



Valley Mountain Regional Center Connection

Volume 6 Number 1

Winter 2017/Spring 2018

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VMRC:

State of the Agency

A VMRC All-Staff Holiday gathering occurred to advise all staff of the agency's status and priorities. Staff learned of the Mobility Project and how it will affect their work, as well as the most up-to-date information about our budget. A Year in Review was presented by our Executive Director, Tony Anderson and he discussed the priorities and plans for the next year:

- Self-Determination is coming soon. We expect it will be implemented within the first half of next year.
- Developmental Center Closures—Sonoma to close by 12/2018. Porterville General Treatment by 12/2021. Advocates will press hard to retain the money saved and DDS will continue to focus on crisis and enhanced behavioral services.
- HCBS—Person-Centered Planning and Thinking will become even more important as a requirement in receiving federal funds.
- Disparity in expenditures for culturally diverse populations will continue to be a



VMRC staff gather at SJCOE

focus of our legislature.

- Housing, employment and dental care will round out the top priorities of the department and the legislature.
- There will most likely be a significant tax bill that makes Medicaid spending on developmental disabilities vulnerable.
- Governor ends his term and Congress enters mid-term elections.

2018 should be a year full of changes.



News Briefs

The City of Modesto Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhoods Department offers adaptive recreation activities including a Friday Night social/Recreational program, Adaptive Bowling League, Archery, and Drop In Swim Program during the upcoming summer. www.modestogov.com/prnd/activityguide.

Working with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards, the *Sesame Street*-themed amusement park in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, is actually the first theme park *ever* to bear the "Certified Autism Center" qualification. Opening on April 28th.

A \$1.3 trillion government spending package will aid those with disabilities who wander while increasing special education funding and tackling restraint and seclusion in schools. The legislation, which had been under consideration since 2014, will provide \$2 million annually through 2022 for grants to local law enforcement and nonprofit agencies. The money can be used to supply electronic tracking devices to families of those at risk of wandering or for education, training, notification systems and other efforts.

Connie Brings Smiles Through Her Hobbies



Among the consumers at VMRC we often find many talented individuals and a lot of caring hearts. One individual who combines both of these attributes is Connie Rosette from Modesto. If you've been around VMRC's Modesto office for a while you may know Connie. She has been with VMRC for 36 years and seems to know just about everyone here. Despite many health problems and other personal struggles, Connie is someone who you will always find with a pleasant demeanor. In her free

time Connie likes to crochet, color and decorate rocks. Connie's mother taught her to crochet when she was just 10 years old and she has been doing it ever since. Connie enjoys making scarves, blankets and bed spreads. Connie states that she often donates these items as she wants to help others who are in need. Her donations go to local hospitals, UCP, to the elderly or are given away as gifts. Connie also frequents the VMRC Modesto office bearing gifts. A quick look around the cubicles of Team Magic in Modesto and you will find several examples of the decorative rocks that Connie makes and then brings in when she visits. Connie says that she loves VMRC. They have been such a big part of her life for such a large portion of her life. They have done so much to help her. She hopes that her creative works can bring smiles to those at VMRC who have helped her so much.

By: Jason Toepel

Lawmakers Band Together to Defend ADA



Amid vocal protests from disability rights activists, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the ADA Education and Reform Act on a vote of 225 to 192 in February.

Critics say the controversial legislation, also known as H.R. 620, would severely damage accessibility protections laid out in the 27-year-old landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. The vote was split mostly along party lines with a dozen Democrats joining nearly all House Republicans voting in favor of the bill.

The legislation would require people facing accessibility barriers at public businesses — whether that means a lack of wheelchair ramps, special parking or bathroom facilities — to provide written notice of their concerns. Businesses would have up to 60 days to respond and then an additional 60 days to begin improvements.

U.S. Senate Democrats are vowing to block legislation that would dramatically alter the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Coming Up

VMRC Board Meetings to be held on the second Monday of each month. Upcoming meetings:

- April 9
- May 14
- June 11

6pm in the Howard Cohen Board Room at 702 N. Aurora, Stockton. The public is welcome.

The Annual Autism Forum will be held on Tuesday, April 10 at the San Joaquin County Office of Education. Ann Cirimele will be the keynote speaker discussing “The Road Less Traveled: Understanding the Emotions Experienced by Parents Raising children with Special Needs”.

The 18th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Symposium “Building Hope in 2018” will be held on April 20 at the San Joaquin County Office of Education.

San Joaquin County 5Cs Project will hold a Health Forum for Children with Special Health Care Needs on Monday, May 7, 2018 at the SJ County Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center. To register contact FRN for more information.

VMRC will hold its Annual Staff Longevity Awards Luncheon on June 14th in Stockton.

Vendor Corner



Jason started attending Valley CAPS on June 15, 2016. Since his start he has worked on being able to communicate his wants, needs and preferences with staff and peers. Jason works in the WAGES (Workers Achieving Greater Employment Support) program, performing various janitorial duties and he also participates and assists staff with group trainings and activities. Jason and a group of his peers made holiday cards for the troops overseas. They dropped off the cards in Lathrop Ca to be mailed out to the troops in time for Christmas. Jason is a very polite young man, who goes out of his way to open the door for staff and peers, and wishes them a good day. Jason volunteers in the community weekly and sometimes more than once a week. For example, at St. Mary's in Stockton Jason assists in passing out trays to the patrons, he also assists in the folding of the napkins and the stacking of the trays. At the Tracy Food Bank he bags up beans and rice for the patrons and places labels on the bags. Jason also helps at Valley CAPS Area Board 6 consumer store, aka, Stop-N-Shop. He sets out the display items for sale and assists with making coffee and tea. We are proud to select Jason to be the Valley CAPS Student of the Month; we look forward to continuing to assist Jason with accomplishing his goals.

*Jason Henderson
pictured as Student
of the Month.*

**By: Valley CAPS
contributor**



Be Heart Healthy!

Heart disease can happen to anyone. You can stop heart disease. Learn more about how to keep your heart healthy.

You can prevent heart disease if you make changes in your life and:

- Eat healthy foods that are low in fats and cholesterol.
- Do not smoke.
- Exercise regularly.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Manage stress.
- Stay on your diet if diabetic.



If you have questions about heart disease, be sure to talk to your doctor!

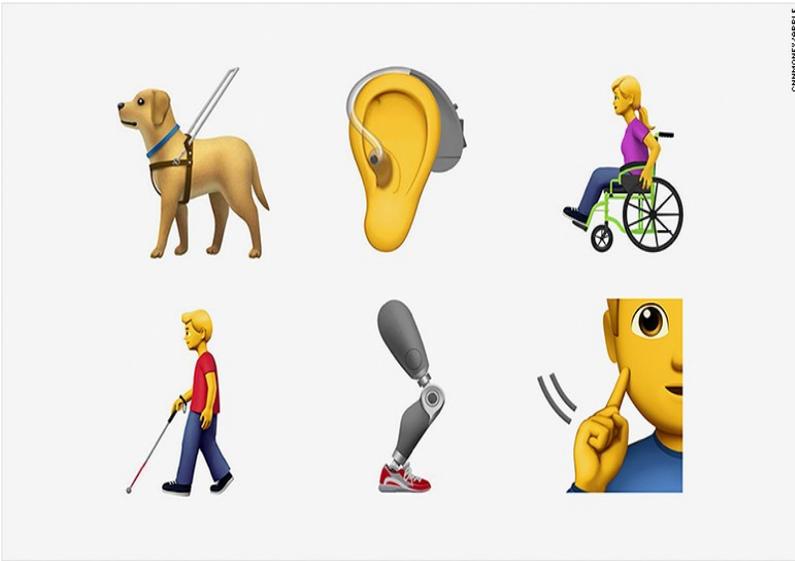
Your doctor can give you more information about steps you can take to keep your heart healthy and strong!

Program Offers Competitive Wages

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is funding a new program through regional centers called the Paid Internship Program (PIP). The PIP allows our individuals 18 and over to work for an employer and gain valuable work experience while being paid a competitive wage for that particular industry. Salary cost will be reimbursed by the regional center to the vendor providing direct support services. This creates a win-win for our individuals and local businesses. It is the goal of this program for employers to give our individuals a chance to show their skills resulting in Competitive Integrated Employment.

Currently, VMRC has 5 individuals who have participated in our PIP program. Career Connections is our first vendor to include the PIP in their program design, resulting in one of the first individuals to be placed in the PIP in the entire State of California. That particular individual has just recently been hired on permanently by the company.

For any questions about VMRC's Paid Internship Program, please contact VMRC's Employment Specialist Enos Edmerson Jr. at (209) 955-3672 or eedmerson@vmrc.net.



Apple Expands Emoji Options

Apple wants emojis to better represent people with disabilities. Currently emojis provide a wide range of options, but may not represent the experiences of those with disabilities. Apple proposed the idea, saying “Diversifying the options available helps fill a significant gap and provides a more inclusive experience for all. Thirteen (13) new emojis will be introduced.

Paint Night Party

Erica White, VMRC Service Coordinator organized this paint night party on January 18th benefiting the Awesome Spot (special needs playground) at Michael's Pizza. VMRC was well represented with ten SCs in attendance. (Pictured are Julie V, Elizabeth J, Teresa D, Erica W, Jennifer G, Karla P, Marlene L, Nicole B, Nicole N and Cindy) The project has raised 15% of the funds needed for this worthy inclusive playground in Modesto.



A Night to Shine



A Night to Shine Prom was a spectacular event for all. Renew Church in Modesto applied for a grant from the Tim Tebow Foundation to bring this event to our area. Renew Church partnered with The Society for Disabilities and Shelter Cove Church agreed to host this huge endeavor. On February 9, 2018, 537 Churches from around the world in 16 countries hosted a prom for teens to adults with special needs. This event was free for all that applied to participate. All guests were given the royal treatment from start to finish. This event included: hair and make-up appointments, free gowns, free jewelry and goody bags. All guests entered on the red carpet and were greeted and cheered on by fans and cameras flashing. Every guest received a corsage or boutonniere. There was a soda fountain, dinner buffet, dessert bar, karaoke room, photo booth, dance party and limo rides. Each guest was assigned a one on one buddy as their escort for the night. There were 600 volunteers throughout the event. I was privileged to be on the dance floor during the event to witness the bright lights, elaborate decorations, loud music, smiles and line dancing. While the event was in progress, parents and care providers were treated to a dinner in an upstairs respite area. Towards the end of the evening there was a short video on the dance floor big screens with a message from Tim Tebow. The main message of the event was conveying God's love for all people. The conclusion and climax of the evening was each guest being crowned a King or Queen of the prom, because that is how they are seen every day. **By: Marlene Lombardo**

Greg's Healing Letter

By: Lisa Rosas

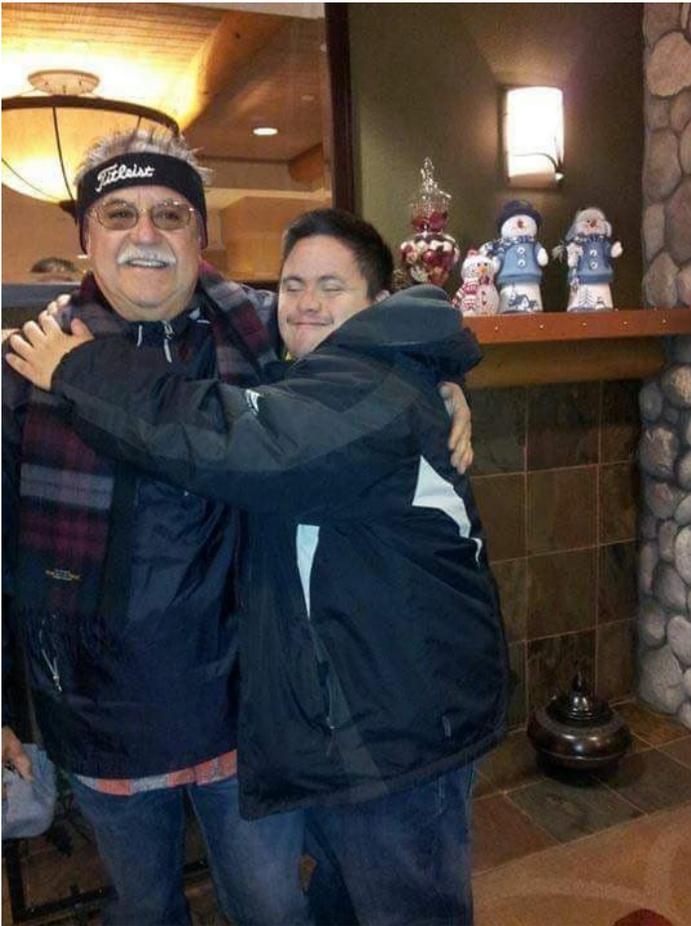
George and Rosa Orozco were together for thirty nine years and married for thirty three years. Their union brought forth two beautiful children, Cassandra, and Gregory, also known as "Greg." Greg was diagnosed with Down Syndrome and receives services from Valley Mountain Regional Center. Greg has been raised in a very loving and supportive family. His family upbringing has contributed to who is today, a loving, kind hearted son, brother, uncle, and friend.

His father George greatly influenced him and made an impact on his life. George worked very hard to provide Greg with a quality life that was filled with many opportunities to thrive and flourish. George was Greg's best friend and Greg was his "Chipper". Together, they went to the movies, fishing, the casino, he involved him in church activities, and made weekend road trips to men's retreats. George and Greg shared a special father-son relationship and spoke a special language that they alone understood. His sister Cassandra described their relationship as "the purest relationship anyone has ever seen. It was the truest love relationship." George was the only one who understood Greg and he was the only one who could assure and calm Greg when he was afraid, upset, or having a difficult time. He taught Greg Christian morals and values through his spiritual leadership and godly example. Greg learned how to pray and worship during services at their church, The House Modesto. During services, Greg boldly and passionately sings worship songs from his heart. The House Modesto offers an in depth and intensive ten month curriculum called Kingdom Men that teaches biblical principles for manhood. George helped Greg attend the curriculum, read several books, studied the Bible, and completed homework assignments. With support from his father, he completed the curriculum's requirements successfully and commissioned as a Kingdom man on 4/13/14. Greg walked down the main sanctuary aisle with other men as 3,000 people proudly cheered with excitement as the House Modesto Church honored him with his certificate of completion. His life verse that his father encouraged him to live by was Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." George encouraged him to live his life to his fullest potential.

In 2006, a cancerous tumor was discovered near George's kidney. He received treatment and was in remission until 2013. In 2013 the cancer came back aggressively and he was diagnosed with stage four cancer. The family was told that George had six months to live but George out lived the prognosis and lived three more years. He passed away on 12/2/2016. His passing was extremely difficult for the family. Prior to his passing, George was very worried about Greg. He tried to prepare Greg as much as possible and told him that he was going to be leaving to Heaven. George recorded a video of himself to be played for Greg after he passed away. He told Greg that he loved him always, to be strong, to be the man of the house, and to take care of his mother Rosa, sister Cassandra, and nephew Gio.

George's death affected Greg the most. Greg experienced deep mourning and grief. He began to isolate, stayed his room, refused to go to work at Howard Training Center, and didn't want to talk to anyone. Eventually he went back to work and resumed daily living activities but the deep sadness remained. His mom and sister experienced sadness and hurt for Greg because they felt powerless and ineffective in helping him through his grief and inability to understand. They relayed on their faith, prayer, and church family as a source of comfort, strength, and hope.

This Christmas season, the family made plans to have a nice Christmas, in hopes of cheering up and comforting Greg. The home and Christmas tree was festively decorated. However, his sadness was still present. His cousin invited him to send a text message to his dad in heaven. Greg joyfully agreed and texted a message to his dad in heaven. On 11/30/17 Greg was given a package to open, it was a letter from heaven. His dad responded to his text message. When Greg opened it and realized he received a letter from heaven, he cried intensely and exclaimed, "My dad is here!"



Above: Greg with his Dad
Below: Greg with his letter



He continued to weep uncontrollably, months and months of pain flowed in tears down his face. His cry wailed and carried such a deep grief. Greg quickly went to Kassandra for comfort and she held him and offered to read the letter from heaven. Together they wept as they read.

Greg asked to share his letter. The letter read:

Dear Greg,

Hey Greg, its Dad, the angels showed me your text message! Thanks for thinking of me... I'm always thinking of you too!

I miss you a lot, but I want you to know that I'm always right by your side, keep on being the man of the house and take care of your mom, sister, and Gio for me...and tell everyone I say hello!

I saw the Christmas tree you put up in your room, it looks great! Good job decorating it! I'm glad you guys have a tree and decorations up, I can see the lights on the tree all the way from heaven and they make me happy!

I hope you all have a great Christmas, just know I'll be sitting right next to you as you open your presents on Christmas day!

I need you to make me a promise Greg, I need you to be happy, it's all right to miss me, but when you do, don't cry, instead smile because I'm right there with you, you just can't see me! You're still my best buddy!

Don't forget to smile,

Love Dad

The "letter from heaven" brought much needed comfort and healing for Greg. His mom stated that the letter gave him closure. Greg is displaying less anger, he is more playful with family, he isn't isolating anymore, and he is now engaging and spending time with the family. Smiles have become more frequent as Greg continues to heal and his father's legacy of love, faith, servanthood, and godliness lives on.

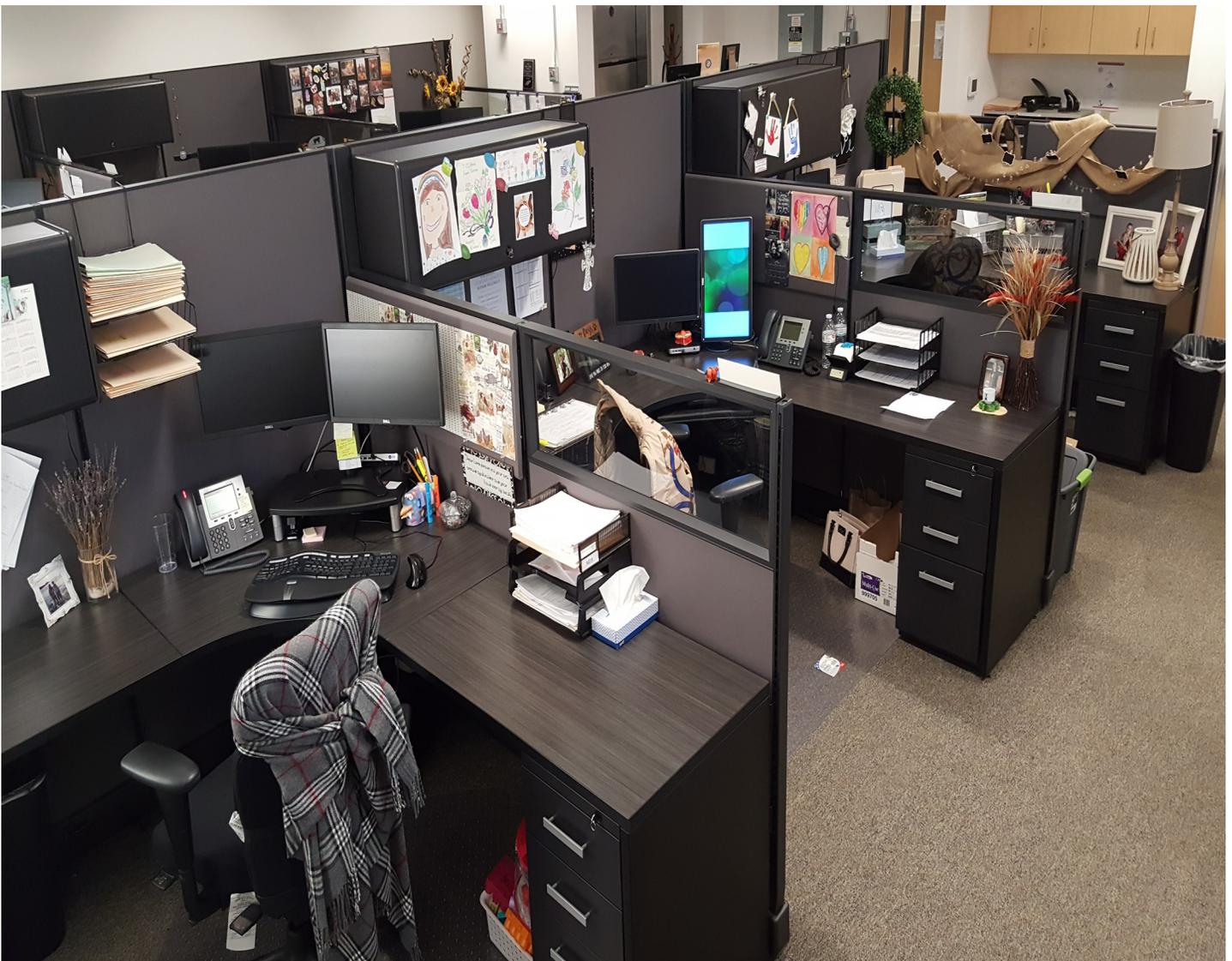


Change is Good!

In the VMRC Modesto office, Phase 1 construction has been completed and conference rooms are being booked. It will be nice to have a space to accommodate events, both large and small.

Phase 1 includes a new reception area, lobby area, a large conference room, tele-medicine clinic, “clinical” space, and a coffee cart to be hosted by Cole Vocational.

Phase 2 is now completed, as well. Intake staff recently moved to the first floor renovated area. A children’s team has now moved to the vacated third floor area to join their peers.





Solar panels have been installed at VMRC's Stockton site. It's not just good for the environment, but serves as much needed shade for parking during the Summer, and shelter from the rain in other months.

The San Andreas site is adding 1,500 sq ft in office space. The photos below show the walkway cut-out and new rooms, the larger to be occupied by cubicles.



CULTURAL CONNECTION FAIR A HUGE SUCCESS





VMRC's Cultural Connection Fair was held on September 30th. 600 attended the fair and a good time was had by all. There were 40 vendors providing information and interactive carnival games, as well as a variety of dance and singing groups. Attorneys were also available for participant consults. The festive event was a hit! A similar event is being planned in Modesto this year.



Seasonal Donations

VMRC volunteers delivered donated turkeys and sides to several needy families during Thanksgiving. Food, toys and clothing were distributed in December.

The holiday spirit was alive and well with donations going to designated families in our area.





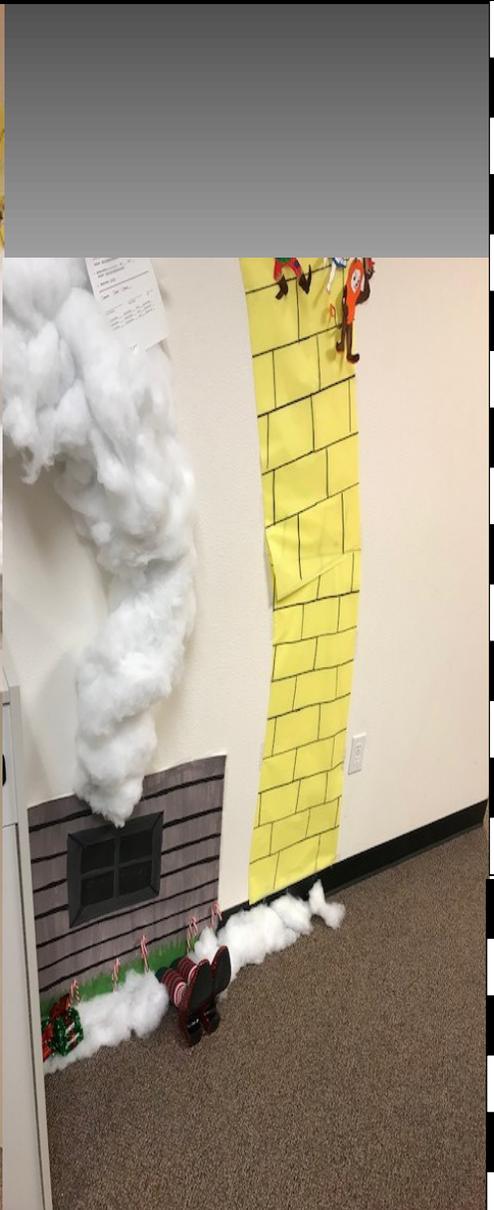

Special
Events



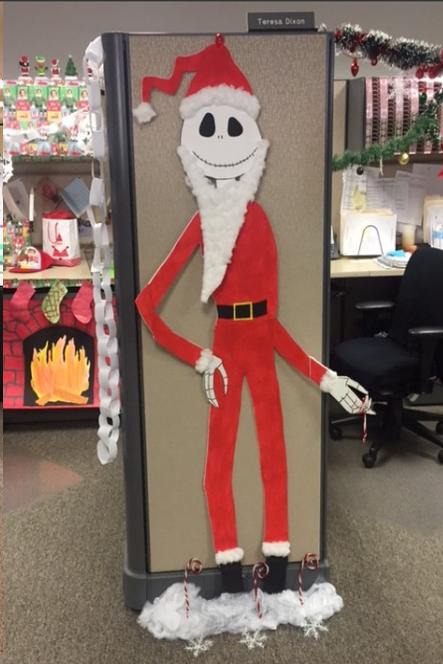


Holiday Creations









Miss Stanislaus Princess



The Miss Stanislaus Princess Pageant, sponsored by the Lions 500 Club and Society for Disabilities, was held on September 16 at Downey High School in Modesto.

Hayven Smith was crowned Miss Stanislaus Princess.

Juliana Reyes received a Friendship Award for encouraging her fellow contestants.

The Miss Stanislaus Princess competition included a casual wear category, formal wear category, and a question and answer session for the contestants.

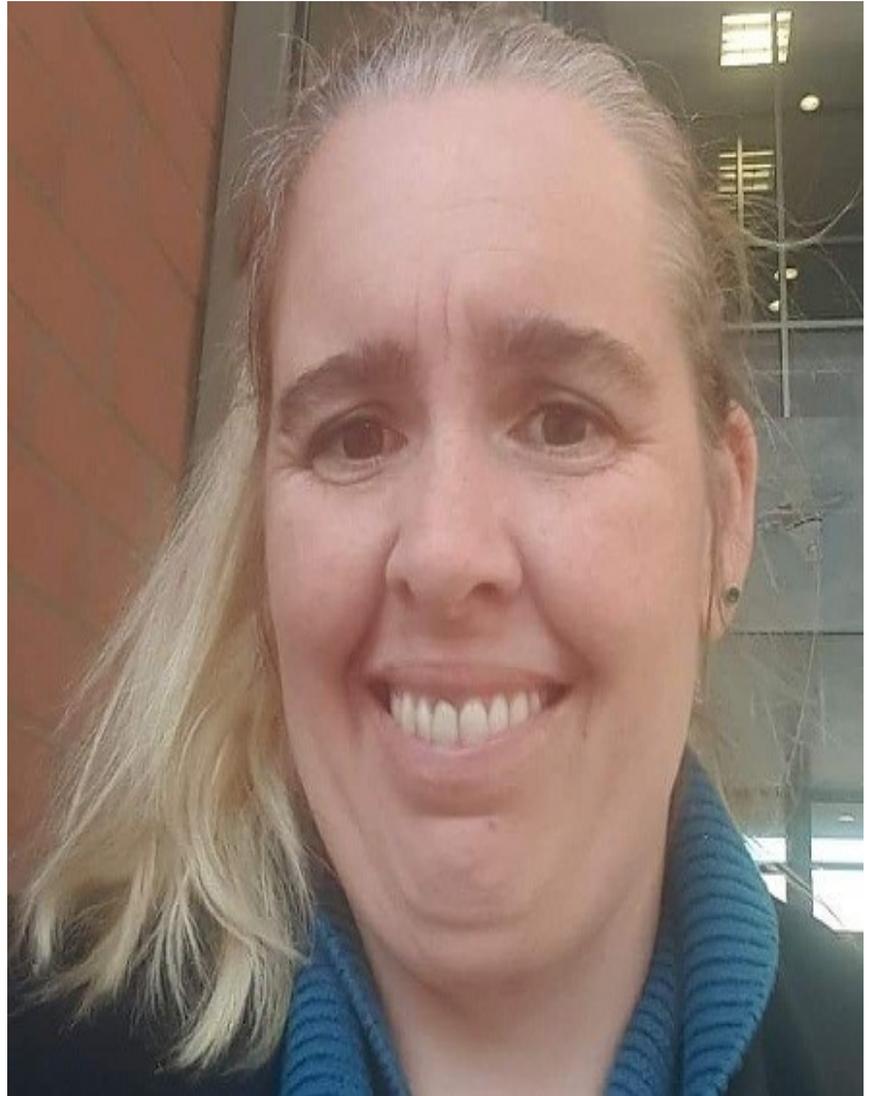


Christene:

A Positive Spirit at VMRC

By: Corina Ramirez

Positive. Hard-working. Uplifting. These are just a few words you can use to describe Christene Adams. Joining VMRC's Resource Development Department as an Office Aid in March 2017, Christene whizzes through her day like a seasoned pro & loves learning something new every day. "I never dreamed I would one day work for VMRC!" she says with a broad smile. Outside of work, she enjoys volunteering at the Moose Lodge, baking cupcakes & traveling to Vegas. Christene credits her beloved grandpa for teaching her to see the good in everything, while encouraging others to do the same. Because of this positive spirit, it's an absolute joy



to work alongside Christene. The Resource Development Department feels lucky to have her as part of their team!

VMRC's E.J. Edmerson, Employment Specialist was instrumental in assisting Christene.

A win/win for all!

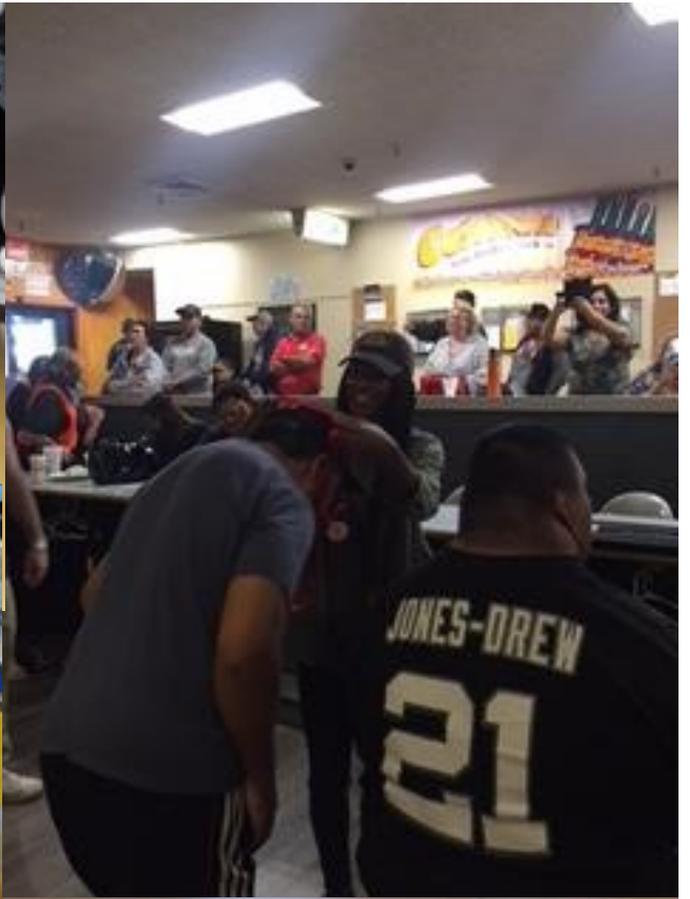


Many Winners in the NorCal Special Olympics Bowling Event

CVTC partnered with Special Olympics of Northern CA and participated in a bowling event that took place on November 7th. The consumers began practicing in mid September in preparation for the tournament.

It was a great success with athletes taking home different medals. They are seen proudly wearing their awards.





Person-Centered Commitment



Pictured are the VMRC Person-Centered trainers and coaches. All staff will participate in the training.

Person Centered Planning is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. In person centered planning, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. This "person-centered" team meets to identify opportunities for the focus person to develop personal relationships, participate in their community, increase control over their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities needed to achieve these goals. Person Centered Planning depends on the commitment of a team of individuals who care about the focus person. These individuals take action to make sure that the strategies discussed in planning team meetings are implemented. Purposes of the training include:

- *To look at an individual in a different way.*
- *To assist the focus person in gaining control over their own life.*
- *To increase opportunities for participation in the community.*
- *To recognize individual desires, interests, and dreams.*
- *Through team effort, develop a plan to turn dreams into reality.*

Self-Determination Progresses Forward

The California Department of Developmental Services is pleased to announce that on March 13, 2018, the Home and Community-Based Services Waiver application seeking federal funding for the Self-Determination Program was formally re-submitted to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). A copy of the Waiver application is available on the DDS website. CMS has 90 days to either approve the application, deny the application or request additional information. Because of all the work that's been done with CMS to prepare for this formal re-submission, everyone is hopeful the application will be approved soon. We will post updates regarding communications with CMS about the status of the application as well as progress toward implementation. Please visit <http://www.dds.ca.gov/SDP/SDPUpdates.cfm> or www.vmrc.net for updates.

OneNote Option is Powerful Tool

With fast-paced growing technologies nowadays, VMRC IT staff had an opportunity to attend OneNote training at the Microsoft Store in San Francisco. OneNote is a Microsoft program that is currently being used by many organizations.

The program helps you organize and keep track of records and documentation. It offers powerful features that can be very useful for our organization. According to our staff who attended It was definitely a good learning experience. According to IT staff Donna Sioson and Virakone Daranouvongs, “We are trying to get to know more of OneNote and will share it with all VMRC staff”.



IT staff Donna Sioson and Vira Daranouvongs, Angie Shear, Project Manager

Aaron's Success Story



At 8 yrs of age, Tracy resident Aaron McAllister asked his mother if he could go to the Boys and Girls Club. Ava McAllister wasn't sure her son would be accepted or welcomed by others due to his autism. He persisted and his mother finally relented, enrolling him into the club's Inclusion Program which is designed to provide support and assistance to children with specific, individual needs.

That was 12 years ago, and today Aaron is an employee at the club's Richard O. Hastie Clubhouse, as a mentor and role model for the youngsters with whom he works.

Kelly Wilson, the club's Executive Director said Aaron rode his bicycle or walked everyday to the club—rain or shine—to volunteer. He was rewarded with a job. Today he is somewhat of a celebrity at the club—where everyone knows his name.

Stockton Record excerpts

POS Disparity Meetings Held in VMRC Localities

VMRC recently held informational meetings regarding fiscal year 2016-17 purchase of service expenditures. Review and discussion of the current statistics on expenditure patterns occurred looking at ethnicity, language, age group, residence and other factors.

The meetings were scheduled as follows: 3/22—Modesto VMRC office, 2-3pm; 3/23—Stockton VMRC office, 10-11am; and 3/23—Calaveras County Library in San Andreas, 1:30-2:30pm.

Carlos Hernandez, VMRC's Cultural Specialist facilitated the public meetings and will prepare a summary of the public meetings to the Department of Developmental Services.



Public POS Disparity Meeting in the VMRC Stockton Office

Celebrating Social Worker Month



Transition Fairs Scheduled

VMRC, along with sponsors Self-Advocacy Council 6, SCDD, Family Resource Network, DRAIL, Fresno State, MJC, and Dept of Rehabilitation (DOR) will hold five (5) separate Transition Fairs in the near future. The schedule is as follows:

- ◆ April 18, 10am to 2pm—Stanislaus County—Modesto, VMRC Office
- ◆ April 25, 10am to 2pm—San Joaquin County—Stockton, VMRC Office
- ◆ May 9, 12noon to 2pm—Calaveras County—San Andreas, Calaveras Library
- ◆ May 10, 12noon to 2pm—Amador County—Jackson, Argonaut High School
- ◆ May 31, 12noon to 2pm—Tuolumne County—Sonora, Sonora High School

Free community resources and informational tables with ILS, day programs, and DOR vendors will be provided as will learning sessions comprised of Disability Resources, Wayfinders, San Joaquin Delta College, Modesto Junior College, DOR and VMRC Human Resources staff.

The events are planned for fun and good information about services available to those transition-age individuals.

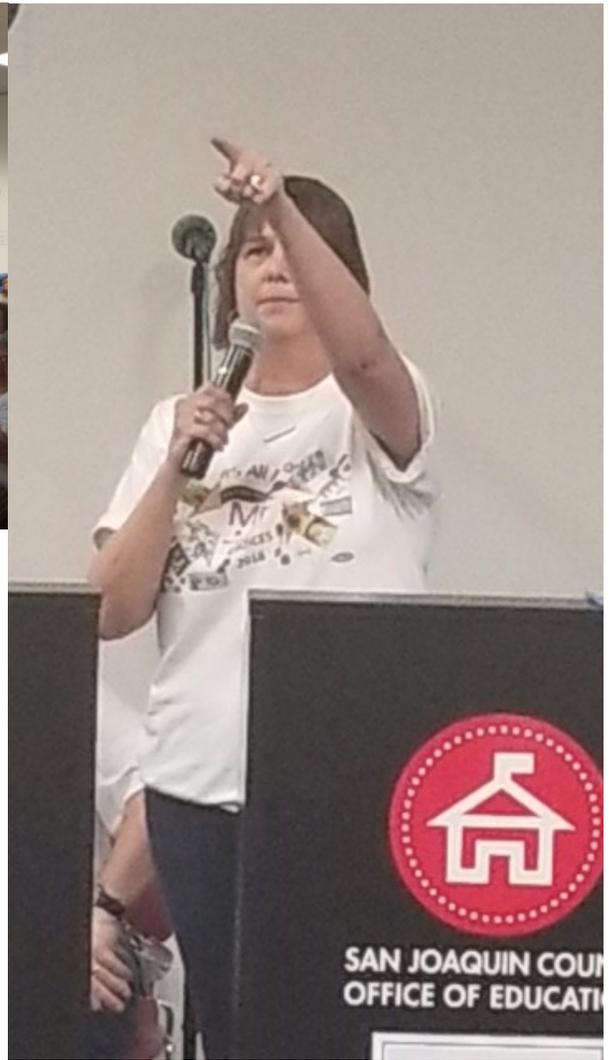
Grass Roots Day Successful

March 20 was Grass Roots Day at the state capitol. Representatives from VMRC's Legislative Committee comprised of staff and board members met with legislators to discuss budgetary concerns and advocacy efforts.

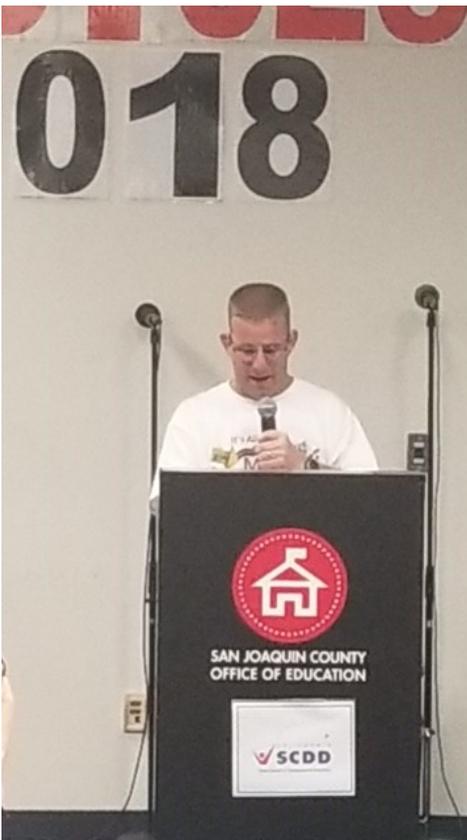
Pictured below left: Mohammed Rashid, Consumer Board Member; Angie Shear, VMRC Project Manager; Lynda Mendoza, Board Member; Candice Bright, CLASP Representative to the Board; and Anthony Hill, VMRC Legal Advisor.

Pictured below right: Mr. Rashid and California Assembly Member Heath Flora.





Choices 2018



The 31st Annual Choices Conference presented by the Choices Institute was held on April 6 at the San Joaquin County Office of Education. The theme this year was "It's All About ME!". The conference occurred 10am to 3pm with a Micro-Business Fair being held 8:30am to 1pm.

(continued on next page)





About 500 Choices participants received good information and according to Rayvonne Hamilton, "It's great to see individuals having so much fun". Wilma Murray, who has been involved in planning the event for many years said, "We have great volunteers who help make this day special".



And, many consumers helped make the conference a success. Katie Alcantara commented, "The Advocates were rockin' today". As always!

