



Renee Uitto, CLS/OC Citizens' Advisory Committee Chairperson

DECEMBER 2011

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

KATIE KRESS – FUTURE SUPERSTAR!



Katie Kress is an extremely friendly, outgoing, and talented young-lady that has BIG dreams of one day being a superstar. She is a natural entertainer with much assertiveness and a natural sense of humor.

Katie is an extraordinary ice skater, dancer, singer, swimmer, and former cheer leader. She has won multiple medals through the Special Olympics for her performances in figure skating. She has also participated in the talent shows at AJ's Café, wowing the audience with her singing and dance moves and recently brought down the house with her solo performance at her sister Stephanie's wedding.



While Katie works on her dream of becoming a professional entertainer, she is earning money by working at TJ Maxx. Katie attends the Bloomfield Hills Post-Secondary P.R.E.P. Program. She began working at TJ Maxx participating in a work-based



Katie, a proud employee at TJ Maxx

learning experience three-four times per week through her school. This past summer, TJ Maxx offered Katie paid employment over the summer months and Katie was happy to accept. She worked part-time over the summer and TJ Maxx was

so happy with her job performance that they decided to continue her paid employment. Katie now earns the same wage as her co-workers without disabilities and enjoys being a part of the TJ Maxx team and receiving her pay checks.



Katie with her sister Tiffany

When Katie isn't working or practicing her singing and dance moves, she enjoys spending time in the community with her sister or going up north with her family. Katie lives with her mom and step dad and has a strong support circle with her three sisters, Tiffany, Laura, and Stephanie, and two brothers-in-law, Shan .0 non and Brett. There is also a brand new addition to the family, Donald Mitchell, Katie's nephew (Katie loves her new role as "Aunt Katie"). Katie's family is very supportive of her and they assist her in achieving her dreams by providing encouragement in her pursuit of more and more independence.

Katie has taken dance classes in her community through Bloomfield Parks & Recreation, Avondale High School, and Oakland Community College. If anyone has any leads or knows of any connections in which Katie could dance or otherwise be a part of any performing arts plays or presentations, please contact her Support Coordinator, Diann at 734-729-9100.



Thank you Katie for sharing your story with our newsletter readers! We congratulate you on your employment at TJ Maxx, and we wish you much success in your pursuit of work in the entertainment field. We look forward to hearing more about your successes in the future!

THANK YOU THERESA ARINI – YOU WILL BE MISSED



In October, everyone lost a bright star in the world of advocacy. Theresa Arini was a fierce advocate for people with disabilities. Despite having significant physical and medical conditions, Theresa did not allow her disability to define her life.

Theresa expressed that she wanted to be “an agent of positive change”. She desired to make a difference that matters in the lives of people. She was smart, savvy, and a good advocate.

Over the years, Theresa attended many meetings and participated on many committees statewide and within her local community regarding issues of ground transportation, housing, community living, and employment. She spoke to the issues of concern, and taught others how to advocate for themselves. Theresa provided others with encouragement and support. One of her deepest felt goals was to develop new leadership skills in the people who serve on local committees, so they could go on to lead in future advocacy efforts.

Theresa led her life as a shining example of advocating for yourself and others. She began advocating while earning her Bachelor’s Degree in Public Law and Government at Eastern Michigan University. She was a member, and later President, of ARRIVAL, which roughly stands for “people with disabilities have arrived on campus”. Later, Theresa worked as an advocate with the Oakland/Macomb Center for Independent Living. She also worked with folks at United Cerebral Palsy of Detroit on a Self-Determination endeavor to develop independent Person-Centered Planning. She served as a member of the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council and was the past Chair of the Macomb County Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee (RICC).

Theresa held two separate employment positions within the Wayne State University Developmental Disabilities Institute; one as a Student Research Assistant and the other as a Peer Mentor. She was an Independent Facilitator through Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority and had extensive training and experience related to Person-Centered Planning. She worked at the Department of Community Health related to their employment initiatives and presented at numerous local and state level conferences in her quest to help educate and empower others.

This article only names a few of Theresa’s many accomplishments. Her work touched the lives and hearts of many people and she will be greatly missed.

GET INVOLVED! – SELF ADVOCATES BECOMING EMPOWERED (SABE)



Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) is a national self-advocacy organization. They have a board of regional

representatives and members from every state in the United States. For 21 years they have been working hard for the full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in their communities.

SABE believes people with disabilities should be treated as equals; be given the same decisions, choices, rights, responsibilities, and chances to speak up and empower themselves; be able to make new friendships and renew old friendships just, like everyone else; and be able to learn from their mistakes, like everyone else.

To name just a few of SABE’s goals: eliminating institutions promoting affordable and accessible

housing for all people in the community, equal employment opportunities and equal pay for all people, national healthcare for all people; accessible transportation, education for people with and without disabilities, and alternatives to guardianship. SABE also works on legislation that affects the lives of people with disabilities.

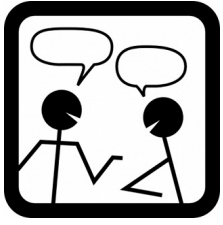
You may want to consider joining this national Self Advocacy movement to stay connected with other self advocates. Included in membership with SABE is a SABE pin, Membership Card, and Newsletter. For more information about SABE, becoming a member, valuable resources, news and events, visit SABE’s website at www.sabeusa.org.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Really great people make you feel that you, too, can become great.

Mark Twain

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS *By Renee Utto*



Recently, I attended the statewide Recipient Rights Conference and one of the sessions I attended was about difficult dialogue and how to speak up in a difficult situation. Suppose you don't feel comfortable with the person you need to talk to.

Maybe you fear things will be worse if you have this conversation. This could be with a co-worker, a caregiver, a family member, or a friend.

You need to remember that you have the right to change things in your life, that you don't feel comfortable with. It is your life after all, and YOU need to trust your instincts and be your own best advocate.

Let's say you hired a support staff person and you feel they rush you with certain things. First, you should try having a calm conversation with the person and explain your concerns. It is important to explain yourself to the person and be specific as to what you would like to change. Provide them with specific examples of their actions and how it made you feel. Let them clearly know your expectations and then ask for their feedback about what you have discussed.

Another situation could be if you want to become more independent and you feel a family member is holding you back. These can be very difficult discussions. You should follow the same steps as above, but you'll want to be particularly sensitive when talking with family members, as they are usually responding to their internal fears about your well being. You may want to try to find areas of compromise when having difficult conversations with family members. Let them see you take on more responsibilities and independence, and hopefully their fears will subside.

Facing conflict isn't always easy, but putting off difficult conversations often doesn't help. If something is bothering you and you don't think you can handle having a difficult conversation on your own, you can consider having a member of your support circle with you. You could also consider bringing your entire support circle together to talk about the situation and they could help you come up with options for resolution.

With calm communication, people in your life to support you, and the right problem solving skills, you will be able to handle any situation with success!

INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE COMING TO OAKLAND COUNTY *By Renee Utto*



Over the last several months, there has been a lot of talk, and multiple stakeholder meetings, to discuss the healthcare needs of our community; specifically the healthcare needs of people served by the Oakland County mental health system.

Recent research has shown that people with mental health diagnoses are dying an average of 25 years earlier than the general public without mental health needs. These are statistics that are very serious and cannot be ignored. They suggest that the people served by the mental health system are currently having difficulty accessing and maintaining consistent and high quality health care services.

In an effort to address this need, the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority has developed the Oakland Integrated Healthcare Network (OIHN) and is in the process of applying to become a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center (FQHC) look-a-like. Under this new model of supports, primary healthcare physicians will be available in the future at the current Core Provider Agency sites, including CLS/OC in Ferndale. This means that people will have the option of having their healthcare needs met, such as primary care and dentistry, along with their mental health needs, all at the same place. National Healthcare Consultant, David Swann, visited CLS/OC on November 11th and described the idea as a "medical home," where all needs can be met under one roof to allow people to get the health care they need in a more efficient and integrated way.

The purpose of this integrated healthcare initiative is the ability to address the full well being of each person served - physically, medically, mentally, and socially. It can also enhance access to healthcare services for our community, improve quality of care outcomes, and lower healthcare costs by increasing communication and efficiencies. It is expected that these changes will be in effect, and this option (it is only an option, nobody will be forced to utilize the primary care services if they don't want to) will be available by the year 2014.



THE 2011 LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

By Allison Gargus



When I was asked to attend the Leadership Summit in Florida on November 2, 2011, I knew this was an opportunity I couldn't refuse. Being there and listening to many people from around the country explaining the issues, and wanting to make a difference, was breathtaking. I absorbed

so much information and knowledge that I was overfilled with happiness and was instantly motivated to make a difference. One of the topics that really stuck with me was the importance of registering to vote.

I am sure everyone knows how important it is to have your voice heard! Well, one of the best ways to be heard is by voting. By voting, you are letting the elected officials know what your priorities are in shaping our community. Having your voice heard helps you to gain confidence that your voice matters and that you matter as a person. When I first voted, I felt good about myself and knew that my vote counted just as much as everyone else's vote. I made my voice heard and afterward had a rewarding feeling of accomplishment; I made a difference. I will continue to vote and have my voice heard because I matter, we all matter. So, go to your local Secretary of State office to register; this is making the first step toward the things you want to see happen in your community.

Although there were many topics that interested me at the 2011 Leadership Summit, I believe that voting is one of the major ways to make a difference.

CONGRATULATIONS RENEE!

On October 21, 2011, Renee Uitto was awarded the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH)



Front: Annette Downey CLS/OC Executive Director, Renee Uitto, and Angela Pryor. Back: Chad Witcher OCCMHA ORR, Olga Dazzo Director of the MDCH, Jeff Brown OCCMHA Executive Director

Director's Award for Empowerment. During the statewide Recipient Rights Conference, Olga Dazzo, Director of the MDCH presented Renee with the award.

COMMUNITY CORNER CELEBRATES THEIR 50TH EPISODE

On November 15th the guys from the Community Corner show celebrated the taping of their 50th episode. Community Corner is a local cable TV show that airs through Community Media Network. The hosts David DeWitt Taylor, Ryan Gray, and Aaron Castle invite guests on the show for personal interviews, and to talk about community issues that affect the lives of people with disabilities. Hosting the show has allowed David, Ryan, and Aaron to use their talents and passion to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and make a difference in our communities.



The 50th Anniversary Episode will air on November 30th at 6pm. The guys celebrated their 50th show by interviewing Jay Wiencko, Executive Director of CMNtv, Patty Brown who directs Community Corner, and Joe Johnson, CMNtv Training and Outreach. Plus, the guys take a look at clips from past shows.



Kevin Eckert CMN staff (Production Assistant), Jay Wiencko CMN Exec. Director, Patty Brown Community Corner Director, Joe Johnson CMN Outreach & Training Coordinator, Aaron Castle, David DeWitt Taylor, Ryan Gray, Nicholas Krishnan volunteer crew & Brendon Shryer

The Community Corner show airs on Wednesday at 6pm, Thursday at 4pm, and Friday at 9pm on channel 18 of Comcast and Wide Open West (WOW) cable in 11 Oakland County communities. If you do not live in one of the 11 communities, you can catch the show on your computer with live video streaming. Just visit the Community Media Network website at www.cmntv.org.

Congratulations David, Ryan, and Aaron!

SAY GOODBYE TO A HAM AND CHEESE LIFE *By Steve Harrington*



Who among us is fully satisfied with his or her life? At some place in our hearts and minds, don't we all long for something better? Don't we all crave something different—big or small—in our lives?

Part of the human experience is to want change. Whether it's more money, a better relationship, freedom from pain, acceptance, more comfortable surroundings, or opportunities for personal growth—everyone desires change at some point. Even the most hopeless person would welcome hope. Even those who are most lost would embrace direction.

But the reality is if nothing changes, everything stays the same. Without change, life satisfaction remains an elusive shadow that follows but cannot catch us.

What would make *your* life more meaningful? Enjoyable? Satisfying? You probably already know. And you may also know how to obtain it. The hard part is acting on your plan for making changes that will improve your life. Consider this story:

Three construction workers building a skyscraper are eating lunch on a steel beam hundreds of feet above the ground. The first worker opens his lunch box and pulls out a ham and cheese sandwich.

"Ham and cheese!" he exclaims. "I've had ham and cheese sandwiches every day for the last year! If I get another ham and cheese sandwich, I don't know what I'll do!"

The men finish their meals and the next day find themselves eating lunch on the same steel beam. Yet again, the first worker pulls out a ham and cheese sandwich.

"Ham and cheese!" he shouts. "I can't take it anymore!" And with that, he jumps off the beam and plummets to his death hundreds of feet below.

The second worker turns to the man still on the beam and says, "Gee, I've never seen anyone so upset about a ham and cheese sandwich." "Yeah," agrees the other. "What's really odd is that he makes his own lunch!"

Is your life a ham and cheese sandwich? Instead of roast beef, are you settling for ham and cheese because fear of change compels you to pack the same meal every day?

The ability to change our lives lies within us. Stepping out of our routines takes courage. It takes a willingness to challenge our fears and risk unpleasantness or failure. But we can do it in small steps until we gain the confidence risk takers know so well.

Instead of plain ham and cheese, add a little mayonnaise one day... then mustard. Toast the bread and soon you will be ready for that roast beef.

Always remember: if nothing changes, everything stays the same. Remind yourself of how satisfying, enjoyable, and more meaningful life could be.

Once you stop packing ham and cheese sandwiches for lunch, you may discover a world filled with egg salad, tuna, turkey, chicken, and peanut butter. You may discover a world of immense diversity and rich opportunity.

You might look back and scold yourself for living a life filled with ham and cheese sandwiches. But then you will look forward to each lunch hour, when you can open your mouth wide to embrace new tastes.

If your life is one ham and cheese sandwich after another and frustration has compelled you to



consider a leap off that steel beam, heed my words: muster the courage to take a risk. Gather your dreams, hopes, and desires for a better life... and change your diet!

After he was diagnosed with a psychiatric condition, Steve Harrington lived on a steady diet of ham and cheese sandwiches for five years. He now enjoys a great variety of food!

Steve Harrington has overcome two psychiatric disorders and has turned challenging experiences into a compelling story about recovery. Steve's stories have touched audiences across the U.S. at conferences, business meetings and rallies. Audiences enjoy humorous anecdotes woven into a message of motivation and compassion. Steve uses his experiences to keep listeners interested and enthralled. Steve is the author of 12 books, his proudest, *The Depression Handbook, You Can Recover!*, and his newest book, *Trees of Hope*.

Steve earned a Bachelor of Science degree at Michigan State University, a Masters of Public Administration degree at Grand Valley State University, and a *Juris Doctor* degree from Cooley Law School. He is the founder of the National Association of Peer Specialists.



HOLIDAY PARTY

HEADQUARTERS



Get ready to Party! Join friends for food, music, dancing and socializing. Dress casual and be prepared for a good time and many laughs.

CLS/OC staff will provide a yummy turkey and ham dinner feast. This cost is free, just put on your dancing shoes and bring a 2-liter bottle of your favorite soda pop, juice, or lemonade to share.

WHEN: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2011, 6:30-9:00PM

DINNER WILL BE SERVED 6:30PM – 8:00PM

WHERE: CROSS OF CHRIST CHURCH
1100 LONE PINE ROAD
BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MI 48302



If you have questions please call Diana Kaszyca at 248-547-2668.

NOTICE OF CLS/OC HOLIDAY HOURS

The CLS/OC office will be closed on the following days:

Thursday - November 25, 2011

Friday - November 26, 2011

Friday, December 23, 2011

Monday, December 26, 2011

Friday, December 30, 2011

Monday, January 2, 2012

In the event of an emergency, you can contact our Emergency On-Call System at 734-238-7246. There is a link to our on-call system on our office voice mail as well. This service is available between the hours of 4:30pm and 8:00am on regular business days and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays. All other days we will maintain regular business hours of 8:00am to 4:30pm.

***Have a Safe and Happy
Holiday Season!***

***From Everyone at
Community Living Services***

