

## **“UPSTREAM” mini edition: May 2014**

### **EDITORIAL:**

### **SO WHAT MATTERS?**

I was in the middle of writing, settled in my room and going for the kill of a conclusion to what is a very detailed proposal when my sister hands me the phone—“It’s Auntie from out of state” she said, apologetic because I had just begged them to stave off the calls so I could concentrate. People do not see you sweat with intellectual work so it doesn’t much convince anyone you’re really working and busy. But, as a struggling soldier of patience, I give in and say, “Ok, hello Auntie, what’s up?” My poor Auntie, also apologizing was explaining why she called and I assured her that it was perfectly all right.

So she shares with me that somebody very young just committed suicide in Las Vegas—found dead in his hotel room and she was completely saddened by the news. Apparently this young man just graduated from college and seemed to have everything going for him. This came in the heels of the news of Mick Jagger’s girlfriend L’Wren Scott’s suicide by hanging, a story that dominated the news for a few days. As my Aunt spoke and I listened, it was a little hard to imagine how this story could make a dent in my day—I barely knew anyone she was mentioning in the story but I wanted to put my heart in it to be meaningful. But immediately, I was reminded of a beautiful quote by John Donne “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

How truly connected we all are, I thought and as soon as I got that settled in my head and heart, it was easier to drop everything I was doing for the moment. I imagined the poor man and had a moment of silent prayer for his soul and like a physical process triggered by a catalyst, I perceived in my heart something like incense of prayers happening for him, fueled by divine and human mercy and thoughtfulness from his family to his friends to my Aunt taking in with her, even this stranger writing a proposal in her room. At home, I remembered that we were taught about the corporal works of mercy like caring for the sick, etc but also the spiritual works of mercy like praying for the dead. And this is particularly significant when one imagines how fast news spreads these days through multiple layers of media technologies!

Those things should not just pass us by—even the pervasively distressing news of people getting killed by violence or disasters should move us to spiritually bind the wounds of our poor hurting world. --Lillibeth Navarro, April 11, 2014







**Assistive Technology  
Success Story**

As the Assistive Technology (AT) Coordinator, I was assisted by our Housing Coordinator, Reginald Robinson, to assist a consumer obtain AT devices so the consumer could transition from living in a rehab hospital to living in a place of his own. Reginald and I did a home visit meeting with the consumer and the property owner. The consumer uses a manual wheelchair for mobility and there were some architectural barriers that needed to be addressed and dealt with before the consumer could move in.

Based on the particular situation, we had to decide which type of AT device was needed. The consumer said he would need something to help him function independently at home so I took measurements and photos of his environment--the entrance way to the house and the bathroom's toilet, bath tub and door way.

The front entrance to the house had three steps not allowing the consumer to enter or exit the house with his manual wheelchair so it was important to install a ramp. The bathroom had a door that would not open wide enough for the wheelchair to go through so the original hinges had to be removed and replaced with a different type that would allow the door to open into the hallway. Grab bars/rails were installed near the toilet and also in the bath tub so the consumer could transfer from his wheelchair to the toilet and bath tub. In addition, CALIF was able to assist the consumer with getting a hospital bed with a specialized air mattress for the consumer to sleep on.

I contacted Accessible Design and Consulting for some help from the contractor who installed (to Code) the AT devices and made it possible for the consumer to live safely while using them. All this was possible through a grant from the California Community Transition Program which provided the funds to make people with disabilities have an accessible and safe place to live.

Written by: Sergio Garibay  
CALIF AT Coordinator

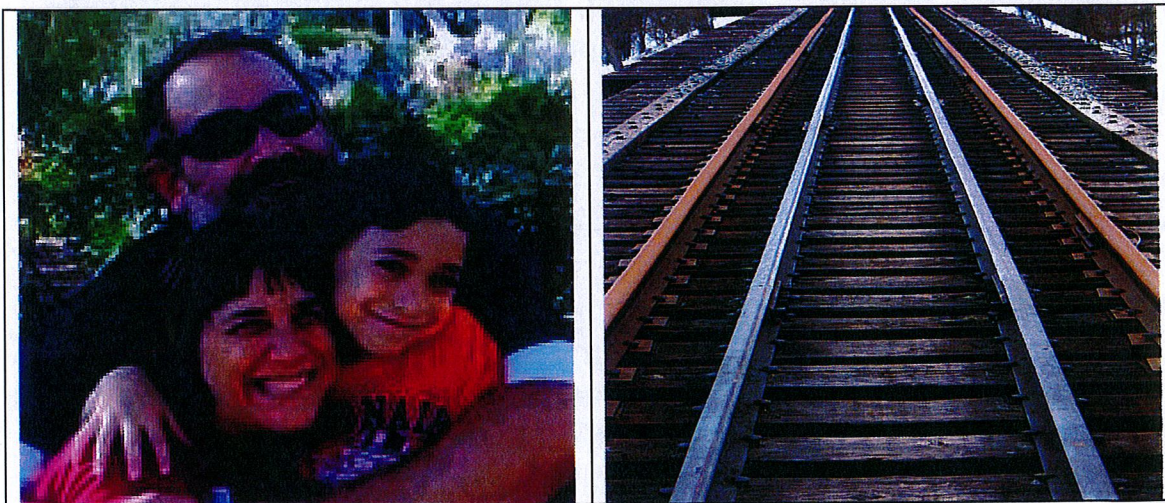






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### ***SAVED IN THE NICK OF TIME—WHEN QUICK THINKING, LUCK AND PROMPT ACTION COME TOGETHER!***



Every morning, we wake up with many things on our minds. On April 22nd, my main concern was getting on an 8:25 a.m. flight to Sacramento for a business trip. My power wheelchair had been giving me problems, which I thought had been fixed the day before, but something still did not feel right.

I told myself to put it out of my mind because I needed to get to the airport. I guess I should have done what my mom has always advised me, listen to my gut.

I kissed my husband, Daniel, goodbye as I left the house at 6:18 for the 6:26 train, it only takes me 3 minutes to get to the train station from my house. When I first left, I was still apprehensive about my wheelchair, but once I turned the corner, I was feeling better, enjoying the early morning breeze blowing my hair.

I have been taking the train to and from work for more than two years. Yet every time I ride my wheelchair over the train tracks, I hold my breath and get a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach over the fear that my wheelchair will decide to stop working when I reach the tracks, a horrendous nightmare.

There are two sets of tracks I need to pass over to get to the



station. After going over the first set, I usually look to the left to see if I can spot the white lights of the train. That tells me how much time I have before it arrives at the station. On that morning, as I passed the first set of tracks, I saw the bright train lights looking at me in the early morning sky.

As my chair drove over the first rail of the second set of tracks, I felt the usual rattle of my chair, then nothing. My worst fear had just become my reality! It felt like someone had just turned off my motor, my wheelchair coming to a dead stop right in the middle of the tracks. For a split second, I looked around, not believing this was happening.

I could see the lights of the train heading my way. Beginning to panic, I started screaming for help. Cars were driving by, but nobody was stopping or even slowing down to help me. I could see that the train had stopped at the Chatsworth station, so I knew I had two or three minutes before it would reach me.

While looking at that train, I saw my son, Brandon's, little face flash before my eyes and I knew I had to get out of there. I climbed out of my wheelchair and crawled on all fours across the tracks. At that point, I knew I was safe, but I still needed to my wheelchair off the tracks. I looked around and saw a Metro bus at a nearby corner. I locked eyes with the driver and screamed "HELP!!" at the top of my lungs as tears came down my eyes. He left his bus, came running over to me and asked how he could help. He pulled my wheelchair off the tracks just as the train went by. Since I am a regular rider of Metrolink, the conductor recognized me and opened the door to ask me if I was alright as they slowly passed me.

After I had called Daniel to tell him what had happened, I sat there in amazement about how I had just saved my own life. Once Daniel brought me my other wheelchair, I got in it and got on the next train to continue my journey to Sacramento.

In a moment of survival, it's amazing how much strength we find. Life is very precious, I appreciate every moment I have and every person in my life!

Written by: Dina Springer Garcia, Systems Change Advocate



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### **Answering the Call, Kind of**

I wiped another grown man today, I knew the day would come due to experiences with close calls in other occasions. I had assessed the situation sometime back as I was looking through one of our emergency kits. I remembered there were gloves, towels, masks, cleaning liquids and so on.

I know this is not really something to boast about as it is not considered to be in line with work thought to be pleasant or uplifting, but “when duty calls” some one must answer.

The room was soiled with clothing thrown about and there was a man standing, holding onto the sink. His legs were trembling, he was apologetic and sobbing remorsefully. He had managed to stand up from his chair but was too weak to stand and manage anything else. I first cleared the area and made room for him to sit should he have a reoccurrence, I tried to reassure the man about the normalcy of the situation and gave him anecdotal examples of people requiring care and being comfortable about some of the issues around aging and disability. His despair seemed to subside and he began to calm down. There were no pants only pads and adult diapers so I ran out and bought a pair at the local Ross. When I returned to the office I assisted the man in getting changed and back on his wheelchair.

The whole ordeal had taken a few hours and we were both pretty tired. So I sat down on a side chair and the gentleman started to explain to me what his situation was and he also took a book out of his bag. He showed me a pristine leather bound encased “Big Book” used by Alcoholics Anonymous. He told me he had been sober for along period of time and that was his most prized possession. We talked a little about faith and direction, life and providence.

The man was an elderly homeless person that had been brought in by local downtown security because his wheelchair had run out of power the night before, He had stayed in his wheelchair with out being able to move overnight. Somehow they were aware of our presence and thought we would be able to help him. Our assistive technology coordinator was able to help him charge his wheel chair and assisted him further over the course of three following workdays. I gave the man suggestions about places he might go and explained to him that I had seen greater success in



those who join programs whose aim is to get people off the streets than in those who try to do it in their own way or stay here and there at shelters.

Written by: Mario Recinos, Peer Counselor/Independent Living Skills Advocate



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