

## TOWNE HOUSE CREATIVE LIVING CENTER

629 Oakland Avenue • Oakland, CA 94611 • (510) 658-9480 • www.BayAreaCS.org

A Program of Bay Area Community Services

FALL 2006

### JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT

I have been attending Towne House for approximately a year and a half. During that time I have been a member of the Creative Services/Clerical unit and have attended the Employment Group. After a number of months at Towne House, I began working with the BACS Employment Director, Bill Judd.

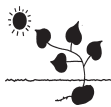


*Aaron Dorfman*

Working in the Creative Services unit, building my computer and office skills, and attending the weekly Employment Group, gave me the confidence to pursue employment again. Through working with Bill Judd, I returned to work with the Transitional Employment position at the Mental Health Association of Alameda County for five months. As a clerical assistant, I did photocopying, mailings, and labeling. This was the first paid job I have had in a number of years.

I am currently working with Bill Judd to find a permanent part-time position. I have made the eligibility list for a job as a library page with the Alameda County Library System. I am also working on applications for bookstore jobs at Half-Price Books and Barnes and Noble. Bill Judd and I are continuing to seek out job leads so that I can meet my employment goal.

*Aaron Dorfman*  
Member



### THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

*Michael Yamagata, licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, became Program Coordinator at Towne House last year, after 12 years with the BACS Case Management/Supported Independent Living Team.*



*Michael Yamagata*

At Towne House the community values of inclusion, cultural identity, and having a meaningful role with a real sense of contribution are important elements of the program. In December 2005, I chose to come to work at Towne House to further pursue and expand this notion that many people of different races and experiences can find hope, empowerment, self-responsibility, and a meaningful role in life through community and positive relationships.

I was very fortunate and blessed to have grown up in the 1950's in a small rural sugar plantation community on the Big Island of Hawaii called Ninole. My great grandparents came to Hawaii around 1880 from near Hiroshima, Japan, to work on the sugar plantations. My father's mother was born in Hawaii, and we lived in my grandparent's home as my father was the oldest son. I grew up in a multi-cultural community of

Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, and Native Hawaiians. We always had an abundance of fresh vegetables and food because everyone had a garden, and there was an unspoken agreement about sharing when you had more than you needed. As kids we were told that Hawaii was first the

land of the Hawaiians, and that we were visitors and were taught to respect the Hawaiian culture and the land of Hawaii (aloha aina). I was truly lucky to have experienced the importance of community and culture and of helping and treating your neighbors and friends with generosity and kindness.

My upbringing and growing up in Hawaii gave me values about the importance of being integrated in the community and the healing power of relationships based on integrity and compassion. So as I show up at Towne House each day, I cannot help but remember my ancestors, neighbors and friends from Ninole who gave me so much so that I can now give back what I have received.

*Michael S. Yamagata, MFT*  
Program Coordinator

### RAFFLE GOES GLOBAL

This year's 22nd annual Raffle went global as we sold raffle tickets on the internet for the first time. This made it easy for friends and family from all over the country to join in the fun. In keeping with the global theme, the first



*Members display quilt at Summerfest celebration*

prize was a homemade quilt made by Marcia Lowrie, a Towne House supporter who lives in Switzerland. Some of our donors chose to purchase tickets for members so that they could take part in the raffle. This allowed lucky members to win restaurant meals, tickets to Yoshi's Jazz Club, televisions, and more. At Towne House, members are active participants in program decisions and

activities, not just recipients. Members were involved in selling tickets and logging sales which raised \$5,000, as well as preparing and serving the Summerfest spaghetti luncheon. There was a sense of pride in contributing to paying off the Towne House mortgage, while having a lot of fun.

*Sandi Vargas, Member*  
*Dennis Pense, Member*

## BECOMING THE BEST PEER COUNSELORS

*This year Towne House was fortunate to have two interns from the BestNOW program that trains people with mental illness to become peer counselors.*



Lisa Wagner



Armanda Sanchez

**Lisa Wagner:** In 2005, I joined the BestNOW program to pursue my interest in counseling and health care. When it became time for my internship, I decided on Towne House, where I had been a member from 1995-2001. Returning to Towne House gave me a work experience in a meaningful place, and I learned to become part of the staff. It also made me realize that people can learn and change and get well at the same time, as well as live meaningful lives. Since graduating from the program, I am continuing my studies in the Social Services Program at Berkeley City College.

**Armanda Sanchez:** While working as a nursing assistant, I heard about the Latino BestNOW program and decided it was a good opportunity to learn how to help Latino people in my community. As an intern at Towne House, I felt welcome from the beginning. I have been able to observe and see for myself what Towne House has to offer its members - which is hope and recovery for a better tomorrow and future. Through clerical and creative art activities, I have been able to be a participant, and to be a part of helping, encouraging, and supporting members. My experience as an intern has been a rewarding one which I will never forget.

## DOUBLE HONOR FOR BACS

BACS Mental Health Services had reason for celebrating on January 26, 2006, when two staff members were honored by Alameda County Mental Health Association at their annual dinner. Edy Nicolini, former Towne House Program Coordinator, and Suzanne Gorham, Director of Case Management/Supported Independent Living both received Mental Health Achievement Awards. Suzanne was recognized for her outstanding work increasing services for people with mental illness and for expanding the BACS Service Team and Supported Independent Living Program.

Edy, who has worked at Towne House since 1993, was recognized for her "exceptional efforts, above and beyond the requirements of her position, to assist members of the Towne House CLC with severe and persistent mental illness in increasing their self-esteem, to improve their health and to function more independently in the community." In her acceptance speech, Edy recognized values she learned from her family, including "working hard, being active, and having faith." She also expressed admiration for Towne House members who have the courage and determination "to lead meaningful, purposeful lives in spite of the obstacles and stigma associated with a mental illness diagnosis." After retiring as Program Coordinator in December 2005, Edy returned to Towne House as Pleasant Valley Adult Education Teacher in June 2006 to work with the Creative Services/Clerical Group.

Aaron Dorfman, Member  
Milly Alvarez, Program Director

## SUPPORT WITH EXPERIENCE

I never thought my experience with 15 years of mental illness and alcohol and drug abuse would come in handy. Not that I recommend it to anyone, but my rocky road in life gave me a certain perspective and empathy for others with similar issues.



Taylor Wong

I attended the BestNOW peer counseling program and worked on giving positive feedback, listening skills, and developing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Now I am facilitating a weekly Peer Support Group for Towne House members on Tuesdays during lunch. The atmosphere is casual and the group is small. The topics are member generated. Sometimes we laugh and talk about movies or other light-hearted subjects. Sometimes the mood is more serious, such as dealing with depression or other troubles in life. I enjoy helping others in any way I can and realize that in helping others, I help myself. I think that the main theme of the Support Group is to give and receive support.

I no longer feel like I must turn my back on my past, but I can see how my story can benefit others. I realize that in the Support Group everyone is important and deserves consideration. By careful listening we can all learn from each other. In Support Group, positive feedback, empathy, and respect can go a long way.



Taylor Wong  
Member

## TOWNE HOUSE ARTISTS AT DE YOUNG MUSEUM

As the lights dimmed in the de Young Museum's beautiful Koret Auditorium in Golden Gate Park, a group of Towne House artists and friends waited eagerly for their artwork to be projected on the screen. The art of five Towne House



Sunset Horse by Bettina Roth

members was displayed as part of *Digital Exhibition 2006, Art by Artists with Disabilities*, sponsored by the Arts & Disabilities Network and the de Young Museum. "I was really excited waiting for my piece to come up" said contributing artist Monroe King. Artist David Batchelder commented that "it was truly an honor to review our work in such a public place." Other Towne House artists participating in the exhibit were Patrick McCaffrey, Bettina Roth and Richard Taylor. The multi-media presentation, held on April 29, also included live theatrical and dance performances, including a piece performed by dancers in wheelchairs.

Towne House offers an art workshop each Wednesday afternoon, where members have an opportunity to express their creative spirits and explore their unique artistic perspectives in a relaxing and social environment. With classical music playing in the background, members try their hands at watercolors, pastels, charcoal, collage, and clay. Some members choose to write in their journals. The group has grown since its inception with more members discovering their own artistic talents.

Lois Silvers, Adult Education Teacher  
David Batchelder, Member

## PARTNERSHIP WITH NURSING

For the past 23 years, Dr. Christine Vourakis, Professor of Nursing, has been bringing interns to Towne House from Samuel Merritt College for training in psychiatric-mental health nursing. Under her leadership, students have been able to gain experience in a community-based program and to learn the importance of relationships and community in the healing process. This fall Dr. Vourakis became a professor at California State University, Sacramento, Division of Nursing. The intern program she developed at Towne House continues under the supervision of Marjorie Hammer, Clinical Faculty. We have been fortunate to have had this mutually beneficial collaboration with Dr. Vourakis and her students, and wish her well in her new position. Dr. Vourakis reflects on her experience at Towne House.

*Working with students at Towne House since 1983 has been highlighted by the sense of community that was modeled at Towne House year after year. The true spirit of community existed at this setting, and was instantly felt by each group of students on their arrival. Many preconceived notions they might have about the behavior and capabilities of adults with mental illness were dispelled while participating in the Towne House program. Overall, the students learned not what people with chronic illness can't do, but what they can do and can do very well!*

## STRIKE UP THE TOWNE HOUSE BAND

There are sounds of music coming from the new Towne House Band during the exercise and stretching group after lunch, Friday afternoon socialization group, birthday parties, and special celebrations. The band includes staff members Michael Yamagata on guitar and Chloe Wenthur on piano, and members on drums and percussion. Playing together encourages cooperation and creativity. Comments on the music by Towne House members: *It brings back childhood memories. It relaxes me and gives me a second breath. The music is harmonic and relaxing. I like playing the drums for the band. The music is very beautiful and the sound fills up the environment of Towne House. Keep on playing!*



*Towne House Band performs live.*

## ON THE JOB TEACHING

*Towne House is fortunate to have three Adult Education Teachers from Pleasant Valley Adult School/Oakland Unified School District who contribute to the daily operation of the program while teaching skills in the three groups.*



*Edy Nicolini, Lois Silvers, Josie Sommer*

### House and Grounds, Josie Sommer

Our job in the House and Grounds group is the upkeep of the house and the maintenance of the grounds and gardens. There is always something to do, from planting vegetables and flower seeds in the garden and making our own compost, to keeping the living room clean and comfortable so that members have a place to socialize and read. My job as teacher includes coming up with seasonal projects, helping members learn work skills, and encouraging each person to participate. We each make important contributions to the community, and although it is not always immediately noticed, it is always greatly appreciated. Working side-by-side with members has been a real joy, and I've been the one learning a lot.

### Food Service, Lois Silvers

"Have you finished chopping that garlic?" "Can you make us one more pitcher of milk?" "How's that cornbread coming?" These are just a few of the comments you might hear coming from the Towne House kitchen on any given morning as the Food Service group is busy preparing the daily lunch. Food Service members sign up each day for tasks that contribute to maintaining the kitchen, preparing and serving the meal, planning the monthly menu, and shopping. It's all about teamwork and everyone pitching in to help turn out a nutritional and tasty noon-time meal for 45 members and staff. When asked what they like about being in Food Service, members said: "it's creative", "educational", "interactive", and "social." "We cook good food." "I enjoy cooking." "It's good to learn how to cook."

### Creative Services, Edy Nicolini

Many members who come to Towne House want to use the computer. Some have no experience and others have a lot. We start where each person is, and develop the necessary skills. We use the Mavis Beacon program to improve our typing skills. We use Microsoft Word to type messages and envelopes for greeting and birthday cards, to write thank you letters for donations, to make attendance lists, sign-in sheets, memos, and to make labels and signs. We use Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to record lunch income and expenses, books and card sales, Clothes Closet sales, and to record attendance. We use Microsoft Access to keep a birthday database with names and addresses by month. Microsoft Publisher is used to produce our Towne House Newsletter. We research the Internet for information on holidays and ethnic celebrations.

## FRIENDS OF TOWNE HOUSE CLC

*Cash donations (except raffle) from November 2005 through October 2006*

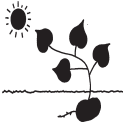
### INDIVIDUALS

Geraldine S. Alvarez  
 Jean Alvarez  
 Walter & Milly Alvarez  
 John Badanes  
 Fred W. Barnes  
 Myra Barrett  
 George & Larisa Batchelder  
 Kathy Ritchie Bateman  
 Dennis & Pat Bleile  
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 John Brooks  
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 Marjorie Nicholson  
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 Fran Ohlsson  
 Warren & Camille Parker  
 Bob & Teri Peri  
 Lindsay Clegg Pierce  
 Christina Platt  
 Patricia Pope  
 Janice M. Robinson  
 Bettina Roth  
 Dwight S. Russell  
 Richard & Joan Russell  
 George & Jacqueline Saito  
 Bill Savidge & Carol Wilkins  
 Virginia L. Semrau  
 Bryan & Julie Sharp  
 Jeff & Patty Shimizu  
 Joe & Ruth Shimizu  
 Clem & Sharie Shute  
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John & Carolyn Sindall  
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 by John & Edy Nicolini  
**Clinnetta Simril**  
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 by Genie Kaiser  
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**Tom Walker**  
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 Social Welfare Alumni Association,  
 UC Berkeley

**ORGANIZATION**  
 Piedmont Service League

### MEMORIAL GIFTS IN HONOR OF

**Tosh Caulfield**  
 by Ruth A. Johnson  
**Rosita Faerburg**  
 by Bethe Moulton  
**Jim McClure**  
 by John & Edy Nicolini  
**Chuck McLain**  
 by Craig & Anne Harper  
 Harold & Cecile Weaver  
**Mark McKinzie**  
 by John Hickey  
 Kaye G. McKinzie  
**Gladys Alvarez Mead**  
 by Jean Alvarez

**TO HONOR**  
**Craig & Anne Harper**  
 by Elwyn & Margaret Williams  
**Edy Nicolini**  
 by Barbara MacAuliffe  
 Harold & Cecile Weaver  
**Kirsten Towne Smith**  
 by Winifred Clegg Smith  
**Taylor Wong's Birthday**  
 by Lonnie Moy Walker

### LOYAL SUPPORT FROM OUR COMMUNITY

We are very fortunate at Towne House to have the support of many faithful, generous, caring people in our local community, too numerous to list. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and companies who have made notable contributions to our fundraising, holidays, and celebrations year after year. With this faithful support, Towne House has established events that hold fond memories for our members and bring us together throughout the year.

**George Hasa, Minuteman Press, University Avenue, Berkeley,** has donated the printing of our raffle tickets since 1999.

**Natural Choice Company, Oakland,** has been donating delicious chips and salsa to our *Cinco de Mayo* celebration since the 1980's.

**Piedmont Grocery** has loyally donated a gift certificate used to purchase ham for our Christmas luncheon for over 20 years.

**Piedmont Service League** has been raising money to donate to Towne House several times a year since 1971.

**Safeway, Grand Avenue, Oakland,** for 10 years has donated pumpkins for our Halloween party and for pumpkin pies for our Thanksgiving luncheon.

**St. John's Episcopal Church in Montclair** has provided Christmas gifts for Towne House members since the mid-1980's.

**Berkeley Bowl, The Cheese Board, Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Foundation, and Semi-Freddi's Bakery** has been donating to our Summerfest spaghetti luncheon every year since 1992.

**Thank you to all of our supporters. Every contribution makes a difference.**



### Towne House CLC Review

Bay Area Community Services  
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