



Westside Center for Independent Living, Inc.

# OPTIONS

C E L E B R A T I N G I N D E P E N D E N C E

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Mary Ann Jones, Executive Director, is temporarily out of the office while recuperating from a severe setback from pneumonia. In her stead, Aliza Barzilay, Assoc. Director and Interim Executive Director sat for this interview:

## QUESTIONS FOR ALIZA BARZILAY

I know you are really excited about the DIAL (transition and diversion from institutional living into the community) Project for its Independent Living theme and humane concept. But, is there an ultimate goal here?

My perspective is that we are always working to improve lives consistent with goals set by individuals but that, in addition, we have a significant responsibility to government when we are utilizing the public monies to ensure that we are able to use it cost-effectively and that we can demonstrate tangible outcomes. DIAL is a terrific exam-

community whereby consumers get out of institutions; government saves money--everyone wins!!

**Can you give specific examples?** As illustrated on the chart below, the ten most recent DIAL consumer transitions out of institutions represent a savings of \$325,320 per year to the government. In some ways, although a difficult time in non-profits with a great increase in administrative requirements and significant grant reductions (such as the Community Development Block Grants), it is a tremendously exciting time with immense possibilities. The DIAL Project is just one example of some innovations that are occurring that effect consumers. Another is the shift in the Mental Health delivery system which is moving from a traditional treatment model into adopting the recovery model. WCIL has been advocating for this kind of change for many years locally and has been the primary trainer of Peer Advocates for several years through collaboration with the County of Los

	Government payout for institution	Cost Comparison (All Benefits)						Monthly Savings	
		Government payout in the community							
	Total	SSDI	SSI	IHSS	GR	Medi-Cal	Other	Total	
Consumer #1	\$5,370	\$1,300						\$1,300	<b>\$4,070 + Medicare</b>
Consumer #2	\$3,300				\$221			\$221	<b>\$3,079</b>
Consumer #3	\$4,530		\$836	\$811		\$508		\$2,155	<b>\$2,375</b>
Consumer #4	\$4,162		\$856	\$811		\$508		\$2,175	<b>\$1,987</b>
Consumer #5	\$4,162			\$2,366		\$508		\$2,516	<b>\$1,646</b>
Consumer #6	\$3,600		\$856			\$508		\$1,006	<b>\$2,594</b>
Consumer #7	\$4,035		\$813					\$813	<b>\$3,222</b>
Consumer #8	\$3,300		\$832			\$508		\$982	<b>\$2,318</b>
Consumer #9	\$5,359	\$1,496						\$1,496	<b>\$3,863</b>
Consumer #10	\$3,300		\$836			\$508		\$1,344	<b>\$1,956</b>

**\*Twelve months total savings per year \$325,320.00**

ple in that we are addressing the most basic needs of consumers with disabilities--the desire and, of course, the right to live like everyone else in their own communities. We are able to facilitate achievement of their goals in a way that illustrates an enormous cost-savings to government. While many programs talk about anticipated savings, we have designed the project with the inclusion of a data collection mechanism that compiles specific information on REAL people in REAL situations. The even larger impact of the project both State-wide and Nationally is that we have the details needed to advocate for systemic changes in governmental systems that impact the disability

Angeles Department of Mental Health. When we designed the Peer Support and Employment Project which trains consumers with mental health disabilities to provide services to their counterparts, we were not just teaching employment skills to individuals but, trying to increase the responsiveness of the Mental Health system to the population that they served. The Mental Health system is now actively recruiting consumers to be Peer Advocates working alongside other Department Staff. How could anyone not be excited given where we were 20 years ago!!!



SAVE THE DATE—MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2007

**Tenth Annual WCIL Charity Golf Tournament**

**Title Sponsors Wells Fargo Foothill and Southern California Edison**

Calling all golfers, come and play at the Tenth Annual WCIL Charity Golf Tournament

*Invitations are on the way*

Have a wonderful, exhilarating day Monday, Nov., 12, 2007. The Friendly Hills Country Club

*For information call Robin Hargrove 310-568-0107*

# NEW PROGRAM STARTS UP

Generously funded for 2 years by The California Wellness Foundation, Listos Para Trabajar, is a bilingual pilot version for Latinos with mental/psychiatric disabilities of our award-winning Peer Support and Employment Project. Recent stats from the Department of Mental Health show a count of 1238 Latinos receiving mental health services in WCIL's service area. Increasingly aware of the lack of services tailored for this target group, WCIL realized that a program such as PS&EP developed for a mono and bi-lingual Spanish/English group would respond to a large need right in our own back yard. Specific cultural differences will be recognized and incorporated into this program.

Consisting of a 6-week course with 8 weeks of internship, Listos Para Trabajar started this month with 6 class members. Among the activities based on a Spanish translation of the course are the following: erasing the stigma of mental illness, knowledge of casework procedures, low-income housing, disability benefits, recovery models against med-

ical models, knowledge of the Department of Mental Health, how to run support self-help groups, money management, boundaries of consumer confidentiality, and employment procedures.

Following this course, students will be eligible for internship at one of the mental health providers in the community. During the complete program, students will receive a stipend of \$8 an hour. At the end of the internship, they will be eligible for positions in social service agencies and the Department of Mental Health.

This year, two classes are scheduled. To enroll in the class, call Javier Huete, class coordinator at WCIL, who will explain the program, and if you are interested, you will be placed on a waiting list and come to WCIL for an interview. Using this information, a decision on who will enter the class will then be made by WCIL.

## New WCIL Board Member Speaks Out

**Carole Schlocker, President of iSpace, Inc.** recently joined the WCIL Board of Directors and offered her reasons for volunteering precious private time to support and advance our mission.

**Carole,** "I have known about WCIL for about 15 years and have supported WCIL in various ways. I always attended the fundraising luncheons and participated in the Information Technology programs and Mentor programs.

When I was asked to join the Board I was honored, thrilled and scared. Honored to be asked to join such a distinguished group, thrilled that they thought of me and scared because I did not know if I had the "stuff" to be part of this group. I am so glad that I pushed myself to step up and join the Board. It is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference on a larger scale. I only hope that through my board participation that I can help WCIL to be the BEST that it can and to grow to serve the needs, wants and hopes of the community."

## Telephone message to the Assistive Technology Staff--Praise Indeed!

**"We just got all the equipment delivery.** Everything is awesome. The wheelchair is perfect. The delivery person showed me how to make it fit into the trunk of our car. When I rented a transport wheelchair, the wheelchair that they gave me wouldn't fit in the trunk. This fits my trunk.

It's perfect. The quad cane is great. The table tilts. It's awesome. I just wanted to thank you so much for getting such great equipment for my husband. Thank you."

*Lila.*

## ALICE LORRAINE ROBINSON MCGINDLEY

The community, joined by her children and grandchildren, dear friends and many staff members of WCIL said goodbye to Alice at the memorial service held at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mar Vista on a beautiful spring morning. Flowers, greetings and tears were all part of the sacred rite. Alice had first volunteered and then became a beloved member of the WCIL staff over

a period of 25 years. Her welcoming, kind voice was the first sound heard by callers to WCIL. No matter the need, fear, anger, Alice's gentle ways assuaged the caller and suddenly the emotions calmed. Alice retired at the age of 74, continuing with her skills as a calligraphist for the church. We all miss her.

## IF YOU ARE A CONSUMER OF A PERSONAL ASSISTANT'S SERVICES PLEASE READ THIS WARNING--IMPORTANT

**By David Serbin, *Benefits Advocate***

LA County is encouraging consumers to agree to an IHSS (In-home supportive services) mediation process, in lieu of a formal Hearing. The reason is that the County can cover up its unpreparedness and lack of documentation if the consumer agrees to mediation.

If the County is allowed to cover up its mistakes, who will ever find out about them? Certainly not the consumer, who is probably not even aware of these mistakes. Also the mediation process is a problem for the consumer who is not represented by an Advocate, since the County is able to apply some intimidation tactics: for instance, the Social Worker can say things like "you should be satisfied with (say) 2 hours a week for bathing, because that is what I give most people with similar disabilities." What is the consumer to say?

Also, the Social Worker can always sound menacing and

threatening at such mediations, quoting non-existing policies, and leading the consumer to fear retaliation later on. The County has the advantages at mediations, whereas the consumer (unless represented) is at a disadvantage, not being fully aware of the policies and regulations. Since successful mediations are typically "win win" procedures, the County winds up looking "good" and none of their mistakes come to light.

The consumer is left feeling satisfied, perhaps, but unaware he or she could have gotten much more. Consumers still retain a right to a hearing, however, even if the mediation goes against them. In that sense, the process is similar to what occurs at the Department of Rehabilitation. But how many consumers will still ask for a Hearing if the mediation goes against them? (Intimidation is a big problem for consumers whose very survival depends on County services.) Unfortunately, the consumer is probably not even aware of these mistakes.

## My WCIL Experience *By Whitey Brewer*

Before coming to WCIL I was cycling between depression and anxiety on a daily basis for nearly two years. Every so often to "spice things up" I would go through OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) as well. At this point where I was double or triple checking (at least) my car and house doors to make sure they were locked, my medication, both anti-depressant and anti-OCD, was at a maximum. I awoke in the morning fearful and depressed. I was afraid to get out of bed. I was afraid of financial ruin. I was lucky to get more than four hours of sleep a night.

I thought I had lost my job. I didn't feel that I was of any use to anyone. And, I didn't think I had any reason to live.

I did not know where else to turn, so I decided to try out the Peer Advocate training and Internship that WCIL provided. Ever since the day I committed to this training, in the course of about 4 months, my life has completely changed from night into day. Mornings have become the most precious part of my day! I am averaging 6 to 8 hours of sleep a night; and I ski, swim, rollerblade, work out at

the gym. In another two weeks I will be off all my medication! My OCD has virtually all disappeared, and I look forward to life with joyful anticipation. As an intern I lead 3 to 4 groups a week. Since I have joined WCIL, I have gone from almost quitting my own Body Linguistics business to watch it blossom and flourish. The most satisfying part of all is watching all the members I work with also open-up and flourish. Like me they all seem to be very sensitive creative people.

I can't thank enough my peer advocate training leader, Judith Holtz, for being such a great role model, and especially for showing me the value of stretching my comfort zone and then rewarding myself. I am also extremely grateful to Keith Miller for his wonderful encouragement and support in some of my more difficult times during my internship. Thanks again WCIL for triggering the vital forces inside of me to come alive and give me birth to a new life!

## WCIL MONTHLY FOCUS GROUPS

Meet at the WCIL Mar Vista Center, 12901 Venice Boulevard, LA, CA 90066

*Schedule may change. For current date and times, please call 310-390-3611*

**Government benefits and how to navigate through the system.**

3rd Tuesday at 12 PM

**Roommate Mixer and Housing Computer Search**

Monday, from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM

**Peer Support Employment Follow-Up Group**  
(participants only) 2nd Tuesday at 2 PM

**Strong Women--Support Group.**  
(women only) 3rd Thursday at 10 AM - 11 AM

# JERSEY



# BOYS



“The Jersey Boys” hit town with a bang and everyone with their children and grandchildren wanted to be at the Ahmanson to rock and roll with that special romantic sound and remember that seemingly innocent time. The Associates sent invitations and made it easy for all of us. Come for a Patina buffet on Friday night under the stars and croon all the way home. Or, come on Saturday afternoon, and have a picnic lunch under the trees at the Times Mirror Square next to the theatre and at matinee time watch the little and big ones tapping their feet to jukebox hits of the ‘60s. Echoed throughout the theatre and the next days on telephones were praises for the Associates party-giving skills and, “Jersey Boys” is fabulous—see it! As always, an extra large thanks and congratulations to the extraordinary ladies of the Associates Steering Committee and the Event Chair, Ruth Kraft, who made the evening possible by their hard work and devotion to the mission of the Westside Center for Independent Living.



**The Associates Steering Committee**

- Suzie Levin, *Chair*
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- Bernice Blackman
- Betty Deutsch
- Louise Escoe
- Marjorie Fasman
- Barbara Gordon
- Lola Jameson
- Trudy Kallis
- Jean Katz
- Ruth Kraft, *Event Chair*
- Ruth March
- Marcia Solomon
- Dorothy Straus
- Dascha Auerbach Stuart
- Marcella Swartz
- Ruth Tober
- Phyllis Wiseman



## My DVD Pick *By Bruce McKinley* "The Lookout"



*As a member of the disability community, Bruce McKinley is a movie buff of the first order. A former film critic and writer for a number of small journals, he now has made space*

*for OPTIONS in his writing calendar. As independent in his life style as his movie selections, we welcome him, and look forward to future slightly obscure film reviews.*

In the history of the suspense thriller, you have the concept of an ordinary man caught up in precarious and unusual circumstances. One of the great masters of this formula was Alfred Hitchcock, who repetitively took average people and put them in perilous situations, orchestrating a collision between the incidental and the peculiar.

In a film called "The Lookout," Director Scott Frank uses this concept to tell the story of a man with a disability trying to find a normal life while at the same time being pulled into a bank heist. Joseph Gordon-Levitt plays Chris, a former high school hockey player with exceptional athletic ability and a promising

career ahead cut short by a severe car accident in which Chris sustains a brain injury.

He finds employment as a janitor at a bank and rooms with his friend Lewis (played by Jeff Daniels), who is blind as the result of an accidental explosion in a methamphetamine lab.

Through an apparently chance meeting with old high school friends, who happen to be planning to rob the bank where Chris works, he becomes a part of their scheme. Lewis, a reformed criminal, has enough knowledge of the workings of the underworld to suspect that his friend is being set-up as the scapegoat.

In Hitchcock thrillers, through a series of events the main character extricates himself from grave circumstances.

In "The Lookout," the characters are plunged into a nightmare which ultimately is resolved into the realization of their dreams, as they discover their identities and places in the world.

Although Chris and Lewis' disabilities are not the central focus of the story, they are a plot device to propel the suspense. Scott Frank's high-caliber script is cleverly written and gives the audience a nail-biting, edge-of-your-seat experience. The acting by Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Jeff Daniels is first rate. In particular the work of Jeff Daniels gives the character of Lewis a certain ironic edge and has generated buzz of Oscar potentiality.

I give this critically acclaimed, but over-looked film an enthusiastic tip of my beret!

## Thank you to our wonderful theatre donors

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Ruth Tober  
Charles Toppino  
Tommy Virag  
Henriette Viray  
Elka Weiner  
Misty WidELITZ  
Phyllis Wiseman

## New Staff Members at WCIL

**Sam Espinosa**, Development Assistant, raised in South Pasadena, has a background in customer service. Applying for the job, he stated that helping others reach their goal in life was a value that was instilled in him by his parents. His mother was a social worker for 18 years. His father is a longtime volunteer at the YMCA and at local high schools where he uses his skills as a computer trouble-shooter to assist the students. Outside of the office, Sam enjoys spending time with his two sons, going to the beach, movies, museums, and Dodger games. He claims to keep his life simple.



**Edward Williams**, a former consumer and volunteer recently became the WCIL Housing Specialist. He has spent the last 50 years here on the Westside. Homeless himself for 2 years, he went through the difficulties of getting a section 8, and has a passion for people living on the streets. Edward understands what the problems are that they face daily. His middle name could be "searching" right now, because that is what he does, walking, riding the bus, always looking for rental locations. In the brief time he has been at WCIL, he has placed several women as roommates and found section 8 housing for seniors. All tell Edward they are pleased with their accommodations. Hobbies? No longer a surfer, he still loves the beach. His other passion remains volunteering.



**Javier Huete**, Coordinator for Listos Para Trabajar, the bilingual English/Spanish-speaking version of the Latino Peer Support and Employment Project, was formerly with the Good Shepherd Center for Homeless Women. Spotting the WCIL ad on the web, he sent his resume, and was soon planning and scheduling classes for the WCIL pilot project, Listos Para Trabajar. When asked about his choice of WCIL, Javier said with feeling, that working with people with mental illness is so rewarding to him, especially in the area of preparing them for future employment. Born in El Salvador, Javier fled with his family from the Civil War in El Salvador and arrived in Washington D.C. before settling in Los Angeles. Now a contented and proud first-time grandfather, Javier likes to be outdoors--hiking, bicycling, and walking. as he says, "I just enjoy life in general—helping others."



**David Ayala**, CAP Staff Advocate, is a former teacher who worked with parents setting a goal for their children to attend college. His present work helps the Department of Rehabilitation consumers, be they new to the program or long-standing DR clients. David acts as the guide as they proceed through the DR process. If issues arise, David will assist the consumer to resolve any difficulties. Asked about coming to WCIL, he laughed and said, "I met a lady at DR who told me about the job-- had my resume' with me and sent it right then. Next WCIL asked me for an interview and suddenly I had a new job, challenging, but I really enjoy it." He and his family, (a grown daughter and twin boys live in Bakersfield), a son in high school and his wife, Rosemarie, live in Downey. David is an artist who not only paints, but also uses his creative skills doing crafts. As a family they enjoy Dodger games, hockey games, biking and going to the park.



**Carmen Perez**, Clerical Assistant to Employment Services, is bilingual in Spanish and English with a smattering of Russian thrown in. Raised in Los Angeles, Carmen, her husband and her 12-year-old-son live in East LA. Previously Carmen worked in a law office translating, filing, and doing reception work. As a former consumer at WCIL, she heard about the job from a friend and applied. Now she says about her work at WCIL, "I love it. Everybody is friendly and I enjoy my work, and am learning a lot." Every weekend, we go salt-water fishing on the pier in Redondo Beach. My son is the best. Last week my son caught a crab, but we didn't eat it to his disappointment. I love to cook and chile rellanos is the family's favorite dish."



**Victoria O'Shea**, part-time Billing Clerk, is indispensable to the workings of WCIL with her responsibilities for contract billing and reporting. When asked about her decision to work at WCIL, she responded, as a working mother, she would be home in the afternoons with her 2 children, Kevin and Kelly. Her brother, Steven, who had been the comptroller for WCIL, told her how much she would enjoy working there. That cinched it, plus the O'Shea family lived very close to the office location. Together, the family likes to spend time on their Boston Whaler cruising the Marina. Otherwise you will find them at the Kevin's baseball and softball games every weekend, and applauding daughter Kelly's musical theatre appearances. Latest addition to the family is Murphy, a particularly beguiling Shitzu.



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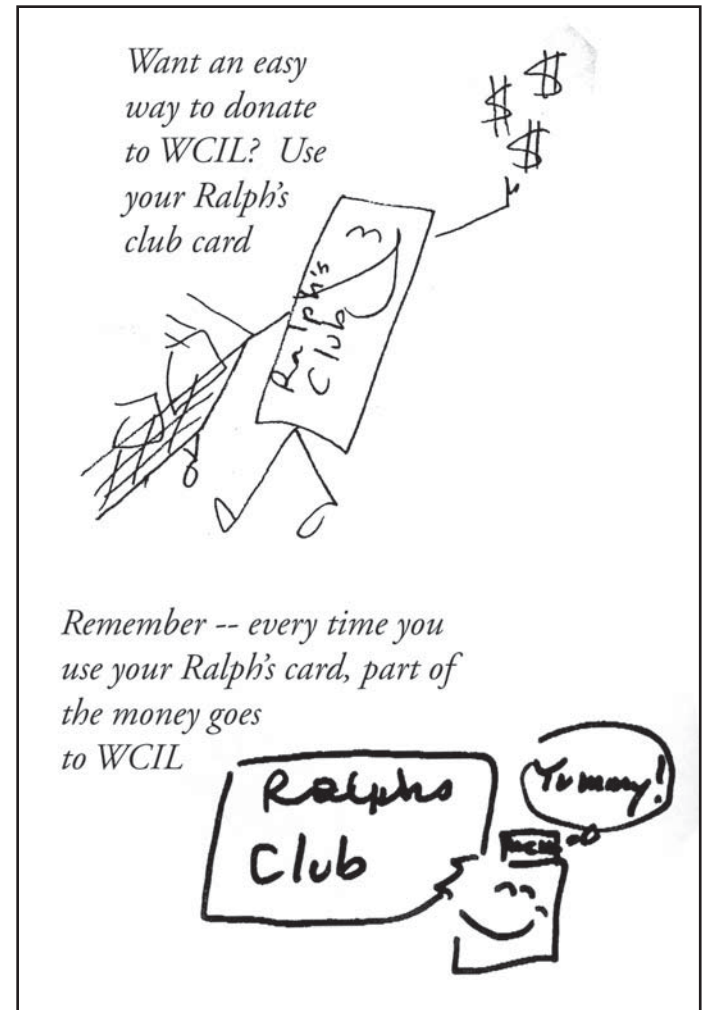
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The Westside Center for Independent Living is a 501(c)(3), Tax ID 95-3013310, nonprofit organization providing services and advocacy to facilitate independent living for people with disabilities. WCIL is funded by government grants from California State Department of Rehabilitation, LA County Department of Mental Health, and the cities of Los Angeles, Santa Monica and Redondo Beach. Additional funding comes from individuals, support groups, organizations, foundations, businesses, and corporations.

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