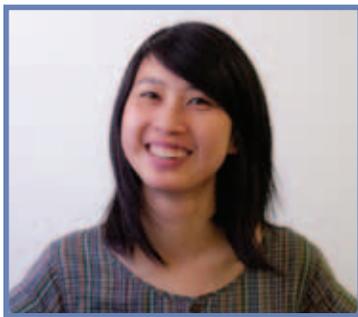


THE FRONTLINE

FALL 2013

Attorney and Cheerleader

Eva Chan connects clients with services they need



“This is one of the few places clients can come and no one will judge them.”

After reading a piece one of our staff attorneys, Eva Chan, wrote in response to a controversial National Public Radio story that was critical of people seeking Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), we sat down to speak with her about her own work at PRC.

Not too long ago, after many years as a corporate litigator, Eva came to work for PRC representing clients on Social Security disability claims. Her dedication to working with PRC’s disabled clients is rooted in her own family’s experience with disability.

Why did you make the big switch from corporate law to practicing as a public interest attorney at PRC?

Part of my motivation to practice this area of law stemmed from my single mother’s experience raising my developmentally disabled sister and me. My younger sister, who is in her 30s now, has the cognitive functioning level of a 2-year-old. There is no way that she can ever work, let alone be left by herself for a single moment of the day. My sister did not obtain SSI until she was an

Continued on page 2

Networking Events a Big Success

PRC Employment Services keep clients moving forward

The San Francisco Mayor’s Committee for Employment of Persons with Disabilities hosted a networking and recruiting event this spring, at the Milton Marks Conference Center, SF. The event, hosted by the California Department of Rehabilitation and community based organizations including Positive Resource Center was designed to introduce employers to job ready candidates with disabilities.

Barbara Weaver, Senior Recruiter, Talent Acquisition and Staffing at Union Bank CA, commented, “It’s just so important to educate employers to the wide range

of talent in the disabled community.” She added that candidates from the many agencies in attendance were well prepared.

Approximately 180 job seekers met with human resources personnel from a wide range of sectors including hospitality, banking, and healthcare such as Bank of America Merrill Lynch, UCSF, Enterprise, United Health Care, PG+E, and Safeway Stores. Joe Ramirez-Forcier, PRC’s Employment Services Managing Director said, “Recruiting and networking events like this are such a valuable resource for our clients, helping to level the field for disabled jobseekers.” Almost 20% of



Darlene Rutkowski, Joe Ramirez-Forcier, Anne Steiner, Dennis Reilly, Antoinette Bobbit, Paul Johnson, Dee Yavor, Brian Whitford

PRC clients who attended moved forward to interviews and potential offers of employment. ●

Attorney Eva Chan

Continued from page 1

Note from the Executive Director



This year marks my 10th as Executive Director at PRC. Over these past 10 years, I have seen rapid changes in technology, advances in HIV treatments,

and most recently, our government, non profit and medical community's response to universal healthcare.

PRC has also changed over the last decade. In 2004, recognizing that people with mental health disabilities were disproportionately at risk for HIV, we expanded our programs to serve those with mental illness in our Benefits Counseling Program, and later, in 2009 in our Employment Services Program.

Positive Resource Center continues to deliver successful, much needed programs that impact individual clients' lives as well as contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of our community. Through our core programs and our recent medical benefits and employment trainings, we are continuing a more than 25 year history of innovation and creativity to ensure that disabled individuals have access to the income and healthcare coverage we all need.

As our country struggles to turn the corner on the devastating impact the recession has had on the American workforce, and as it seeks to be a more perfect union by providing access to healthcare for all, PRC remains focused on ensuring those who are disabled receive the same benefits and opportunities as all other Americans.

Brett Andrews
Executive Director

We Welcome...

PRC is excited to welcome new Staff Attorneys **Eva Chan, Faina Shalts**, Legal Assistant **James Yelen**, Employment Specialist **Sinaya Cotlong**, Employment Services Program Assistant **Angelica Cardenas** and Board Member **David Stith**.

adult, even though she may have qualified for childhood SSDI benefits that are supposed to replace income lost when a parent must reduce their paid work hours to take care of a disabled child. My mother did not pursue childhood SSDI benefits for my sister because she did not have a benefits counselor to guide her through this process, and she relied upon the word of a worker at a local SSA field office who told her that she was not eligible.

The huge bureaucracy of the Social Security Administration (SSA) can be incredibly daunting for individuals, especially those with special needs, to navigate on their own. Without legal representation, applicants frequently have their claims turned down on a technicality because they do not have the right paperwork, or they do not know about their appeal rights. Even with representation, sometimes the SSA's medical consultant will overlook very strong medical evidence, delaying a client's benefits for 3 or 4 years depending on how many levels of appeal are necessary, from a hearing before an administrative law judge, to a request for review to the Appeals Council in Virginia. This means that people seeking disability often must live a precarious existence, where they are forced to rely on family and friends if they are fortunate, or end up in the shelter system or on the streets.

Finally, from my family's experience, both caring for a person with a disability and caring for oneself when one is disabled can be very isolating experiences. Most people don't think about disability unless they are confronted with it in their daily lives, and it is difficult to get connected with the right information. My work is very rewarding because I can help steer clients through the SSA process and connect them with the services they need.

What's the broader impact of Positive Resource Center's work?

One of the most important parts of my work at PRC is helping to stabilize our clients, who struggle with trying to preserve their health and their housing in the context of severely limited financial resources. Before some clients are awarded benefits they need to move every few days, whether it is couch surfing from one relative's apartment to the next or moving from shelter to shelter or from SRO to the street. This housing instability leads to chaos in our clients' lives where they may lose their medication or face disruptions to their routine, so they fall out of contact with their medical providers.

Helping clients get onto SSI/SSDI serves a public health purpose because once they are on benefits they can gain access to affordable housing programs, which can help improve their health since they have a place for their belongings, including medication, and since they can more easily follow a schedule once they know where they're sleeping each night.

How does benefits counseling work with other services?

Now I'm part of a web of social workers, doctors, nurses, and case managers trying to stabilize the most vulnerable members of our community directly. Social services are a puzzle and PRC is a critical piece of that puzzle. For clients on General Assistance, it's highly unlikely that they can show proof of sufficient income to qualify for long-term affordable housing. Helping them get more income through SSI/SSDI, allows them to obtain the stable long-term housing piece of the puzzle. Clients frequently need an SSI/SSDI award letter to even be able to get on a waiting list for stable housing.

What's your day to day work with clients like?

I have to be a cheerleader for my clients; they encounter a lot of negativity out there. This is one of the few places clients can come and no one will judge them, and where they will have an advocate on their side. A lot of times, I communicate to clients that they are not at fault for their disabilities, and our work will hopefully help them get to a better place in their lives.

It brings me great joy when clients are finally approved. One of my favorite parts of the job is receiving approval letters on Friday afternoons. This means that I get to end the week with calls to the clients to let them know of good, life changing news. ●

Positively Fantastic!



▲ Brett Andrews, Donna Sachet, State Senator Mark Leno



▲ Moe Joe, Alan Toomey



▲ Top: Jacques Michaels, Daryl Walker, Kent Roger
Bottom: Gary Virginia, Brett Andrews, Donna Sachet



▲ Karl Christiansen, Karin Brotman, Kirk Kleinschmidt

▶ Dave Some, Andy Chen



▲ Mairi McKeever, Laura Lee



▲ Patrik Gallineux



▶ Michelle Park Chiu, Herman Hoying, Michelle Kim-Szrom



▲ Lu Conrad



▲ State Senator Mark Leno, Beth Feingold, Matthew Denkla



▶ Ethel Merman



▲ Joe Ramirez-Forcier

Photos by Steven Roberts

Photo by Rich Trove



Photo by Will Victoria

Grinning and Baring it for a Good Cause

Bare Chest Calendar Celebrates its 30th Year

The Bare Chest Calendar celebrates its 30th anniversary with the 2014 edition. Positive Resource Center is proud to be a beneficiary and honored to be associated with a San Francisco institution that has so steadfastly supported the changing needs of people affected by HIV in our community. Beneath the great big chests of the 13 men in this special anniversary edition are the huge hearts that are reflective of those that have led our community to respond to the shifting HIV epidemic. Their participation, along with their calendar alumni, has raised many thousands of dollars to support Positive Resource Center and AIDS Emergency Fund—community dollars that are more important than ever.

2014 Bare Chest Calendars can be purchased for \$25 at www.barechest.org.

Become a fan: www.facebook.com/barechestcalendar



Photo by Rich Trove



Photo by Rich Trove

POSITIVE RESOURCE CENTER

The mission of Positive Resource Center is to assist people affected by or at risk for HIV/AIDS through culturally appropriate counseling, education, training, and advocacy. As a result, our clients can make more informed choices that maximize available benefits and employment opportunities.

STAFF

- Fernando Aguayo-García**, Senior Bilingual Benefits Advocate/Quality Assurance Manager
- Brett Andrews**, Executive Director
- Matthew Bandiera**, Administrative Director
- Melissa Cardoza, Esq.**, Supervising Attorney
- Eva Chan, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Andy Chu, Esq.**, Managing Legal Director, Benefits Counseling Program
- Ananda Clarke, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Sinaya Cotlong**, Employment Specialist
- Taylor Hoang, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Leigh Illion**, Managing Director of Development
- Alisa Jackson**, Senior Legal Assistant
- Selina Khuu, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Ron Kurlaender, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Yumi Maeda, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Ali Nixon**, Legal Assistant
- Joe Ramirez-Forcier**, Managing Director, Employment Services Program
- Dennis Reilly**, Employment Specialist
- Pat Riley**, Compliance Specialist
- Michael Rubio**, Front Office Coordinator
- Faina Shalts, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Ana Luz Vazquez, Esq.**, Staff Attorney
- Vaughn Villaverde**, Senior Legal Assistant/Training Coordinator
- Jim Wegman**, Information Technology Manager
- Brian Whitford**, Computer Training Coordinator
- Jolene Wong, Esq.**, Supervising Attorney
- Dee Yavor**, Employment Specialist
- James Yelen**, Legal Assistant

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15th Annual Pride Brunch a Runaway Success

Gary Virginia & Donna Sachet's 15th Annual Pride Brunch presented by Wells Fargo benefiting Positive Resource Center and honoring the Grand Marshals of the San Francisco Pride Celebration was a runaway success, raising over \$42,000 in net proceeds!

This year's Pride Brunch punctuated an incredible week. With the defeat of DOMA and Prop 8, the nearly 350 guests in attendance were in a truly festive mood, including State and local politicians Mark Leno, Tom Ammiano, Jose Cisneros, David Chiu, Malia Cohen, and Scott Wiener. We were honored to hear from Celebrity Grand Marshals Tabatha Coffey, Alex Newell, and Mondo Guerra, Lifetime Achievement Grand Marshal Al Baum, Community Grand Marshals Mario Benton, Veronika Fimbres, Marlana, Crystal Jang, BeBe Sweetbriar, Perry Lang, and Kenneth Monteiro, and Organizational Grand Marshal Bay Area Youth Summit, represented by Jason Galisatus.

Special thanks to all the Pride Brunch sponsors, Wells Fargo, Sterling Bank & Trust, Community Thrift Store, M & K, Dan Joraanstad and Bob Herman, Walter Leiss, Kent Roger, 440 Castro, David Perry & Associates., The Edge, Russell Kassman, Colin Burry, Anita Martini, Lu Conrad and Jeff Stone, Dave Mohr and Wayne Ross, and The Sundance Association.



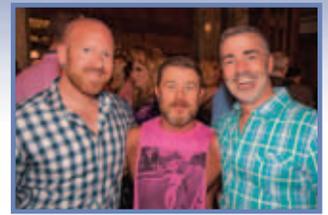
Mark Murphy, Joe Mac, Brett Andrews



Gypsy Love, Miguel Gutierrez-Ranzi, Kippy Marks



State Senator Mark Leno, Donna Sachet, Gary Virginia, Jason Galisatus



Carl Oliver, Julian Marshburn, Lenny Broberg



Al Baum



Project Runway's Mondo, Tabatha Takes Over's Tabatha Coffey



David Stith, Stephen Adams



Joseph Ramirez-Forcier, Patrick Rylee, Jim Gatteau, Bob Hermann



Glee's Alex Newell



Anna Damiani and friend.



San Francisco Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi, San Francisco City & County Treasurer Jose Cisneros



Kent Roger, Danny Hancock, and Michael Barber

Ways to Give

Please help disabled people access financial resources and healthcare.

There are many ways to support PRC. However you decide to help, please consider making a tax deductible gift today.

- * Donate by check or credit card using the donation envelope provided.
- * Make a secure online donation at www.positiveresource.org/donate.asp.
- * Increase your gift's impact with employer matching gifts. Ask your employer how.
- * Attend fundraising events.

- * Leave a legacy by naming PRC in your will or trust. Speak with your financial advisor.
- * Donate used items at Community Thrift Store.
- * Volunteer your time. Call 415-777-0333 for upcoming volunteer opportunities.
- * Shop at Under One Roof.

Visit www.positiveresource.org/support.asp for more easy ways to show your support.

Contact PRC's Development Department for more information at 415.777.0333 development@positiveresource.org.

**POSITIVE
RESOURCE
CENTER**

place
stamp
here

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San Francisco, CA 94103
phone 415.777.0333
fax 415.777.1770
www.positiveresource.org

**We're
going green.**

Please sign up to receive our
e-newsletter at
www.positiveresource.org

Find us on



www.facebook.com/positiveresource

**Positive Resource Center
is a grateful beneficiary of
these community events:**

Folsom Street Fair

Sunday, September 29



**Help Is On the Way
For The Holidays**

Monday, December 9



Under One Roof



Come out and support us or volunteer!

To volunteer, contact Michael Rubio at 415-777-0333;
michaelr@positiveresource.org

**PRC'S
WINDOWS OF
OPPORTUNITY**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2013
6 - 9 PM**

**SPUR URBAN CENTER
654 MISSION ST., SAN FRANCISCO**

**TO PURCHASE TICKETS, GO TO
www.positiveresource.org**

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

Contact Leigh Illion, Managing Director of Development
at 415-972-0878; leighi@positiveresource.org