

CREATIVE SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES

Newsletter
April
2014



Mary Ellen Sousa
Director

Kristoffel
van de Burgt
Associate Director

Neiman Hatcher
Coordinator

Melissa Hough
Coordinator

Denise Martinez
Coordinator



Congratulations, Denise!

We are excited to officially welcome Denise to the Coordinating Leadership team at Creative Support Alternatives San Diego. Even before graduating from high school, Denise began working for Creative Support Alternatives in March 2007. Originally hired to assist Teri and Chris D. Denise grew to working with seven other people supported by CSA. Denise has worked, not only as a Community Support Facilitator, but also as a Live-In Support Facilitator with both Rob and Teri. Her various experiences working in multiple positions and her solid understanding of our organization and culture made her a natural fit for the Coordinator position.

Denise has extensive experience assisting people to access resources such as Social Security, IHSS, Section 8 Housing, San Diego Regional Center, Day Programs, and the like. She has been immersed in the philosophy of inclusion and community and understands the values and relationships that make up the "CSA Family". Please welcome Denise into her new role as Coordinator on Teri, Chris D, Andy, Demra, and Brenda's teams! We are excited to have the opportunity to grow with you, Denise!



Out and About in the Community





Opportunities Abound for Learning and Teaching

This year's annual **Cal-TASH Conference** was held in March in Burlingame, CA. Along with **Mary Ellen** (who has represented Creative Support Alternatives on the Board of Directors of Cal-TASH for the past nine years), **Linda R.** of CSA's Northern CA team also participated at what was her first-ever Cal-TASH Conference. Session topics included new developments in Inclusive Education, Customized and Supported Employment, Advocacy, Legislative and Policy challenges, Community Living, Technology and many others. Mary Ellen partnered with some of our San Francisco colleagues and gave a presentation about developing and organizing regional Self-Advocacy themed conferences, such as CHOICES. Linda and Mary Ellen both came away inspired by the most amazing Keynote presenters ever, who spoke not only from their minds, but from their hearts. Mary Ellen and Linda are both eager to continue sharing what they learned with the rest of the CSA Family.

The April **CHOICES Institute** event, a regional advocacy conference held in Stockton for our Valley Mountain Regional Center counties, was once again a huge success! Over 500 people participated in what is seen locally as THE advocacy event of the year! Since 2007, Creative Support Alternatives has served on the **CHOICES Conference Planning Committee**, now joined by new committee member **Bev L.** micro-business entrepreneur (of Bev's Bracelets & More). Special recognition goes out to **Diana P.**, whose video was selected for showing at the event! Diana and **Anna** (her Support Facilitator) co-wrote and acted in Diana's first-ever advocacy-themed video that showed the "right vs. wrong" approach to filing (and winning!) an IHSS appeal...based on her own True Story!

By the time this Newsletter is in print, our CSA North team will have hosted a training called "What is an SSI Over-Payment and What Can Be Done About Them"? Provided by **Leinani Walters** of **Disability Rights California**, Creative Support Alternatives partnered to offer and host this important topic-training to people who use services, as well as those who provide services. Further, CSA was able to invite and include some of our community colleagues, such Arc of Amador/Calaveras, Community Compass, and Transition Programs.

Opportunities Abound for Learning and Teaching (Con't.)

We were fortunate to be a part of hosting Educators from the Netherlands. The visitors were interested in exploring how we at Creative Support Alternatives provide individualized supports to those we serve. During our gathering, we shared how we work on a daily basis to empower the individuals that we support to live full and inclusive lives. This visit served to be mutually beneficial, as we were able to learn how education and supportive services work in the Netherlands.

Once again, Creative Support Alternatives also participated in the annual California Supported Living Network (CSLN) Leadership Conference, held in April at the Dana Hotel on Mission Bay. Formed in 1996, the California Supported Living Network started as a small group of California professionals who had provided supported living services under the original California Supported Living Arrangement pilot program. Envisioning a united group consisting of service providers, people using Supported Living Services, families, and other community members, CSLN has grown into a strong voice for those committed to high quality Supported Living Services promoting fully inclusive communities.

At the conference, the Creative Support Alternatives leadership team gathered with other domestic and international leaders to explore topics such as the Affordable Care Act, employment law, technology in SLS, and team development. The conference not only served to educate the leadership team at Creative Support Alternatives on upcoming changes to SLS, it also allowed us to share with other SLS leaders the amazing work Creative Support Alternatives is involved in!

Welcome New Employees!

MacKenzie Simpson

Adriana Gonzalez

Alejandra Dominguez-Cordoba

Isabella Cavella

Michelle Altamirano

Mona Rupe

Kimberly Laymon

Jeff Provenzano

Eboni Muse

LaQuana Perry

Anna Lozano

Ezra Pouech

Employee Recognition

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**Empowering
people with
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disabilities to live
full and included
lives.**

We're on the Web!

See us at

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Lily McCoy - Over the past 3 years, it has been a pleasure to watch Lily grow in the field of supporting people with disabilities. Not only is she always willing to step in to assist her team members whenever needed, she constantly asks questions, applies what she learns, and continuously goes above and beyond when providing support. Thank you for all of your hard work, dedication, and consistency on Teri's team especially, and within CSA as a whole. We appreciate you, Lily!

Joy Vierra - Joy's attention to detail and unwavering commitment to providing the highest quality of support possible have been well-known on our No. California team since 2009. Joy's ability to see the "big picture", whether it be opening to doors to new opportunities or facilitating cost-effective approaches, she is an amazing asset to our team! She directly assists Ted, Mike J., Christine, and Andrew and also represents CSA on the Amador County Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee. Thanks, Joy, for inspiring and supporting all of us!

Anna Powell - Since 2008, Anna has served as a Support Facilitator on our Northern CA team and is one of our "go-to" gals for all things Tuolumne County! Most recently, she assisted Diana to write and act in her very first Advocacy video, shown at CHOICES to over 500 people! Anna's enthusiasm and support provide a great example of teamwork and what's possible when we work together! Thanks for all you do, Anna!