

Upcoming Event

Mark your calendars for Golden Hearts!

Do you know why we schedule our Golden Hearts Luncheon for late September? Because it leads us into October and Disability Awareness Month! This year, we'll be changing our format to give our guests a deeper sense of the work we do on a daily basis. You won't want to miss it, so mark your calendar!



Date: Friday, September 25, 2009
Time: 11:30 pm to 1:00 pm
Location: Washington State Convention Center
RSVP: goldenhearts@nwcenter.org or 206-387-6389

We need volunteers to help us with this event. If you are interested in volunteering, e-mail us at goldenhearts@nwcenter.org.

Founder Reflections

“My daughter Naida was sort of alone in the world when she was three or four...”

...so I put an ad in the paper asking for a playmate for her. Someone called about a play group in a nearby neighborhood and we joined it. That group developed into Central School for Retarded Children, as we called it in those days. We started out in the basement of Temple De Hirsh.

That was the beginning; ultimately all of us joined the various groups together and developed Northwest Center.”

—Janet Ward Taggart, Founding Parent of Northwest Center



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**The wheels on
OUR bus are going
'round and 'round!** pg. 2



July 2009

A Message from President & CEO Tom Everill

The articles in this month's newsletter all speak to the core purpose of Northwest Center—which in my mind is to create environments where people of all abilities can engage fully with each other.

The environments profiled here range from thrift stores to grocery stores, from restaurants to public swimming pools and parks, from childcare centers to people's homes. What these environments have in common is that they represent opportunities for inclusion—opportunities for people to share the ordinary human experiences of working, shopping, eating, learning, and just having fun without regard to labels or stereotypes.

What I have seen over and over again in this work is how people so often approach inclusion out of some sense of duty or social responsibility, only to embrace it selfishly and enthusiastically once they discover the amazing value inclusion brings to their own lives!

We invite you to *be selfish* and join us in experiencing the rich personal rewards of inclusion. ☺



Client Spotlight On... Felicia!

When Felicia is at her Value Village job, she's all business. Her notable work traits include strong attention to detail, impeccable organization and a continuous desire to improve. Those qualities have already led to a promotion for Felicia—in just one year on the job!

Felicia is in charge of removing tags and recycling items that don't sell, and she takes pride in keeping the bed, bath and accessories sections in great shape. Northwest Center job coach Irene Ng says Felicia is great about identifying problems and working to solve them. For example, she started creating a daily list of goals for herself in an effort to be the best at what she's doing.

Felicia enjoys using her income to get an occasional manicure, but she says most of her paycheck goes toward rent. She lives on her own and spends hours on public transportation getting to work four days a week. Felicia wouldn't have it any other way, though. "It feels good to work in this environment," she says. "The team here is excellent and everyone feels like family. If I could work anywhere, it would be for Value Village." ☺

Beep-Beep! Kids Program Hits the Road

Remember the field trips you enjoyed as a kid?

To a young mind, field trips represent exploration, adventure and new experiences. That's why we're thrilled to have a new school bus at our kids program – so kids of all abilities can take their learning on the road!

With our own bus, we can take children to more places in the community and transport children with physical limitations more easily. Not surprisingly, the kids *love* the bus. The preschool classrooms have taken several trips, including outings to the aquarium, the library and a drive around the neighborhood to learn about transportation and our local community. The bus is also booked for upcoming classroom trips to a Mariners game, Carkeek Park and Northwest Center Pools.

The bus was made possible through donations from Costco, Ronald McDonald House Charities and Lucky 7 Foundation – as well as individual donors. The kids and staff at Northwest Center send a resounding *thank you* to everyone who made this goal a reality!



Local Businesses Create Valuable Job Assessment Opportunities



Northwest Center is teaming up with local businesses to provide community-based job assessments for people with disabilities. Why? An important step in the job placement process is gauging the skills our candidates have, as well as their career interests. The best place to do that is in real-life work settings – and the more diverse the settings, the better!

Enter employers like Top Foods and Grand Central Bakery. They and other businesses have opened their doors to Northwest Center's staff and clients for activities like collecting shopping carts, restocking items, sorting mail, gardening, cleaning fitness equipment and doing laundry. Our employment consultants call whenever they have someone who is interested in an assessment, and then they shadow that person as they go through their job tasks. The impact on the work environment is minimal, but the impact on the client can be monumental. Grand Central Bakery, for example, provides great assessment opportunities. Northwest Center brings people in periodically to stock condiment bars, wash dishes and wipe up tables. The visits can last as long as five hours and span a total of two to five days.

In addition to all the benefits to Northwest Center clients, the employers have discovered some improvements in their businesses. Their employees learn how to relate to a different population of people, stereotypes and stigmas about the capabilities of others are dispelled – and ultimately, people with disabilities are viewed the same as any other co-worker. That's the kind of dual benefit we're looking for!

Northwest Center is urging more local businesses to make their locations available for assessments. All it takes is a call to Joe Smith at 206-378-6355 to get the process started!

A Day in the Life of a Child Therapist

Every day in the week is different for each therapist in our Child Development Program. Our therapists visit kids at our program, homes, community centers and childcare centers.

Depending on the day, the therapist will have work beyond the visits and case-load: evaluations, intakes, paperwork, meetings with teachers, parent education classes (each week two speech therapists run a parent training program in the evening), special interest groups, networking and staff meetings. Each therapist has at least 5 visits per day around the greater Seattle Metro area. The visits last about 45 minutes, travel time not included.

The day begins...

- **Home visit:** These typically start with a plan developed by the family. Today the therapist is focused on one of the family's goals. The therapist uses specific techniques to help the parent facilitate communication with the child. Many home visits don't go as planned. Ask one of our therapists to tell you about how a therapy session went away from the plan! Funny stories!
- **Community Center:** This visit is in a community center where a young child has an opportunity to play with peers. The therapist meets here with the family to help them facilitate play with other children as part of their family goals.
- **Childcare visit:** Similar techniques used for visiting the home are used within other childcare centers. The therapist becomes a part of the classroom routine with the hope that we can foster inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in community-based childcare centers.
- **Classroom visits:** Each therapist has a few children that they see in the Northwest Center Child Development Program classrooms. The relationship between teachers and therapists at the Child Development Program is a very collaborative one. The therapist blends into the classroom routine while working on family/classroom goals for the child with the disability.



PCC Partnership Achieves Mutual Goal: Sustainable Future!

PCC Natural Markets' commitment to organic, natural food sustainability reflects Northwest Center's goal of sustaining services for people with disabilities.



In 2002, PCC hired Adley (a Northwest Center client) as a courtesy clerk. For the past seven years, he has been a mainstay, happily greeting and bagging groceries for PCC's customers. Every day, customers and staff alike benefit from Adley's great customer service and willingness to lend a hand wherever needed.

Then in 2004, PCC stepped up again by becoming one of our valued clothing donation bin hosts. The donations collected from the bins at the West Seattle and View Ridge stores make a significant contribution to our programs. Not only are these donations of reusable clothing diverted from local landfills, they also help fund our services for kids and adults with disabilities.



The ongoing partnership of client employment and hosted clothing bins demonstrates PCC's dedication to Northwest Center, sustainable causes, and to the local communities in which they do business.

It's a win – win for all!!!