



# MSSSG

## Mountain Shadows Support Group

Mountain Shadows  
Community Homes  
Mountain Shadows  
Outreach Services

WINTER ♦ 2009

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## Harvest Festival Reaps Rewards for Residents

***“Judge each day not by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.”***

— ROBERT LEWIS STEVENSON

Throughout history, the Earth’s bountiful harvest has been celebrated with festivals to give thanks. Harvest celebrations brought community members together to rejoice and give thanks for a new crop. Festivals were much anticipated events featuring music, games, food, and merriment. Gatherings marking fruitful harvests were held by most early cultures, including the ancient Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, Chinese and Egyptians.

Demeter, the Greek Goddess of Corn, was honored at the *Festival of Thesmophoria*. The Romans celebrated their Harvest Festival, *Cerelia*, with music, parades, and games.

The ancient Chinese commemorated *Chung Ch’ui*, their harvest festival, with the full moon that fell on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month. This day was considered the birthday of the moon and special “moon cakes,” round and yellow like the moon, would be baked.

The ancient Egyptians marked the harvest with the *Festival of Min*, God of Vegetation and Fertility. It featured a grand parade in which the Pharaoh took part.

*Lammas Day*, or “loaf mass,” a feast with pagan origins, was one of the oldest medieval festivals. Believed to date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, the Feast of Lammas was eagerly anticipated because it marked the end of the “hungry gap,” the time of year when food stocks were at their lowest, just before harvest. The first loaves of bread baked from the harvest were

blessed in church, which explains the term Lammas, or loaf mass.

This year, for the first time, Mountain Shadows Community Homes celebrated its own unique Harvest Festival. There were no crops of corn or wheat or fruit to gather. Instead we celebrated the cultivation of the many seeds we’ve planted at Mountain Shadows over the years, seeds that we believe have produced one of the Earth’s most precious harvests.

As with Harvest Festivals of times and cultures past, our Mountain Shadows festivities featured a coming together of community in tribute to our collective hard work and the many ben-



Right to left, Cindy and Keisha from Orange enjoy the candy table.

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# Cheryl Harris Infuses Mountain Shadows Outreach Services with New Vision

*“A leader has the vision and conviction that a dream can be achieved. She inspires the power and energy to get it done.”*

— RALPH LAUREN

Cheryl Harris, Mountain Shadows Outreach Services (MSOS) Director, has a very clear vision of what she believes the Mountain Shadows Outreach program can become. “I want MSOS to be the best,” says Cheryl. “I want us to be #1 in the industry. When providers, families, care givers, or clients are in need of outreach services, I want Mountain Shadows Outreach Services to be the first name that pops into their mind.”

Cheryl joined MSOS in October of 2008. Since then, she’s been working hard to achieve her dream. During her first three months as Director, she spearheaded an effort to renovate the MSOS facility. Says Cheryl, “The décor really wasn’t appropriate for our clients, who are all adults. All of the rooms in the building have been freshly painted and the décor is now much more appropriate and functional for everyone. The staff and clients love it!”

In addition to a refreshing, age-appropriate, new look for the organization, Cheryl has expanded and enriched staff training programs to help employees identify and become more responsive to client needs. Gaining insight into client limitations, setting suitable program goals and demonstrating respect for client choices are skills highlighted in the training programs.

“While we’ve come a long way in just three months, we have a long way to go,” says Cheryl. Her strategy to keep things moving forward includes:

- Building and cultivating new relationships with local businesses that will allow more MSOS clients to work within the community. This will include both volunteer and paid work sites.
- Hosting open houses for families, service coordinators, providers and other industry professionals to promote awareness of MSOS services and mission, and to establish relationships within the field.
- Increasing and improving staff training to enhance client potential.
- Monitoring and constantly refining programs to ensure quality and innovation.
- Promoting MSOS’s access to transportation through Mountain Shadows buses. Very few programs in the area have buses available for client use.

Prior to joining Mountain Shadows, Cheryl was employed with the San Diego Regional Center as a

Service Coordinator within the organizations’ Placement Unit. While there, she managed a case-load of approximately 75 clients and earned a solid reputation with professionals and vendors throughout the industry.

Cheryl was raised in Michigan and still loves to visit there. “I love the trees and open spaces,” says Carol. “I enjoy camping and hiking and just love being out in nature. My favorite hobby is woodworking. I have every power tool ever made by Craftsman! My father was my inspiration. Now woodworking is something we can do together.”

When asked what the most important thing in her life is, Cheryl quickly replied, “Andy! Andy is my five-year-old son ... a male canine. He’s a Belgian Malinois that I adopted five years ago. When I brought him home, I fell in love. Unfortunately, after I adopted him, I learned Andy was only four weeks old. He was much too young to have been taken away from his mother. I had to bottle feed him for weeks. Andy has had some other health problems over the years too. He has an eating disorder called Megaesophagus and had several seizures earlier this year – but his quality of life is terrific now. And there’s nothing better than seeing his wagging tail and having him jump up, lick me in the face and welcome me home.”

Cheryl’s family was and is still very close. “My grandparents had a strong influence on my life. Just by watching them, I learned how important it is to work hard, to give back, to help others, and to accept them as they are.”

Working hard, giving back, helping others – these are the qualities Cheryl demonstrates in her personal life and in her work with Mountain Shadows. It is these same traits which support our conviction that her vision for Mountain Shadows Outreach Services can be achieved.

*If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can do it.*

— WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

Through Cheryl’s vision we have seen the dream, now, under her leadership, we know we can do it. ■



Cheryl Harris

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# Excalibur Legend Unfolds for Cedar House Resident

*Behold the sword of power! Excalibur! Forged when the world was young; and bird and beast and flower were one with man; and death was but a dream.*

In medieval times, with the magical sword Excalibur in hand, King Arthur built Camelot, an enchanted kingdom where he envisioned mankind would return to an innocent time of hope and peace.

Today, while we may be a long way from the legendary Camelot, the name Excalibur still captivates us, conjuring images of knights in shining armor, castles, and fair maidens. These images are brought to life daily at the Excalibur Hotel in Las Vegas where, as Mountain Shadows Cedar House resident Cathy A. recently learned, a world of magic still exists.

“Cathy had been anxiously awaiting her trip to Las Vegas,” says Bridget Faimon, QMRP of Cedar House. “On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, she left for the airport with one carry-on bag, Cedar House DCS, Maria, and a huge smile.” Upon landing in Vegas, royal accommodations, designed to be completely handicapped accessible, awaited Cathy at the Excalibur. From the moment Cathy checked in, “The rush to see everything and do everything that the Strip had to offer was on,” says Bridget. Adds Maria, “Cathy wanted to go, go, go!”

Thanks to Cathy’s go-go attitude, she was treated to an enthralling, jam-packed journey through time that featured everything from strolling princes and princesses, to Sponge Bob Square Pants slot machines, to jousting knights, to glitzy, pyrotechnic-laden stage shows. “Apparently the only thing Cathy didn’t do in beautiful Las Vegas ... was sleep!” says Bridget.

Cathy got to shop til she dropped at the Excalibur’s Castle Walk, a medieval themed bazaar, with village shops such as the “Dragon’s Lair” and “Kids of the



Standing behind Cathy are Zorro, Elvis, and Maria (MSCH Staff).

Kingdom”. While there were a myriad of fun things to buy, Cathy made it a point to save some of her money so she could buy souvenir T-shirts for her brother and sister, James and Carmen, who helped fund her trip to Vegas.

“We ate at seemingly endless buffets,” says Maria. One of Cathy’s favorites was the Excalibur’s Roundtable Buffet – an all you can eat feast fit for a king!

But, when asked what her favorite part of her Las Vegas adventure was, Cathy grinned and turned a little red, “The dancers -- they were so cute!” Of course, no trip to Las Vegas would be complete without experiencing one of the spectacular live stage shows. Not wanting to miss out on any excitement, Cathy carefully chose the Excalibur’s internationally acclaimed revue, “Australia’s Thunder from Down Under,” the #1 male revue in the world.

Camelot! Camelot!

I know it sounds a bit bizarre,

But in Camelot, Camelot

That how conditions are.

The rain may never fall till after sundown.

By eight, the morning fog must disappear.

In short, there’s simply not

A more congenial spot

For happily-ever-aftering than here

In Camelot

— KING ARTHUR

Arthurian legend and the Las Vegas Strip may seem an odd mix, but the smile on Cathy’s face as she rolled through the Excalibur castle in her wheelchair was a sign to us that, while times may have changed, the magic of the sword Excalibur and of King Arthur’s Camelot still exist today.

Yes, Camelot, my boy!

Where once it never rained till after sundown,

By eight a.m. the morning fog had flown ...

Don’t let it be forgot

That once there was a spot

For one brief shining moment that was known

As Camelot.

“Cathy can’t wait to go to Las Vegas again next year,” says Bridget. “She’s already making plans!”

Here’s to Camelot! To hopes. To dreams. To innocence. Yes, here’s to Camelot! ■

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# Direct Care Staff Appreciation Week Rocks

*“The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.”*

— OSCAR WILDE

Our Direct Care Staff (DCS) members provide the day-to-day, hands-on care that allows our residents to achieve greater independence and lead happier, more satisfying lives. In appreciation of their hard work and commitment to enhancing the quality of life for our residents, Mountain Shadows held its Annual Direct Care Staff Appreciation Week from September 29<sup>th</sup> to October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

“The event was very successful,” says Arlene Galvan, QMRP. “Daily events were held to recognize and honor our Direct Care Staff’s contribution to Mountain Shadows success.”

“On Monday, we provided a continental breakfast for staff at the business office. On Tuesday, we held a Safety Fair and ended the day with ‘Taco Tuesday’. The freshly grilled chicken tacos were delicious!

“Wednesday was our most popular event. We hosted a Rock Band competition using the Guitar Hero game, which allowed staff and residents to perform in a virtual rock band. There was a huge turnout. Each house created a band and competed for prizes. The Ash House band, KISS ASH, won the group competition with the song “Dead or Alive” by Bon Jovi. The solo artist winner was Eddie C from Birch House. Eddie performed Radiohead’s song “Creep”. Winners received a \$30 gift



certificate.

“No one missed out on Thursday’s event. Five massage therapists from the Healing Hands School of Holistic Health provided staff with luxurious massages. It gave everyone time to relax and de-stress.

“On Friday, we held a car wash. Upper management washed all of the staff’s cars. To end the week, everyone got together for a BBQ. We had all kinds of homemade goodies – ribs, hot wings, macaroni and cheese. It was great!”

“Arlene and the Morale Committee did an outstanding job organizing the week chock-full of events,” says Wade Wilde, Executive Director, MSF/MSSG.

Our thanks and gratitude go out to each and every one of the members of our Direct Care Staff for the large and small acts of kindness and caring they provide daily to enhance the quality of life for our residents.

*“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”*

— ALBERT SCHWEITZER



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# Mountain Shadows Resident Kristen Weller Wins Prestigious UCP Award

Peter Horton loved to live life to the fullest, without limitations, despite having Cerebral Palsy. To celebrate his life and honor his memory, United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) established The Peter Samuel Horton Award. The annual award recognizes exceptional UCP Habilitation and Networks program participants who defy the odds, turning their disabilities into abilities, and living beyond their limitations.

Kristen Weller, Mountain Shadows Willow House resident, was presented with The Peter Samuel Horton Award on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. “Kristen was nominated for the award by her peers, administrators and supervisors,” says Arlene Galvan, QMRP. “She exemplifies the positive energy and spirit of the award.

“Kristen works for a medical company through the UCP program. She really sets a high standard and stands out amongst her peers. It is a joy for her to go to work each day. She never misses a day and she really goes above and beyond in achieving her goals. She has an aura that just draws you in with her positive energy.

“The Horton Award is given to only two UCP consumers each year, one in San Diego and one in North County. Kristen won the award for North County this year. We’re all very proud of her!”

The awards banquet was held at the San Diego Marriott in Mission Valley. “It was a formal, sit-down dinner,” says Arlene. “All of Kristen’s supervisors and the MSCH staff were there. She was presented with a beautiful award plaque, a \$100 check and a Black Angus Steak House Gift Card. She was thrilled with the recognition and enjoyed the dinner, champagne, and evening with all her friends. Kristen plans on



Kristen at banquet with UCP staff that nominated her

using the \$100 check wisely – on casino trips and shopping – two of her favorite activities!

“Kristen is always very happy, very positive. She loves what she does at UCP.”

Says Kristen’s mother, “UCP has been very instrumental in encouraging Kristen’s physical and social development by providing the positive work environment for continued growth. They are constantly encouraging Kristen by adding new work goals and challenging her with new tasks so that today she is achieving so much more than we had ever thought possible. My warmest thank you to everyone who has worked with Kristen in making her life rewarding and happy.”

Thank you, Kristen, for demonstrating to us all how to live life more fully and to reach heights beyond our limitations.

Congratulations, Kristen, for winning this prominent award! ■

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## ■ HARVEST *(continued from page 1)*



Palm House

efits we have reaped. “The event was held by Olive House,” says Arlene Galvan, QMRP. “There was a huge turnout. All of our residents came and the staff really enjoyed it too.” Residents and staff alike participated in enjoyable activities such as a “Harvest Walk” which was similar to a cake walk, played exciting games of all kinds, won prizes, created arts and crafts, designed their own greeting cards, and became real-life characters in an amazing sensory story. “It was a great event that gave the residents and staff time to interact. It was a very positive experience for everyone.”

Each day at Mountain Shadows we plant seeds we hope

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## ■ HARVEST *(continued from page 5)*

will nurture our residents' ability to grow and thrive. Each day we reap the harvest of our efforts by witnessing our residents live more independent and fulfilling lives. Each day this harvest enriches our community and fills our spirits with joy.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Harvest Festival was a time of coming together to celebrate the journey we all share at Mountain Shadows Community Homes. It was a time to rejoice in the strength and splendor of the seeds we have sewn together and the rare and beautiful harvest our combined efforts have yielded. It was a time to honor our residents and the bounty of gifts they give us each and every day.

We doubt there has ever been or ever will be a harvest more precious. ■



Olive House



Plum House



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