

L O C A L E D I
T I O N

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Alliance House Newsletter

Salt Lake City, Utah

Alliance House is a long-standing partner with Valley Mental Health and a non-profit United Way agency.

Advocacy Committee Reenergized

By Rob Peden

There *must* have been times during February when both David Reed and Rene Christensen wondered what they had gotten themselves into.

On February 3, Rene succeeded Tess Lage as staff co-chairperson on Alliance House's Advocacy Committee. Tess had steered the committee through a very successful year. We lobbied the state legislature to retain Medicaid for five thousand Utahns. We conducted a successful letter-writing campaign to persuade Utah Transit Authority not to cancel the 442 Main Street bus route. Obviously, Tess's record would be difficult to equal.

At that same February 3 meeting, the committee chose David by acclamation to fill the vacant position of member co-chairperson. A series of David's predecessors had felt obligated to resign in order to accommodate their work schedules. David moved into the high-pressure, deadline-laden position that has traditionally been filled by highly motivated members.

It's a sign of the Advocacy Committee's importance that Director Jon Paulding, no matter how dense his schedule, almost always finds time for the committee meetings.

David's and Rene's appointments came just as the state legislature was gearing up for a regular session that must provide for an ambiguous economic forecast and address the demands of many important causes. Governor Walker has announced that her priority is to allocate as much funding as possible to education; nuclear waste, hate-crime legislation, and DUI reform are all on the minds of our legislators; then there's the slate of special interest proposals that seem to plague all state legislatures. What could Alliance House do for its own agenda?

"We decided from the beginning to focus on our most immediate goals," David says. "The Advocacy Committee decided, I think wisely, that we should go after the things that are achievable, measurable, and most important to Alliance House members. We also looked for strategic alliances with other organizations that

would allow us to leverage our influence, to piggy-back on issues they already endorse. We feel that by combining our push with those of Utah Issues or NAMI, we could make more of a difference in the way the legislature is shaping our laws.” Conforming to this philosophy, the committee is concentrating on the restoration of dental and eye-care programs to Medicaid.

To further leverage our effectiveness, David help lobby the other Utah clubhouses to involve them in the program. He has e-mailed and phoned each clubhouse to encourage them to join a letter-writing campaign. He suggests individual letters from members to their representatives and senators relating their personal stories and explaining the importance of proper medical attention to their lives. When possible, each letter would be accompanied by a photograph of the author to impress on the legislators that the correspondents were real people with real and immediate problems, not mere pieces of an orchestrated campaign.

Rene expresses frustration at the short-sightedness of the way Medicaid is administered: “It’s ridiculous, really. They say that the idea is to get people to return to work. But how can people get jobs with huge gaps in their teeth, poor eyesight, or infected gums?”

Bill Lamm echoes Rene’s concerns ironically: “Hey, legislature! It’s all right. We can read in the dark. We can gum our food.”

On February 6, David and Rene accompanied a group of members to the capitol building to present their cases before the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services. Although they arrived well before the appointed time, the Alliance House members found themselves far down the list of witnesses, mostly other health care consumers, physicians, and other health care professionals. After a two-hour wait, Mike Perry, John Adams, Laura Litnak and Irene Leishman each had the opportunity to testify, carefully outlining their deeply personal histories for the members of the committee. Rene expressed satisfaction with their appearances. “I was quite impressed by the way they stepped up, told their stories forthrightly and economically, and seemed totally unfazed by being in the spotlight.”

On February 9, the Advocacy Committee conducted a workshop to prepare letters for legislators. Rene repeated the issues and approach that the committee recommended and member-volunteers provided support when requested. Rene estimates that fifteen letters resulted from the workshop. Many of the letters were quite eloquent:

“I have been on Medicaid since I was five years old... Now I am twenty-six years old and am forced to live without my teeth.” – Diana Whitaker

“Twice I’ve lost my savings to dental care.” – Gordon Butler

Excerpts from the letters, along with photographs, were furnished to Utah Issues for their story bank.

On the 16th, Presidents’ Day, Rene and David led a contingent of members to the State Capitol building for a press conference and to meet their legislators face-to-face. Utah Issues had prepared a special Day on the Hill, and Alliance House’s contingent of ten arrived on time for the 9:30 press conference that kicked off the day.

The acoustics of the rotunda, coupled with persistent problems with the sound system, made hearing difficult for many of the hundred or so people in the audience, but the press coverage was excellent, with microphones from at least three television stations on the podium and video cameras on every side. After the press conference proper, Channels 2,5, and 13 conducted interviews with audience members, and Alliance House's members were quick to oblige them. It was widely speculated, however, that if Channel 2 aired any portion of Rod Decker's interview with Bill Lamm, the FCC would be forced to pull their license.

Afterwards the members sent messages to their legislators requesting an audience. Jackie Biskupski, representative for most of the members in attendance, was unable to appear personally, but an aide met with them and assured Jackie's commitment to our cause. Several members were able to buttonhole Senator Paula Julander in the hallway, who assured them that she, too, was committed to do everything possible for our welfare.

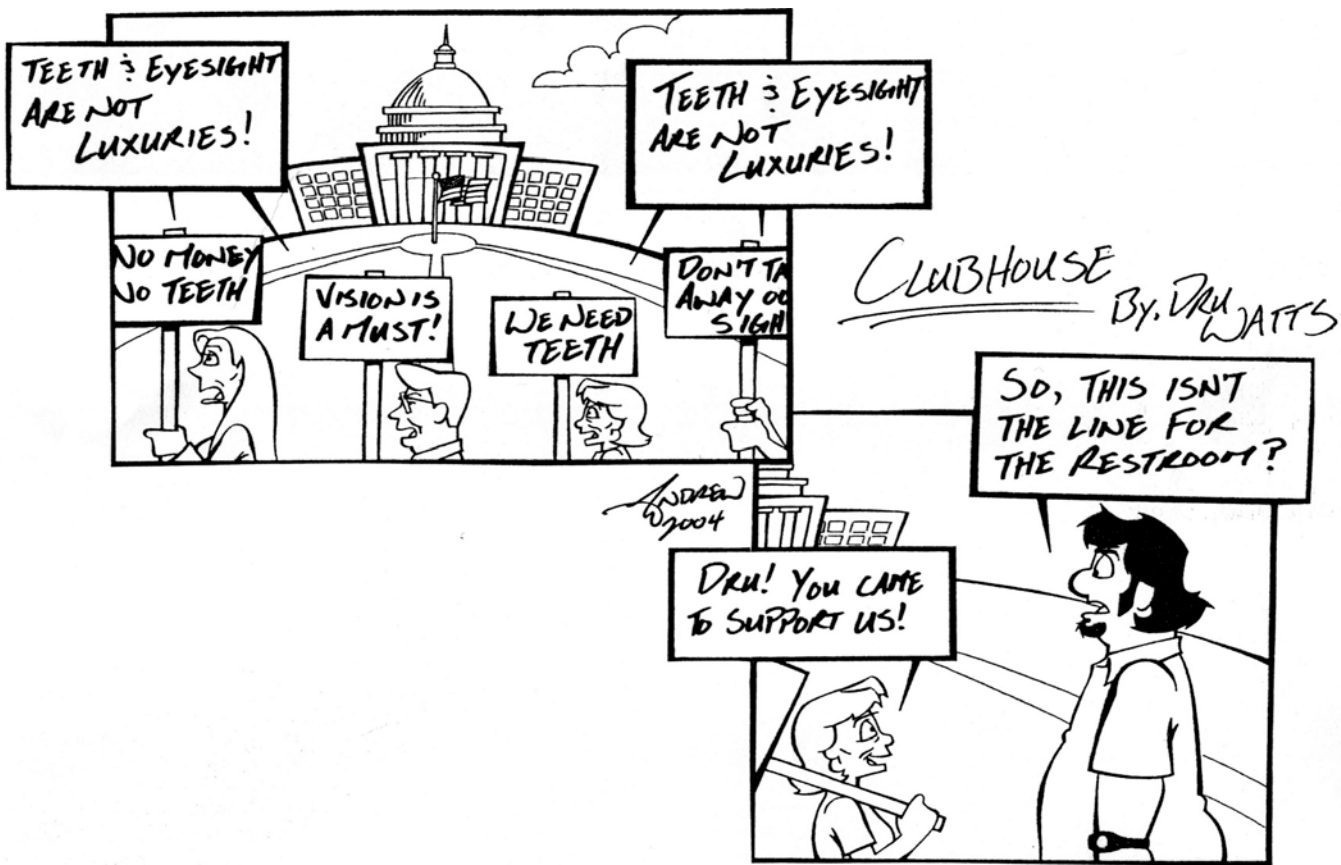
"I think there are two keys to our performance," David says. Both as a clubhouse and jointly with UCN, we pulled together to try to influence our legislators; then we had access to television cameras and were willing and able to take advantage of the situation."

Gordon Butler provided an alternative appraisal of the experience. After a long appearance before the camera of Fox-13 Television, he was asked if this meant that he had a Fox Attitude. Gordon paused thoughtfully, then smiled. "I'm *crazy* like a fox," he quipped.

The deadline for this newsletter comes long before we can see any fruits from our efforts, and Rene and David continued to encourage members to write letters, send e-mails, or otherwise make clear to their legislators what we want and expect. David, in fact, is renewing his efforts to draw other Utah clubhouses into the campaign. Kent Palmer and the dashing and virile young Rob Peden are preparing to remind Alliance House's Board of Directors how much we need their help in this movement.

It seems that Rene's quiet intensity and David's affable self-confidence more than compensate for their newness to the cause. "We seem to have done so much right," Rene says. "Our approach to the media, our handling of our appeals, our focus, our joining forces with other organizations, all improve our chances of success. If we fall short this time, we're that much better prepared for our next chance."

What happens after the Legislature adjourns? Already committees have been appointed to track federal legislation, interface with other nation-wide organizations, and work on specific programs, such as what we will contribute to Mental Health Awareness Month this May. After February, Rene and David should be entitled to a long rest, but smart it won't be that long.



Colleague Spotlight By Rob Peden

When you first meet Marianne Sorensen, you'll make a snap judgment. Her intensity, her brightness, her sense of focus are obvious at first sight. *This woman, you'll think, can get things done.* You'll be right.

Then you speak to her. All that intensity and brightness are focused on you. Her caring, her kindness, her compassion become apparent. Now you think, *This woman wants to do the right things.* Again, you're right.

Then there's that warm, heart-melting smile.

Small and dark-haired and one of the newest members of Alliance House's Board of Directors, Marianne was born and raised in Richfield, an I-15 exit about two hundred miles south of Salt Lake City. She attended Richfield High School. "Richfield has grown a lot since I left," she says. "It has a K-Mart now."

After graduating from high school, she headed north on I-15 to Logan, where she enrolled in Utah State University. There she met and married her future husband. Upon graduation, clutching her diploma in political science, she and her husband took I-15 southbound to Salt Lake City and the next step in her program: University of Utah Law School.

As one would expect, Law School proved little more than a speed bump to Marianne. Upon graduation, she and her husband both enlisted in the Utah Army National Guard. The Guard quickly recognized their potential, that focus and brightness, and sent them to the Defense Language Institute, where they quickly became fluent in Arabic.

"Maybe *fluent* is too strong a word," she suggests modestly. Nonetheless, the Army called up Marianne, by now the mother of two small children, and packed her and her husband off to the Middle East, where they served with distinction as interrogators in Operation Desert Storm – the Iraqi War, Part I.

(Understandably, Marianne isn't at liberty to describe her adventures in Asia. But one imagines a

hardened Palace Guard trying to face down that smile: “Ah, shucks, Miss Marianne. We’ve planted mines here, and here, and here, set up an ambush outside of Baghdad, and assembled for a pitched battle...”)

Marianne takes pride in her role in liberating Kuwait, but was unhappy at her separation from her



children, distressed by the carnage of even a short conquest, and impatient with the hurry-up-and-wait attitude that characterizes military operations. She was not disappointed to be de-activated and given the opportunity to

get on with her life. She returned with her husband to Utah, where she picked up the thread of her legal career where she had left it.

Five-and-a-half years ago, Marianne accepted a position as Staff Attorney with the prestigious local law firm, Jones, Waldo, Holbrook & McDonough. “We’re a full-service firm, but I’m currently attached to the Real Estate Section,” she explains. “I purchase land for large out-of-state companies, write and negotiate commercial leases, that sort of thing.”

In her spare time (and just how much spare time does a high-powered, fast-track attorney have, after all?), Marianne is determined to take up skiing again. “I used to ski, but haven’t been out this year. I will before the end of the season, though. It’s just been too cold so far.” She’s also an accomplished motorcyclist and enjoys dirt biking and mountain biking. She admits that in quieter moments, between the demands of her three children, she is a voracious reader. “I read everything,” she says. “I suppose mostly novels. Tom Clancy used to be among my favorites, but his last book didn’t impress me much. Right now I’m reading *Ghost Soldiers*, a history of the liberation of POW’s in the Philippines after the Bataan Death March.”

Marianne first learned about clubhouse in general and Alliance House specifically at work. “I’ve worked with Lorraine [Hewett] and Gordon [Butler] and was attracted by their enthusiasm, attitude, and work ethic. They told me about Alliance House, and I thought, ‘This could very well be my niche.’” Lorraine also remembers Marianne fondly. “She is a super lady. She’s very outgoing and friendly and always willing to go the extra mile.” Marianne foresees her primary contribution to the Board of Directors as a liaison, establishing contacts with potential donors and the business community. She is currently thinking in terms of acquiring items for the auction to be held in conjunction with this June’s Queen of Hearts bridge tournament.

Marianne acknowledges she has worked with professional organizations and done her fair share with church groups (one suspects, knowing her even slightly, it’s rather more than a fair share), but Alliance House’s Board is her first deep community involvement. We should all be grateful she’s chosen us.

“Everyone I’ve met here seems so caring and committed. I’m delighted to work with such an excellent group of people.”

Standard of the Month

By Duncan Macdonald

This month we’re going to discuss Standard # 28. It reads: “The clubhouse assists members to further their vocational and educational goals by helping them take advantage of adult education opportunities in the community. In addition, clubhouses provide in-house educational programs that significantly utilize the teaching and tutoring skills of members.”

I think that this standard is key to the clubhouse community because, as Jon Paulding states in the Alliance House video, most of us have our first episode in our teens and twenties. This makes it necessary for there to be other ways for our members to get an education and higher paying jobs. This standard provides members that opportunity. The education that members get is vital to their self-esteem, because it shows them that they can accomplish their educational goals.

A natural progression of getting an education can lead to more job opportunities and potential careers for members. For this reason, Transitional Employment and Education Programs can go hand in hand.

Here's what other people had to say:

"Alliance House has been strong in education for a long time and we're constantly trying to do better. One of the things we're very interested in right now is improving our program in vocational education and enrichment which straddle our high school and college programs. We may not be where we want to be, but we're working hard."-Dashing and virile young Rob Peden

"Education is a fundamental right of all Americans. It is totally co-related to employability and social status. Clubhouses have an obligation to provide members with supported services needed for members to succeed in this area."-Jon Paulding.

"I think the education unit at Alliance House is very effective in teaching people at their own speed. I get plenty of help on my educational program in the CD Unit and I am, slowly but surely, getting my high school diploma."-Bill Lamm

"There is more to this standard than the brief words indicate. Clearly, it states that clubhouse will assist in helping members with their education. But more than that, it is saying that all members have a right to seek education. Also, since clubhouse utilizes members as tutors, this standard shows that we value the learning and intelligence that resides in

our members. We encourage and inspire our members to believe in their potential as educated, capable adults."-Rene

Christensen

Unit Updates

by Betsy Ogden



Business/Colleague Training Unit Update

Alliance House is currently working on the Capital Campaign. Our goal is 100%, which would be \$2,000,000. We need the money because we want

to build an addition to Alliance House. We are turning up the heat. David Ahlin has made a poster with a thermometer to keep track of the donations we have received. Our thermometer started at \$1,400,000 on February 5, 2004. We need \$600,000 more to make all our dreams come true.

The Unit would like to welcome Larry Christensen to the 1805 apartments. There is one more opening at 1805 South Main Street. It's a studio apartment. We started doing phone trainings this month. We have phone training on orientation day. One training is held in the morning at 10:30 and one in the afternoon at 1:00. The purpose of phone training is to train people how to answer the phone and be a good receptionist. Tess is the staff who does phone training. We will continue to have phone trainings as long as it is needed

Kitchen Unit Update

The Kitchen Unit began a reach-out training for the clubhouse. This training will consist of each unit explaining their reach-out process and ways in which they can improve. The reach-out training committee has meet and discussed ideas for the training. Keep your ears and eyes for the announcement of the next reach-out training.

The unit also has some new goals, such as: retyping and revising the kitchen unit manual, our unit meetings will meet between 2:00 and 2:30 p.m. and having a snack bar training in the near future. Linda Stone commented on the kitchen unit manual "We are in the home stretch at revising it."

We also have a lot of new members working in the kitchen unit. We have members helping with the snack bar, writing donation letters and looking up recipes on the internet.

Career Development Unit

The Career Development Unit had a “Gift of Education” celebration. It was held Thursday February, 26 at 4:00 pm. Many of our education students came to this celebration and were acknowledged for their hard work and dedication. Thank you to Doug Gregory, our valuable Horizonte liaison, for supporting us in such a worthwhile cause.

We have three new people working on Transitional Employment Placements (TEP’s):

*Cadie Burkhalter is working at Smiths as a bagger. She started February 19.

*Dru Watts started his training for Youth Services on February 22nd.

*John Adams started working at Jones, Waldo, Holbrooks and McDonough Law Firm on February 18th.

Lisa Mathena is working hard on Pre-Algebra. Lisa states, “Even though it’s not easy, I am still going to work on it.” Lisa is one of the many committed education students at our clubhouse.

Director’s note

By Jon Paulding

Last year the Utah Clubhouse Network began an initiative to create a standardized way to record pertinent clubhouse statistics. The goal of this effort is to get all Utah clubhouses to begin tracking the services and outcomes that we provide using standardized definitions and measures so that the data can be combined. The idea is to not only provide individual clubhouse data, but to enable the coalition to assemble its collective data into an annual statewide clubhouse report. Massachusetts does this at an annual day at the Statehouse where TEP employers are recognized and the efforts of clubhouse are collectively publicized on a statewide level. In a time of diminishing funding and continuing restrictions on Medicaid funding of recovery type services, such as employment, it is imperative that the outcomes that clubhouses provide be widely publicized. We are thrilled to have recently compiled the annual data for Alliance House for 2003 and to make this information public. Here are some of the highlights from our first year:

- Total attendance hours 45,008

- # of active members 135
- Unduplicated individuals served 201
- Orientations conducted 68
- % retention from orientation 76.6%
- # reach out calls made 2385
- # hours of TEP placement management 852
- Cumulative wages earned on TEPs \$47,398.00
- # lunches served 7958

These are exciting numbers! We are sure that there are even more in each category that we failed to capture due to the fact that we are just beginning to really attempt to track this data. We will be posting some very interesting graphs of this data in the clubhouse. A special thanks goes out to Catherine Carter and the VMH research department for their assistance in proofing and graphing the data. We are very excited to do an even more thorough job next year. We hope to publish the statewide data in a “year in review” report from the UCN. Look for that information soon.

March Birthdays

- 1st Adele Brown
- 1st James Pepper
- 8th William Reed
- 14th Amanda Allred
- 16th Joshua Roebuck
- 24th Julie Wallentine
- 25th Maxwell Williams
- 29th Connie Jensen
- 31st Robert Romano

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