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# Turning Point

NEWSLETTER

## It's time for full inclusion, says The Arc Breaking the Silence: LGBT Clients Get a New Voice



*Matthew Tree (l) and staff planning the new LGBT support group.*

Like many gay people who move to San Francisco, Matthew Tree left home to escape prejudice, abuse and a community that wouldn't give him a chance. As a person with autism, the road to a better life was difficult, but he took a leap

of faith back in 1999, making his way from Michigan to California on a Greyhound bus and arriving with little money, no family and few supports. Things got better when he connected with The Arc of San Francisco. He found work, an

apartment with other people with developmental disabilities, and for the first time began to feel good in his own skin. "I used to get letters from home saying there's something wrong with me—my mother said I'm under the devil's influence," says Matthew. "But I have a life here and I'm never going back—I have so much to do." Matthew may seem an unlikely force for change at The Arc. Soft-spoken and unfailingly polite, he is reluctant to say anything bad about anyone. But on the subject of helping clients speak up for themselves, he is fearless.

"I know I have the right to be who I am," he says. "Now I want other clients to be accepted for who they are—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. It's my goal to help other LGBTQ people with disabilities like me."

**Sex, choice and disability**

Coming out for any gay person is difficult. But for people with

*(Continued on page 3)*



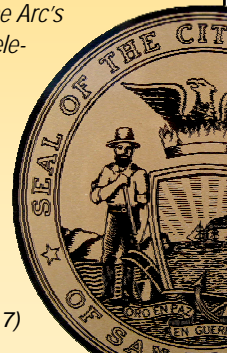
*The Supervisor next to his portrait by Artreach Studios' Tyrone Johnson.*

## City Supe Steps Up for People with Disabilities

*As Honorary Chair of Cirque de l'Arc, the event that launched The Arc's new LGBT initiative, Supervisor Bevan Dufty helped make our celebration of pride and disability a huge success. We asked the Supervisor about his response to the needs of this community.*

"I have to say, it was a revelation when we first spoke together about people with developmental disabilities coming out. I started to think about how hard it is under any circumstances...the homophobia, the threats. People with

*(Continued on page 7)*



# The Arc

OF SAN FRANCISCO

The Resource for People with  
Developmental Disabilities

## OUR MISSION

The mission of The Arc of San Francisco is to serve people with developmental disabilities by promoting self-determination, dignity and quality of life.

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## A Message from Timothy Hornbecker



**Timothy Hornbecker**  
Chief Executive Officer

### The Wealth of Diversity

*What Happens in San Francisco Today Happens in the World Tomorrow*, according to an old movie title. Our LGBT initiative is the first of its kind among any chapter of The Arc to reach out to people with disabilities who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. We're hoping The Arc of San Francisco's efforts on diversity will truly spread throughout the country.

Our recent "Cirque de l'Arc" celebration of pride and diversity was an exciting kickoff to our plans. In this issue of *Turning Point*, we hear how clients and staff are leading the charge to make us a more culturally competent and responsive organization (*cover story*).

We are serving the different needs of people with an amazing range of abilities, languages, cultural backgrounds, interests, and dreams. Group employ-

ment sites like the one at The Sequoias (p.6) provide a unique way to put more clients to work. New volunteer opportunities over at Wonder Dog Rescue (p.5) offer clients a way to give back and change the way our community thinks about disability.

Diversity equals a wealth of ideas and a richness of life experiences that is reflected in the accomplishments of our clients. Our very own Carmelite Buonaventura is the first person with developmental disabilities to be employed in a Mayor's office in California. First Lady Maria Shriver (p.4) noted that Carmelite's trailblazing sets an example for other Mayors across California who need to be a part of Shriver's "We Include" program.

Supporters like you make a huge impact on the lives of people with disabilities and their families. I ask that you continue to make an investment in our mission to affirm the rights and dignity of the clients we serve. Together, we are creating a brighter, more inclusive and diverse future for all of us.

Thank you for your support.

\* See Cirque event video and photos at [thearcsf.org](http://thearcsf.org).

## Disability Groups, Legislators Battle Over Budget

### PROTESTS ON THE PLAZA

Disability groups, seniors, students and families mobilized at the city's Civic Center in May to join the Budget Justice Coalition in their efforts to reconnect the city's budget to the needs of everyday people. "We can't settle for a 'cuts only' budget," said The Arc of San Francisco's Lolita Leanda (2nd from r. with client self-advocates).



San Francisco

### SURGE ON THE CAPITAL STEPS

The Governor's proposal to slash another \$48 million in supports for people with developmental disabilities has met with outrage by The Arc and other advocates. At Disability Action Day in Sacramento, advocates from The Arc urged legislators to reconsider. The one-day event in June garnered the support of Senator Leland Yee, D-SF (2nd from l.) who stated, "We will not balance the budget on the backs of people with disabilities."



Sacramento

## Breaking the Silence, *continued from page 1*

developmental disabilities, understanding their sexual orientation can be doubly confusing. Stereotypes (*'People with disabilities have SEX?'*), family pressures and a lack of information all keep people with disabilities from expressing who they are. But as The Arc has learned, almost any barrier—intellectual or otherwise—can be overcome with the right teaching tools and supports.

### Living in fear

"We know that many clients need help in this area of their lives," says The Arc's Skills Director Shelley McHugh. "There are individuals living in group homes who are afraid to come out; others suffering verbal abuse at home... this is just not acceptable. That's why we've reached out for help from the LGBT Center in San Francisco. We're adapting their suggestions to our staff trainings, client classes and our support systems," says McHugh. For example, The Arc's Healthy Relationships classes have expanded to include more dis-

cussions around stereotypes in the media, same-sex couples, and how to combat teasing. Plus, specialized referrals are planned for urgent legal needs or more personalized counseling around these issues. The result? "Empowerment," McHugh says emphatically. "That's what it's all about here."

### An historic first

This initiative is the first of its kind among any chapter of The Arc to reach out to gay people with disabilities, and supporters have been very encouraging. In fact, the most common question heard has been: 'Why hasn't this been done before?' The effort gained real traction with the public when The Arc hosted its recent "Cirque de l'Arc" event with Supervisor Bevan Dufty as Honorary Chair. Celebrating diversity, disability and pride, the fundraiser brought the city's gay, lesbian and developmental disability communities together to raise awareness, highlight common struggles and strengthen mutual support.

### No more silence

For Matthew Tree, it's just the beginning. His dream of co-facilitating a support group for clients will become a reality this summer. At a recent kickoff meeting, he came to the table armed with lots of ideas for success. "I want people who come to our group to know they are accepted," said Tree. "We can speak up and talk about anything—it's probably going to get emotional and I know we'll need some ground rules. But the most important thing is to let people know it's OK to be who you are. It's what's inside your heart that counts; that's all that really matters." □

*To find out more about LGBT staff trainings, client classes or our new support group, contact Shelley McHugh at: [smchugh@thearcsf.org](mailto:smchugh@thearcsf.org).*

#### HOW TO INTERRUPT PREJUDICED COMMENTS

1. "I'm sure you didn't mean to offend me, but you did, and let me tell you why..."
2. "I'm going to interrupt what you said because you just offended me."
3. "Where did you get that information?"

**Discussion Topic:**  
How are gays, lesbians, bisexuals portrayed in TV and other media (internet, radio, newspaper, ads)?



*Above:  
Discussion topics  
from The Arc's  
Healthy Relationships  
class, a 9-week series  
available to all clients.*

## There are stories we can't tell you.

Privacy prevents us from sharing the names of our clients suffering in silence:

- 'Sammy' whose brother calls him names because of his sexual orientation
- 'Denise' who isn't allowed to be alone with her partner
- 'Barry' who's afraid to get a job because he thinks he's too different

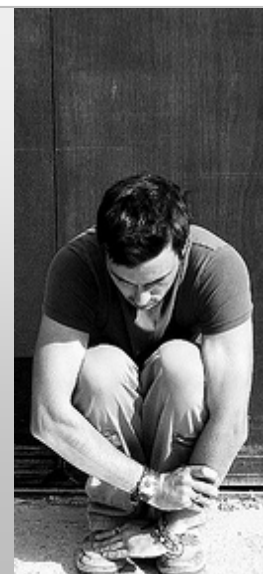
These are not big problems to solve. All that's required is time, resources and a commitment to help.

Your contributions make stories with better endings possible.

**Please donate today. [www.thearcsf.org](http://www.thearcsf.org)**

**The  
Arc**  
OF SAN FRANCISCO

*The Resource for People with  
Developmental Disabilities*



## Up Close with Clients in the News



### Dignitaries Honor Arc Client

Congratulations to **Carmelite Buonaventura** celebrating her 1-year anniversary as an employee in the Office of The Mayor.

California's First Lady Maria Shriver made a special trip to celebrate with Carmelite noting, "She is the first person with developmental disabilities to become a Mayor's Office employee in all of California. What an achievement!"

*Photo: (l-r) Hydra Mendoza from the Mayor's Office, job coach Nicole Eccles from The Arc, Mayor Gavin Newsom and First Lady Maria Shriver with Carmelite (front) at City Hall.*

**Briana Beker** (*below*) just moved into her new place in Park Merced and it's a welcome change. "There are no hills—I really don't like hills!" she told us. Our Household Recycling team stopped by with a kitchen table and chairs that are a perfect fit for her breakfast nook. "I think I can get used to this," she said.



Kudos to **Jennifer Villatore** (*above*) who received a promotion to Host at Denny's in Pacifica, saying goodbye to her old position as bus-person. Jennifer has been working at Denny's for many years and is a role model for other clients in our San Mateo County office.

### More Client Drama! EMERGENCY!

See what happens when band practice is interrupted by an earthquake! Follow our clients as they make their way to safety in this client-created docu-drama that shows us how to respond.

See video on our homepage: **"SPOTLIGHT"**  
[www.thearcssf.org](http://www.thearcssf.org)



### In Appreciation

*Above: Rob Repke and Steven Straus  
Right: Joseph Flanagan*

### Awards for Client Advocacy Committee Members

Three picked for outstanding leadership, service and advocacy

Honors were in abundance recently for three key members of The Arc's Client Advocacy Committee.

Rob Repke and Steven Straus were recognized by the state's Developmental Disabilities Board Area 5 for their outstanding service as community advocates.

Joseph Flanagan was awarded the Sandra Jensen Award by Disability Rights California and received a special acknowledgement from Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, D-SF. *Congratulations, gentlemen!*

See more photos from *Wonder Dog Rescue*. Become our Fan on **Facebook**.

## Rescue Dogs Teaching New Tricks

**R**emember the first time you held a puppy? The first time you walked a dog on a leash?

That feeling of joy and accomplishment is being experienced by clients of The Arc who volunteer at Wonder Dog Rescue, a nonprofit organization committed to rescuing, rehabilitating and re-homing dogs at risk of euthanasia because of shelter overcrowding, age or special needs.

"It's like dog heaven," says Anne Slater who volunteers her dog-walking services every week.

### Everyone wins

Anne's instructor, Lance Scott, is an experienced pet guardian who says there are mutual benefits for his clients and the animals they care for.

"The clients are learning what it means to be responsible for the care, safety and training of a dog," says Scott. "The dogs get personal attention; they're learning voice commands, how to walk with a leash and be with other dogs—it's great skills-building. And someone who saw us walking the dogs decided to adopt one for himself—what a nice outcome for all of us," he adds.

### Teaching each other

"I always wanted to make this a community place where our neighbors and friends help us in our work—it's good for everyone involved," says Wonder Dog owner Linda Beenau. Beenau ran the rescue in her home for many years before moving to her new storefront



Vadim Vaynshteyn and Anne Slater with new friends at Wonder Dog Rescue ([wonderdogrescue.org](http://wonderdogrescue.org)).

on Fillmore Street. "My goal is to have an environment of healing and growth for these rescue animals and the volunteers who care for them. We can all learn so much from each other—The Arc is testament to that," said Beenau.

## Young Volunteers are the New 'Pulse of The Arc'



Member of Pulse of The Arc with friends at "We Gotta Dance!"

**F**rom art shows and dances to happy-hour mixers and bowling, members of Pulse, a new volunteer group, are finding creative ways to get more people involved with The Arc.

The group first came together as supporters of "We Gotta Dance!" held monthly at our Howard Street location. "Volunteering at the dances is such a great experience, and

we knew a lot of our friends would love to be involved in something like that. We decided we'd make our group official, and 'Pulse of The Arc' was born," said Megan Petrich. Petrich is a family member of a person with disabilities and says the Pulse team wants to celebrate the abilities of everyone.

"Events like ours help people get to know The Arc better while raising funds for services the clients really need," says Petrich. "We'd love more people to join us."



For more about Pulse and upcoming events, visit [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org) > **Volunteers.**

Follow us on Facebook, too!



## Working with the Clean Team at The Sequoias

**T**he Sequoias Retirement Community is a life-care facility offering wide-ranging supports to its seniors. The Arc's laundry crew is part of a large housekeeping staff that maintains clean linen for over 300 residents. Denise March, The Sequoias' Housekeeping Manager, spoke with us about this valued team.

**Q.** How did The Arc get started with The Sequoias?

**A.** Our Human Resources Director knew people from The Arc and introduced us to the idea of hiring people with developmental disabilities. It was new to us, so we had an in-service training and tried to educate everyone here about their new co-workers. It was helpful; we were very comfortable when the clients began working for us.

*"The clients know their routine and they are eager to do their work—it's been great."*

**Q.** How long have clients from The Arc been in your department?

**A.** It's been over 10 years! I can't believe it's that long.



*The Sequoias' Housekeeping Manager Denise March (r) counts on her team from The Arc to stay on top of laundry for over 300 residents.*

**Q.** Can you tell us about the work they do for you?

**A.** It's mostly folding, stacking and storing the linen; all the bedding, towels, tablecloths, etc. There is a high volume of work to be done, but they are always on top of it.

**Q.** Are there advantages to working with a team of clients from The Arc?

**A.** I would say definitely. They stay, and they are very reliable—attendance is near perfect. If someone does get sick, the job coach arranges a substitute so I never have to

worry about the work getting done. They know their routine and they are eager to do their jobs. If I have any issues, I just talk with their Job Coach and we straighten things out.

**Q.** How do the clients fit in?

**A.** They are a part of the community. We take breaks, eat lunch and have birthday parties together. I think the clients add something to the diverse culture we have at The Sequoias. They've been here a long time and everyone knows them—even the residents. They fit in like family here.

### Why should I hire a client of The Arc? Here's 10 good reasons:

1. Employees with developmental disabilities are reliable and loyal
2. Lower turnover & higher retention
3. Less absenteeism which increases overall productivity
4. Wide range of competencies
5. Full, part-time & temp hires
6. No placement fees
7. Pre-screened applicants matched to your job specifications
8. On-site job support & coaching for new employees at no charge
9. Federal tax credits improve the bottom line
10. Builds morale, fosters diversity, creates positive business image

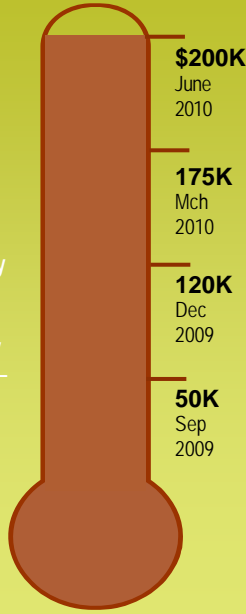
Contact Terry Goodwin at The Arc to learn more about hiring a client for your business: [tgoodwin@thearc.org](mailto:tgoodwin@thearc.org).

## Because of You, We Made our **\$200,000** Annual Goal

**2009/2010 Goal Report**

**How did we do it?**

With help from your personal gifts. The big ones, the monthly annual pledges & United Way donations—it all adds up for our clients.





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Your individual donations DO make a difference:

- Carlos smiles more because he found help to get a new job.
- Katy is the seniors' social butterfly again after her successful cataract surgery.
- Claudia has a new apartment with a room of her own—and a door that locks.

Your contributions create more opportunities for our clients and a better future for all of us.

***Thank you for all your support!***

### Supes Steps Up, *cont. from page 1*

developmental disabilities may not have the tools they need to speak up and protect themselves.

For me, it's the recognition that I can be an advocate for a part of our community that, until now, has been invisible. I'm a gay man that has access to opportunities, and I want that experience for everyone. The LGBT and disability communities have a great deal in common—the isolation and discrimination, the struggle for civil rights. People are living longer and need a culturally competent environment that supports a better quality of life. This is an issue that needs our attention and I'm very glad to be a part of the effort." □

### The Arc Rainbow Writers Group

Clients in The Arc's new Rainbow Writers Group are finding a whole new way of using their imaginations. Led by two staff who are both writers and strong advocates for creative expression, the weekly class meets to share ideas, log progress and get some healthy criticism from fellow writers. Progress has been fast and profusive.

"Communication for one of our clients is mostly non-verbal," says instructor Lindsay Clark. "You might not realize how inventive he is. But when he's in our class, he reads his story—aloud—and it's rich with incredible detail," she says.



The class runs 9 weeks and posts story progress online as they go.

"We're hoping we can put a book together at the end of the semester," says Clark. "Now we just need a publisher."

*Above: Connie Chu (r) reads her latest work. See more stories online at [arcrainbowwriters.blogspot.com](http://arcrainbowwriters.blogspot.com)*

## CALENDAR

### Events

*"Changing Visions" from Artists at ArtReach Studios*  
Opening Reception:  
Fri, June 25, 2010 7:00-9:00pm  
Show: June 25-July 18, 2010  
Fri, Sat and Sun 1:00-5:00pm  
Sanchez Art Gallery  
1220 Linda Mar Blvd.  
Pacifica, CA 94044  
(650) 355-1894  
Info: Nadol Pak, npak@thearc.org

*We Gotta Dance!*  
Fri, July 16, 2010  
Fri, August 20, 2010  
Fri, September 17, 2010  
7:00-9:00pm; \$1 Admission  
The Arc of San Francisco  
1500 Howard St., SF 94103  
Info: (415) 255-7200

*Let's Bowl!*  
Sponsored by  
Pulse of The Arc  
Sun, July 18, 2010  
Yerba Buena Ctr. Bowling  
750 Folsom, SF 94107  
Info: Jaiden Willats (415) 255-7200  
or jwillats@thearc.org

*Arc Angel Fundraising Breakfast*  
Fri, September 24, 2010  
Breakfast: 8:00am  
Program: 8:30-9:30am  
The City Club  
155 Sansome St. 11th fl., SF 94104  
Invitation only. RSVP to  
Jaiden Willats (415) 255-7200  
or jwillats@thearc.org

### Save The Date

*Self-Advocacy Conference*  
Wed, September 22, 2010  
State of California Bldg., SF

*WorkLife Awards*  
Thu, October 21, 2010  
The Arc of San Francisco

*Youth in Transition Open House*  
Thu, October 28, 2010  
The Arc of San Francisco



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