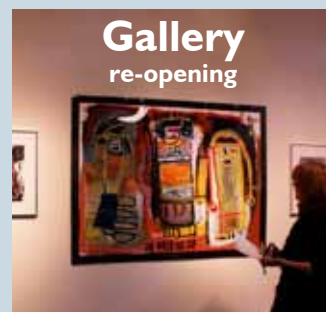
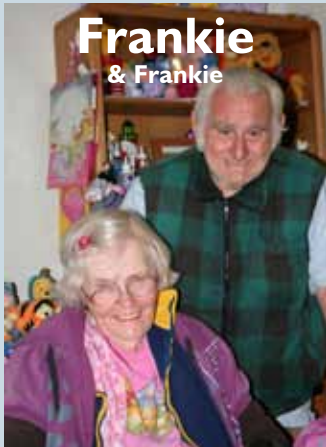


IN THIS ISSUE



MISSION IN MOTION

Remembering Holly and Pat

By Carin Lawrence, Chief of Services

Becoming Independent helps people with disabilities participate fully in the community, and we do that with a variety of programs.

But our programs are only as good as the people who operate them, and our staff includes very talented and committed people.

We lost two amazing colleagues earlier this year.

Holly Callaghan, Community Support Facilitator and Activities and Trip Coordinator, died in May after a long battle with cancer.

Pat Erickson, a Reading Specialist Teacher, died a month later from complications from back surgery.

It's said that you don't know what you've got until it's gone. That wasn't the case with Holly and Pat. We knew the contributions they made to the lives of the people BI serves were huge.

Holly and Pat, in their own unique ways, opened up the world to BI participants.

Holly led group adventures to Alaska and Mexico, down white-water rapids on rafts and to a sound studio to record "Hey Jude."

Pat helped BI participants explore the world through words, teaching them to read and write, in one-on-one sessions, every week, without fail.



Photo from the 2010 annual rafting trip

[MISSION IN MOTION cont pg 3](#)

DINNER UNDER THE STARS

The 19th Annual Dinner Under the Stars (DUTS) was a huge success! Over \$190,000 was raised to support Becoming Independent's vital programs.

We look forward to raising even more money at our 20th Annual gala event. Missed the fun in June? See page 6 for details about Becoming Independent's fun Halloween Party on October 30, 2010.





I work for smart,
determined & organized
people

BI in the moment

By Cami Weaver, CEO

I spent two hours at the Board of Supervisors recently at the invitation of Supervisor Shirley Zane. She was commemorating the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). I was there, officially, on behalf of the 1,300 men and women served by Becoming Independent (BI) in Sonoma, Napa and Solano counties.

It was a long meeting, even longer for my boys who were waiting to be dropped off at summer camp. But it gave me time to reflect on what the ADA has meant to me, my family and to the people we serve at BI.

It's a personal thing.

Programs for people with disabilities have been part of my life for as long as I remember. My parents were special education teachers and the struggles of their students were often part of our dinner table conversation.

I was well into the field even before I graduated from Sonoma State University. During my senior year I managed six group homes for people with disabilities in Sonoma and Marin counties.

The ADA then was only a year old. It followed me when I graduated in 1991 and took an entry-level staff job at Becoming Independent. As an advocate, I've been lucky to have the legal backing of ADA.

My professional life is guided, inspired and directed in the context of the ADA and other legislation attempting to ensure the rights of people with disabilities.

Forty years ago people began finding ways to leave institutions and join our community. Twenty years ago with the passage of ADA the rights regarding access were made clear. Now, another 20 years has passed, and our society has benefited from the ADA.

So many things most citizens take for granted – such as sidewalks, buses, telephones, and public places – are now more accessible to all people. Support for getting jobs, like filling out applications or obtaining a driver's license, are available. Students with disabilities are continuing to move out of portables and into mainstream classrooms.

Programs once out of reach of many kids are changing. For the first time in Sonoma County, the YMCA this summer had a two-week camp that offered full inclusion to children with disabilities.

The ADA breaks down job barriers to people once automatically ruled out because of a real or perceived disability. If someone with a disability is just as qualified as a so-called "regular" person and the disability can be accommodated, then that person has a chance. That's fair.

Great progress. But we have a long way to go.

Many schools include kids with disabilities, but at 3 o'clock that inclusion generally ends. Rarely do schools provide after-school programs for kids with disabilities comparable to programs for other kids.

Access to public accommodations is vastly improved, but when shortcomings are discovered, which are often illegal, there's often more grumbling than action to fix the situation. Could this be because of the lack of people with disabilities sitting on school boards and city councils? Why are there so few people with disabilities in leadership positions?

Finally, while the ADA has opened the world of work to millions of people who were once unemployable, more than two-thirds of Americans with disabilities are not working. Often those who do work are paid sub-standard wages.

I sign checks for about 400 people working through BI employment programs, and for two years in a row people have earned more than \$1 million in wages. It's fantastic.

But sometimes when I see the payroll I feel like I've let them down. It's just not enough.

I can be hopeful for the future and the strength of the ADA because the people I work for are smart, determined and organized. They're on the internet, they are networking, and they are looking to share their opinions and their ideas.

In my view, this needs to be everybody's business. There are now about 54 million individuals with disabilities in the U.S.

Looking ahead, one of every 100 children born today will have some condition associated with autism. In 20 years they are going to be adults. They'll be demanding their rights under the ADA. I am hoping our community shows up for them.

MISSION IN MOTION cont.

HOLLY CALLAGHAN

This past summer Becoming Independent participants making the annual trip down the American River stopped at a familiar stretch of water to launch a fleet of paper boats carrying personal messages to Holly Callaghan, the woman who over the years introduced them to white water rafting.



“They conveyed to Holly that we love her and miss her and wish her well on her sail to the other realm,” said BI participant Oma Lee Bridges.

For nearly 30 years, Holly provided services to people with disabilities, first at TRACE (Transitional Residential Assistance in Community Experience) program in Rohnert Park and then at BI where she led staff and participants on trips short and long. BI offers participants in our Community Living Supports programs the opportunity to participate in 12 Saturday trips a year to local destinations, an annual rafting trip, and larger trips (most recently Alaska, Hawaii, Mexico).

Adventure is the goal, and Holly’s message was clear: Just do it.

Over the years, Holly inspired hundreds of BI participants to embrace life with the spirit and sense of adventure that Holly lived by.

“She taught me that anything is possible and to not give up on my dreams,” said Oma Lee.

Holly’s last day at BI was a Wednesday, May 19. She called colleagues the next day to hand off the details for a trip to the zoo planned that weekend. She emailed a few colleagues on Saturday and then, in candlelight because of a power outage at her home over looking the Russian River in Healdsburg, sailed into the next realm with her good friend, Lynda Wheeler, and her cat Izzy at her side.



Few people at BI knew Holly was ill or that polio had damaged one of her legs years ago. She kept those things to herself as she did her age. She insisted she was 29 and never revised that number. Perhaps she was too busy to say, given all the planning she had to do for the party she threw for her friends and colleagues after her death.

PAT ERICKSON

Pat Erickson was an experienced Special Ed teacher when she joined BI in charge of reading programs in 1998. BI has helped hundreds of participants become readers and writers during one-on-one sessions four days a week in the small reading room in BI’s Santa Rosa facility and on Saturdays in Rohnert Park.



In some cases Pat helped participants improve their reading and writing skills. In other cases, her students started from scratch. In the course of her 12 years with BI she opened the doors for BI participants to explore their interests and embrace ideas of the larger world. On the practical side, she helped her students master language skills to enable them to pass a DMV driver’s exam, produce a signature stamp for signing checks, and master other day-to-day skills for living in the mainstream.

At a Celebration of Life at BI in July, Pat’s students paid tribute to their teacher.

“She taught me a lot,” said Dorothy Tharp. “She worked with me on learning how to sound out the alphabet, helping me to learn to read better.”

“Pat tried to teach me the right way to put words together and sentences. We did games about reading and writing on the computer,” said Curtis Mannion. “She listened to me about how my day was going. We would talk about other stuff.”

“I just got a computer and got it hooked up to the Internet,” said Abi Taylor. “I couldn’t have done it without her.”

“She will be missed by a lot of her students, including me,” said Andrew Schochet.

Pat died on June 10 from complications from back surgery. She hadn’t complained about her condition. Her colleague, Tina Tyko, said she never complained and never missed work if she wasn’t feeling well.

“She was there for her students,” said Tina. “She said: ‘You’ve got to leave your personal issues at the door.’ ”

At Pat’s request there was no funeral service, but Tina thinks Pat would have approved of the memorial celebration at BI where her students spoke.

“It was very special, so the students could have this final goodbye,” said Tina. “It was exactly how Pat would have wanted it, to be about the students.”

Pat was 78.

Frankie & Frankie near their 50th anniversary

Heart and Soul

Mark your Calendars.

Frankie and Frankie Smithle will celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary next year.

The well-known members of the Becoming Independent family were married on March 16, 1961 in Cotati, about a year after each of them was released from the old Sonoma State Hospital where they had been placed by families who couldn't, or wouldn't, take care of them.

Now the couple is a well-known fixture in Santa Rosa where Mrs. Frankie Lee Smithle is frequently seen out and about in her wheelchair and being pushed by her husband Mr. Frankie Smithle Jr.

He's 77. She's 73.

Earlier this year Frankie and Frankie were the recipients of BI's annual Community Living Supports award for "Living Together Successfully."

Perhaps for them the award should read: Living Together Successfully.... The Longest and In Spite of the Most Challenging Circumstances.

Their story is tragic misadventures of two children who were the victims of dysfunctional families, largely because of abuse and alcoholism, and a child welfare system that placed many young people in institutions.

Frankie Smithle Jr., born in 1933 in Merced, was one of 10 children who were abused by an alcoholic father. Frankie at age 3 was run over by a tractor driven by his dad. A sister was sexually abused by their father. The father went to prison, and all the children were sent to Sonoma State Hospital in 1940. Frankie was 7.



"I hung out with the wrong crowd," Mrs. Smithle says, skipping school, getting poor grades, and running away to Fresno to see a brother.

The solution for her mother, whom Frankie says drank heavily, was to send the girl to Sonoma State Hospital. Frankie remembers her natural father, whom she rarely saw, showed up for that juvenile court proceeding required to send the incorrigible away in 1953. She was 15.

"It was supposed to be for three months. I was there for seven years," she said.

But the world turned for the better.

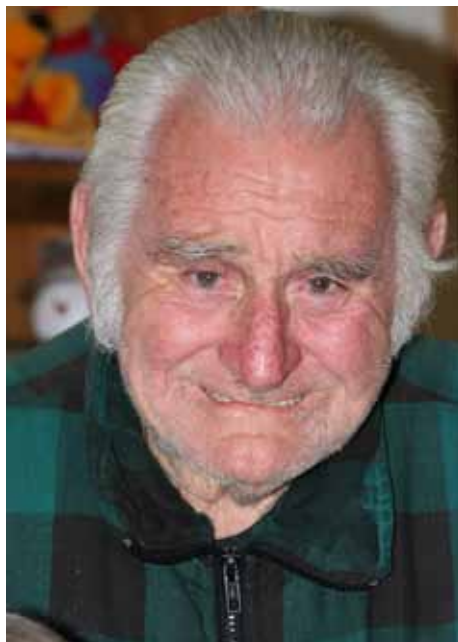
Frankie Lotz said she lived in the hospital's McDougal Unit where she made a friend named Dorothy.

Dorothy left the hospital and married Guy Smithle who had a brother named Frankie Smithle.

Frankie Smithle left SDC in 1953. Frankie Lotz left the hospital in 1960. They met through Guy and Dorothy and were married the following spring.

Frankie Jr. worked for a Sonoma Valley dairy. Frankie Lee worked at super markets, restaurants, and the cafeteria at the state hospital.

Now they are retired. A fall down a staircase about 11 years ago requires Frankie Lee to get around in a wheelchair. Frankie Jr. is slowed by emphysema.



"My mother couldn't take care of us," he said.

Frankie Lee Lotz was born in 1937 in Fresno. She grew up in Oakland. She went to elementary and junior high schools but was turned away from Oakland High.

But with the help of BI Community Living Supports and their enthusiastic participation in Senior Connections activities, Frankie and Frankie remain active and looking forward to their 50th wedding anniversary. Plans haven't been made yet.

"We'd like to go to Disneyland," Frankie Lee said.



Legacy gifts: keeping BI strong today & tomorrow

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS

Roots in past lead toward future

There are many positive resource developments to report. The Dinner Under the Stars paddle pledge this year focused on programs and raised \$80,000 – the highest ever. We have wonderful volunteers. Our speakers bureau is up and running. New members continue to sign on for our monthly pledge program, the BI Giving Club. And thanks to a \$10,000 grant from The Press Democrat, we will soon have a Celebrate Community Library on our main campus, significantly expanding life changing resources to children with disabilities and their families.

Our progress echoes the theme of Cami Weaver’s column in this newsletter: roots in the past lead toward the future. I’m thinking specifically of three legacy gifts.

The future of BI’s services began with an estate gift in 2005. While a need was emerging, unbeknownst to BI an individual was determining to play a partnership role. Based on its experience and scope, BI was positioned to respond to the needs of growing numbers of children with disabilities and their families. Funding, however, was an obstacle. While leaders at BI grappled with this dilemma, a legacy gift was unfolding. We never had the pleasure of meeting Jack T. Morris, the man who gifted over \$500,000 to expand services to children with disabilities. Cami and I did, however, recently have the pleasure of meeting with the person who acted as the conduit for this sizable investment in the future - attorney and KGO radio talk show host Len Tillem. It was a great pleasure to meet with Len and his associate Rosie McNichol to convey our gratitude for this transformative gift.

Eileen Adams became acquainted with BI when her daughter Andrea began receiving services through our Sonoma Valley program in 1992. Shortly after Andrea died in 2004, Eileen began her exceptional service as a volunteer. She has played a key leadership role by launching and stewarding our Sonoma Valley Advisory Board and served two terms as Board President. Her gifts of time have been so outstanding that this year she was honored as our Sonoma Valley Star Volunteer by the Sonoma Valley Fund, an affiliate of Community Foundation Sonoma County. Eileen gives generously of all her resources: time, wise counsel and financial support. She wants to be part of BI’s success today and into the future, and this summer she let us know that she’s included BI in her estate planning.

Our CEO has deep roots in the disabilities field and at Becoming Independent. Cami recently expressed her commitment to BI’s future by pledging a legacy gift. While the decision was significant, the process was easy thanks to Community Foundation Sonoma County (CFSC). Through our relationship with CFSC we are able to access complimentary professional counsel regarding the variety of ways one can structure a legacy gift. If you’d like to talk further, please call me. In the meantime, I hope you’ll plan to stop by CFSC’s offices some time between October 28 and December 31. J Mullineaux, CFSC’s Vice President for Development, fell in love with the art produced by BI artists on a tour earlier this year. To our fortune, he was inspired to curate an exhibition – the first of its kind in CFSC’s offices.

Lisa Folsom-Ernst
Resource Development Director



Young Professional Corps

In early 2010, a small group of ambitious young professionals saw an opportunity to give back to their community. They formed BI’s Young Professional Corps and continue to grow.

Since their inception, they have raised thousands of dollars and volunteered countless hours in support of Becoming Independent. YPC Founder Quinn Morrision says, “spreading the word about BI has been personally rewarding.”

Interested in getting involved?

Email ypc@becomingindependent.org

or ‘like’ YPC on facebook at:

www.facebook.com/BIYPC



Family Resource & Advocacy Center receives grant

Becoming Independent's Family Resource & Advocacy Center (FRAC) was recently awarded \$10,000 by Celebrate Community and The Press Democrat to help expand the current lending library.

This grant will enable us to provide on-site access to information for families of children with disabilities. We plan for the expanded "Celebrate Community Library" to provide a state-of-the-art community space for both the English and Spanish speaking communities.

Want more information on our resources for families? Contact Nubia or Sybil at 707-524-6600 or email: npadilla@becomingindependent.org shalloran@becomingindependent.org



**CELEBRATE
COMMUNITY**
celebratecommunity.org

'Peer-to-peer training is a perfect example of self-advocacy in action'

BI LANDS

Focus on Napa

Vallerie Birdsell has a passion for self-advocacy. She has lived independently for 15 years, and recently became a member of the State Council on Development Disabilities' Area Board 4. On July 26, Vallerie gave a presentation to other Becoming Independent participants about their IPP (Individual Program Plans). A peer-to-peer training like this is a perfect example of self-advocacy in action. People participating in Becoming Independent's program expressed an interest in learning more about the IPP process and asked Vallerie and her co-speakers from the Area 4 Board to give a presentation.



Who better to teach about the IPP process than someone who has had one for most of her life? Vallerie explained to her peers that their IPP is a legal document that ensures ongoing services and outlines goals for growth. According to the CA Department of Developmental Services, the IPP is a description of goals that includes: "a preferred place to live, favorite people with whom to socialize, and preferred types of daily activities, including preferred jobs."

Workshops like this provide a real-life example for people to look to for guidance and to find the self-empowerment necessary for taking control of one's own life. To Vallerie, that is what matters: helping people understand their rights.

Halloween party



Support BI and join us for a Halloween Party to remember on Oct. 30, 2010. The party takes place at a historic barn and vineyard in Sonoma. The Nugent family is delighted to share this unique piece of history with 75 lucky guests at a memorable dinner-dance! Partake in dinner from the Mary's Pizza Shack Coach.

Tickets are Limited; \$100 per person
Please contact: 707-524-6606 or jsalyer@becomingindependent.org to purchase.



Franklin rides the mechanical bull at this year's staff appreciation day, August 6, 2010. It was a fun event for staff and their families.



August 3, 2010: Cami Weaver, CEO, joined Supervisor Shirlee Zane and other leaders in the disability field to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

ArtWorks Calendar

"artist • abilities"

Oct. 28 through Dec. 31
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
SONOMA COUNTY
250 D Street, Suite 205, SR

"See, Write, and Hear-
Interpretations of the Senses"
Nov. 6 through Jan. 8
GALLERY OF SEA & HEAVEN
312 South A Street, SR

"Holiday Lights"
Dec. 3 through Jan. 8
BI GALLERY
1455 Corporate Center Pkwy, SR

"What's New"
Feb. 12 through Apr. 9
GALLERY OF SEA & HEAVEN
312 South A Street, SR

"Portraits"
Apr. 16 through Jun. 11
GALLERY OF SEA & HEAVEN
312 South A Street, SR

By Appointment:

NORTH BAY REGIONAL CENTER
2351 Mendocino, SR

WINZLER & KELLY
495 Tesconi Circle, SR

Check BI's website for more information



SONOMA COUNTY MAYORS' COMMITTEE
ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

BI honored

Becoming Independent has been making a lot of headlines recently:

- We were named "Service Provider of the Year" for the second time, by the Sonoma County Mayors' Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities.
- North Bay Business Journal named us one of the "Best Places to Work" for the second year in a row.
- BI was awarded the 2010 "Healthy Business Leader Award" by The Northern California Center for Well-Being.
- Board Member, Bonnie Burrell received the 2010 "Outstanding Board Volunteer Award" from the Sonoma County Volunteer Center.
- Board Member and Past President Eileen Adams was honored as Becoming Independent's "Sonoma Valley Star Volunteer" by the Sonoma Valley Fund, an affiliate of Community Foundation Sonoma County.



Gallery of Sea and Heaven re-opens

August 21, 2010: Becoming Independent's beloved gallery, located at 312 South A Street in Santa Rosa, officially re-opened. The City of Santa Rosa had temporarily closed the gallery in March 2009, due to structural deficiencies in the building.

Sue Brady from Winzler & Kelly, having been on the BI Art Advisory Committee for over six years, stepped right in to help. She drew up renovation plans and worked directly with the building's owners, Lee and Carolanne Montgomery. Lee and Carolanne could not have been more supportive. They invested an enormous amount of time and money and the result is a completely transformed gallery and eight studio spaces.

The gala re-opening was outstanding! Art sales that night totaled over \$3,000. Special thanks to Winzler & Kelly who sponsored the incredible re-opening event.



Pictured from L to R: Lee Montgomery, building owner; Andrea Hibbard, former A Street Gallery Manager; Bob Nugent, BI Board Member; Carolanne Montgomery, building owner; and Cami Weaver, CEO.



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OUR MISSION

To promote community inclusion and participation for people with developmental disabilities.

OUR VISION

An improved quality of life – meaningful work, recreation and support of family, friends and the community.

Becoming Independent

Phone (707) 524-6600

Fax (707) 527-1206

info@becomingindependent.org

www.becomingindependent.org

Newsletter Production: Erin Thompson, Development Associate



IN MEMORY . . .

Donations were made in memory of these friends:

Rick Anderson; June Burkhart; Holly Callaghan; Olga Dmitriew; Frank Furnish; Tom Martin; Greg Neils; Jim Smith; Christopher Stone; Ben Thornton.

A special thanks to the estate of June Waite.

With the partnership and support of Community Foundation Sonoma County, BI is launching a legacy program in 2010. The full range of estate gifts are gladly accepted. Please call Lisa Folsom-Ernst, Resource Development Director at (707) 524-6751 to discuss in greater detail.

BECOMING INDEPENDENT

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