

JUDY: A Client's Story

By Kristine Engels, CEO, LSF So. Calif. Adult Services Affiliate



Judy came to Life Steps Foundation (LSF) twelve years ago from a social services agency that was closing. She had been living in an apartment with a roommate, but it did not work out. Prior to that her experiences were confined to survival in group homes and institutions. Life had been filled with many cruel and extraordinary challenges for Judy, who lives with developmental disabilities.

When Judy came into our world, she had aggressive behaviors, did not know how to live independently, and had never been introduced to the routine tasks and social etiquette of mainstream adult life. Banking, cleaning her home, cooking, grocery shopping, keeping a budget, and just being nice to people around her who wanted to help were all new to Judy. The fact was that Judy was a 47 year old woman who had been told what to do all of her life. In helping Judy to thrive and improve the quality of her life, we realized that we couldn't expect her to know how to manage what we take for granted.

Judy cares for Seaside Learning Center aquarium.

I will not try to sugar coat what happened in the next few years as my So. California Adult Services team and I began to help Judy navigate through everyday activities. It was not easy. For example, she would become frustrated and sit down in the middle of the bank and refuse to leave. Of course, this caused quite a disturbance in the bank. At the grocery store she could not get along with shoppers or staff. Judy had trouble on the street, calling people names as we walked with her. But very slowly Judy started to come around. Eventually, she no longer would sit on the bank floor or fight with customers at the super market.

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WHAT ARE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DDs)?

Developmental disabilities (or "DD") is a broad category of often lifelong disabilities that can be intellectual, physical, or both. Developmental disabilities can also impact a person's emotional development. The term "intellectual and developmental disabilities" (or "IDD") is often used to describe situations in which intellectual disability and other disabilities, such as mal-adaptive behaviors, are present.

Down's syndrome, autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), cerebral palsy, and Fragile X syndrome are examples of IDD's related to problems with the nervous system. They can also be sensory in nature, affecting sight, hearing, senses of smell and touch (e.g. being touched or held can be difficult for people with ASDs.) DDs can also be metabolic, affecting how the body breaks down food during digestion, which can also impact brain function.

Most developmental disabilities begin before a baby is born, however, they can occur any time before a child turns 18.

The causes of DDs can include a complex mix of factors -- genetics; parental health and behaviors (such as smoking and drinking) during pregnancy; complications during birth;

infections the mother might have during pregnancy or the baby might have very early in life; and exposure of the mother or child to high levels of environmental toxins, such as lead. For some developmental disabilities, such as fetal alcohol syndrome caused by drinking alcohol during pregnancy, we know the cause. But for most cases, the cause is unknown.

Having a disability does not mean a person is not healthy, cannot be healthy, or positively contribute meaningfully to society or their local community. Being healthy means the same thing for all of us—getting and staying well so we can lead full, active lives and realize our own personal potentials. That includes having the tools and information to make healthy choices and knowing how to prevent illness.

Life Steps Foundation is committed to helping people with developmental disabilities to improve their quality of life and achieve greater independence.

Sources:

NIH: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Medlineplus.org;
CDC; and American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

FRONTLINE Q&A

**InStep Interviews Lisa Tapia, program manager,
LSF Central California Adult Services Affiliate**

Q: What types of developmental disabilities do your clients experience?

A: Our individuals experience various physical and cognitive developmental disabilities. The majority of our cases at this time involve cerebral palsy and intellectual developmental disorder. In addition, many of our individual cases experience concurrently a mental health disorder and other medical health problems. We tend to see depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia along with diabetes, high blood pressure, and seizure disorder.

Q: What types of in-home services does the Central California Adult Services Affiliate provide?

A: We provide assistance for individuals to benefit from living in their own home environment and community. Personal care, meal preparation, eating assistance, light cleaning, medication monitoring, safety and mobility assistance, shopping assistance, social support, and medical appointments.

Q: Do you have other services in addition to in-home care?

A: In addition to in-home care, we provide training and habilitation services that empower individuals to gain skills and training to be as independent and self-sufficient as they are able to be, based on their person-centered plan. Examples include: budgeting, pre-employment, housing, mobility, community safety, seeking natural and community supports, parenting supports, sexuality, healthy living, nutrition, and/ or household management. We are working to build residential homes for the elderly and disabled population, with our most recent project - Orcutt House.

PROFILES IN VOLUNTEERISM

Meet Life Steps Volunteer David Blackshear

I grew up in Ohio. Presently I live not far from the Life Steps Foundation's (LSF's) Culver City headquarters, in Inglewood, CA.

I've been doing volunteer work with the Life Steps Foundation for 8 months. Prior to volunteering with them, most of my career life was in administration and customer service.

I first learned about the LSF organization through SER Jobs for Progress - a program that helps seniors 55 years of age and older learn new skills to compete in today's job market.

All of my volunteer projects have been with the LSF Corporate Support office. I enjoy doing research for their Human Resources Department. Volunteering with them has given me the opportunity to practice important workplace skills.

I have found that the most valuable assets one can bring to any volunteer effort are a willingness to do whatever is needed and a positive attitude.

LSF is proud to recognize David Blackshear for his dedication, hard work and passion as a volunteer in support of our non-profit mission. We thank him for his contributions.

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities with the Life Steps Foundation, please visit contact our Human Resources Department at (310) 410-9012 or sdavis@lifestepsfoundation.org.



Meet Social Dynamics Client and Award Winner A.Z.!

Social Dynamics staff recently awarded their client whom we call A.Z. as a **"Star of the Month."** People who know A.Z. say that she is very friendly and has a remarkable memory. "She will recall past employees and peers," said Social Dynamics Supervisor Eloisa Palomaria. "She will even talk to staff about their family members, and ask about them by their first names." She is known to be remarkably independent in all areas of daily living and very helpful towards staff and her peers.

In particular, A.Z. enjoys cleaning, helping others around the center, conversing with staff and watching Michael Jackson music videos. According to Palomaria, "Her maladaptive behaviors are becoming stable and less significant. In fact, visitors will often mistake her for a staff person!" Congratulations, A.Z.!

Social Dynamics is a center-based day program for adults with developmental disabilities, including moderate to severe behavioral challenges. Located in Burlingame, it is a program of the Life Steps No. California Adult Services unit.



SANTA MARIA WISDOM CENTER SETS SIGHTS ON RELOCATION AND EXPANSION TO HELP MEET GROWING NEEDS FOR ELDER POPULATION



Like the rest of the U.S., the population of the Central Coast is aging. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, Census figures for Santa Barbara County, alone, show a 15% increase in the number of residents over 60 years of age. Many depend on family members for their care, but require somewhere to go during the day when family members are working.

Our Santa Maria Wisdom Center is the ONLY licensed, CBAS (Community-Based Adult Services) facility in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties to offer adult day care along with nursing oversight/health monitoring capabilities. We offer a variety of health and social services as well as planned therapeutic and rehabilitative activities. The program is designed to serve the specialized needs of adults with physical and/or mental challenges who are at risk of long-term care placement. More than 75% of our participants are low-income CenCal recipients. Those who are under VA contract are needy as well.

LIFE STEPS' SANTA MARIA WISDOM CENTER IS TAKING ACTION!

Given the critical and growing need for adult day health care services on the Central Coast, the Life Steps Foundation has chosen to take a proactive stance, identifying a new location for the expansion of our Santa Maria Wisdom Center's CBAS program in the Santa Maria area. We are now preparing to construct a larger 7,000+ square foot facility that will allow us to accommodate nearly twice the daily capacity of people we currently serve. Today, we serve 55 participants per day. The new center will be able to serve up to 100 people per day.

To help fund the construction project, the Life Steps Foundation is embarking on a significant capital campaign initiative. We are now actively seeking support for the project from foundations and individuals who have an interest and stake in addressing the needs of the low-income aging population of California's Central Coast. We look forward to sharing our progress as we turn our dreams into reality.

Learn more about our construction plans, progress and our capital campaign; contact us at development@lifestepsfoundation.org.

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I became Judy's preferred shopper. Every May and October I would take Judy to the mall to shop for clothes and then take her out to dinner. Going out to dinner was initially an ordeal because Judy would eat everything as fast as she could. It became clear that she did this to guard her food because in the group homes and institutions, she felt she needed to protect her food so no one would take it away from her. After twelve years, Judy still does things that are a holdover from her days before arriving at LSF. But she has improved, and all you need to do is ask her and she will tell you all of her improvements.

Judy is still sometimes insecure and afraid that the people who assist her might leave her. She also wipes out the entire sink and surrounding areas every time they are used. I found out that was her job in the group homes and institutions. But today Judy is living independently. She pays her bills every month on time.

Today Judy is living a life that no one believed she would ever live. She came from institutions where she had been abused, and was living in an apartment which was less than stellar. She had nowhere to turn. Thank goodness the Harbor Regional Center stepped in and made major changes, and got her to LSF for help.

If you could see or visit her now, you would not believe she is the same person from twelve years ago. Not only can she manage her own home, but last year she voted in a public election for the first time. She has gone on many trips outside of Long Beach, participating in our Seaside Learning Center day program. Judy even helped the Center obtain an aquarium tank and all the equipment, and even helped pick out the fish. Her life is rich in ways she wants it to be. No longer is everyone telling Judy what and how to do everything. All of us at LSF are proud of Judy and what she has accomplished.

"Today Judy is living a life that no one believed she would ever live."

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NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Santa Maria Speedway Sponsors LSF CCAS



Santa Maria Speedway sponsored the LifeSteps/Central California Adult Services (LSF - CCAS) community outreach exhibit at the April 26th CDCR/WSDCA Nationals, one of its most popular races of the year. The Santa Maria Noontimers Lions Club generously donated 50% of their raffle proceeds from the day's race to support the programs and services of the LSF CCAS. Albertson's sponsored bakery goods, and Sign Craft donated custom banner signage for the booth. Life Steps thanks all of our Speedway event partners for their support!

We Play We Learn Preschool Turns One



On June 27th, from 1 to 3p.m., Life Steps' Northern California Children and Family Services will break out the party festivities to celebrate the One Year Anniversary of its "We Play We Learn" inclusion-based preschool program in the community of Pacifica! Open to the public with RSVP, free of charge. Bring your little ones along! RSVP by email: weplaywelearn@lifestepsfoundation.org



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STEPPING UP FOR CALIFORNIANS OF ALL AGES WHO LIVE WITH DISABILITIES

From time to time, all of us need help taking some of the more challenging steps in life. At Life Steps, we help those with the greatest challenges by giving them training, skills and confidence to achieve greater independence and realize their personal potentials. In today's economy, your support is more urgent than ever.

Please consider joining our Life Steps Community with a donation. Visit our website www.lifestepsfoundation.org and click on the "Donate" button today! Your name will be recognized on our Life Changer list of donors. Thank you for your support.



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OUR MISSION

Life Steps Foundation, Inc., is a fiscally responsible, culturally competent organization dedicated to meeting the health, psychological, and socioeconomic challenges of people throughout their life span. The individuals we serve are impacted by cognitive, developmental or physical disabilities.