

# TMI

TOWARD MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE

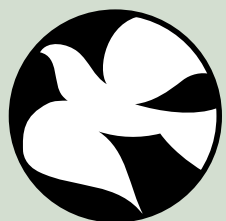
*A non-profit agency assisting people with disabilities to live, work and participate in their communities for 23 years.*

ISSUE #46

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*Wishing you all a peaceful holiday season and a New Year filled with promise, prosperity, and good will.*

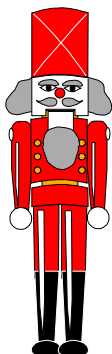
*Best Wishes,  
From All of Us at TMI*

### ***The Bellantes-A Year After the Fires***

Just a few short weeks ago many communities in San Diego County commemorated the first anniversary of the devastating fires that took so many lives and destroyed so many homes last Fall. For many of the families impacted by this traumatic event, life is beginning to show promise and new homes are rising from the ashes.

Last year TMI shared the stories of loss experienced by several staff members. None was more compelling than that of veteran staff member Lori Bellante. She, her husband Lonnie, and daughters Melanie and Lindi barely escaped with their lives from their home on the edge of the Barona Indian Reservation. They lost everything in the fire—their home, all their personal belongings, their vehicles, their pets and, tragically, many of their neighbors. The past year has been a rocky one for the Bellantes whose property was uninsurable due to its location and distance from emergency fire services. Here at TMI and across the community people came together to help them get back on their feet. The family wants to thank everyone who contributed money, clothing and household needs.

No one deserves a chance for a fresh start more than the Bellantes but the road back has been a difficult one with many twists and turns. Early on the family was elated by the prospect of putting a modular home on their property but soon learned that this would not be possible. Next they heard from Habitat for Humanity that they were eligible to have a home built through their organization but plans for this have been thwarted by politics and obstacles beyond understanding. For over 70 years the Bellantes' predecessors and their neighbors accessed their property via a road owned by



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

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# TMI Employment Solutions

## Workforce Strength Through Diversity

### **GREAT WAGES = BETTER ECONOMY!**

TMI has established business relationships with great employers throughout San Diego County. This past year, TMI provided support services for 210 participants with 162 employers!

Joseph Nacario, TMI Employment Services Director states, "I am always impressed with our TMI clients who want to work and not have to be totally reliant upon Social Security benefits."

Do you realize what a positive impact TMI clients have on our on our economy? Please consider the following:

- 210 TMI supported employees at \$800 per month would have collectively received over \$2,000,000 in Social Security benefits if unemployed.
- Each TMI supported employee earns an average monthly wage of \$725.00 (Supported Employment and Integrated Work), equaling over \$1.8 million for these 210 individuals. As a result of working, the social security benefits of these individuals are collectively reduced approximately \$810,00 annually.

- These TMI supported employees became responsible, hard working citizens who collectively paid over \$400,000 in income taxes.

Increased earning power generally leads to purchasing goods and paying sales taxes. However, these dollar figures are unavailable.

Therefore, our TMI supported employees have contributed well over \$1 million back into our economy!

Most employers want to employ people with disabilities because they feel it is "the right thing to do," and it is. We at TMI reinforce the value in hiring people with disabilities, by explaining that it makes good business sense due to reduced employee turnover. Employers report that our clients are some of their most dedicated employees. We also share with employers that this is a win-win situation for their business, our clients, the community, and our economy!



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## An Early Visit from Santa

Children receiving services through TMI's Alternative Families enjoyed an early visit from Santa this year. On December 11, TMI's Conference Center was transformed into a Holiday Wonderland where foster children were treated to fun, games, and yes, a visit from Santa. With the help of TMI staff and our friends in the community, each child received a gift from his or her holiday "wish list" from Santa himself. A Christmas tree was decorated with ornaments containing the names, ages, and gift items our foster children were hoping Santa would bring them. Although Santa came early this year, Christmas morning is still a couple weeks away and it would really brighten the day of a foster child if friends of TMI would buy a gift for a child, wrap it, and drop it off at TMI to either Louanne or Rachel for a child to open Christmas day. The holidays are a great time to "make a difference in the life of a child." If you would prefer to make a cash donation, please mail a check to TMI, 4740 Murphy Canyon Rd. #300, San Diego, CA 92123, with a note... [Holiday Wish List](#). Family Support Services would like to wish everyone a very healthy and happy new year! Thank you for your generosity!!



## **Forensic Follow-Up Coordination Project Gets Underway** *by Mark Gardner*

In our July newsletter we shared that TMI was awarded a quarter of a million dollar grant for a two-year period, aimed at assisting people with developmental disabilities with the ongoing process associated with criminal convictions. In most criminal cases the requirements of probation are more strenuous than that of incarceration. The grant will focus on assisting newly paroled or diverted individuals to meet the conditions of their parole or probation.

In California, the justice system is not very well equipped to handle people with developmental disabilities, and the 21 privately operated regional centers and their Service Coordinators who have extremely high caseloads often lack the resources and legal background to handle criminal offenders. The project, designed to provide services for 30 individuals a year, will allow for increased coordination and assistance in accessing services such as housing, employment, and mental health services, as well as meet requirements ordered by the court.

In the second year of the grant the team will conduct three regional trainings throughout California, in order to showcase the Forensic Advocacy Services to other Regional Centers and agencies interested in replicating TMI's program. Finally, the grant will end with a statewide conference "featuring experts in the field of forensic advocacy and exhibits demonstrating state of the art advocacy efforts."

Mark Gardner, who is an attorney and joined the FAS Team in December 2003, leads the project as the Grant Coordinator. Corey Pahanish, who studied Criminal Justice at the University of Toledo, joins the Team as the Grant Facilitator. Kevin Farrar, who has been with TMI's FAS Team for over 4 years, will continue as a Forensic Advocate while lending his expertise to the project.



*Continued from page 1-The Bellantes*

the Barona Indians. Now the Indians have refused to an agreement allowing free access. Currently the Bellantes are not allowed to even visit their property without first notifying the tribal office on the reservation. Habitat has sought assistance from County Supervisor Diane Jacobs. Frustration has the lead the Bellantes to seek alternatives, such as transferring their building option to Lori's mom's property in Lakeside. Again they have hit several snags and lots of bureaucratic red tape.

When asked what she and her family need at this stage, Lori is always quick to address her wishes for her daughters. She eventually would like them each to have rooms of their own and to be able to decorate them with new furniture of their choice. The Burn Center of San Diego has recently contacted her to offer assistance. For now they can offer gift or gas cards but assure her that when they are ready and have their new home, both Melanie and Lindi will each have the room of their dreams. As for Lori, well, she has recently begun to slowly replace an adored Lladro Christmas bell collection her mother started for her in 1986 by purchasing the first replacement on E-Bay. For now she and her family continue to live with her mom and hope that a new home will soon be a reality.

***To Lori, Lonnie, Melanie and Lindi  
Happy Holidays from all of us at TMI!***



# OUR MISSION

It is the mission of TMI to support the value, right and responsibilities of all people with the support of their advocates, to make informed choices regarding how they live, work and express their membership in the community. We accomplish this by providing personalized supports to people in their own homes, workplaces, schools, families and neighborhoods.

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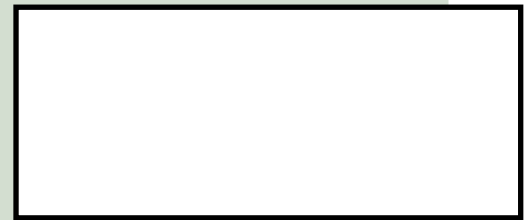
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Seasons  
Greetings