

Setting Sails



A Quarterly Publication For Friends And Consumers

Spring 2009

Message from SAILS' Executive Director: Kitty L. Brietzke, J.D.

“ Making the Most in Tough Economic Times”

Every time we turn on the television set or listen to the news we seem to be reminded of the state of our nation's economy. With that stated, we all are also formulating our own assessments of how this affects us. How will we cope?

Many folks are concerned about retaining their jobs, being able to make mortgage payments, having enough food to last until the end of each month and so forth. Many people have already lost their jobs and homes. So, what should one really do during these difficult times? What happens if you are a person who has a disability or there is a family member who has a disability?

San Antonio is a community of caring and support. Many organizations such as San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) are partnering to share important information about valuable resources that are available to assist consumers with their emergency and basic needs. We are here to help those in need to “make the most in tough economic times.” Please contact SAILS at V/TDD (210)281-1878 and ask for one of my staff who can provide Information and Referral assistance.

SAILS is the only federally-designated independent living center in San Antonio serving consumers in Bexar County and twenty-seven additional counties. Staff provides core services of independent living skills training, advocacy, information and referrals and peer support. SAILS staff also helps persons with specialized telecommunications and adaptive equipment and persons who are homeless and awaiting their Social Security disability by providing bus passes and vouchers (limited numbers and eligibility requirements must be met). We also offer support groups to help persons with disabilities with Life Skills, coping and other topics. With all of this, we still find the time to have fun by bringing the community together through our community projects and annual picnic! (See articles in this newsletter). So, let's hang in there throughout these tough days and work to make things a little easier and brighter for all!



Dr. Kitty L. Brietzke, in front of SAILS Office
in San Antonio



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SAILS Consumer Success Stories



Success Story

submitted by Sandie Flanagan
and Rodger Bahrke

When I came in contact with SAILS, it was through the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DARS). I had just lost the place where I was staying and was living on the streets. I asked SAILS staff for some help. Sandie Flanagan, Gloria Aguirre and a volunteer named Jack suggested several ways to help. With their guidance, I set goals that were attainable. The priority was to get me into a shelter and off the street. I went to the Salvation Army first and when I couldn't pay the fees; I went to the Rescue Mission.

The next goal was to help me find a job and a way to earn my independence. The staff at SAILS encouraged me to develop my resume and to seek the help of Texas Workforce Center in locating a job. Part of the effort also included helping me set up a residence. This was something I needed, believe it or not, in order to receive a new hearing aid. SAILS established a voice mail for me and allowed me use their address as a residence to continue to receive messages and mail. This went on all while I was seeking job opportunities through Texas Workforce Center and SAILS.

One of the job prospects was with a company called Training, Rehabilitation, and Development Institute (TRDI). Sandie helped me contact them and permitted them to fax an application to me. I completed it and was interviewed shortly thereafter. I felt very confident about my interview.

SAILS staff provided encouragement and continued to provide me job leads. They never gave up hope that my situation would change for the better (I was always given the most positive attitude-always looking on the bright side). I was encouraged to seek various ways of helping my situation (I applied for Food Stamps and acquired a "Carelink" card for medical help). Both of these I obtained. On Sept 18, 2008, the offices of TRDI called and asked me to come and meet with them about a job opportunity. The end result was that I was successful in obtaining the job!

None of the above would have been possible if SAILS had not allowed me to come in several times a week and check my voicemail

and mail. They graciously put up with me in order to support me and help me put the best effort forward. I also achieved another goal-locating a permanent residence! Anybody needing help to find a place to live or find a job should contact SAILS. The staff has a positive attitude and can really help with positive results!



Albert J. Pulido

A Very Good Year

Albert J. Pulido

To quote the Frank Sinatra song "It was a very good year" and in 2008, a very exciting year for myself and Bruce Orey. We had a change in our job description and a title change. We are now "Community Work Incentive Coordinators" (CWICs) and we now work only with persons with disabilities who are already working or actively looking for work.

In 2008 we spoke to 1791 people who inquired about working or returning back to work. Also, in 2007 we helped 426 people to decide to either return to work or increase their work hours by explaining all of the Social Security rules and regulations concerning working while disabled or blind. We also worked with 156 people who are disabled/blind. We provided services helping them to determine how many hours they could work or how much money they could earn and still retain some or all of their benefits and keep either Medicare or Medicaid. Many of them wanted to know how long they could keep their benefits.

This year, 2009 should be even better; because we will have two full time employees working as CWICs. In addition, to working one on one with people wanting to go to work, we also spoke to various groups about the changes in Social Security. We put extra time working with the "Transitional Students", that is the disabled student who exits or graduates from High School and transitioning into the work force.

Recently, SAILS attended the first W.I.S.E. Meeting (Work Incentive seminar), which also consisted of representatives from SSA, various representatives from the Alamo Work Source, Dept. of Assistive Resources Services, Service Employment Redevelopment of San Antonio, S.A.I.L.S. two C.W.I.C. and about 40 people with various disabilities seeking employment. Please don't hesitate to contact Albert Pulido or Bruce Orey for any questions about employment if you are receiving your Social Security benefits.



Mrs. Molina is SAILS Volunteer of the Year

SAILS Volunteer Luncheon

by Sandie Flanagan



Andy and his Roadway team receive recognition for their volunteerism as an organization

SAILS' 4th Annual Volunteer Luncheon was the best ever! On November 14, 2008, we all gathered at the Texas Land and Cattle Restaurant to recognize our volunteers for their service to SAILS. The 4th Annual Volunteer of the Year award was awarded to Hortensia Molina who has been involved as a volunteer for several years. This year was the first year for Organization of the Year award and that award was presented to Roadway of San Antonio. The award was presented to them for being such an active volunteer group especially at our annual SAILS Annual Picnic. We are also very grateful for our sponsors this year, Valero, Amerigroup, Superior, and Allstate Insurance Company. Thank you all for making this event a day to remember. If you or anyone you know would like to volunteer, please contact SAILS' Volunteer Coordinator Sandie Flanagan at 210-281-1878.



Sandie Flanagan gives Carol Villarreal from AmeriGroup her certificate. AmeriGroup is a great supporter of SAILS

Access Housing Volunteer, Jack Bentley

submitted by Gloria Banik



Jack Bentley

As Jack was surveying apartments for the Access Housing Project, he discovered that every recently developed subsidized property has a specific number of units set aside for people with disabilities. Most of these properties' first floor units are also basically accessible, with wide doors and minimum-standard bathrooms and kitchens. With these newer properties, accessibility is not the problem. However, these low-income, tax-credited units have their monthly rent set at around \$500 for a one bedroom apartment. This may seem low by most standards, but for people with disabilities living solely on SSI at \$637 a month, it is impossible to afford. Additionally, most of these properties have very few one bedroom units available, but they have several multiple-bedroom units available.

Jack thought about the fact that he was able to live in a market-rate apartment simply because he had found a roommate before moving to San Antonio. Noticing how many SAILS consumers are living on SSI, he thought that if there could be a way to encourage and assist SAILS consumers in the process of finding a compatible roommate, many people who live on that fixed income would have an easier time locating and affording an apartment.

In addition to the obvious economic benefit of making rental expenses less burdensome to consumers living on SSI, finding a compatible roommate would be a positive and encouraging challenge to many people with disabilities who may not be accustomed to a relationship with their community. Once people are matched, they could work together on their own to locate an apartment. Bringing people together to look for an apartment and learn to share a living space would be a great way to encourage not only independence, but also social skills essential to a spirit of inclusive community integration.

He presented the idea to the leaders of the Access Housing Project at United Cerebral Palsy in Austin, and they resolved to launch the project in the form of a roommate matching database which would provide a matching service to address the specific concerns of the disability community. The Roommates Project will be a great service for the consumers at SAILS and all of the other Access Housing sites throughout Texas. Stay tuned for more news as the project develops.



Calendar Dates for February, March, & April

February: *American Heart Month *Library Lovers Month *National Black History Month *National Cancer Prevention Month *National Children's Dental Health Month and *National Wise Health Consumer Month

- 6- Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) meeting 1-2
Support Groups: People w/ Disabilities & Family Members Groups 2-4pm
- 7- VITA Super Saturday Event @ Claude Black Community Center Foundation Fighting Blindness @ SA Marriott NW
- 11- SAILS Board Meeting 6pm
- 12- GAP Workshop
- 16- President's Day/Holiday
- 19- DARS CHIRP Meeting 2pm
- 20- ADA Meeting at SAILS 10:00am-11:00a.m.
- 25- Transportation Workshop 9:30a.m-11:30a.m.
- 26- Life Skills Support Group

February, 2009						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

March: *American Red Cross Month *National Nutrition Month *National Women's History Month *National Kidney Month

- 3- Teleconference CHIRP
- 6- People with Disabilities & Family Members Support Groups
- 7- Southside High School Fair
- 8-10- Texas State IL Conference, Austin, Texas
- 12- Tx Worksource Center Job Fair in Victoria
- 14- Low Vision Expo @ Colonial Hills United Methodist
- 18- Young People's Support Group
- 20- ADA meeting @ Goodwill Industries
- 25- Transitional Workshop
- 26- Life Skills Support Group

March, 2009						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

April: *Celebrate Diversity Month *Stress Awareness Month

- 1- Community Action Advisory Board mtg @ SAILS 5:30pm
- 3- 2 Support Groups (same as above)
- 5 & 6- CTD Convention in Austin, Tx
- 7- Northside Activity Center Special Education Presentation
- 10- Good Friday-Holiday
- 15- SAILS Board Meeting
- 17- In-Service CPR- SAILS Closed
- 20- ADA Meeting @ 1:30p.m.
- 21- Comal ISD Special Education, Canyon HS in New Braunfels
- 22- Workshop on Assistive Technology 9-11am
- 23- Emergency Training—Shelters Webcast
- 24- Fiesta Holiday
- 25- King William Fair & SAILS Fundraiser
- 30- Emergency Training—FEMA Webcast

April, 2009						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9



13th Annual Anglers on Wheels

Anglers on Wheels is an annual accessible event enjoyed by fishing enthusiasts who have disabilities, and their family and friends. The Island Queen II is a 65-foot converted ferry that is wheelchair accessible and deck hands are available to help with bait and tackle free of charge. Texas Parks and Wildlife provides free fishing licenses for event participants.

All participants along with their family and friends are welcome to a free barbecue on Saturday night May 16th at the PortAransas Pavilion along with great music. SAILS' staff and family members attend and assist with cooking and serving for the event. The fishing event is hosted annually by the Door in the Wall Organization.

Plan now to join in the fun in Port Aransas. Reservations are required. For more information contact SAILS at 210-281-1878.



Last year's catch!

STAP Success Story

Lori Crownover

As I look back on my first year with the Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP), I remember many success stories, challenges and learning experiences. I also remember meeting so many wonderful people who have applied for services. They have been an inspiration to me because of their continued perseverance in tough times.



Lori Crownover

This past fall, I visited Mr. Richard Nesman, a gentleman with a hearing impairment who lives in a very remote rural area in the Texas Hill country. Mr. Nesman had been without phone service for over a year! He had a specialized phone acquired through STAP, however, he was having difficulty with his phone service. During my visit, I discovered Mr. Nesman is a very talented artist. He enjoys drawing western themes and applying them to leather crafts. He showed me some of his crafts and explained how therapeutic his artwork is for him. After my visit, I contacted the local phone service and we determined that there was a technical problem with his line and a worker was able to repair it. He also needed a new adaptor for his special phone. After solving these difficulties, I am happy to say Mr. Nesman's phone is working! He still needs to practice using the statewide relay service for the hearing impaired, but I am confident that he will have no problem mastering this and we will be available to help him if he needs more training.

I will continue to provide outreach presentations to the community about STAP services so we can locate those individuals who are in need of specialized telephone equipment. We hope to serve as many people as possible in the coming year! Please contact me for any questions or assistance.

From the desk of Ricardo V. Rivas, EA – SAILS Accountant

Hello everyone, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our countless supporters throughout SAILS' history in San Antonio. During the last 28 years SAILS has provided our community with hope and the ability for numerous members of our City to live independently. We have been able to do this through government and local grants and the generosity of your support. Although we are going through rough economic times, it is now when organizations like SAILS needs your support the most. We want to ask our supporters to please help us not only stay economically strong, but to increase our services to the community by sending any financial support or volunteers for our projects. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your generous gift; we will also send a receipt for you to be able to deduct this donation on your next tax return. Together we can make a difference!

Thank you, and God Bless You.



A Very Special Farewell and Welcome Too!

from SAILS Board & staff



Board Chair
Lon D. Oakley
served two terms



Board Vice Chair Carol
Kelly
served two terms

SAILS Board of Directors and staff extend the warmest of thanks to our former, long-standing Board Chair, Lon D. Oakley, Jr. and Vice Chair, Carol Kelly. Lon served two terms: July 2004 through June 2006 and July 2006 with an extension through February 11, 2009. Carol Kelly also served two terms: October 2003 through September 2005 and October 2005 with an extension through February 11, 2009. Both Board members went "above and beyond," to assist SAILS with their time, talent and donations. SAILS Board and staff say, "Farewell, not goodbye." We all hope to continue to gain from their valuable expertise when needed in the future.



Board Member
Lou Ann Williams
served two terms

SAILS will also retire another very loyal Board member, Lou Ann Williams. She is retiring at the April Board meeting. Lou Ann was always very generous in her service to SAILS. She also served two terms: December 2004 through November 2006. December 2006 with an extension through April 2009.

Now, we welcome and congratulate the new Board Chair, Frann Wright and new Vice Chair, Andy Galan! Frann and Andy have both served on the SAILS Board since November 2007. SAILS appreciates their continued dedication to serve as part of the governing body and to help in our mission to help people with disabilities live more independently. Again, thanks to all.

Communication In the Court for People Who Are Deaf

by Norma Jean J. Ek

I was my own lawyer in court. I have significant hearing loss and have two hearing aids. I requested a real-time captioning but was turned down by the judge. In court the lawyer was shouting in my ear "she can hear fine there is nothing wrong with her hearing." The judge said only in criminal court you are allowed a translator and not in his court. He told me further "I would have to obtain a translator and pay the cost." I said "but your honor there are laws." He overrode me and said he refused to discuss this with anyone. "No translators in his court." He did set a new date for court in a week.

I wrote a motion to the court for a real time captioning communication access realtime translator. I enclosed a letter from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and a copy of my audiologic evaluation.

"Deaf and Hard of Hearing have a right to communicate effectively and to participate in proceeding and activities conducted by state and local courts. Specifically they are entitled to have courts provide and pay for auxillary aids and services to enable them to understand and be understood. Their right is based on a federal law." Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) #42 U.S.C. 6612131-12134

The law applies to any type of court proceeding in any type of state or local court, including civil, criminal, traffic, small claims, domestic relations, juvenile, etc. It also applies to other activities conducted by court systems. Know your rights!

2008 Christmas Party

December 12, 2008 SAILS Support Groups and the Consumer Advisory Group had a wonderful holiday party. Everyone brought food to share and gifts to exchange. We played bingo and had a ball. If you haven't had the opportunity to get involved with one of the four support groups then now is the time. SAILS provides the "Persons with disabilities group" and "Family members" meetings on the first Friday of each month at the Villa O'Keefe community room from 2-4 p.m. We also have the "Young people's support group" at SAILS on the 3rd Wednesday each month from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. The facilitator is Gloria Aguirre. Finally, we have the "Life Skills for Successful Living" on the 4th Thursday at SAILS from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The facilitator is Terry Bates.



Taxpayers with Disabilities Served at VITA Super Saturday



Mr. and Mrs. Thompson take advantage of free tax return

Fifty-two-year-old Ollie Thompson and his wife were among crowds of families who showed up at the Claude Black Community Center to file their tax returns for free during the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Super Saturday event on Saturday, February 7th. Ollie, along with fellow deaf/hard-of hearing taxpayers at the event, took advantage of sign-language interpreter assistance sponsored by San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) and the Texas Interpreters Fellowship. "I've had my taxes prepared before through VITA," Ollie said through 51-year-old interpreter Sergio Gonzalez. "It's been a good experience. I appreciate the free service a lot." "We serve as intermediaries," Sergio explained. "A deaf taxpayer may sign a question or response to me, and I'll express that in words to the tax preparer."

An estimated 250 participants attended the free event, which was sponsored by the National Disability Institute (NDI), the Antioch Community Transformation Network (ACTN), the City of San Antonio and the Real Economic Impact (REI) Tour. Community agencies, local businesses and disability resource organizations provided free information to families, including the Alamo Service Connection, Wells Fargo, VIA, Deaf Interpreter Services, Inc., Bank of America, S.A. Lighthouse, San Antonio Food Bank, Workforce Solutions Alamo and Taxpayer Advocate Services.

SAILS Hosts VITA Site

SAILS is happy to announce we are a host organization for the City of San Antonio's Department of Community Initiatives (DCI) volunteer income tax assistance program (VITA). The days and hours of operation are:

Tuesday 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Thursday 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Friday 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Please call 210-281-1878 for information. If you need special accommodations please let us know when you make your appointment.

SAILS Mayfest Picnic 2009

SAILS invites everyone to join staff and volunteers on Sunday, May 3, 2009 from 10:00a.m. to 3:00p.m. at Mission County Park, 6030 Padre Drive for our Mayfest Picnic. This year's picnic will include many exciting activities for children such as a fishing pond with prizes, a bean bag toss game, face painting, a moonbounce, and live entertainment! There will also be community booths and a silent auction. Brisket and sausage BBQ plates (yes, a two-meat plate!) are available for a \$5.00 donation, drink included. Pre-orders are encouraged. For more information please contact Mallika Rangarajan at 210-281-1878 extension 19. SAILS wishes to extend a very special thanks in advance to AmeriGroup for their continued sponsorship and support for this event. SAILS welcomes additional sponsors for this event to defray costs



Medea's turn at the SAILS Fishing Pond

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Sandie Flanagan	I&R/ Volunteer Coordinator	Bruce Orey	CWIC
Casey Hamilton	IL Peer Support Specialist	Lori Crownover	IL/STAP Specialist
Albert Pulido	CWIC		

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However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the DOE or the DARS and you should not assume endorsement by local, state, or federal government.

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