

Voices of Choices

August 2013

Choices Learning Center

Volume 2, Issue 5

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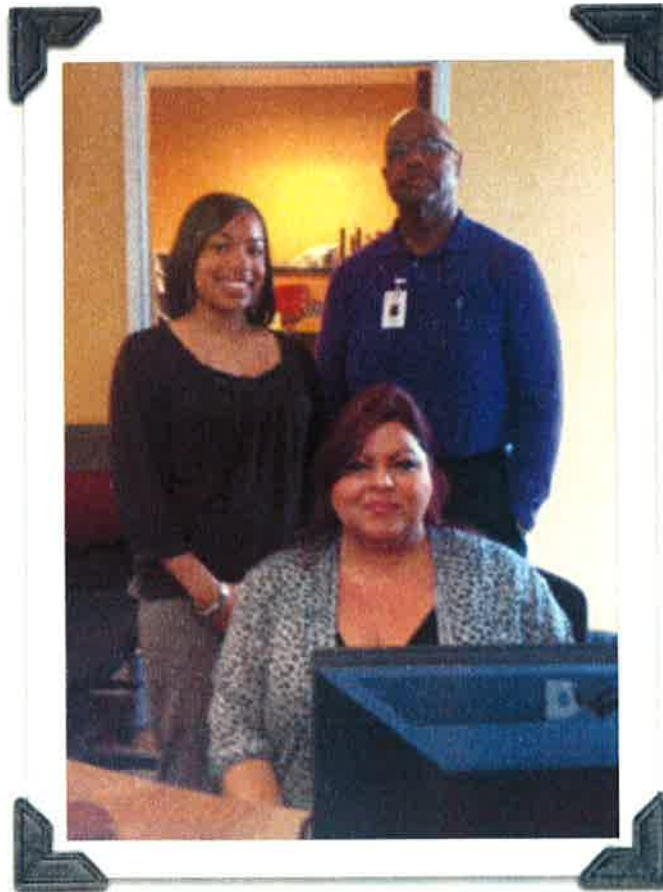
An interview with Choices partner and community advocate, Tina K.

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This Mexican Casserole delighted partners and staff.

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New Staff at the Learning Center!

This July, Choices Learning Center welcomed three new staff members!

Michael Rangel is our new Support Services Assistant, and she has already taken the front desk in hand with her calm, grounded energy and willingness to jump in and help.

Vernon Royal and Desire Means are our newest full-time Recovery Coaches! Currently, they are learning their way around the Learning Center and sitting in on groups and meetings. Any day now, they will be facilitating groups at the Learning Center and amazing you with their unique strengths and gifts.



Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services
CHOICES
for Community Living Program

Allow us to introduce ourselves...



Hello, my name is Vernon Royal. I am 50 years of age and I have been working in the social work field for the past 25 years. My experience includes working with adults and juveniles in the mental health field as well as the court systems. I really enjoy this field of work and I am excited about working for RI.

It's tough to talk about myself, I guess I can say that I am happy to be here. I have 3 children: Marcos, twenty two; Michael, nineteen; and Mikaela, sixteen. We share a house in Sunnyvale Ca along with our two pit bulls, three cats and two snakes... yikes!! Sometimes I feel like Zsa Zsa Gabor from Green Acres. (Oops, I might have dated myself with that comment.) I love working with people and embrace the unique qualities of each person. I feel our individuality is a blessing otherwise what a boring colorless world it would be. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you and learning about your special gifts



Desiree Means lives in Oakland, CA, with her significant other and their 17-month-old son. She comes from a mixed background of Hispanic and African-American cultures. She hopes to learn fluent Spanish and become more in-tune with the Hispanic culture. Desiree has a BA in psychology. She plans on going back to school to get her Masters in Social Work. Her career goals are to one day own her own business in the behavioral health field.

Recipe of the Month: Mexican Casserole

Simple, nutritious, affordable...brought to you by the Learning Center's Cooking Basics group*.

Ingredients (serves 6):

- 1 lb extra lean ground beef (drained or rinsed!)
- 1/2 cup onion (chopped)
- 1/4 cup canned jalapeno slices, chopped
- 2 cups fresh tomatoes, chopped or 1 (15 ounce) can diced canned tomatoes
- 1 (15 ounce) can kernel corn (drained)
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans (rinsed and drained)
- 1 (1 1/4 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 8 corn tortillas
- 3/4 cup nonfat sour cream
- 1/3 cup reduced-fat Mexican cheese blend, shredded
- 1/3 bunch fresh cilantro, chopped, to taste (or less (or more))

Preparation:

1. Brown ground beef and chopped onions in large skillet; brown 10 to 12 minutes or until thoroughly cooked, stirring constantly. Drain well and rinse with warm water to remove all fat; return beef/onions to skillet.
2. Add corn, black beans, tomatoes, jalapenos and taco seasoning; mix well. Reduce heat; simmer 5 minutes.
3. Meanwhile spray 12x8-inch (2-quart) baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Cut each tortilla in half; place 8 halves in bottom of sprayed baking dish, overlapping slightly.
4. Spoon half of beef mixture evenly over tortillas. Spoon sour cream over beef mixture; spread evenly. Top with remaining 8 tortilla halves and remaining beef mixture. (Cover tightly with foil & freeze for later **OR** cook as directed below...).
5. (Thaw overnight if frozen.) Heat oven to 350°F. Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes. Remove from oven; sprinkle with cheese. Cover; let stand 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.
6. Sprinkle with chopped cilantro and serve with fresh chopped lettuce, tomatoes, salsa, black olives, etc...
Makes 6 large servings at 6.5 weight watcher points each.
7. Enjoy!

The **Cooking Basics group meets with Linda in the **Learning Center kitchen** on **Tuesdays** from **10:30 to 12:30**.*



That's Cute!

Where'd You Get That?

Each month, Gary W. shares his keen fashion sense.

He highlights runway-worthy items worn by staff and partners at the Learning Center—items that made him say,

“Hey, that’s cute! Where’d you get that?”

This month, Gary saw some stylish watches:



Gary W. has an eye for fashion.



“I love this watch. It is colorful and fun. It’s a sports team watch. The numbers are big.”

“I like this watch because it is a timeless time piece. It’s simple and can be elegant. You can dress it up or down.”



Recovery is Real: Advocating for a Better Community

Recovery Coach Patricia Neal interviewed Choices partner Tina K. about her work as an activist and advocate.

Tina K. has been riding busses all her life. Her favorite colors are beige, blue, and white. Tina's birthday is March 11. Tina takes responsibility for her behavior, is a quiet and well-informed woman. She is a willing spirit ready to serve others as a community activist for fair rights and equal opportunities for all people. Tina is also passionate about speaking up for people with disabilities. She has been speaking with knowledge about herself through the Choices and B.O.S.S service teams since October 2012. Tina's community activism includes her work with a Neighborhood Watch group in San Francisco.

For the past two months Tina has been talking with AC Transit asking for free shuttle service from Downtown Oakland to the Choices Learning Center. Tina would like Choices to host a community event and invite AC Transit board members to hear about us and listen to our request for daily free shuttle service.

* * * * *

Are you wondering how else you can get involved in the campaign for bus service to Choices Learning Center? Well, Tina shared this advice:

1. Call AC Transit (511) every Thursday and let them know YOU support extending the free Broadway shuttle's route to include the Oakland Embarcadero.
2. Make sure to mention the complaint number, 352 996. This helps AC Transit track how many people call to talk about a specific topic. When you provide this serial number to the AC Transit operator, that makes your "vote" count.
3. Stay tuned! Tina will keep the Choices community aware of any upcoming meetings to attend, or other developments.



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-Margaret Mead

Getting to Know You

Each issue, Robert Medeiros asks someone at Choices Learning Center his Four Questions.

This month, get to know... Kim W!

Question #1:

What is your birthday?

Answer:

July 22nd

Question #2:

Where were you born?

Answer:

Alameda, CA

Question #3:

What are your interests?

Answer:

Martial arts

Facebook

Reading books

Watching TV

Music: Pop, country, pop-rock.

Question #4:

Who, what or where do you want to be after you graduate from Choices?

Answer:

I hope to be in a position of being a Recovery Coach. I also want to be married someday and have kids.



Kim W. in the Choices garden

Creative Expressions

POETRY - PHOTOGRAPHY - INSPIRATIONAL IMAGES AND QUOTES - MUSIC -
PERFORMANCES - JOURNALING - ANYTHING YOU CREATE AND WANT TO SHARE.



Untitled

Upset at the hard work it takes
Just makes the work harder

I'm filled with rage
and thinking it's funny
doesn't make my bed softer

getting to the core of what bothers me
to hold up a mirror so I can be free

I see so much inside, all obscured by
who I was before I knew to look

It's going to take a lot of work to
polish the inside
to set free the facade
so I can just be

Until then you'll see me working to breathe.

By Recovery Coach Michael McKeever

"Your task is not to seek for love,
but merely to seek and find all of
the barriers within yourself that you
have built against it."

-Rumi



Closing Thoughts...

Remember -- the Voices of Choices is a place for every member of our community to share and connect. If you have an idea or a contribution for the newsletter, tell us! Drop a copy in the suggestion box, hand it to your recovery coach or Donna or Michael at the front desk, email to contact.voc@recoveryinnovations.org... whatever works best for you. But please, share your beautiful contributions!



Recovery

is remembering
who you are
and using your
strengths
to become all you
were meant
to be.

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