



Little People of America

Sacramento / San Joaquin

www.lpaonline.org

Valley News

May Newsletter

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President's Message

The 2009 Spring Regional Meeting for District 12, hosted by the Orange Blossom Chapter, was held in Costa Mesa California, April 3-5. Some 250 attended the event with many first timers in attendance. One of the most interesting was an LP woman, in her sixties, who had no previous contact with LPA. She recently had some health issues and was planning to see one of the specialist doctors for a reading of her MRI. She was a delight to talk with and share experiences. We never know when folks may decide to contact LPA. In the case of this woman the first contact did not happen until she was sixty.

The District 12 membership meeting was held on Saturday. Chapter Presidents gave a short presentation about their planned activities. I extended an invitation to the District to schedule the 2009 Fall District Meeting in Sacramento and the invitation was accepted. I noted that planning for the event has begun and the Chapter is looking forward to hosting this event. The site for the Fall Regional will be at the Red Lion Hotel in Sacramento and is scheduled for October 2- 4, 2009.

**President's message continued
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2009 Calendar

June 7th: Land Park/Zoo –
Sacramento, CA – hosted by the
Okenfuss Family

**July 4th-10th: LPA National
Convention**, Marriot Hotel,
Brooklyn, NY

**August TBA: Mission Oaks
Park –** Carmichael, CA

**October 2nd-4th: District 12 Fall
Regional**, Red Lion Hotel,
Sacramento, CA

October TBA: Pumpkin Patch,
Stockton, CA

December TBA: Holiday Party,
Roseville, CA



Picnic at Land Park
Sunday June 7th, 12-4 pm
William Land Park – 16th Ave., Sacramento, CA
 Hosts: Dan & Ericka Okenfuss, 916-397-6915

Come join us for an afternoon in the park. We have a large picnic/BBQ area reserved in close proximity to the family fun areas of William Land Park – Fairytale Town, the Sacramento Zoo and Funderland.

We will start with a potluck/BBQ. The chapter will provide the meat to BBQ, buns, and condiments.

Please bring a pot luck item to share:

A-I Salads & side dishes

J-Q Desserts

R-Z Drinks (soda, water, juice boxes, lemonade, etc) with ice & coolers

We will bring balls and other outdoor toys. Please feel free to bring additional ones for the kids.

Families should plan to visit one of the three fun areas that are very close to our picnic spot.

Fairytale Town <http://www.fairytaletown.org/>

Sacramento Zoo <http://www.saczo.com/>

Funderland <http://www.funderlandpark.com/>

Directions

From North of Sacramento on I-5 South: Exit Sutterville Rd and turn left. Left on Land Park Dr. Right on 16th Street.

From South of Sacramento on I-5 North: Exit Sutterville Rd and turn right. Left on Land Park Dr. Right on 16th Street.

From South of Sacramento on 99 North: Exit 12th Ave and turn left. Left on Freeport Blvd. Right on Sutterville Dr. Right on Land Park Dr. Right on 16th Street.

From NE of Sacramento on Capitol City freeway/Business 80: Take 99 South. Exit 12th Ave and turn right. Left on Freeport Blvd. Right on Sutterville Dr. Right on Land Park Dr. Right on 16th Street.

From West of Sacramento via I-80: Take I-80 East toward Sacramento. Take Capitol City Freeway/US-50 East toward Sacramento/South Lake Tahoe. Take I-5 South toward Los Angeles. Exit Sutterville Road (first exit) and turn left. Left on Land Park Drive. Right on 16th St.

From East of Sacramento via Hwy 50: Take Hwy 50 toward Sacramento. Take I-5 South toward Los Angeles. Exit Sutterville Road (first exit) and turn left. Left on Land Park Drive. Right on 16th St.

Note: Parking fills up early and is not very close so you may want to bring strollers for the younger kids.

This is going to be a First 5 of Sacramento funded event – more details to follow on Socializr invite



We have reserved Group Area 9 (GA9) on 16th Ave.



Talking About Inclusion

By – Laura Dawn Bridges

“This is my son Arlo when he was 18 months old. He was born with the most common type of dwarfism.” Arlo’s adorable toddler image elicits a chorus of “aahhhs” across the room. Even though I don’t want to promote the “cuteness” stereotype for people with short stature, I don’t mind capitalizing on the cuteness effect to make a point about the benefits of including young children with special needs in *early care settings* (that’s the new buzz word for child care and preschool). My presentation is a series of photos in powerpoint that help me tell the story of Arlo’s birth, diagnosis, medical interventions, social challenges and his evolution into manhood. No one seems to mind that he is now 25 years old. My old story about being a parent of a son with dwarfism is still an important one.

Little did I know when Arlo was born how much my life would be blessed and enriched by him. He was an easy, delightful child to raise. Even more surprising is how much his birth navigated a specialty in my career that proved to be a great boon.

He was born a week after finals week as I was in my final year in a bachelors program at the University of Oregon in...Religious Studies. Ok. So this major wasn’t a great choice in terms of predicting a good future career, but I found it personally fascinating to explore. While finishing my bachelor’s degree and still nursing a baby, I decided to apply for my Masters in Early Intervention. Taking classes in child development and early intervention topics allowed me to explore how to be the best mommy I could be to this baby.

At first, I enrolled Arlo in the Early Intervention toddler program at the university. When I switched my major to Curriculum & Instruction with an emphasis in child development my second year, Arlo followed me and enrolled into the University Lab Preschool for the Child Development Department where he was fully included. He was more included than I knew was even possible. The preschool staff invited his peers to help figure out how to accommodate him in the classroom. One day he came rolling into the classroom in a red wagon, freshly out of a recent surgery and unable to walk. The teachers asked the children, “How can we get him up close to the snack table so he can eat snack with us?” The children suggested putting an art board across the top of his wagon to serve as his own private snack table while he parked next to the snack table. The children were all too eager to take turns serving him snack. Then the children discovered that his red wagon made for great pretend play as a fire truck. They pulled Arlo around the room, letting him be the fire fighter putting out fires everywhere. Following the lead of the children, the teachers turned the drama corner into a fire station to support the play.

Over time, wherever I worked, in parent education, teaching at a variety of community colleges, universities and running child care resource and referral programs and so on, I always found myself standing on that same soapbox to declare the urgent importance of making sure infants, toddlers and young children are fully included in early care programs. The more I found myself on that soapbox, the more invitations I got to do trainings, write articles and facilitate collaborative groups. Increasingly, it became the work that I love the most in all the world; primarily because I get to talk about Arlo. Who doesn’t enjoy talking about one’s kid (OK, and some bragging, too)?

Currently, I have three arenas in which I get to dust off the “Arlo Show” and talk about inclusion. For the last 10 years I have been an instructor for UC Davis Extension teaching a variety of child development and child care topics, one of which is “Keys to Serving Children with Special Needs.” I get to do college credit classes to child care professionals, parents and foster care parents across California. I also have my own business called Bridges Transformation Network in which I provide my own workshops on the same kinds of topics, including, “Creative Inclusion”. For the past 10 years I have also been a group facilitator for a statewide Inclusion Institute for anyone who works with young children in California (paid for by the Department of Education). Institute participants attend as a collaborative group to work on how to make inclusion work in their county or in their school district. I help them to talk together, brainstorm and create community action plans.

More recently I have begun work with WestEd Center for Prevention and Early Intervention on a statewide demonstration project called "Special Needs Project". This project is funded by First Five California Children and Families Commission (tobacco tax). I am working with four demonstration sites in Southern California who are screening young children to catch signs of special needs, referring children to the local regional center or other agencies and are also providing direct services like parenting classes to families. This project also has asked me to write an online course on "Inclusive Practices" that can be accessed by anyone who works with young children. You can be sure I included a scenario example of a child with dwarfism in the online course!

In all of these trainings and presentations, I take time to describe characteristics of Achondroplasia. I also reference other types of dwarfism so that participants leave with a new knowledge and awareness about short stature conditions. I take time to explain other disability conditions as well, but dwarfism will stick in their minds for the rest of their life because they saw the "Arlo Show". They often have tears in their eyes as they ask questions about how Arlo is doing now as an adult. Their hearts are warmed by his story and their hearts are equally warmed and opened to the possibility of enrolling a child with special needs in their family child care home or their child care center.

At the risk of sounding like I love talking about myself and bragging about Arlo, I hope I have conveyed to you about how inclusion is becoming more and more at the top of California's priority list (despite the horrors of our state budget). Inclusion has fully permeated into the early childhood culture and has become accepted as the norm (I couldn't say that 10-20 years ago). I also see it trickling up into the public school system, albeit slowly and in spite of school district red tape. Segregated special day classes still exist. But the message is getting out about the huge benefits to everyone when inclusion happens, especially for the peers of the child with a disability. When children with special needs share class space together and learn together with typically developing peers, amazing things can happen. When peers learn how to include a classmate with special needs, they become adults who aren't afraid of including people who are different from them.

Working for inclusion means I get to express my passion as a mother of a son with a disability. When people attending my workshops tell me stories of how a child was not enrolled in child care because of a disability or kicked out of preschool because of special needs, I take it personally. It's as if they are telling me a story about my own son. And I anguish over those stories. It brings out my "Mama Bear" reflex. And you don't want to awaken my inner Mama Bear; EVER. Then I turn to the person telling me the story and coach them through how to take on the system or communicate with an agency so that that child can have equal access to their American right to public accommodations. Like child care. What I love most about inclusion is how it taught me to accept not just differences due to special needs, but also differences in languages, skin color, religious beliefs and lifestyle choices. I have become fascinated with the diversity of humanity and the processes we use to connect and work together. It's become much more fun than exploring the diversity of religions (even though I still find that topic interesting as well).

I have to give Arlo lots of credit for traveling this journey together with me. Every so often I check in with him and tell him the kinds of stories that I tell about him in my presentations. He just smiles and nods and says, "That's fine." It's nice to have his permission. Next week I'll be in Los Angeles giving the workshop on Creative Inclusion to a group of preschool teachers and I'll once again flash that adorable picture of Arlo. "This is my son Arlo at 18 months. He was born with the most common type of dwarfism: Achondroplasia." I can hear the "Aaaahhhs" now.



Julia Alysianne Hatcher
February 26, 2002 – February 27, 2009

Beloved daughter, granddaughter, and niece passed away on Friday morning, February 27, 2009. We lost this precious gift of God from medical complications that she was not able to overcome. Julia (Juls) was the daughter of Scott and Dorine Hatcher of Ripon, California. She was in the first grade at Nile Garden Elementary School in Manteca. Julia was a joy to all who knew her and was loved by all. She was full of surprises, enjoying so many activities with her family and school friends each and every day. Julia loved learning new things and loved living her life with enthusiasm, finding something new and exciting each day.

In addition to her parents, Julia is survived by her grandparents, Don and Paris Douma of Ripon, California and Monnie and Melanie Hatcher of Columbia, South Carolina. Her great-grandparents are Harvey Douma of Ripon, Bob and Levenya McClanahan of Lodi, and Wilene Mincey of Columbia, SC. She had very special aunts and uncles in her life that will miss her, Stacey and Jeff Cardoza of Salida, California and Charles (Chuck) Hatcher of Nashville, Tennessee. Julia's extended family includes aunts, uncles, and cousins in California, Florida and in the Carolinas.

A memorial fund has been set up in Julia's name. Here is the information:

Julia Hatcher Memorial Fund
Union Bank of California
c/o William S. Hatcher
Routing # 122000496
Account # 6351093940





Dental Services for LP's



Often individuals with skeletal dysplasias have issues with their teeth due to small mouths or large teeth or both. At best any dentistry can be expensive and the expenses can increase if there is a need for orthodonture or other special services.

There are some dental options available that provide good dental services at a cost than can be less than the typical Dentist may charge. These options include Community Colleges and Career Colleges that offer training in Dental Hygiene, Native American Health Clinics, and County Health Clinics. These programs will provide services and will refer patients for special dental if it is needed.

Typically a good source of information about low-cost Dental Services can be found by contacting the 32 Dental Society units that are located in California. Dental Society's are organized on a county or regional basis depending on the number of dentists in a given geographic area. To identify a Dental Society in your area check out the California Dental Society web page Component Dental Societies at: http://www.cda.org/about_cda/component_dental_societies The location and web address for each of the Component Societies can be found on this page.

Some of the local dental societies will have a page that identifies low cost dental services. Some of the Dental Societies do not have a web page. Each does have mail and phone contact information. In the central valley the Sacramento Dental Society has identified low cost services:

Sacramento Dental Society: Low Cost Care

http://www.sdds.org/Clinics_SacramentoAreaDental.htm

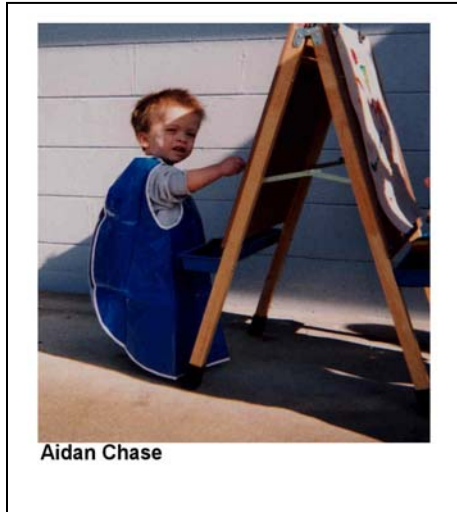
The University of the Pacific, whose campus is located in Stockton, offers comprehensive dental care services in San Francisco, Oakland, Stockton and Union City. The University of the Pacific provides general dentistry services, pediatric services and orthodontic services at a cost that they estimate is 30% to 40% less than charged by a typical Dentist. Information about the UOP dental programs in San Francisco and Stockton can be found at the following web sites:

UOP Dugoni School of Dentistry: <http://dental.pacific.edu/x1134.xml>

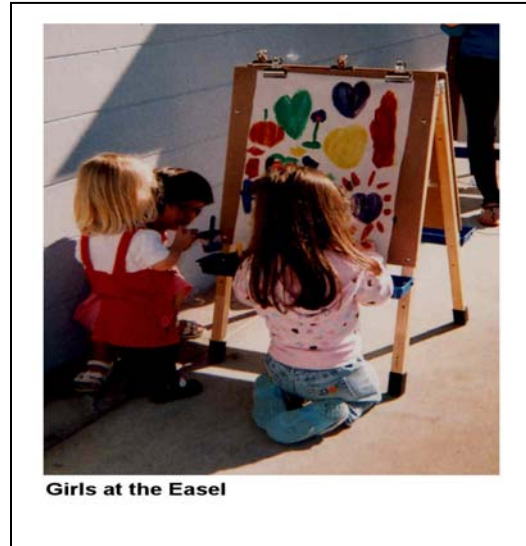
UOP Stockton – Pacific Dental Care Clinic:

http://dental.pacific.edu/Dental_Services/Clinics/Stockton_-_Pacific_Dental_Care_Clinic.html

Valentines Day Event – February 7, 2009



Aidan Chase



Girls at the Easel

The Valentines Day Event was held at the Arden Park Community Center in Sacramento. This marked the first event underwritten by First Five-Sacramento. The children had a good time with the paint, easels and chalk, while the parents spent time discussing plans and activities for the Fall Regional Meeting, to be held at the Red Lion Inn in Sacramento, October 3-5, 2009.



Drawing with chalk



Girls playing kickball

Images of Little People in Film and Television

Carolyn Shapiro, a Senior at Mills College in Oakland, California, has written her senior theses on the subject, "Images of Little People in Film and Television"

Her thesis is based on a survey of adult LP's who were asked to give their responses, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong agreement and 5 indication strong disagreement, to several questions. These questions included the following among others: "Images of Little People in film and television affect how the non-LP world views Little People." "The attitudes of non-LPs toward Little People are PRIMARILY shaped by images they see of Little People in film and television" "Some images of Little People in film and television have had a NEGATIVE influence on how the non-LP world views Little People."

The survey also included a list of several films and televisions shows and the respondents were asked to indicate their reaction on a scale of 1- to 5, with 1 indicating Positive and 5 indicating negative. The list of films included: Austin Powers (film series); Bad Santa (film); Boston Legal (TV series); Freaks (film); -Little People, Big World (TV series); The Love Guru (film); Seinfeld (TV series).

In addition to the survey Ms. Shapiro also interviewed several actors and asked them about their professional life including their choice of roles and if their choices were guided by a decision to avoid roles that depicted little people in an offensively or disprepectfully. Actors interviewed included: Michael Lee Gogin, Zelda Rubenstein, and Michael Marius Massett.

Ms. Shapiro's conclusions are as follows: "The sample agrees that images in film and television affect how the average-statured world views them. The majority of participants also believe that the attitudes of average-statured people toward Little People are *primarily* shaped by mass media images. Average-statured people may form prejudices and pre-conceived notions of Little People based on depictions they see in film and television; because it is rare for most average-statured people to encounter Little People in their daily lives, it is hard to counteract the effects of these images. Average-statured perceptions of Little People can be altered either through a single yet popular depiction, or through a series of images from various sources which create or perpetuate a stereotype about Little People. It is in this manner that film and television depictions of Little People impact how the average-statured world views them."

A complete copy of the thesis, 71 pages, including the questions asked in the survey and the list of films and television programs referenced, can be found at: <http://lpimages.atspace.com/>

Meet Hai Okenfuss – by Ericka Okenfuss

Dan and I became parents to Hai Alexander Okenfuss on February 9, 2009 in Hanoi, Vietnam. Hai is a 2+ year old with achondroplasia. We had been waiting for over a year when we were finally able to go get him in February. He has been part of our life for just over 3 months now and we can't imagine it without him. He is a happy, social and fiercely independent toddler. He has adjusted well to his new family and home. We can't wait to introduce to all of our friends in LPA. We hope you will join us at the Land Park picnic so you can meet him in person.

Our first family picture



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President's Message continued...

You may be aware that a recent episode of the NBC television show, "The Apprentice", included a segment that featured dwarf actors who were characterized as "midgets". The National Office of LPA, through the office of Public Relations, immediately wrote to NBC and criticized the segment and objected to the way the dwarf actors were labeled and characterized. To date there has been no response from NBC that they will monitor future productions to ensure that little people are treated respectfully.

In the recent past, the New York Times ran an article about the financial mess. In the article they included a reference to J.P. Morgan and the "midget" actress who was thrust onto his lap as a publicity stunt in the 1930's. The LPA Office of Public Relations wrote to the New York Times, called attention to the use of the word "midget" and it appears that editorial policy at the New York Times will be changed to eliminate the use of the word "midget" when referring to people with short stature. The LPA Public Relations Office should be commended for their response to these two media events.

Our next event is scheduled for June 7th, in Land Park. I look forward to seeing you there.

Gerrie Kay