

Creative Support Alternatives

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NEWSLETTER
2013



Honoring Chris: The Trailblazer

Way back in 1993, Chris D. began partnering with Creative Support Alternatives for her Supported Living Services. When her Service Coordinator first introduced us to Chris, she was hospitalized and had been living in a group home for several years. Using her eye gaze to communicate, she let us know she wanted out and into a home of her own!

We quickly learned a lot about Chris: fiercely independent, opinionated, compassionate, loving daughter, and a pioneer of sorts. After six months of tireless work together, Chris moved into her first apartment. We'll never forget what she shared with us that first night in her new home, when she typed "It's just like Christmas". (In fact, we'd end up writing a story together about the experience and used that quote as the title for the story).

Over the next 10 years, Chris developed a well-earned reputation of Advocate, community college

student, political activist, and founding member (along with Creative Support Alternatives) of the San Diego Homeownership Coalition. As such, she became the first person supported by CSA to purchase her own home. Using person-centered planning, Creative Support Alternatives was honored to support Chris to define her dreams...and go after them! As we approached that 10-year anniversary, we wanted to honor Chris. So in 2003, the Pioneer Award was born and the first recipient was, of course, Chris. (The Pioneer Award continues to honor each person who reaches that very special 10-year anniversary of their own, as well).

(See page 2, "Chris")

Mary Ellen Sousa-Hiner
Director

Kristoffel van de Burgt
Associate Director

Melissa Hough
Coordinator

Stefanie Kurtz-Harris
Coordinator



Creative Support Alternatives

Creative Support Alternatives believes that all individuals share the basic right to live in a real home, which reflects personal choice and control as to lease/ownership, location, and potential occupants, as well as to work at a real job in the community which offers meaningful work, fair compensation, and dignity. Central to the agency's core values are the themes of inclusion and interdependence. We believe that the quality of life experienced by the individual, as well as others in the community, is enhanced when support services are focused on the individual's active participation in community activities, events, and routines, including the building of personal social networks.

Our Next 20 Years. . .

As 2012 drew to a close, so did Creative Support Alternatives' 20th Anniversary year. The Anniversary year gave us many opportunities to reflect upon our history and the people and events that have shaped not only Creative Support Alternatives, but all of our individual lives as well. We honored and thanked the people we serve and their families, our Interwork Institute/SDSU mentors and colleagues, our community partners and friends, and so many others. From the special CSA 20th Anniversary newsletter and picnic, to the making of our very own CSA DVD and holiday gatherings, we relished the moments to share and celebrate.

Now that 2013 has begun, Creative Support Alternatives looks forward to our next 20 years! While much has changed since our early days, such as the economy, politics, resources, healthcare, etc., we've persevered, worked together, and continued to grow, and "walked the talk". Our commitment to each other and our community partners is stronger than ever. We look to the future with passion, determination, creativity, and a belief that our work improves not only the lives of the people with disabilities and their families whom we serve, but our own lives, our neighbors, and our entire communities, too. Creative Support Alternatives remembers the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, who once said "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world, indeed it's the only thing that ever has". Here's to continuing to positively change the world, one day, one person at a time!

Chris (con't.)

Using augmentative communication devices, along with photographs, Power Point presentations, and stories, Chris has shared her ever-evolving Life Story with many audiences. She's presented at SDSU classes, other universities and community colleges, and local, state, and national conferences.

Unbelievably, 20 years have flown by! And now it seems fitting to once again recognize a very special anniversary. We're proud to give the first-ever Trailblazer Award to Chris, who is a Trailblazer, in every sense of the word. Chris represents the very essence of our organization: individuals partnering with Creative Support Alternatives, along with friends, family, and community, to create the life s/he wants with the support s/he needs. We celebrate you Chris and thank you for being both a Pioneer and a Trailblazer!



Kathleen Leads by Example

A big Creative Support Alternatives “Congratulations!” goes out to Kathleen (see picture below left), who is healthier and happier and 40 pounds lighter! That’s right: Kathleen has lost 40 pounds as a faithful member of her local Weight Watchers group in the little mountain town of Murphys! One year ago, a determined Kathleen set out on a path to better health and fitness. She has learned a lot about making good food choices, “power foods”, and portion-control. Kathleen says she can have any food she wants; it’s all about how much we eat and how often we eat it.

She’s added regular walking to her routine, often accompanied by her Chihuahua named Bandit. Kathleen loves the support and friendships she’s made in her Weight Watchers group. She’s missed only one weekly meeting in an entire year! (And she had a really great reason: she was speaking at the Supported Life Conference in Sacramento!)

With assistance from Mary Ellen, Kathleen has kept a photo-record of her journey to health: with every 10 pounds she loses, we take a photograph of her progress. Kathleen says it’s fun to line up all the photos and literally see herself changing before her very eyes!

Kathleen isn’t stopping at 40 pounds: she’s continuing with Weight Watchers until she meets her healthy-weight goal. All the while planning a major life change: Kathleen is soon moving to sunny San Diego where she’s planning on working with our San Diego team for Independent Living Services! Words of inspiration from Kathleen: “You have to believe in yourself! And you CAN do it!”



Employee Recognition

Susan Martin has worked on many teams during the last seven years with Creative Support Alternatives. She is always willing to give a hand to her fellow teammates and is phenomenal with connecting the people she supports to members of their communities. She’s creative and never stops seeking new opportunities with and for the people she supports. Thank you Susan, for everything you do to make people’s lives better!

Special Announcements

Welcome New Employees

Cassandra Robin Allen
Rosalinda Diaz
Shawn Lemons
Taree Owens

Upcoming Events

CSA South All-Agency Meeting:

Friday, April 26, 2012
NEW TIME: 4:30pm-6pm

At: CSA Office
3590 Camino del Rio North
San Diego, CA 92108



Creative Support Alternatives functions as a small, grass-roots agency committed to empowering people to live full and included lives as members of their chosen communities.

We accomplish this by:

Developing unique patterns of support with people with developmental disabilities who live in homes of their own.

Promoting individual choice and control through person-centered planning.

Engaging resources available through SDSU's Center for Community Living/

Interwork Institute to research, demonstrate, and evaluate support services that promote best practices in the field.

Facilitating the discovery and pursuit of people's dreams and visions for their future.

Supporting people to build positive reputations and become valued members of their communities.

Assisting people to develop and maintain relationships.

Standing with people throughout the challenges and celebrations of life.

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