



TOWARD MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE

TMI is an exemplary non-profit agency with a long standing reputation for "Best Practices" in providing personalized assistance and support to children and adults with disabilities enabling them to live, work and participate in their communities by offering

Real Choices, Real Possibilities.

ISSUE #55

SUMMER 2008

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

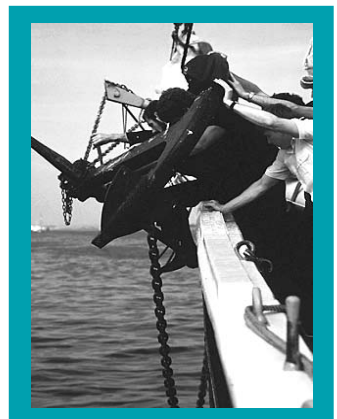
TMI Update: The State of the Agency by Kirby Wohlander, Executive Director

Toward Maximum Independence (TMI) has been around for many years. In the life of an organization, just as in the life of an individual, there are times of challenge, and circumstances that may require change in order to move forward in a positive way. TMI has just come through such a period. In a sense, an era has ended and a new one has begun.

At such times of change it is useful to stop and assess strengths, weaknesses and areas that need attention or change. Change is inevitable because the people and environment that surround and sustain any organization shift over time. So accepting change, adapting to it, perhaps even embracing it and looking for the opportunities it creates can be a way of using change as a tool to make things happen, or make them better. TMI has many assets and many strengths. Among these are a strong, positive reputation for quality services, for innovation, for commitment to the full integration of people with disabilities in society, for meaningful employment at competitive market wages, for helping people to be as independent as they can be. Another strength is a staff of dedicated people who work hard to bring the agency's philosophy into the lives of the consumers of our services.

So, what is the state of the agency now? Since my appointment as Executive Director in early March, I have been impressed with the friendliness of TMI employees and their devotion to providing high quality client services to people with disabilities. Further, a solid management team that weathered the difficult period of top management change has come together, showing eagerness to support me as the new Executive Director and to move the agency into the future in a positive way. In other areas, TMI is sound. Our dedication to our mission is unwavering. We are fully staffed and open for business. The agency is on a very firm financial footing. Cash flow, a frequent challenge for non-profits, is not a problem for us. We can meet our regular expenses and are in a position to deal with unexpected building repairs or other necessities that trigger spikes in spending.

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2007 Employees of the Year

Administrative Employee of the Year~Monika Driscoll was recognized as TMI's 2007 Administrative Employee of the Year at the holiday party held in December. Monika is the only Community Living Services coordinator in the North County office. She has worked hard over the past few years to develop and support a strong team in North County. She treats each person she comes in contact with respectfully and kindly. Monika is genuinely interested in increasing the quality of life for each person that she supports and has contributed to the lives of many. Monika comes to each and every meeting fully engaged and is consistent and reliable. Thank you, Monika, for all your hard work and congratulations!



Community Living Services Employee of the Year~Janet Mertens was recognized as TMI's 2007 CLS Employee of the Year. Jan was actually nominated by the whole administrative team from North County because she has worked in a variety of roles in her years at TMI, including a job coach, independent living facilitator, and as a supported living roommate. She has been a supported living roommate for the same individual for seven years! Jan continues to volunteer with the North County Job Club and to mentor new staff in all departments. Jan is extremely well organized and has strong time management skills. Her supervisor has received numerous comments from stakeholders, such as the Regional Center, on what an exemplary employee she is. Jan is a tremendous advocate for people with disabilities!

Community Employment Solutions Employee of the Year~Gary Hinkley has been a CEF with Integrated Work since February 14, 2000. During this time, he has provided exemplary support of the individuals he works with. He is a positive representative of TMI while in the community. Gary is an influential and supportive role model for those he supports as well as a strong advocate. Gary's dedication to the individuals he works with is commendable. Gary has worked with the same individuals for over 7 years supporting them at their place of employment (Pizza Hut). Gary has a very strong and uncompromising work ethic. He strives to always meet deadlines and submit accurate and complete documentation. Gary is often proactive - he was at one time on leave (hospitalized) and yet he turned in his paperwork regardless, shipping it air mail to reach his Division Manager on time. Gary is an incredible asset to TMI. Thank you Gary for your tremendous efforts and enthusiasm!



Department of Rehabilitation Luncheon



Kirby & David

TMI Staff members Kirby Wohlander, David May, Ginger Cohen, Mary Barnhart, Nick Pelosi, Roxane Wall, and Brent Ramsey recently attended the annual Department of Rehabilitation luncheon awards held at the Catamaran Hotel on March 16th from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. In the past, TMI has been recognized for outstanding achievement for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing program thanks to David May and his continued success at job placement. Consumer Jason Zeveley received the 2006 award for outstanding vocational achievement for his work at Trader Joes in Temecula, CA. TMI staff members enjoyed a wonderful lunch accompanied by a short award program that highlighted consumer and employer success for the past year. TMI will hopefully be back next year with a employer recognition nomination or a consumer success story.



Roxane, Brent, Kirby & Nick

Annual Breakfast Attracts State Legislator, Other Dignitaries

California Assemblyman George Plescia as well as representatives of several other state legislators, along with staff members from the offices of the two U.S. Senators from California and staff of the local U.S. House Members attended the Developmental Disabilities Provider Network (DDPN) legislative breakfast on April 25, 2008. Held at the Marriot Mission Valley Hotel, the DDPN event attracted some 300 guests, and this year, for the first time, was co-sponsored by the San Diego Regional Center for the Developmentally Disabled. The program for the breakfast was hosted by well-known radio personality Larry Himmel. Guest speakers included Supervisor Greg Cox; Terry Delgadillo who is the Director of the California Department of Developmental Services; Carlos Flores the Executive Director of the San Diego Regional Center for the Developmentally Disabled, as well as developmentally disabled consumer Marlo Ryan, an employee at Sea World, and Nichole Mischo, Managing Partner of the Chili's Restaurant in La Mesa, which employs developmentally disabled people, and finally Jim Lantry, a legislative lobbyist.



Vanessa, Brent & Kirby

The annual legislative breakfast is an effort to educate those in government about the need to maintain and expand funding for services to those with developmental disabilities and their families. Speakers stressed that developmentally disabled employees are reliable, hardworking, dedicated workers who have proven themselves as welcome additions to thousands of worksites. People from many agencies and organizations serving the developmentally disabled, as well as consumers, employers, family members and interested others were present at the breakfast. TMI staff people and a member of our Board of Directors attended to represent our agency and help promote the work we do. Present were: TMI Board President Jim Timlin, Associate Executive Director Louanne Miller, Director of Community Employment Services Brent Ramsey, Director of Finance and Facilities Ginger Cohen, Administrative Aide Vanessa Baca, and Executive Director Kirby Wohlander.



Kirby & Jim

Mark Berger, CEO of Partnerships With Industry (PWI), chaired the DDPN committee that planned the event and expressed his pleasure about attracting a legislator to the breakfast for the first time. Many guests concluded that overall it was a very successful event celebrating people with developmental disabilities and the contribution they make to our society.

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Several things that were initiated prior to my arrival are now being actively pursued. TMI is expanding services into Riverside County, working with the Inland Regional Center to open a TMI office in Temecula. We have leased office space on Jefferson Avenue, and during May and June will be launching our programs there and laying the groundwork to provide employment and family support services to people who live in that area. We are also growing geographically by doing advance work to open an office in the Clear Lake, California area, a section of northern California about two hours north of San Francisco. The Redwood Coast Regional Center is supporting our expansion, and their people have been very supportive of having TMI services available to residents of Lakeport, Clearlake, Kelseyville and other nearby communities. Working with our Board of Directors we will be examining other possible avenues of service expansion, with an eye toward doing more of what we are good at.

TMI is in good shape, and there is every reason to believe that the agency will thrive. We may face some funding cuts related to California's current budget shortfall, but looking back over the recent past, I am confident that with skill and determination, with deftness and creativity, and our commitment to those we serve, TMI can weather any storm.

Spotlight Interview with Kirby Wohlander by Mary Barnhart

Kirby was born in Brooklyn, NY. At the age of 10 Kirby and his parents moved to Jericho, NY. About the time Kirby graduated from high school, his Father's employer transferred him out to their office in Los Angeles, CA.

Kirby attended Cal State, Los Angeles and UCLA where he earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology. Later, after moving to San Diego, he earned a Masters in Social Work and then his MBA from SDSU. Not only did Kirby put himself through university, he did so without the benefit of (public) financial assistance. Kirby shared with this interviewer that he had originally planned to study political science.

Kirby worked a few different jobs to put himself through university. One position he held was as an expeditor, another was in an accounting office, and he even worked some retail jobs. One job in particular set Kirby on the path of committing himself to a career of helping others. Kirby worked at a psychiatric clinic doing a variety of things, primarily intake interviews.

After he completed his bachelor's degree, he continued to work at the psychiatric clinic during which time he worked at 2 of their offices. While attending university Kirby met his wife Barbara who also has her MSW and is now the Director of Clinical Services for Jewish Family Services of San Diego. They have 2 daughters, Rachel, 25 and Jessica, 22. Rachel earned her bachelor's degree in Dramatic Art (theater) from UC Santa Barbara. She graduated with honors and since graduation has toured Europe, and worked in the San Diego area doing a variety of theater jobs, including directing. Rachel has worked at several local playhouses and is currently the Assistant Director of a Shakespeare show at the Old Globe. Jessica is an honor student and is working on a degree in legal studies. She attends UC Santa Cruz. Jessica is also involved in the theater and organized a national tour for a small theater company, and then went on the tour as Road Manager. Both young women are planning on relocating to New York in order to pursue their careers in theater.

When asked what motivates him each day Kirby responded that he is an optimist, he has a happy disposition and tends to notice the good around him. He also says he has a personal sense of mission to help others and try to make the world a better place. This interviewer asked Kirby what he feels his two greatest accomplishments in life are up to this point. Kirby stated that he actually has two. Not necessarily in this order, obtaining his MBA and getting the position as the Executive Director of TMI. He felt it was time for him to be the Executive Director of an agency.

When asked what his vision is for the future of TMI, Kirby replied that he has several. One being to continue with the geographical expansions and if they are successful there is the possibility of more expansions. Second, to look into expanding the range of services provided by TMI. Third, providing more correctional services. Fourth, an expansion of TMI's client base. Additionally Kirby would like all of us here at TMI to hold to the statement, "Excellence isn't an accident." He would like for TMI to be known as THE BEST of the 49 agencies throughout San Diego. One other thing Kirby mentioned was that he would like to ensure that we at TMI are prepared for the wave of clients with autism spectrum that will be transitioning into adult services over the next several years.

I finally asked Kirby, "Why TMI?" His response, "I like TMI, I like the fact that there are so many people working here who have been here for so long." Kirby also stated that he believes that whatever you have to say, say it with love.

Red Cross Awards TMI Clients

TMI Clients Alicia Bergwitz, Lauren Petzinger and Robin Sullivan were the proud recipients of the Spirit of Volunteerism Award at the 2008 American Red Cross Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.



The crew volunteers every Thursday uploading satisfaction surveys that customers take after completing an American Red Cross course. Their hard work and dedication to the American Red Cross chapter is truly valued and appreciated. Great job!!!!

TMI Welcomes New Executive Director Kirby Wohlander

TMI is pleased to announce we have appointed a new Executive Director. Kirby Wohlander comes to TMI with more than thirty years of mental health and human service experience. Highlights of his career include working as a senior manager of family service programs for the U.S. Navy for about six years, overseeing the psychiatric inpatient service at a general hospital, and several years working with people who are physically and/or developmentally disabled. Most recently an associate director at North County Lifeline, a counseling and social service agency with offices in Vista and Oceanside, Kirby is a very welcome addition to the TMI team. After being with Lifeline for seven years he chose to pursue an executive director position. TMI's Board of Directors selected Kirby for its Executive Director position in February and he started with TMI on March 3, 2008.

With masters' degrees in both social work and business from San Diego State University, Kirby is also licensed as a psychotherapist (LCSW). In addition to his many years of dedication to human services, Kirby is also a published writer and poet who enjoys hiking, biking, traveling and spending free time with his wife and two daughters. He is excited about his new position at TMI and will dedicate himself to continuing the agency's tradition of providing innovative, high quality services to people with disabilities in a variety of locations around San Diego and throughout California.

Welcome to TMI Kirby!

We are very happy to have you as our anchor!



CES Has a New Director!

TMI is pleased to announce the recent promotion of Brent Ramsey to Director of Community Employment Solutions (CES). Brent is a well-respected TMI employee who has nine years of experience working in progressively responsible positions. He began with TMI in 1991 when he was hired as a job coach. Since then he has worked as an employment services Coordinator and Associate Director of Community Employment Solutions. Brent knows TMI's employment program well and has consistently worked to ensure quality supports and services for individuals receiving Integrated Work and Supported Employment Services.



Brent is an active member of the San Diego community. He has developed sound working relationships with consumers, family members, employers and funding sources. He is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to work "in real jobs for real pay" and enjoy the benefits of full inclusion in work and community settings. TMI is very happy to have Brent as the new Director of CES and we know that he will do a terrific job!

Staff's Corner

New In Administration

New Office Manager Marilyn Mohr

New In Employment Solutions

Melissa Anderson • Linda Brewer • Kimberle Lemon • Janice Rocha-Grafsky • Ramon Roman-Rodriguez

New In Family Support Services

New Social Worker Marisa Horner

New In Community Living

Robert Benavent • Marea Betson • New Coordinator Amy Catale • Leticia Diaz • Maria "Cecilia" Earl • Steve Halstead • New Coordinator Patricia Herrera • Andrew Hockenberry • Korleen Howard • Ian Ireland • Sarah Kang • Nicole Melendez • Abigail Morales • Melanie Pile • Kathy Rollins • Rosa Valencia • Consuelo Villegas • Margarita Villegas-Figueroa

Employment Solutions

News & Congratulations

Adam Stepner and Norma Yvette Gandara have started working at Dave & Busters. Way to go!

Job Options/Balboa Naval Hospital has hired Aaron Anderson, Jose Gascon and Leslee Cowling. Congratulations!

Amy Orell just passed her California License for Phlebotomy. Amy is seeking a job as a Lab Assistant or Phlebotomist. Best of luck!

Donna Lively recently returned to Vons as a Deli Worker and Morgan Reisig returned there as a General Merchandise Clerk. All the best to you both!

Kenneth Meza was hired as an Office Assistant with Sycuan Reservation. Enjoy your new job!

After 62 job applications, that is not a typo, and several interviews, with no job working out for her, Sarah Brown's perseverance and hard work have paid off. Sarah started her job with the City of Vista, at The Wave Water Park on 4/14/08! Sarah is not just part of The Cabana Crew, she is part of the team at the Wave. She is so wonderful to work with and is an example to all of us! Way to go Sarah! Hugs to you from all of us on the North County Team, we are so proud of you!

Welcome to the TMI North County Team Janice Rocha-Grafsky! We are so happy to have you work with us. Janice started in March as a Community Employment Facilitator and has already established a positive and supportive relationship with Stephanie Nordquist.

The North County Team also welcomes Linda Brewer to our team. Linda also started in March as a Community Employment Facilitator. We are really happy to have you working with all three of the Villasenors, Vielka, Hector and Hernan. They have given positive feedback on working with Linda!

The Rescue House/PETCO...Sarah is working with rescued animals for adoption as a volunteer in San Marcos.

Way to go Brent Ramsey! Our new Director of Employment Solutions. Although we all miss you up here in the North County office, we are all happy for you and proud of you!

Thomas Rossi has continued to be very successful and exceed the standards in his position at Costco. Thomas has an outstanding work ethic and per his co-workers and supervisors he is highly valued and cared about.

Speaking of work ethic, how many of us have ever had to be called in to speak with our supervisor because we want so badly to work that we even come in and work on our days off? Hey, we love ya Damon Beeby, gotta follow the schedule though!

Zeke Stern began working 8 months ago at HomeGoods in Encinitas. He is a Merchandise Processor. Zeke also attends classes on Tuesday and Thursday at Mira Costa College. HomeGoods is very supportive and does not schedule him during school hours. However, they had a new scheduler who inadvertently scheduled Zeke on a Tuesday. They called Zeke to see why he was not at work, he explained the situation and was told not to worry about it. Yet, Zeke took it upon himself to walk the approximately, 5 miles over to HomeGoods and work. He did not want to let his employer down!! Another great example of work ethic.

Kris Henderson will be working as a part-time volunteer at Rancho Coastal Humane Society in order to increase his experience working with animals while continuing to pursue a paid position.

Administration

News & Congratulations

Thanks to Sandra Eddy, formerly Wyspianski! First for taking the time in the middle of a busy day to scan articles into the computer so that they could be used to obtain an interview for one of the people in Job Development! Thanks a lot Sandra from Mark Beerman and the North County Team. Second from everyone at TMI, on tying the knot!!!! Best wishes to you both!!

Family Support

News & Congratulations

Congratulations to Joey O. who recently acquired a volunteer position on Saturdays and Sundays at the Otay Recreation Center. Joey will be working with the younger kids and will be helping to keep the center clean and organized.

TMI is sad to say goodbye to Jessica R. who will be moving into an adult placement setting within the next few months. Jessica has been with the same foster family since July 1999 and has developed a strong bond with all of her immediate and extended foster family members. We wish Jessica the best of luck with her future placement.

TMI FSS would like to wish America V. the best. She has recently been reunified with her biological family.

TMI FSS would like to wish Manny D. a speedy recovery! We know you are strong and have amazing support!

A special thank you to foster parents Valentina Cobian and Ricardo Barra for the amazing support and love that they provided for America during placement. America was able to learn so much and enjoy life thanks to you. We thank you for all the positive changes you assisted America in making. We hope to continue working with you in efforts to help other children.

TMI FSS would like to give a special welcome to all the new foster families who have joined our agency since January 2008:

Jose and Araceli Trejo
Bertha and Andres Balcazar
John and Nieves Drummond
Marcos and Isabel Sanchez

We would also like to welcome the new foster children to the TMI's family:

Martin	Albert	Isaiah
Kyle	Mandy	Javier
Ivette	Jennifer	
Yvonne	Jovan	

Thank you for opening your homes and your hearts to such wonderful children.

Also our condolences go out to Isabel McGee on the loss of her mother this year. Our prayers are with you during this difficult time.

Congratulations to Francisco and Leticia on the birth of their beautiful baby girl born on February 13, 2008, weighing 7lbs and 4oz.

Community Living

News & Congratulations

Thank you to TMI employee Vanessa Rodriguez who patiently and amicably assisted a client with extensive moving. She is also excellent with paperwork and follow through!

John Nicosia started a day program at St. Madeline's Sophie's. Way to go!

Laverne Burton is going on her first camping trip with her church. She is eagerly looking forward to the trip!

Supported Living welcomes Patty Wells, Mary Stump and Caryn Singer to the program!

Caught in the Act

Caught in the Act is our opportunity to recognize some of the exceptional things we have "caught" TMI staff doing. • Esther Kang actively working to expand the social life and community experiences of the individual she supports. • Rochelle Ward's exceptional professionalism and flexibility. • Christina Bailey is a example of the true mission of TMI by being considerate of the personal preferences of the individual she supports. • Sandra LaCrue's compassion and professionalism with some complex and sensitive issues. • Estella Romero being super flexible with her schedule; she was asked to work on her day off to fill in when a substitute was needed. Thank you so much for great teamwork! • Bob Steen's incredible job coaching at Vons with his group. • Chris Bosworth developing a volunteer site. • Tracy Guzman for creatively and efficiently coordinating TMI FSS events and activities. • Ruben Vega for giving exceptional efforts in moving TMI FSS to the 2nd floor.

Great Job! Who knows who we will catch next...

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 community. We accomplish this by providing personalized supports to people in their own homes, workplaces, schools, families and neighborhoods.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Contributing Journalists

Ginger Cohen
Mary Barnhart
Laura Gonzalez

Kirby Wohlander
Brent Ramsey
Louanne Miller

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Ginger Cohen

Editor

Kirby Wohlander

2008 SAVE THE DATES!

Summer Picnic: July 18th

Client Holiday Party: December 12th

Staff Holiday Party: December 19th

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