



The GATE



Central
California
Mennonite
Residential
Services

September 2011

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF AKTION



Presidents Lewis Regier and Patrick Balakian

Anniversary Celebration

On May 20th, the Charis Community Aktion Club hosted a party to celebrate its tenth year of service. The club was chartered in 2002, two years after Aktion Clubs became an official Service Leadership Program of Kiwanis.

The East Fresno Kiwanis cook team prepared the food for the day, serving delicious tri-tip sandwiches, beans, and salad. For dessert, everyone shared in birthday cake.

The program focused on what the Charis club has meant from different perspectives. **Rachel Schellenberg** and **Karen Kyle** shared as members of the club. They both enjoyed being leaders in the club and helping with service projects. **Bobbie Coulbourne** interviewed member **Tasha Guimont** about how she started coming to the meetings. **Reva Guimont**, Tasha's mother, reflected on how Tasha resisted going to Aktion Club at first but now wants to be club

president. **Bobbie Coulbourne** shared a similar story about her grandson, **Nick Benson**, who was encouraged by Aktion Club to be more outgoing and to do community service. Finally, **Jen Foster** talked about how Aktion Club has blessed CCMRS by giving the residents a venue for service. She said that every single Aktion Club member has an opportunity to share their talent and love.

Bowl-a-thon Raises Funds

For ten years, the Charis Community Aktion Club has hosted a Bowl-a-thon fundraiser. This year, the Arc Aktion Club joined them in sponsoring the event. The Bowl-a-thon raised approximately \$2,400 for the two clubs.

Charis team took home the team trophy for a tenth year in a row, amidst stiff competition. All of the teams were within fifty six pins of each other, and Charis topped its nearest rival—the Gutter Ball Boys—by a mere five pins. Charis was led by **Susan Dahl**, whose combined two-game total was 236—putting her in third place overall.

Our own **Brian Sturgeon** won the spirit award for the Charis team. Anyone who has met Brian knows that he has a great attitude and encourages those around him.

Member Wins Speech Contest

In August, Rachel Schellenberg (Aktion Club past-president and resident at

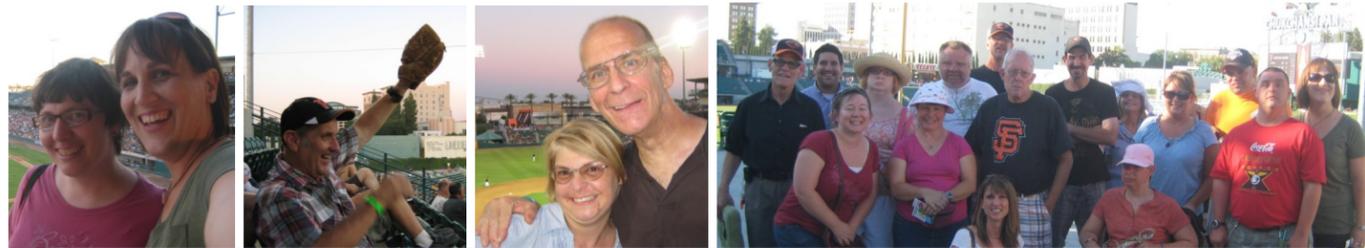


Hampton Way) had the opportunity to travel to San Diego to deliver a speech before the district Kiwanis convention. Her speech was selected from all submissions from Aktion Clubs within California, Nevada, and Hawai'i. The subject of her speech was "How being in Aktion Club makes me a leader in my community."

As the convention, Rachel's speech was mentioned by the district President, who praised her for her commitment to projects with international scope. You can view Rachel's speech for yourself by visiting <http://youtu.be/BYPauNrIWng>. That link can also be found on our Facebook page.

NO FALL DINNER?

Read about this year's *Non-Event* Fundraiser in Jen's "Director's Corner"



A group of residents, staff, former staff, and family members enjoyed the annual trip to the Fresno Grizzlies' "Faith and Family Night" in July.



Director's Corner

Change is in the air. Can you feel it? I wait in eagerly for the change of seasons. Part of my anticipation is based in fact – the seasons change every year as God designed according to the rotation of the earth. The other part of my anticipation is based in faith – a firm belief that with the calendar moving forward I will feel differently, have the opportunity to change my routine to include school activities for my sons, and work in my garden for longer hours, because while the mercury has yet to fall into my comfort zone I believe it will, and when it does it will make a difference in my life. Now I could go forward, day to day without thinking to the future, being fully present in the moment but not concerning myself about what is coming next. This would not be unbiblical since we are admonished by Christ not to worry about tomorrow. At the same time, I believe we are to wait eagerly for the Lord's return. Is this not the height of anticipation of what tomorrow brings?

In the same way the CCMRS board of directors and I must seek balance in leading CCMRS. We must maintain excellent daily operations and support services, while anticipating with eagerness what will come next. In light of this daily and future walk, we made a decision to refine our efforts in the areas donor cultivation and fundraising. Brace yourself – *this year we are not having a Fall Dinner*. Yes, you read that correctly. After many years of coming together in the fall to share a meal and celebrate what the Lord has been doing in our community we are doing something different. Our Advancement Committee—the group of tireless volunteers and board members who coordinate our fundraisers, newsletters, and seek to grow our constituency—is focused on learning and implementing a comprehensive model to guide our future efforts in these areas. While they study and plan we are going to take a break from the annual dinner.

Does this mean we are not fundraising? Absolutely not! CCMRS continues to rely heavily on the generosity of those who support our mission and our services with their generous financial gifts to keep our support communities going. In fact the need is greater than ever as we enter our third year of reduced funding from the Department of Developmental Services. In fact it is this ongoing decline in state funds that has prompted our board to look carefully at the future and to strategically reduce our dependence on these monies. Instead of gathering for a meal, we will hold a non-event fundraiser. You can expect a letter from me in the near future outlining the opportunities for coming alongside us in gifts of time,

donation of goods and services, and financial contributions. We even have a couple of opportunities for supporters to make a difference at CCMRS by simply shopping with companies that donate a percentage of sales to our organization. I don't know about you but I get excited about making a difference for the organizations I support without making a change to my budget, but more about that later.

**THIS YEAR WE ARE NOT HAVING A FALL DINNER.
DOES THIS MEAN WE ARE NOT FUNDRAISING?
ABSOLUTELY NOT.**

I anticipate the change to our model for cultivating significant relationships with supporters will raise some questions and perhaps even some concerns. Let me assure you right now that *this revision to our fundraising plan does not signal a problem*. We are simply taking a step back to evaluate our traditional modes and update our overall strategy. We want to be sure to give the utmost respect the time of our donors, to meet your needs for swift and relevant communication. We want to clearly show how your gifts make a significant difference in the lives of the residents we serve both now and in the future. This process of evaluation simply takes concentrated time and effort and so we need a break from the usual activities to allow us to concentrate on this change. We are also recognizing that while we have appreciated the opportunity to enjoy a meal with some of you and to share face to face about who we are, what we do and why we exist, most of our supporters do not attend our fall dinner. Less than forty percent of the funds raised in relation to the annual come from those who attend. This fact, coupled with the expense of the event itself have led us to believe that we will be able with a *non-event* to raise a similar, if not greater dollar amount, without incurring the expense of the meal, while we take a step back to reformulate our plans for the future.

(continued on next page...)

WISH LIST

- Office chairs for Huntington House
- Plants: banana palms, queen palms, date palms, and amaryllis
- Volunteers to help...
 - paint the common apartments.
 - work on the HH bathrooms and bedrooms.
 - make a digital scrapbook from our photos.
 - organize the tool shed.

THANK YOU TO...

- an anonymous donor who gave a composter.
- a stealthy green-thumb who added plants to the community garden.
- Ken and Carol Franzen for an upright freezer.
- Cheryl from Snapp's Service Center for garden tools.
- David Dyck for a washing machine.

Find "The Gate" on our the CCMRS Facebook Page.



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I hope you will join us in praying for the Advancement Committee as they engage in this important work. I also hope you will continue to support CCMRS by participating in our *Non-Event Fall Fundraiser* with the generosity you have faithfully shown in the past. Without your help we would be unable to continue to experience the mighty work of God in sharing His love with those who participate in our support communities. If you are really disappointed to not be invited to dinner this fall, please know that I would love to share a meal with you, get to know you better, and tell you what amazing things the Lord has done in our midst in the past year. Please, call the office (227-2940), or email me (ccmrsjf@sbcglobal.net), and we'll set a time to gather around a table and celebrate with anticipation all the wonderful things our good God has done and what we are anticipating in the next season at CCMRS.



STAFF TRANSITION HONORED

The CCMRS community gathered at Friendship Park on June 24th to celebrate transitions of two staff members.

After two years, **Hunter Raburn** has left CCMRS. With his wife Christa, and his two-year-old daughter Alli, he is taking a job as a pastor in Michigan. Hunter worked individually with all of the men residents in the supported living program as a Resident Advocate. This job entailed assisting and instructing the men in social skills, shopping, household duties, and a variety of additional responsibilities.

Hunter was interested in the spiritual life of the men. Several joined him regularly on Sundays to attend Beyond Sunday Church, a group ministry which he was instrumental in starting.

Ben Jacobs also completed two-years with CCMRS; he served as a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker. MVS offers volunteer workers to organizations for one or two years of service. One of Ben's gifts to CCMRS was serving as a "jack of all trades." He graduated with a BA in English from Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana. His parents live in Goshen. He has two brothers who are attending university.

The good news for CCMRS is that Ben will continue his work on a part-time basis. The good news for Ben is his recent engagement to Holly Pipkin of Fresno and his new job as a programmer for Central Valley Software Solutions. He attends Mennonite Community Church in Fresno.

WE ARE CONNECTED

Some organizations prefer to "go it alone," to avoid connections with other groups or agencies, fearing that these might interfere or impede. Not so with CCMRS. Since its inception and over the years it has sought, developed, and nurtured connections from which it has gained many benefits.



West Coast Mennonite Central Committee (WCMCC)

When CCMRS began in the 1980s its leaders established an affiliation with the west coast region of MCC. The WCMCC Developmental Disabilities Committee is committed to linking disability ministries to one another and to families in their regions who experience developmental disabilities. Throughout the last 25 years, WCMCC has mentored the organization and provided funds for capacity building and networking.

Central Valley Regional Center



When the decision was made to develop several supportive care programs in Fresno, the obvious need was for a funding base. CVRC is a private nonprofit corporation funded by the State of California. As a result of the Lanterman Act of 1969, a number of centers were established across the state to provide case management and fund services for persons with developmental disabilities. Most of our residents are clients of the regional center, and we work closely with case managers in implementing each person's support plan.



Mennonite Health Services Alliance

MHS Alliance is a national agency headquartered in Goshen, Indiana, which offers its services to the health and disability care providers in the various Anabaptist denominations. Among the benefits of participating in the alliance are networking with agencies who share similar values, leadership training, and consulting services. It assists in sponsoring an annual assembly, which the CCMRS executive director attends.

Other organizations

In addition, CCMRS also has informal connections with *East Fresno Kiwanis Club*, which sponsors the Aktion Club (see the article on "Aktion Club Updates"). *Mennonite Voluntary Service* occasionally provides persons to fill staff positions for a year or two. Most recently, Ben Jacobs was a MVS volunteer to serve as staff. The social work department at *Fresno Pacific University* provides interns and short-term volunteers, and the education department uses CCMRS as a model for delivering support services.

Please consider a tax-deductable contribution. CCMRS depends upon the generosity of those who support its mission. *Thank you.*



**Central California Mennonite
Residential Services**
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If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, it means someone has given you the gift of getting to know CCMRS. You may contact the main office at 559-227-2940 with any questions you may have.

Experiencing God's love in community...

RACING TO SAVE LIVES



If you've been to Woodward Park recently, you might have noticed a familiar face in a group of joggers. **Amy Datsko**—who has been on the CCMRS staff for over a year—is running on the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS) Team in Training. They will be running in the San Francisco Marathon on October 16th.

Amy writes “in light of recurring news of friends and church family members being diagnosed with cancer, I realized that Team in Training is a phenomenal opportunity not only to help financially, but raise awareness and pray for the many lives affected. Another personal goal is that through this training experience, God will be honored as I learn discipline and endurance in running the race (literally).”

In addition to training, Amy has been raising funds to put toward the eradication of blood cancers. With the help of other CCMRS staff, she ran a booth at the Huntington Boulevard mile-long yard sale. At that event, she raised just over **\$760**.

If you're interested in learning more about Amy's race or in donating toward her cause, please visit her online at <http://pages.teamintraining.org/cca/nikesf11/adatsko>.

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