



Meet Me

Meet individuals in
your community with
developmental disabilities

Michael Devall helps design the set for "Terror on Magic Island," a production for a multi-media class he takes at the DDSO - Short Center South. Devall and the other students regularly write scripts, create soundtracks and star in short films that are uploaded to YouTube.

PHOTO AND COVER PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

'This is Who I Am'

Individuals with developmental disabilities
add to our communities

BY ELISSA EINHORN

michael Devall is an athlete, a thespian, and a poet. What he is not is "retarded." "I despise the word 'retardation,'" Devall says from his home in Galt. "It is offensive language. If someone uses that word in front of me, I say, 'Excuse me, please refrain from using that word.'"

While the 53-year-old describes himself as an individual who is mentally challenged with a visual impairment — he is blind in his left eye — he defines himself by his accomplishments.

So, who is Michael Devall? He is a five-time gold medalist in the Special Olympics. At age 4, he discovered a passion for acting and has since performed in countless local productions, including the lead role in "Bye, Bye, Birdie." He composes music and pens poetry for his girlfriend, Nicole, who he's been dating since 2011. He is a valued employee at the DDSO Short Center South. A committed volunteer, he serves on the Galt Strawberry Festival Committee and with the Student Council Committee at his program, which he has attended for more than 20 years. He is also organized and punctual. He loves video games and peanut butter. And, above all, he enjoys helping people.

Devall's life is an example of what inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities looks like. Inclusion is when all people are able to contribute to our schools, workplaces and communities as equals. But that hasn't always been the

case. Historically, individuals like Devall lived and were cared for in what are called state developmental centers, which follow a medical model involving treatment and medication. Individuals with development disabilities were separated from the community in these institutions.

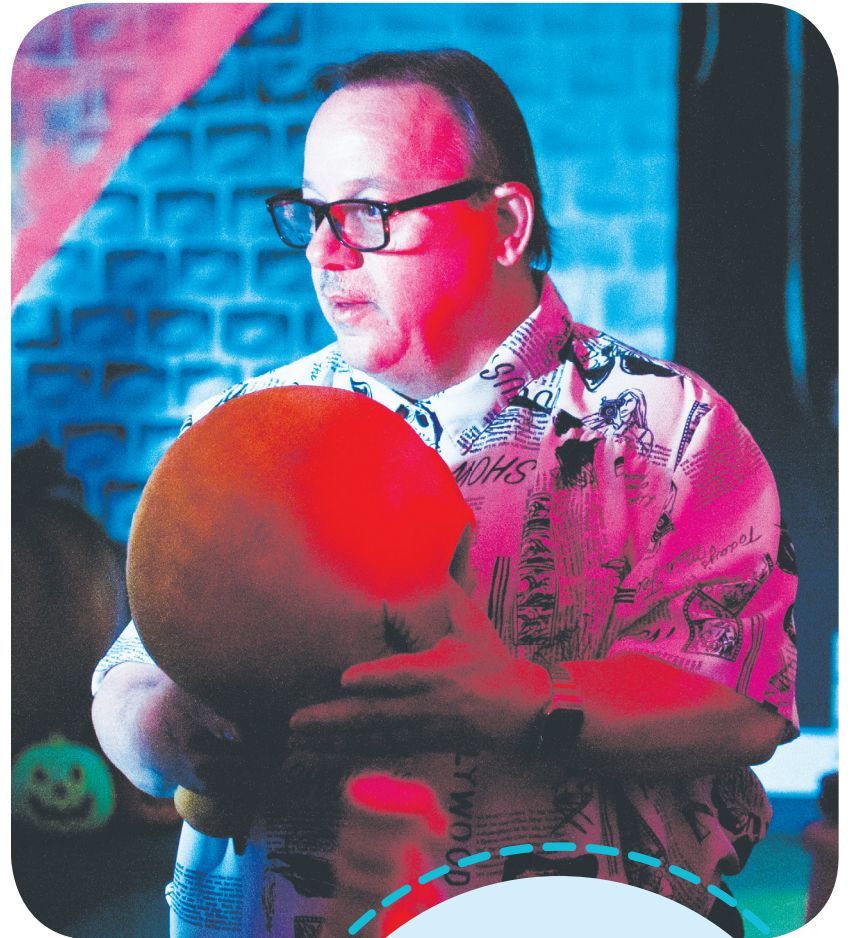
Taking a cue from the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s, disability rights' advocates fought for equal access, recognizing that individuals with developmental disabilities could be productive in their homes and communities with proper supports.

The result of this activism is more people with developmental disabilities successfully living and working in their communities, says Sonya Bingaman, Manager for the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) in Sacramento. Still, there is a long way to go, especially with raising awareness outside of the disability community.

"We try to reach outside the box and attend events related to housing, employment, health care, and other areas to bring the perspective of how individuals with developmental disabilities are being thought of or considered," she says.

This work is even more important as California works to close its last three developmental centers by the year 2021, which means more individuals will be in need of housing, jobs, education, health care and full access to the community.

Bingaman hopes a greater awareness about disabilities such as cerebral palsy, intellectual disability and autism, will lead to a broader understanding about the importance of inclusion.



"Inclusion means
each person is
valued, each person
is interdependent on
each other."

Sandra Smith
Chair, State Council on
Developmental Disabilities

"Our goal is for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive the supports they need to be fully included into their communities, and that they be treated with respect and dignity," Bingaman says. "Our advocacy strives to empower each person to identify and develop their hopes and dreams, and achieve their potential and full access to the community."

Devall's message is this: "I've always wanted to show what a mature adult can do for themselves. Always remember to be kind to yourself, to be kind to other people, and to always let them know who you really are."



Nelia Nunes and husband Ken play with daughters Sabrina, 11, and Alexa, 7. Sabrina inspired Nelia to work with her school district and parks and recreation department to make changes that support inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.

PHOTO BY MELISSA UROFF



What is a developmental disability?

A “developmental disability” is a disability that originates before an individual turns 18 years of age; is expected to continue indefinitely; and constitutes a substantial disability for that individual. It includes intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and disabling conditions found to be closely related to intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with an intellectual disability, but shall not include other handicapping conditions that are solely physical in nature.

22,907 people with developmental disabilities receive services in our area (*)

* Alta California Regional Center statistics, 2016-2017. Alta Regional Center serves a 10-county region that includes Alpine, Colusa, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties.

‘Why I Believe in Inclusion’

A family’s journey to raise their daughter without focusing on her disability

BY ELISSA EINHORN

When Sabrina Nunes was 6 months old, her mother began having concerns. “She had trouble sucking, she had hip dysplasia, her body would turn blue, and she was floppy,” Nelia Nunes says of her daughter.

A trip to the pediatrician’s office set in motion a series of assessments and dozens of physical, occupational and speech therapy appointments. Now 11, Sabrina still has no official diagnosis and limited speech. What she does have is an amazing smile and a sense of humor. She loves music, macaroni and cheese (with a side of fries), and summertime.

In the early days of her first-born’s journey, Nunes spent significant energy trying to control Sabrina’s disability through what she felt were the right combination of services. Her family pulled away from friends and their life revolved around managing Sabrina’s special needs. Nunes joined social groups specifically for parents of children with disabilities.

Then, Nunes had an epiphany.

A parent of a typically developing child asked if her child could have a playdate with Sabrina. Nunes initially declined the offer, saying Sabrina already had a social group for children just like her. Then, she thought about what both children could learn by playing together.

“Here was this real-life opportunity for social interaction,” she recalls. “I realized how much I believed in inclusion and thought, ‘Why not start now?’”

So she did, first building relationships with her school district and parks and recreation department. By advocating for her daughter to be included in educational and social opportunities, she was also helping to change assumptions around individuals with disabilities.

Sabrina has been in general education classes since the first grade with a modified curriculum and services provided by the school. This year, she participated in the fifth grade overnight field trip in Sausalito, accompanied by an aide.

The Nunes family, which also includes 7-year-old Alexa, enjoys what other families enjoy. They eat at restaurants, spend time with friends and go shopping together.

“By us not focusing on the disability,” Nunes explains, “nobody else does either.”

That is life in the present.

But Nunes worries about Sabrina’s future, once she and her husband, Ken, are gone. Will she be abused? Will

she end up living on the streets? Nunes knows

the best she can do is have supports in place for when she and Ken are no longer able to care for her.

Still, Nunes tries to keep focused on the good in their lives. Nunes says, “One of the things I’ve learned along the way is to first, enjoy your child. They are a child above everything else and a person first and foremost. Sabrina is Sabrina. She is not Sabrina with a disability.”

“Sabrina is Sabrina. She is not Sabrina with a disability.”

Nelia Nunes
Parent



Emmanuel Murrell attends class at Cosumnes River College with a goal to get a degree and start a career in counseling.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

'I Have ----- Dreams'

Students gain social skills and self-esteem in general education classrooms

BY ELISSA EINHORN



Inclusion in schools: Tips for educators

✓ Seek guidance from experts

General education teachers have a team of experts at their fingertips: their special education colleagues. Reach out and bring them into your classroom for support.

✓ Learn behavior management

Behavior management techniques can help keep all students engaged. Ask yourself, "Rather than have a student leave my classroom, how can I help him/her stay?"

✓ Adapt curriculum

Adapt the general education curriculum to a level where a student with developmental disabilities can understand the material.

✓ Look beyond the school year

Broaden your goal from graduating students from one grade to preparing them to become citizens of the community and the world.

✓ Set high expectations

Students will become adults who will live and work in their communities. Setting high expectations helps build the self-esteem they will need as adults.

Visit www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se for more ways to be inclusive in schools.

Inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in general education classrooms is first and foremost about the diversity of all individuals, believes Eli Gallup, Nevada County Associate Superintendent of Special Education.

"Individuals with disabilities are not less than," says Gallup. "They have different abilities. Sometimes, they even have super abilities."

Sometimes they are like Emmanuel "Isley" Murrell. The 20-year-old, who has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair, is currently studying counseling at Cosumnes River College (CRC) and plans to transfer to Sacramento State University to earn his degree.

Isley receives support at CRC from an Educational Specialist employed through Futures Explored. The specialist's role focuses on executive functioning skills, such as organization, time management, and supporting the students in accessing campus resources.

"Such support can be instrumental to success in higher education," says Lindsey Dyba, Regional Program Director with Futures Explored.

Throughout grade school, Murrell attended class in general education classrooms with the help of various supports, including a paraeducator who helped him with his writing — which he readily admits is pretty illegible — and extended time on tests.

"I would say that overall, it was a good experience," says Murrell. "I've always gotten good grades and I was on the honor roll a few times in elementary school."

According to Gallup, Murrell's experience is an ideal example of inclusion, where students with disabilities are taught

alongside students without disabilities. Everyone has access to the general education curriculum and the special education curriculum is available as needed. Classes are co-taught and everyone shares in the educational experience. Gallup says students also benefit socially and emotionally as well.

"There is more to education than academics," he says. "It's about how students learn to navigate the world."

Describing himself as social and able to get along with everybody, Murrell believes his peers were accepting of him throughout his grade school experience.

"I think of myself as a nice person and I was able to carry that success outside of the classroom," he explains. "I have friendly relationships with people who have allowed me to get help when I need it. My friends help me a lot."

While colleges operate under different rules than K-12 education, there are many supports available to college students. The Disability Services department on campus is a great place for students to learn about supports, such as note takers, books on tape, and extra time for tests.

Through an inclusive education, Gallup says students with developmental disabilities gain self-esteem, confidence and a growth mindset that instills an "I can do it" attitude.

"At its core, inclusion is about experience and acceptance," Gallup says. "We're all in this together. It's not us and them."

Murrell adds that he believes everyone deserves fair opportunities regardless of any disabilities they may have.

"A disability should not stop you from accomplishing your dreams," he says.

"There is no such thing as a special education student. They're our students. We serve all children."

Kristin Wright

Director of Special Education for the California Department of Education



Since 1987, James Littlejohn has built a successful career through Crossroads, enabling him to live a more independent life.
PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

‘I Want to Achieve!’

Individuals with intellectual disabilities earn a paycheck and a sense of pride through employment

● BY ANNE STOKES

For James Littlejohn, the team at Crossroads is like a second family. “You meet people and you get to know them,” he says. “To me, it’s a blessing really.”

Crossroads has provided Littlejohn, 59, more than just a second family. Despite being diagnosed with severe anxiety and a speech impediment, Crossroads has given him a growing career, the means to support himself and a sense of accomplishment through a job well done.

“That’s nice when you do a job, and when you get finished with it, you can see a big difference,” he said. “I like to stretch myself. If I see something and I tell myself, ‘This is going to be too much,’ I go ahead and I do it anyway. I take it as far as I can and I keep going.”

That drive to achieve is something many people experience in the workplace. Unfortunately, many people with developmental disabilities do not get that opportunity — about 70 percent of them are unemployed.

According to the California Department of Developmental Services, finding competitive employment for individuals with

developmental disabilities supports inclusion and reaps benefits for both the individual and their employer.

“It’s an important thing for us as an organization to see these individuals, recognize the strengths they have and to be able to utilize them out there with various companies [and] different workforces,” said Marc Lopez, Director of Operations at Crossroads. “We want to highlight their strengths and present opportunities in the future for them.”

In May 1987, Littlejohn started with Crossroads as a janitorial trainee. By 1999, he had worked his way up to

a full-time utility technician position, responsible for some complex tasks, including the proper mixing of chemicals. Today, he works within all of Crossroads’ janitorial contracts and is a leader among his peers, sharing his skills and expertise with teammates. He says it’s a good feeling being respected for his experience.

“They depend on me to help them get jobs done,” he said. “I like that.”

Lopez says Littlejohn’s dedication and skills have not gone unnoticed by clients or his co-workers at Crossroads.

“When James takes on a job, he makes sure it’s done to the fullest of his potential,” said Lopez. “His story really builds what our mission is. It truly defines what we do as a company and what we deem a success.”

“People with disabilities bring what employers want: passion, commitment, reliability.”

Aaron Carruthers
Executive Director, State Council on Developmental Disabilities



Inclusion in the workplace: Tips for employers

✓ Create an inclusion policy

Many companies have established diversity and inclusion policies. Work with disability provider agencies to identify your company as one that’s open and willing to accept applications from people with developmental disabilities.

✓ Identify talent matches

Confer with those same disability provider agencies to match your available positions with the strengths and skills of people with developmental disabilities.

✓ Start a mentorship program

Fostering relationships and mentorship between senior leaders and employees with disabilities allows workers to learn from and about one another.

Visit www.rehab.cahwnet.gov/workforce-development for more ways to be inclusive in the workplace.

Libby Drake, 40, has had difficulty in the past finding affordable and accessible housing options, an important element in her ability to live as independent a life as possible.

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES



'I Value My Independence'

Affordable and accessible housing can be hard to find for individuals with disabilities

BY ANNE STOKES

Libby Drake, 40, likes to spend her time hanging out with friends, shopping, and watching movies and TV (she's a big fan of Tom Selleck). She loves visits from her family, especially her niece and nephews, and she's active in her community, advocating on behalf of causes near and dear to her heart — in particular the rights of individuals living with disabilities.

These are all things she wouldn't be able to do if she were living in a state developmental center — closed off from her community.

Drake has cerebral palsy. While nonverbal, she is able to communicate with an iPad, most often with her daytime direct support professional, Destiny Tobeck. Tobeck helps with everyday tasks like housework, meals, arranging transportation, and accompanying Drake on errands and activities.

Drake says she values her independence, one of the most important elements of which is housing. Currently, with the help of Tobeck and other direct support professionals, Drake lives with a roommate in a single-family home in Carmichael. For the past two years, she's been able to live there with financial support from Strategies to Empower People (S.T.E.P.) which, together with her supplemented security income (SSI), covers her housing costs. However, it wasn't always easy finding inclusive housing. In the

past, she says it's been difficult to find affordable houses or apartments that were physically accessible to her and her wheelchair. In her last move, she also had to give up her brown tabby cat, Eddy, whom she had since he was a kitten.

"It is so hard to find affordable housing with my income," she says through her iPad communication device. "We need more friendly housing for handicapped people. People need to know we are people like you."

"This movement is about people having a right to their own front door. They have a right to choice."

Patti Uplinger
Executive Director, Housing Now

According to Jordan Lindsey, Executive Director of the Arc of California, a disability advocacy organization, finding affordable and accessible housing options is a challenge for many individuals in situations similar to Drake's. He says individuals with disabilities face more housing discrimination than any other group of people — 55 percent of all housing discrimination claims are based on physical or mental disabilities.

"We just need to make sure that landlords, owners [and] builders are also leading with compassion and empathy and making sure that they are not inadvertently or overtly discriminating," he says. "It's important that we continue to acknowledge and emphasize that individuals with developmental disabilities are people."



**Inclusion in communities:
Tips for landlords and housing/
transportation planners**

Through supported living services, people with disabilities have options that help them live as independently as possible.

✓ **Make housing more affordable and accessible**

Make more units available, especially those designed with ADA Compliance in mind, and offer affordable units for individuals whose income depends on SSI, housing vouchers or other forms of public financing.

✓ **Adopt policies to reduce discrimination**

Educate management and staff on ADA laws and what reasonable modifications can be made to accommodate tenants.

✓ **Support accessible public transportation**

For many people — especially those who are unable to drive — access to public transportation is essential to maintaining employment and being involved in the community. Public transit is also an affordable method of transportation for many who rely on SSI for income.

✓ **Increase the reliability of public transportation**

Individuals must be able to rely on transportation to get to work, medical and other appointments.

Visit www.housingnowresource.org and www.lantermanhousingalliance.org for more ways to be inclusive in housing.

Why Inclusion Matters



When individuals with developmental disabilities are included in every aspect of our society, we all benefit. Here's how.



Improved academic scores: Students with developmental disabilities and their typically developing peers both show higher test scores and increased likelihood to graduate high school when they learn in the same classroom.

Acceptance: Students who socialize with children with special needs develop acceptance of all individuals.

Higher expectations: Children with developmental disabilities are given more opportunities to be challenged, which ultimately leads to more confidence and ability to live independently.

Positive role-modeling: When children with special needs see positive behaviors modeled by their typically developing peers, they are more likely to adopt those behaviors.

SOURCE: "First Steps to Preschool Inclusion," Sarika S. Gupta Ph.D., William R. Henninger IV, Ph.D., Megan E. Vinh Ph.D.

"In education our responsibility is to create a foundation of belonging and acceptance and community. Every child has great potential and can learn. Special ed is not a place — it's a support and service to ensure everyone has access to their education."

Kristin Wright
Director of Special Education for the California Department of Education



Boosting the bottom line: Businesses who hire people with developmental disabilities report observable benefits such as overall employee engagement and increased customer loyalty.

Corporate culture: Organizations with a diversity and inclusion strategy show improved morale.

Talent match: Three-quarters or more of employers rate their employees with developmental disabilities as "good to very good" on most performance factors, including work quality and productivity.

Reducing economic disparities: Working provides a source of income and economic power to individuals who experience a high level of unemployment (typically 70%).

SOURCE: "Employing People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities," i4cp.com

"We are dedicated to helping individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities obtain the information, services, and supports they need to achieve their employment goals."

Joe Xavier
Director, California Department of Rehabilitation



Satisfaction: Individuals who live in the community are 14 times more likely to like where they live (vs. in an institutional setting).

Civic engagement: Individuals living outside institutional settings are able to participate in the disability rights movement, volunteer and have a voice.

Autonomy: Living outside institutional settings gives individuals more opportunities to be alone when they want, eat the foods they want and go outside and run errands when they want.

Dignity: Individuals who live in the community report having more access to the bathroom, bathing, meals and medicine when they needed them, compared to institutional settings.

SOURCE: "Olmstead Interviews: Great Lakes Results," October 2017, Americans with Disabilities Act Participatory Action Research Consortium (ADA PARC)

"Just seeing someone who is finally able to move into their own place and the joy that comes from that — now they're independent from others. They're free."

Patti Uplinger
Executive Director, Housing Now

Making Our Community More

inclusive



"Community inclusion improves the quality of everyone's life."

Dr. Robin Hansen
Director of Clinical Programs,
UC Davis MIND Institute

Almost 700,000 individuals in California (or 2% of the population) are estimated to have an intellectual or developmental disability. Just as in the general public, individuals living with a disability have varied and diverse skills and aptitudes that contribute to our community's richness and diversity.

Whether you're an employer, educator, landlord or neighbor, you can find ways to be more inclusive in the decisions you make every day.



Thank you to the following organizations for their support of this publication:



Adapts
adapts.org

The Arc of Placer County
522 Vernon St., Roseville, CA 95678
916-781-3016, placercarc.org

ArtWorks!
cts-choices.org

California Health & Wellness
877-658-0305, cahealthwellness.com

Choices
cts-choices.org

Crossroads
9300 Tech Center Drive #100, Sacramento, CA 95826
866-710-9737, cdsdiv.com

Developmental Disabilities Service Organization
5051 47th Ave, Sacramento, CA 95824
916-456-5166, ddso.org

Disability Rights California
916-504-5800, disabilityrightsca.org

Family SOUP
familysoup.org

Folsom Runway
facebook.com/folsomrunway

FREED
435 Sutton Way, Grass Valley, CA 95945
530-477-3333, freed.org

Futures Explored
2829 Watt Ave., Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95821
916-568-1422, futures-explored.org

Goodwill
916-395-9000, goodwillsacto.org

Health Net
healthnet.com

Housing Now
housingnowresource.org

NICU Family Alliance
nicufamilyalliance.org

Pavilion Car Wash
pavilioncarcare.com

Progressive Employment Concepts
progressiveemployment.org

Placer Independent Resource Services
530-885-6100, pirs.org

Resources for Independent Living
ril-sacramento.org

River City Medical Group
rcmg.com

State Council on Developmental Disabilities
3831 N. Freeway Blvd., #125, Sacramento, CA 95834
916-263-8134, scdd.ca.gov

STEP
STEP believes that every person has the right to live in their own home and to have employment opportunities. Our support teams make the difference in meeting this ideal.
2330 Glendale Lane, Sacramento, CA 95825
916-679-1555, stepagency.com

Therap
therapservices.net

UC Davis MIND Institute
2825 50th St, Sacramento, CA 95817
916-703-0300, mindinstitute.ucdavis.edu

WeEMBRACE
weembracefamilies.org