

Watch Out!

VOLUME 1, ISSUE VI

JUNE 2006

THIS NEWSLETTER IS WRITTEN BY AND FOR CONSUMERS WITH A GRANT FROM FAR NORTHERN REGIONAL CENTER. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.

From the Editors: Being Independent

In 1776 our country fought for independence from Britain and drafted the *Declaration of Independence* so that our people could be free to rule themselves. But are we all really free to make our own choices? Today, people with disabilities are still fighting for the right to be independent and to live as they choose.

Under the Lanterman Act and the People First Bill of Rights, our lives are beginning to change for the better. We interviewed many people for this issue and asked them how these laws helped them achieve independence. Inside this issue you will find some of these stories.

We found that you don't have to live alone to be independent. Being independent means that we are able to make our own choices about where we live, where we work, and which doctor we want in our lives. Thanks to the Lanterman Act, we all have these choices and a lot more.

D.O.G.F.I.T.E.

By Shelly Anderson and Rosie Johansen

The letters **D.O.G.F.I.T.E.** stand for "Disability Organizing Group for Initiating Total Equality." This group fights for the rights of people with and without disabilities. Many members of **People First** are also members of D.O.G.F.I.T.E.

D.O.G.F.I.T.E. meets every month to talk about different causes to support. We have spoken for several causes in the Redding area, including adding more routes to the bus schedule. At the state level, we are trying to change some bad wording in the California Penal Code. As an ongoing project, we are working to keep state funding for In Home Support Services (IHSS) in California. IHSS helps people in their homes. Our chapter went to Sacramento in June for Capitol Action Day.

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"Being independent gives you a better quality of life."

—Tim Saxton



Disability Pride

By Sherri Douglas



Dave Hingsburger

In April, **Dave Hingsburger**, a famous activist for people with disabilities and an expert on human sexuality, came to the Northstate. He came to visit self-advocates and give a presentation about disability pride. Dave said that people with disabilities should be proud of themselves and proud of their differences. In the past, people with disabilities were treated badly sometimes, but Dave says it's time to stand up and say "that's not okay!"

We spent part of the day hearing real life stories and talking about how we would advocate for people who were not being treated well. We also talked about reporting abuse and how to help people who have been abused. He suggested that we work with the police in finding the best way to help people.

He told us that the self-advocates in our region are his role models and that he talks about us wherever he goes. We feel the same about him. His eyes lit up with acceptance when we clapped and cheered him.

Artists Honored in San Francisco

By Michael Cooke

In April, three Northstate artists, **Michael Cooke** and **BJ Christenson**, and **Coby Walters**, were honored at the de Young Museum in San Francisco. Our artwork was part of the *Visions and Digital Exhibition 2006* sponsored by the National Arts and Disability Center.

We had to send a brief bio, a description of our paintings, and a picture of our work. It took at least a month, maybe longer, for us to hear back. But when we did, it was good news: we had been accepted in the show!

To my surprise, this was an unusual art show, different from anything I had experienced before. It was an all-digital show in a classroom setting. They showed one picture at a time and discussed each one individually.

I was excited to go there on opening day. When my picture came up in the private showing, they introduced me and took my picture with my work. The whole thing was a very different and interesting experience. Now that I know what to expect I hope to be invited to be part of that process again.



BJ Christenson



Michael Cooke

Reaching For The Sky: The Sky's The Limit

By Shelly Anderson

Region 2 People First held a regional conference at the Red Lion Hotel in Redding on May 5—7, 2006. People came from all over our region. The conference is held every 2 years to help people learn about self-advocacy. There was a contest for the best conference logo: **Brandy Totten**, from Redding, won!



John Riva, from **People First of Chico**, was the Keynote Speaker on Saturday night. He talked about how he got a job on his own and how he is independent and able to pay his own bills. After his speech, **Lassen County People First** hosted Movie Night. We saw "Radio." It was great!

Richard Goens was the first keynote speaker. He showed a video about the things he has accomplished in his life like sky diving, riding his bike in the LA Marathon, and swimming 50 miles. After lunch there were breakout sessions where people talked about everything from disability rights, to living independently, abuse prevention, and the Special Olympics. **Linda Thompson** spoke to everyone Saturday evening. Linda works for **People First of California**. There was a Country & Western Dance Saturday night, and everyone had a lot of fun. Some people were so tired from dancing that they didn't make it to breakfast Sunday morning. **Daniel Meadows**, from PAI, was the speaker on Sunday.

Eleven members of People First received "Self-Advocate of the Year" awards: **Sean Cipriano, Ted Cottini, Sherri Douglas, Scott Douglass, Peggy Englert, Shane Hale, Wilma Hankenseifkn, Beth Lauer, Scott Rawson, Valerie Sharpe, and Jenny Smith.**

I think the conference was a big success. Seeing everyone get together and help each other was really nice. See you at the next conference in 2008!

FOCUS Film Festival: Review of "The Ringer"

By Desi Childress, Teddy Roby, and Shelly Papineau



"The Ringer" star Johnny Knoxville

In February, we went to the *FOCUS Film Festival* at the Cascade Theatre in Redding to see "The Ringer." The movie starred Johnny Knoxville as a desperate man trying to make good on his promise to a friend. In order to raise some money for an operation, he decided to rig the Special Olympics. During the movie he finds out that just because someone has a disability, they are not necessarily unaware of what's going on around them. The movie stars over 100 people with disabilities.

It was a really funny movie, and we had a great time. Thanks Far Northern!

Being Independent:

Ryan Duncanwood By Shelly Anderson

If you haven't heard of **Ryan Duncanwood** yet, you will. He is a self-advocate who just moved to Redding from the Bay Area and he is a good person to talk to about what it's like to be independent. Ryan says that it's important for people with disabilities to be independent because it gives them freedom. His independence is very important to him.



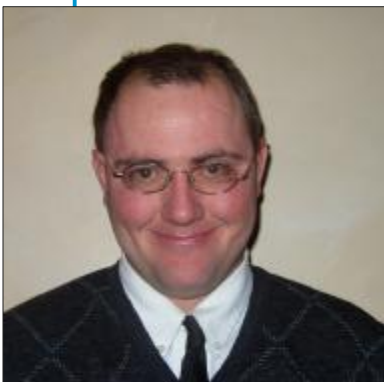
Ryan Duncanwood

Ryan lives independently and does most things on his own. He has staff who help him when he needs it. Ryan does his own shopping and laundry and he makes his own appointments. Ryan has a checking account, and he is learning more about budgeting his money.

Ryan also does a lot of traveling. This month he went to Atlanta Georgia for the SABLE national self-advocacy convention. While he was there, he was elected to be the SABLE Alternate Representative for the Western states!

Ryan doesn't let anything stop him from doing the things he loves. He has gone skydiving, skiing, and been to rallies in Sacramento to stand up for his rights. Ryan is a strong self-advocate and lives a very independent life. I hope you all get the chance to meet him.

John Wilson By Benaye Cooke



John Wilson

John Wilson lived in group homes most of his life. He never liked it much. He didn't make his own choices and there was always someone telling him what to do.

It took him a long time to get into his own house. He worked his way up to it. He went to a meeting at FNRC to tell them that he wanted to live independently. They helped him to set some goals and meet them. Goals like hygiene, cooking, household chores and safety skills. It was a lot of work, but he did it!

John has a roommate, Chris. They give each other space if one of them is in a bad mood. They know how to leave each other alone. They really enjoy doing things like going out to dinner, but they can do different things if they want.

John says he has choices now. He is picky about the housekeeping, so he likes to do it himself. In supported living, he has a staff at night. They take him grocery shopping, help with the chores, medication, and help him learn more about taking care of the house. John says, "staff are here, but it is our house." He likes it that way.

What It Means To Us!

Tim Saxton By Brandy Totten

Tim Saxton is not only a strong self-advocate but he also lives a very independent life. For Tim, being independent means making your own decisions, being involved in your community, and not letting other people control your decisions.

For as long as Tim can remember he has been an independent person and lived his own life. He lives in his own apartment in Chico with his two dogs, Zee and Jupiter, and he is planning on buying his own house one day. Tim has had his driver's license since he was 16 years old and has his own van. He's also owned a motorcycle.

Tim believes that even if you don't live on your own or you have physical limitations, you can still live an independent life by being strong-willed and having a positive attitude.

"I'm tenacious," Tim says. "That means I never give up." Tim has even had his own business. It was called: "Saxton's Digital Printing" and he had 4 employees working for him. Tim is starting another business soon. He is currently working for **Pathfinders** where he helps his peers create Life Plans.



Tim Saxton

Tim thinks that being independent means living the American dream. He believes that everyone should make their own decisions in life and disregard any negative opinions. "Being independent gives you a better quality of life."

Naomi Rose By Brandy Totten

Naomi Rose is an independent person who works very hard and is very talented. Naomi has an amazing ability to draw and paint beautiful pictures. In fact, Naomi just won the grand prize for the best drawing in the "Dream Home" contest. She won a gift certificate for \$200.

Naomi is currently starting her own business where she can sell her art work. Naomi says that she wants her own business so she can make money to support her family and pay the bills. She knows that starting a business will help her gain more confidence and independence.

Naomi is a very independent person in a lot of ways. Besides wanting to start her own art studio, Naomi already has a full time job as a mother. Her daughter, Katrina, recently turned sweet 16. Naomi is a really good mother.



Naomi Rose

—story continues on the next page

Being Independent: What It Means To Us!

Naomi Rose continued

Naomi says that she likes being able to get her own transportation to work and go places on her own. She says, “It feels good when you don’t have to ask people for things.” Even though she doesn’t have her driver’s license, she is responsible for getting her own rides by making her own appointments.

Naomi has her own apartment for her and her daughter. She does a lot of cooking for the two of them. Her ILS worker has helped her learn to cook and do things around the house. She really worked hard for more independence.

Karen Hagaman By Shelly Anderson

To **Karen Hagaman**, independence means doing things on your own. Karen says, “it is important to know your rights to be independent. You have the right to do what you want and to be safe. You should speak up for yourself and the things you want.” Karen is a member of the SAY (Same As You) team. Part of her independence is teaching others about her life.

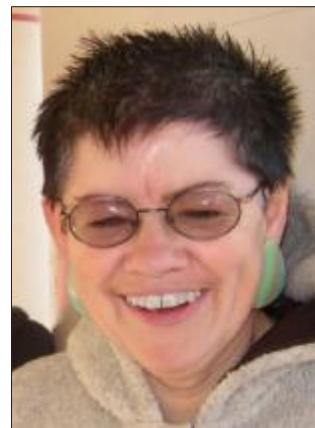
Karen does a lot of things independently. She cleans her house. She does laundry, dishes and vacuums. Karen has a job and makes her own money so she can buy the things she wants. She works at a motel where she helps clean the rooms: she dusts, cleans the coffee pot and refrigerator, and vacuums each room.

Karen likes to spend time in her community. She attends an art class and likes to paint. She also enjoys bowling. Karen loves to shop. She says that she is “shoe crazy and purse crazy.” She has a lot of clothes that she bought on her shopping trips. She likes to go to the movies with her friends.

Church is very important to Karen. She attends Bethel church every Sunday.

Karen says the staff at her home helps her to be independent by dropping her off where she wants to go and then picking her up later. She lives in a home with roommates. She has her own phone in her room, and she is getting a cell phone next.

Karen says it makes her feel happy to be so independent. “I’m not conserved, so I can do what I want” she said. When you’re conserved other people can make decisions for you. She told us that if you want to be more independent, ask the staff at your house or your service coordinator for help. Talk to them, and let them know what you want. They can help you reach your goals.



Karen Hagaman

People First Conference In Nevada

By Sherri Douglas and Glen Pollock

In May, People First of Nevada held their very first conference in Reno. It was a very good learning experience for them. They had speakers from several different states including the **Pathfinders Project** and **The Abuse Prevention Team** from our area. These speakers were there to give presentations and to help them in the future.



Pathfinders and the Abuse Prevention Team

Since this was their first conference, they wanted to learn more about what People First of Nevada needed to do to have a strong conference. They had evaluation forms for everyone so that people could give their suggestions on what was good and what needed improvement. They appreciated all the information that was given to them. We believe that in a few years, the People First of Nevada conference will be a very powerful conference.

S.A.Y. Team Speaks in Anaheim

By Roger Pulliam

The S.A.Y. Team, **Rosie Johansen**, **Ben Gere**, and **Roger Pulliam**, was picked to speak at the state Workability Conference in Anaheim. We were all really excited when we found out. Rosie remembers thinking, "This presentation is going to be different because we will be speaking to a room of teachers not students." I thought it was a little scary too. They told us to expect 200 people at our session!



The S.A.Y. Team at the airport

We were all a little disappointed because less than 35 people signed up for our presentation. But, the people that were there, really liked it. We all think we made a good impression. There were lots of questions, and after the presentation was over, people stayed and talked to us about it. Several people wanted the team to speak to their schools.

Save the Date!

September 2006: The *FOCUS 2006 Film Festival* is coming to Chico! Far Northern Regional Center is sponsoring the festival to teach people in the community about people with disabilities. We are showing 4 films, September 8, on the Chico State Campus. For more information, call Mary Ann 222-4791.

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Being Independent: What it Means to Us!

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When we asked Brandy Totten what independence means to her she said, "It's your freedom, and being able to make your own decisions without having other people telling you what to do." There are a lot of ways that Brandy is independent. First, she and her husband have been happily married for 5 years. She also has 2 jobs that she likes, and she's finds time to do things that she likes besides work.



Brandy Totten

When Brandy was 22, she decided to get her own apartment. Far Northern provided her with an ILS worker who helped her set up her own bank account and other things so that she could live independently. "Once you become independent it makes you really proud." Brandy said.

Brandy also helps her peers become more independent by working for Pathfinders. Pathfinders is a program that helps people create a Life Plan to help them communicate with their Service Coordinator. She thinks that her job is very rewarding because she can help others make their dreams come true. "My Life Plan has helped me to get the support that I need to get my driver's license. I can't wait to drive places and have more freedom."

Brandy says that there are many people who have helped her become independent. Her family, FNRC, her ILS worker, and her job at Pathfinders.