feelings and intuition!” I’ll do it my way! As we motored down the highway, it wasn’t long before we saw the Nevada border over the horizon! Knowing we were getting close, my heart quickened, sending a pulse down my slot-pulling arm! By this time, Dave was out to break some speed record. Go, Dave -Go!! Finally, we made it-Las Vegas-the strip, the lights (wait it’s still daylight??) the entertainment, the people and last but not least - the MONEY!!!!

Our bus pulled into the parking lot of Maxim’s Hotel & Casino. Dry-mouthed and ready to dash off the bus, I was a man with a mission. I had an appointment with destiny. Our group entered the casino and disbanded every which way. Let the games begin! We began at the quarter slots. Lou felt lucky and moved to dollar slots, Mark made his way to the craps tables, while Connie and I maintained at the quarters. Desiring bigger payoffs, I went out to search for “the” lucky machine. I sent out my vibes and I spotted the machine I wanted. However, there was one obstacle to overcome - the blue-haired lady playing 3 slots at once - mine included among them. As I sauntered past her she flashed me a paranoid glance through her cat glasses. I sat down at a nearby machine, willing her to leave and after 30 minutes my prayers were answered. I quickly gathered my quarters and started playing. How could I have been so wrong about my hunch - my quarters disappearing one by one. I halfheartedly pulled the arm and saw a 7 appear, then another and - yes - another! JACKPOT!! The spilling quarters filled my ears! Well, I more than doubled my money, hurried to cash it in, and set off to find Louanne. She had won several jackpots twice the size of mine. mark

## **VIVA LAS VEGAS - CONTINUED**

tripled his money (see what happens when you read books). Well, I won't disclose what Louanne or Mark won, but it was enough to make me grimace with discomfort - my jackpot paled in comparison, but I knew it was just a taste of things to come.

As day gave way to night, I experienced one loss after another - like a fickle lover, lady luck jilted me - I was a loser! by the end of the evening, I was a spectator. Unlike Louanne who tripped upon a fantastic paying machine which kept her enthralled for hours. I was a broken man by this time. I had lost all my winnings and all the money I brought with me. Louanne and I had to use a credit card to get something to drink and a sliver of pie to eat. As we boarded the bus it was fun to hear everybody's stories of the day. Those who broke even and those of us who lost their shirts. The big winners were Brent R. and Christy B. We headed home on the bus with our "wanna-be" race driver, Dave, careening down the freeway (many of us white-knuckled) until we gave in to exhaustion and fell semi-asleep. All in all, everyone had a great time and have good memories of the trip. You better believe we will be planning another trip next year to Vegas and hopefully many more people can come along. Hope to see you on the strip - Viva Las Vegas!

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## **OUR LIVING PLANET EARTH** **By Simone Ferber**

Happy Springtime!! Been hit by that "Spring Fever Bug" yet? Here are some seasonal tips you can think about.

Don't throw away those old clothes, **THINK 2ND TIME AROUND**. Use that old pillow case as a laundry bag, or cut it up and use it as a napkin and save a tree! Give those "closet refugees" to your local charity or share them with a friend.

Here's how to keep the earth clean - pour 1/2 cup vinegar, 1/2 cup ammonia and 1/4 cup baking soda into 1 gallon of water, mix and scrub with a "clean green" conscience!

Make the springtime sun work for you and save energy. Here's how! Dry your clothes outside, they'll be whiter and you won't have to use bleach or a dryer.

Stay cool! Keep your curtains and blinds closed during the hottest part of the day. Use your fans, not an air conditioner and watch your SDG&E bill go down.

Speaking of staying cool, help your pet or companion stay cool and pest-free! Here are some simple non-toxic pest control remedies. Vacuum and wash your companion's bedding and brush your companion frequently. Give them daily food supplements of Brewer's yeast (available at any vitamin store). Finally, Eucalyptus oil (1 part oil to a bottle of water) sprayed on your companion regularly can be a great non-toxic, short-term flea repellent.

Believe that real change doesn't happen until you make a personal commitment to help heal our planet, our home - the only one we have, so take the *Earth Pledge* now...

### ***Earth Pledge***

"I Pledge to make the Earth a secure and hospitable home for present and future generations."

P.S. Buy recycled - if you don't, you're not recycling!!

## **RESOURCE SECTION**

Welcome to the newsletter's new Resource Section. We felt people might benefit from various tips, information, phone numbers and addresses that we'll be offering in this section. We have included regular articles like Our Living Planet Earth, Health Watch, Quarterly Calendar and Support Group Listings in this section.

If you have information, tips, etc. that you'd like to see in our Resource Section, please send them to the TMI office, Attention: Sandra!

### **Environmental Resources**

For facts and information on non-toxic alternatives. Health Info - Toxic Info Center: (800) 235-0281  
Environmental Health Coalition: 235-0281.

For information on green methods of conservation check out the book entitled, "Two Minimum Day For A Greener Planet" by Marjorie Lamb.

San Diego People Trees. For more information on tree-planting events call Shannon at 224-4423.

A Guide to Household Toxics. Gives information on various products, the human health effects and toxic alternatives To obtain your copy, call Sandra at TMI.

### **Other Resources**

"Brides," The San Diego Calendar. A monthly newsletter of resources for physical growth, personal/spiritual growth, professional growth and community growth. Can be found in various stores around the county (I.e., Ben & Jerry's) or call 271-8834.

For information on green

### **Health Resources**

For holistic therapy and massage contact Cathy Cosner, Licensed Holistic Health Practitioner at (619) 297-6469.

### **Business Resources**

Need a school paper typed, flyers, invitations, etc. created on the computer? For professional work at reasonable rates, call Sandra at 281-6283.

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## **LAMB'S PLAYER THEATRE**

We would like to thank the Lamb's Player Theatre once again for inviting us to a spectacular play. "Becoming Memories" was entertaining and enjoyed by all. We appreciate the theatre's generosity and encourage people to support the Lamb's Players. For more information on upcoming productions, call 474-4542

A special thanks to the box office for accommodating us!

## HEALTH WATCH

*By Cathy Cosner*

Many recipes call for inordinate amounts of sugar, salt and fat. However, these are not always essential components of delicious food; many dishes taste fine without them, or with less of them. Try the suggestions below. Remember that baking recipes are more exact than other types of recipes, so you may have to experiment more.

In Place Of:	Substitute
Whole egg	2 egg whites
Whole milk	Low-fat or skim milk
Sour Cream	Low-fat yogurt; low-fat cottage cheese pureed in a blender with a little lemon juice
Sugar	Half the amount in most recipes; for baking, reduce to 1/4 cup of sugar for every cup of flour
Cream	Evaporated skim milk or nonfat dry milk with a little water added
Salt	Omit and/or substitute mixed herbs and spices or lemon or lime juice
Ground Beef	In casseroles, use kidney beans; in lasagna or sauces, use ground turkey breast
Bacon	Canadian bacon or boiled ham
Cream Cheese (on bagels/toast)	Neufchatel cheese, part-skim ricotta, or low-fat cottage cheese
Mayonnaise	Imitation mayonnaise or plain low-fat yogurt flavored with a little mustard
Butter or oil (for sautéing)	Use nonstick cookware and/or sauté in broth or wine
Whole Flour	Substitute whole wheat flour for half the flour in the recipe

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## STEP UP

Lydia Newman was honored recently for being the first employee to successfully complete the "Step-Up Program" - a skill enhancement program for direct service staff. During the March All Staff meeting, Connie presented Lydia with a certificate of completion and a cash reward. She also earned an immediate 4% "step-up" in salary. Nice work, Lydia!

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