



REGIONAL SELF ADVOCACY

NEWSLETTER

SONOMA * NAPA * SOLANO

DECEMBER 2012

A Role Model for Independence

Toni Marie is radiant, confident, insightful, and fun-loving. She wants people to know that she can do all kinds of things by herself, and she wants to help other people who have disabilities learn to be independent like she is.



I asked Toni Marie what she wants people to know about her. She said, "I'm beautiful. I'm smart. I use my feet for everything. I use my left foot to type computers. I

do a lot of stuff. I make my bed, brush my teeth, change sheets, clean my room, the whole thing. I fold clothes. I write my name on a slip. I talk on the phone, I dial it myself."

Can you tell me about your job? "I do shredding. I use the internet. I want to help other people. I try to help people like me."

What do you like to do for fun? "I like to work. I make a lot of money."

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Living with Anxiety

By Jimmy Lee Marks



Living with anxiety is hard. Anxiety is where your thoughts take over your body. You get uncontrollable shaking and very fast breathing, which leads to more thoughts. The thoughts I get feel like I'm going to die, because I can't breathe.

Public transportation and people's behavior and verbal abuse are some of my triggers. People constantly criticizing my actions and trying to put me down makes anxiety worse.

Anxiety is misunderstood. Sometime people think we should just be tougher and 'get over it.' When others try to pass off their negativity to us it affects us even more. It makes us feel even more fragile.

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“I’m proud of this right here”



Richard does a lot of interesting things....he makes jewelry, he volunteers with his program, he’s a poll worker on election day. We talked about some of his activities:

“I like making jewelry. I’ve been doing it a few years. There’s 5 of us. I’m the only man. We make earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. We vote about what to do with the money we earn. We decided to go to The Cheesecake Factory. I had steak and cheesecake. It was good.”

Richard sells his jewelry at the Benicia Peddler’s Fair, NBRC’s Holiday Craft Fair, The Arc Solano’s Open House, and at the Opportunity Fair at Sonoma Developmental Center.



At The Arc Solano, Richard sometimes works answering phones. He’s on the Board of Directors at The Arc. Richard also goes to resource fairs and other events to tell people about The Arc.

Richard recently moved to a new place. “I live in my own apartment. I moved to Vallejo to be closer to my mom.” I asked Richard what he likes about living in his own apartment. He said, “I like cooking. I made beef stew last night.”

But wait, there’s more: “I’ve been a poll worker off and on for 4-5 yrs. I work from 6:00 (in the morning) to 9:00 (at night). I get paid for it. My job is to hand out the ballots. My favorite part

of being a poll worker is seeing all the people come in to vote. I see a bunch of neighbors. It’s exciting to be part of an election. I like general elections best because there’s lots of people.”

With all of his accomplishments, I asked Richard what he’s most proud of. He said, “I’m proud of this right here (The Arc).” He likes all the responsibilities he’s been given and all the opportunities he has at The Arc.

When I asked him what would make his life even better, Richard said, “Having a home of my own. I’d like to have a place that I could paint, or redecorate, or have a pet, a place that I can call my own.”



Giving & Receiving Support

I met with Liz during her lunch break at Solano Diversified Services in Vallejo. Liz loves going to SDS and she loves working. Liz said, "I want a job. I want to earn my money. I don't want to just take P&I money." Liz said she wants a job through SDS. She doesn't ever want to leave SDS to work somewhere else. She said if anything ever happened to SDS, she'd "go down with the ship."

Liz has close friends at SDS, like Adam, Kathy, Virginia and Sheryl. Liz says they're her family. "Having good friends helps me to do new things. They seem to have confidence in me. When I do it, I'm not so scared. Adam helped me learn to do computer games."

Liz helps at Meals on Wheels. "I deliver food and Adam delivers with me. Kathy does food in back, Danny does the clipboard, and Sheryl drives. It's like one big system. We couldn't do it without each other. Sometimes we make mistakes. But Sheryl always lets us fix it. Even if I get in hot water. Sometimes I get boiled." (As you can see, Liz has a great sense of humor).

In her free time Liz likes to go shopping and out for coffee with friends.

She said, "Talking with Kathy is like therapy."

Liz is dedicated to helping people. She pushes herself to try things that are scary. In April she went to an advocacy conference in Stockton, even though at first she was afraid. "New situations are scary. I was worried I'd have to talk and I didn't know what to say. I'm glad I went. I learned a lot and I met Vallerie. I hope to get together with her in December for coffee."



In September Liz introduced speakers at the regional self advocacy meeting. She was worried about doing it, but she did a great job. I asked Liz why she pushes herself to do things that are scary for her. She said, "I just want to help people. I couldn't do it without Virginia and Sheryl. They always say, 'You can do it.' They have faith in me."

As President of the advocacy group at SDS Liz says her role is to, "Pick people to talk, think of new things to do, learn. I believe everyone should go to advocacy. We all have problems. We have stuff in common. And we can all learn."

Liz is an inspirational leader. She looks for ways to help others and she values the people who are in her life.

Jimmy (continued from page 1)

Our feelings can be affected by others' actions and words. It is hard because we already feel like we are isolated from society before this happens. Anxiety has made me largely antisocial, because I'm so tired of others targeting me.



When I've needed support with transportation, some people have treated me like I'm lazy because I can't take busses. Or they insist that if I'm 'travel-trained', I'll be able to use busses. I can easily learn a bus route; I can't stop the anxiety. Why can't people understand the difference? Why do I have to explain it again and again and they still don't get it?

Anxiety has physical as well as mental consequences. I have ended up in hospital because of anxiety. It is not all in my head. This is a misconception. It's real.

My cat makes me feel better, but sometimes I have to take special medication to stop it. What can you do to support someone who deals with anxiety? Understand that it's real. Believe what the person says and treat the person with respect. Give people the support they say they need. When you minimize their anxiety and its impact on their life, you're making it harder and you're being disrespectful.

Join us for the next

Regional Self Advocacy Meeting!

Thursday, January 24, 2013 ~ 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
NBRC Conference Room, 25 Executive Court, Napa

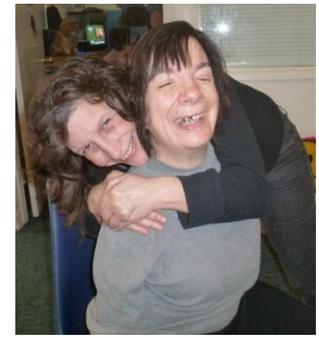
>>Daniel Meadows from Disability Rights California will tell us about services and supports to get and keep jobs.

>>A group of people who have their own small businesses will tell us about how they got started, the support they receive, and what it's like being a business owner. We'll also hear about a program that will loan money to people to start their own businesses.

If you have any questions, or to RSVP, contact
Randy Kitch, North Bay Regional Center, 707-256-1162, randyk@nbrc.net or
Cindy Ruder, Area Board 4, 707-953-8403, cindy.ruder@scdd.ca.gov

TONI MARIE (continued from page 1)

We (Loree and Toni Marie) went to a Japanese restaurant. We went out with a friend. I had shrimp tempura, miso soup, green beans. I liked it.”



Toni Marie talked about using computers. She likes to search for stories and information about people who don't have arms. “Tim (Pace staff) showed me a guy with no arms. He played piano with his feet. It was so awesome. I play piano at home but not like that. I like seeing people with no arms on the computer.”

Tim walked by and Toni Marie said, “Tim helps me out if I have a problem. He's a good person. Sometimes he drives me crazy.” Tim, do you have anything to say about Toni Marie? “She's very competitive when it comes to word searches (Tim laughed, Toni Marie looked shocked). She loses her mind around attractive men (both of them laughed).” Umm, anything else? “She's a hoot.”

What are your dreams? “I want a house. I want a dog. A collie. And I want to help people.”

The piano player who Toni Marie mentioned is Liu Wei, who was on China's Got Talent. He is awesome! (So is Toni Marie.)

What is Advocacy?

“Advocacy” can mean many things, but in general, it refers to taking action. There are several types of action that a person can take:

* Self Advocacy is speaking up and taking action to make your life better.

Examples: “R” is trying to become his own payee, and “J” is looking for work.

* Peer Advocacy is speaking up and taking action to help someone else. Example: Andy helped his friend with his supported living services, and Liz said her friends wanted to learn about SSI.

* Systems Advocacy is speaking up and taking action to influence legislators and other policymakers to help groups of people. Examples: OADS advocates went to Sacramento to talk to their legislators, SDS and WineBev advocates wrote to their legislators, and Stephanie got onto a board of directors.

(adapted from Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy, [Advocacy Training Manual](#))

Comments from the September 2012 Regional Self Advocacy Meeting

What was the best part of the meeting?

- *Hearing about the visit to Ed Roberts
 - *Getting information on voting
 - *Presentations *Rights
- *When she was talking about slavery because you really didn't know that
 - *The video made me tear up
- *I loved the participation and presentations from different groups *Speaking up!
 - *Hearing what others have to say
 - *Ed Roberts Campus
 - *The visit to Ed Roberts Campus

What would have made the meeting better?

- *Couldn't be better than what it was
 - *More participation
- *Maybe sit in a circle to face each other
 - *Room warmer *More speakers

What would you like to see happen at the next meeting?

- *I can't wait for it! *Finding more jobs
 - *Work *More than 2 pieces of pizza
- *Everything was great! *I want to work
- *Turkey sandwiches like last time *Different kinds of housing
- *Jobs *Medical benefits *Social security
- *Finding more jobs *Jobs and money *Look for more jobs *Job training

Thanks for your feedback! The next Regional Self Advocacy meeting will have speakers about jobs, and we'll have turkey roll-ups for lunch. If your group would like to have trainings on any of the other topics (like SSI or housing) just contact Area Board 4 & we'll set it up.



Updates from Advocates

What does your advocacy group talk about?

- *Politics *Social security
- *Letter-writing *Being a self advocate

What would you like to learn more about?

- *North Bay Regional Center
- *Transportation issues *Privacy
- *History of self advocacy

What are advocates in your group proud of?

- *My accomplishments of public speaking and representing the community
 - *Living on my own
- *Making choices and decisions
 - *We wrote letter to our legislators!

Anything else you want to tell everyone?

- *We don't have an advocacy group. We're going to start one. (Yay!)