

EXCEPTIONAL TIMES

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2008



EPU

*The mission of
Exceptional
Parents
Unlimited
is to strengthen
and empower
children and
families facing
extraordinary
medical,
developmental,
and parenting
challenges.*

One “Starry Night” in November there was a sparkle of hope for a better tomorrow in the form of teens and young adults attending a winter formal dance. This was no ordinary dance; at this dance, teens and young adults with and without disabilities came together in a true peer event where judgmental thought and behavior was nowhere to be found. It was amazing to see 120 teens, young adults and chaperones in the same room dancing the night away, having a blast without any attitude other than respect, kindness, and genuine happiness for each other—all dressed up in formal attire. It was impressive.

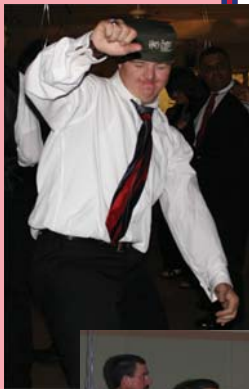
If you ask BeBe Perez of the Center for Independent Living (CIL), who works with EPU as a part of our *SOAR!* Program for teens and young adults with disabilities, what is happening with today’s youth? Her answer is inspiring and gives a different perspective on some very positive role models for the future of our community. Her efforts in collaborating with the youth leadership of the Police Activities League Service (PALS), has been exciting and transformative for the mentor volunteers as well as for our *SOAR!* teens. Though PALS is an acronym, these teens became real pals able to see through the eyes of hope what our *SOAR!* kids can accomplish even with disabilities. They saw an opportunity to be a part of inclusive relationships built on love and trust, building on a foundation of what a person

can do, not on what they cannot. This positive outlook makes this young group of tomorrows’ leaders a beacon of light for change in how society looks at and treats those who may be thought of as different. Each of us brings to life a uniqueness that should be valued and respected.

As these “typical” teens danced and interacted with teens with disabilities there was complete harmony of purpose. It was to make this night something to be

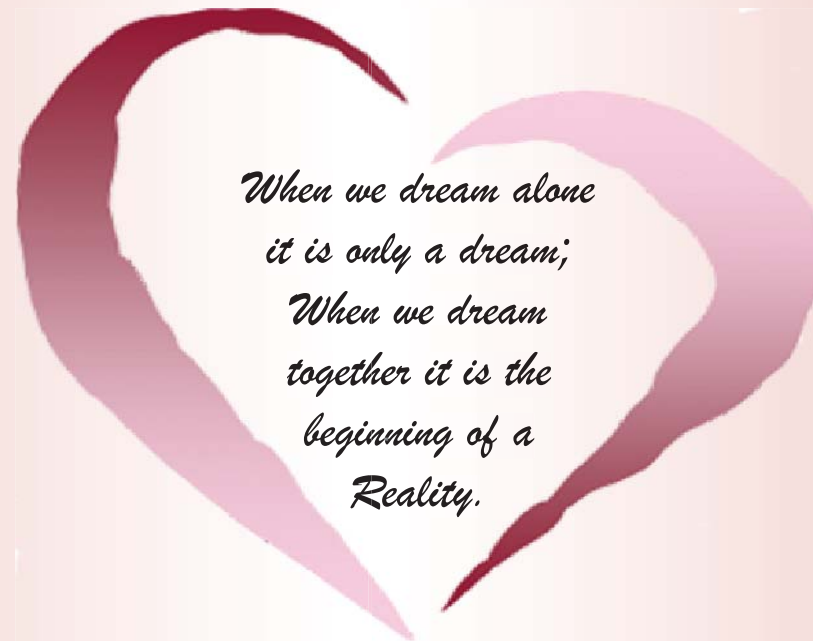
cherished and remembered by all who attended. The world needs more men and women like those in CIL and PALS who assure that as children with special needs grow into adulthood, these special relationships will enhance their lives through encouragement, affirming their best abilities, while giving them the tools to be more independent.

CIL and PALS continue to work closely with EPU’s *SOAR!* Program and have already asked to be a part of every event and mentorship program that takes place. It’s not just because they were asked, but it was the welcoming heart and spirit of our *SOAR!* teens that won them over along with their vision that every person has the right to contribute their voice for the betterment of our world.



SMART Model of Care

A Community Collaborates for Children



Screening

GOAL: All children 0-5 in Fresno County will be screened for physical, emotional, behavioral and learning problems using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire. (ASQ)

Partners: Parents
Pediatricians
Childcare Providers
Public Health Nurses
Child Welfare



Referral

GOAL: Once special needs are identified and a "Plan of Care" created, the Assessment Center staff will assist the family in finding appropriate resources to meet their needs and assure that a "warm hand off" will take place with the program providing treatment and or intervention.

Partners: Parents
Assessment Center for Children
Community providers



Decision Making

GOAL: Based upon results of the ASQ, a decision will be made regarding next steps: information to parents, anticipatory guidance or referral for in-depth assessment and early intervention.

Partners: Parents
Pediatricians
Public Health Nurses
Health Linkages Project
One Call for Kids



Model of Care Partner Oversight Committee

- Central Valley Regional Center
- Exceptional Parents Unlimited
- Families First
- First 5 Fresno County Children and Families Commission
- Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services
- Fresno County Department of Community Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health
- Fresno County Employment and Temporary Assistance
- Fresno Unified School District
- West Care

Assessment

GOAL: Children with developmental concerns will receive a comprehensive assessment by a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency team at the Assessment Center for Children located at EPU.

Partners: Parents
Exceptional Parents Unlimited
Department of Children & Families
Department of Maternal Child Health
Central Valley Regional Center
Fresno Unified School District



Treatment

GOAL: Treatment or intervention will be provided in the community in which the family feels most comfortable and which best meets the goals in the Plan of Care.

Partners: Parents
Mental Health Services Act Partners
Community wide providers of care



Heart to Heart

February 2008



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"Many hands make light work." This adage holds a great deal of wisdom, and no where is it truer than in the work we do here at EPU. For families in our programs there are often many hands reaching out to help. Helping families identify which hand to grasp is very important in our work. Another of EPU's major goals is to assure that these many hands work together to make magic happen for children and families.

In the human services arena we call it "collaboration," and it is talked about and promoted at every level. The reality is that working together is hard to do. Asking complicated and long established agencies to bend and mold their rules doesn't always work—especially when each agency feels that they can do it alone. Understanding the benefits that come from blending expertise and resources requires a great deal of trust that others can and will contribute to meeting the individual needs of a child or a family.

If you look closely, the word "col-**LABOR**-ation" has "labor" in the middle. When that "labor" becomes a labor of love things begin to work. In the past few years, there have been some exciting partnerships forged in our community that are making things easier for those with special needs. With ever dwindling resources, the hands that reach out to help must work together to break barriers and build trust.

I hope you will spend a few minutes looking at the "centerfold" of this newsletter which describes Fresno's "SMART" Model of Care. The SMART Model of Care is a unique and successful effort which involves many community partners working together for the benefit of children and families. EPU plays a central role in this exciting and unique collaboration. The SMART Model of Care is something Fresno can be genuinely proud of.

Marion M. Karian
Executive Director

Thank you!

In November 2007, EPU received a donation of \$250,000 from Peter and Angela Dal Pezzo. This is the largest donation EPU has ever received. It will be used to further our work with children and families. The trust that the Dal Pezzo's bestowed on EPU through this gift is extraordinary - and something we will work hard to live up to.



Ask Dr. Dana

Parents ask me all the time what they can do to stop a “bad” behavior. Actually, the more important question is “How do you get the child to START a better behavior.”



Research has shown that the most effective way to change a child’s behavior is by paying attention to and praising positive behaviors. As parents, most of us fall into the trap of “letting sleeping dogs lie.”

If your child is playing quietly by him/herself, or playing nicely with a sibling, parents tend to use that opportunity to get chores done, or have a time to relax. Unfortunately, we spring into action once our child is acting out or fighting. Most kids love their parents’ attention, even negative attention is better than no attention at all. If we continue to pay attention to the “bad” behavior and ignore the “good” behavior, guess what happens . . . our kids

tend to do more of whatever gets our attention. We are accidentally “rewarding” inappropriate behaviors! Instead, pay attention to when your child does something you like. Be specific with your praise, “Thank you for playing so nicely with your brother.” Nonspecific praise like, “good job” is ok, but does not let the child know exactly what you liked. Praise should outnumber scolding or other negative talk 5 to 1.

As an easy exercise, pick a behavior you wish your child would do more of. Put 10 pennies in your pocket. Every time you “catch” your child doing that behavior, praise your child and pull one penny out of your pocket. By the end of the day, your pocket should be empty. By the end of the week, you should notice your child doing more of that behavior! This is a way to keep you focused on the positive, and hopefully, your child will be smiling more, too.

Good luck! Dr. Dana Riley

Curious George comes to EPU



On October 23, 2007, through the sponsorship of Sun•Maid Growers of California, the Curious George character of PBS came to our Center to bring an animated time of reading, fun and laughter to our children with special needs.



Sun•Maid provided a book for every child who attended, the opportunity to have their picture taken and enjoy interaction with Curious

George. We truly appreciate the generosity of Sun•Maid for adding adventure and excitement to literacy for our families.

Holiday Open House

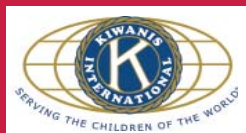
The Open House celebrating holidays from around the world on December 19, 2007, was once again a success. Our families and community members enjoyed food,



music and dance from cultures represented at our Center. The highlight is always the picture and visit with Santa which brings joy to our children. We want to take this opportunity to thank the East



Fresno Kiwanis Club for their part in bringing Santa and Mrs. Claus from the North Pole to EPU.



Our heartfelt thanks to our Circle of Friends in 2008

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"Friends in the Community"

In Memory of Florence Mazgedian

Ralph Cross, Jr.

In Memory of Natalie Thompson

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In Memory of Bill R. Willis

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Gifts offered "In Memory" and "In Honor" of someone have special meaning for EPU and the families we serve.

In Honor of Michael Beatty

Homer & Marceline Scott

In Honor of Joseph Cardoza

Johnny & Susan Cardoza

In Honor of Matt Devinney

Barbara Devinney

In Honor of Marianne Hackney

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Your contributions work wonders!

EPU is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible.

For your convenience, on-line donations are available through www.exceptionalparents.org

Yes! I would like to contribute to brighter futures for EPU children and families with a gift of: \$ _____

This gift is made : In memory of _____

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Enclosed is my check, or please charge my credit card:

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Please mail tax deductible contributions to:

Exceptional Parents Unlimited, Inc.
4440 North First Street
Fresno, California 93726

Save the Date!

18TH ANNUAL FIESTA IN THE PARK

June 28, 2008

Come join us for an evening of great food, lively music, auctions and dancing under the stars. Be on the lookout; your invitation will be in your mailbox at the end of May. We would love for you to consider sponsoring a table.

Give us a call at
559-229-2000 ext. 136.





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What's Inside:

- Winter Formal
- Heart to Heart
- Ask Dr. Dana
- Curious George
- Holiday Celebration
- SMART Model of Care
- Circle of Friends
- One-Call for Kids

One Call for Kids is one number to call when you need assistance in finding help for your child. You can speak with a knowledgeable professional and be guided toward the help that your child needs.

One Call for Kids is available to:

- parents
- physicians
- childcare providers

and others who have concerns about the learning, development, socialization or behavior of young children ages birth to five years of age.

One call to **(559) 225-1102**, will get you started.