



Providing Adults with Developmental Disabilities the Best Environment to Live and Work at the Highest Level Possible.



Our Mission

Is to provide a caring and stimulating environment where people with developmental disabilities can achieve their individual goals, safely and with dignity.

Gateway Center's core values are guided by the following principles that dictate everything we do: Rights, Choices and Opportunities for Growth for everyone we serve.

Who We Serve and What We Do:

Gateway Center of Monterey County serves over 60 adults with developmental disabilities in both day and residential programs. Many of the individuals we serve have been with Gateway for a quite a few years and are now older adults. Consequently, a number of them have multiple health issues.

Each of our consumers has an individualized, Person Centered Program Plan with specific goals that are regularly reviewed and revised by an interdisciplinary team. Our day programs provide a wide range of daily activity choices for each individual. All are designed to be fun and rewarding, while enhancing community integration, life skills and socialization at the same time. Our residential programs also include activities intended to enhance independence, community integration and the acquisition of daily living skills.

All our programs are designed around creating and maintaining a safe, caring, non-judgmental and supportive environment.

Executive Director's Report

"Show me where I am most needed"

~ Amy Brucker

For those of you I have not met yet, my name is Robert Freiri. I have been the Executive Director of Gateway Center since February. I came to Gateway Center with thirty three years of nonprofit management and twenty two years as an Executive Director.

The 'Plan' was to meet many of you at Open Houses, Special Events, Fundraisers, BBQs and family visits. Well... it didn't quite work out that way. Wow, what a year it has been! In spite of the pandemic and sheltering in place for 10 months, we have had some great highlights! First off, we built a leadership team of talented, skilled, experienced, compassionate managers, who are working closely with me every day to make sure the clients of Gateway Center remain our highest priority.

The Covid-19 crisis has been a huge challenge. We have had weekly, daily and sometimes hourly meetings, and have been laser focused on following the latest health guidelines and updating procedures. This has allowed us to stay on top of the health of our residents and keep the situation under control.

In spite of it all, we still managed to have some fun in between. My first week came right before the shutdown. There was a Valentine's Dance that was a great opportunity to witness firsthand how much love there was amongst the staff and clients. When I realized this, it really hit me that Gateway was where I was truly needed and wanted to be.

Even though we could not go anywhere, we had fun with Easter events, a 4th of July bbq, Heroes Day, a Halloween Parade and of course Thanksgiving Dinner. We are hoping for plenty more fun events and laughter in 2021.



We are already starting to gear up for 2021 with 24 Days of Giving December 1st through December 24th. Whatever you, your friends, family and associates can help with is greatly appreciated. There are few better causes. To donate, please visit us on Facebook or log onto www.gatewaycenter.org.

The other reason I came to Gateway Center, was my Sister in Law Jenise.

She was born with severe Cerebral Palsy. For many years she lived at the local State Hospital. The whole time she lived there, you could tell even though she was nonverbal, that she was miserable. The care she was receiving was pretty bad. They also failed to communicate well with her family. Request after request fell on deaf ears. Later in her life, she was finally moved into a group home with caring staff like Gateway's. The change was dramatic, she was as happy as she had ever been! I was able to attend a few of her annual meetings, and saw firsthand the love, quality and authenticity of the care she was receiving. On top of it all, The Home was always responsive to the requests of her immediate family. They truly cared for Jenise for the rest of her life. This experience presented me with a front row seat view of the dramatic difference, good and sub-par care can make. I have carried it with me to my position here at Gateway Center. I can't imagine treating clients any other way as they and the staff who care for them are all like family to me!

Happy Holidays and here's to a bright and blessed 2021!

Robert

*Robert Freiri,
Executive Director*

A message from the Director of Operations

Dear Gateway Center Families, Friends and Supporters,

I am so happy to introduce myself to the larger Gateway family and community as the new Director of Operations. I came to Gateway Center in May of this year after more than 20 years of experience in the Developmental Disability service field. In that time, I have worked in management, direct care, service coordination, education and advocacy across nearly all programs and services that support our unique population. My family and I settled here in Pacific Grove in 2010, and I look forward to helping our residents and clients grow and accomplish great things as we look to 2021 and beyond.

As the Director of Operations, I am overseeing all the programs at Gateway Center to ensure we continue to provide individualized, accessible, and progressive services that evolve and adjust to the changing landscape of our client's individual and collective needs. Right now, that means helping to keep everyone safe, healthy and thriving as we navigate through the Covid-19 pandemic. As the self title "Covid-Police", I have been focusing my efforts in making sure we are following all directives and are as prepared as possible to mitigate and lessen the impact Covid-19 has on our ICF, SLS and

ILS residential programs. This includes on-site testing, a comprehensive and proactive approach to our Covid-19 Response policies and constantly updating and training staff in the new and ever changing regulations from the CDC, local Public Health Department and our various overseeing agencies. This also includes successfully adapting our service models for our Day Programs to ZOOM and remote services, so that we can continue to work with clients and support families with the least amount of disruption as possible.

Believe it or not, amidst all of this, we look ahead and do our best to embrace these many challenges as an opportunity to learn and grow, and come out the other side with strength and clarity on how to best serve our clients and community. You'd be amazed at the changes Gateway has both endured and initiated under our new Leadership and Management Team, along with the guidance and confidence of our Board of Directors.

Perhaps most impressive of all are our direct care professionals who show up every day with compassion, creativity and (usually) smiles on their faces behind their masks and face shields! We are motivated and inspired by our residents and clients who remind us all the time that no obstacle is too big to overcome, and that life is what you make it.

I look forward to meeting and working with each of you, in person or ZOOM in the coming year! Gateway Center has always been at the forefront of service and care for persons with developmental disabilities, and I am extremely fortunate and grateful to have the opportunity to serve and advocate for our community.

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy holiday season and NEW YEAR!

Amy

*Amy Wright,
Director of Operations*





A message from the Board Chair

Dear Gateway Center Friends and Family,

I am proud to tell you that in less than a year, our wonderful new Executive Director, Robert Freiri, has already made great changes to Gateway Center. The biggest thing he did was to bring in a number of new, experienced managers to make things run a lot more smoothly. They oversee the critical areas of HR, Finance, Operations and Nursing as well as both of our residential ICF programs. This translates directly to less turnover, higher staff satisfaction and better quality of care. He also managed to improve staff benefits and pay along with recognition for good performance. Another great thing he did was to implement a new, state of the art, payroll system that has resulted in faster delivery of paychecks, more flexibility, security and less administrative work. Robert obtained the resources for these and other improvements, by being quick on the draw with grant applications, and by making good use of his vast experience.

Robert accomplished all of this while also dealing with the Covid-19 virus! From the earliest days, he sourced scarce P.P.E. and worked to establish stringent, CDC mandated safety protocols. These measures were combined with careful monitoring and weekly crisis meetings with department managers. As a result, against terrible odds, there have been no cases of the virus in any of our facilities, except for an outbreak at our 4 client home in Marina. This happened in November and fortunately, none of the residents or staff got seriously ill. At this time, residents and staff are being tested every week or two. We are anticipating notice from CVS, any day, with a specific time when they will be coming in to administer the Covid-19 vaccine.

Now that our operations are running a little more smoothly, we have begun to focus on improving The Board and planning for the next 3-5 years. To make this process as effective as possible, Robert brought in a couple of volunteer board management consultants who between them, have decades of experience with organizations like Gateway. The Board has been working closely with Robert and the consultants on a revised mission statement,

strategic vision and plan. There are also plans to bring on new members and improve committees so that The Board can function in a manner that maximizes its effectiveness and optimizes oversight.

A few of Robert's projects for the near future include: Comprehensive training for managers and lead staff; Sale of our Forest Hill home (in Sept., the former residents relocated to new homes of their choosing); Remodeling of the downstairs bathrooms at Congress Ave and, refurbishing its old elevator.

Robert also just announced the first meeting of the new "Gateway Center Family and Friends Advisory Council". Robert and I want to bring the circle of Gateway Center family and friends, together in order to make everyone feel more connected and heard.

It is my sincere belief that Gateway Center's good fortune of the past year will continue for many more to come. The past year will continue for many more to come.

Sincerely,
Jim
Jim Landman, Board Chair

Interview with Christina Hunt, Director of Day Services Celebrating 36 Years with Gateway Center!

How did you initially get involved in Gateway Center?

How I came to find Gateway Center was due to an ad I read in the local newspaper, shortly after I had become married and relocated to Pacific Grove. I had previously worked as a Licensed Psychiatric Technician at Agnews Developmental Center in San Jose. I loved the work I did. Seeing the job description included working with persons with developmental disabilities, I was drawn to the position. I started my career at Gateway Center on December 31, 1984.

Through a lot of changes, challenges and iterations of Gateway Center, what has allowed you to stay all these years?

I would have to say number one is because of the individuals I serve who are a part, and who have been a part of Gateway Center over the years. Every day is so unique and I feel as if I can bring a bit of joy into one or more of our individuals' lives through my actions, I've had a really good day. I've worked with so many amazing Gateway Center staff, family members, consultants, board members and Regional Center staff over the years who have helped Gateway weather through many storms. All of these individuals have provided me with wonderful support throughout the years. As I've aged, I really believe keeping a sense of humor is very important too and to not take life too seriously. It's all about being able to balance your work & personal life.

I am sure there have been plenty of milestones and highlights, can you recall three or four events/moments that have stuck in your mind.

Boy, this is a tough question; as of being around for 36 years at Gateway there are so many! I would say I remember when I advocated for our day program, which at this time only had 32 program participants & 4 staff members, to start being able to go out into the community. I believe this was the mideighties and the day program remained on-site working on three very boring prevocational activities inside of a room all day long. I was still employed as an Instructor, working for \$4.00 an hour. We first began taking our individuals out to make shopping purchases at local stores. How far we have come!!!

Another milestone involves John Wecker, one of the founding board members, taking over as the Executive Director after our ED at the time had a horrific medical event and wasn't able to work anymore. Mr. Wecker pulled us through and never collected a dime for the time he served in this role. I truly believe this man to be a Saint and this is still why Gateway Center is still operating today.

I'm also very proud of all the work our Gateway Center team has done over the years to expand our Day Program Services we offer to our individuals in the local community and the Monterey Peninsula. When I first started my career with the day program back in 1984, the Day Activity Program provided services to individuals at a very low staffing ratio of 8 clients to 1 staff member. We now offer day program services at 3:1 staff ratio in all of our day programs. Our day program serves seniors in Pacific Grove & Salinas. We also offer a day program, in conjunction with the Pacific Grove Adult School and many individuals on the autism spectrum. We continue to serve individuals at our Pacific Grove day program site through our Community Adult Development Center. I had fun being



Christina Hunt with Mr. Clint Eastwood and Gateway Resident Donald Navarro during the 1986 Special Olympics.

involved with volunteering and helping out with the numerous Rock and Rod fundraising events over the years. The most memorable one was when Johnny Rivers played at the first event at the Monterey fairgrounds, after it had rained all day. Johnny Rivers strived for perfection and he nailed it! John Pisto was in attendance, along with other local celebrities there to support Gateway Center.

Alright, here is my Gateway confession. During 36 years, I had volunteered to work with the Gateway Center residents for the Special Olympics, when it was still being held at our local community college, MPC. Clint Eastwood was a local volunteer at the time, who would pass out ribbons and take photos with the athletes. I bribed one of my favorite day program clients, Donald, with a cup of coffee, if he would please tell Mr. Eastwood he (Donald) wanted a photo of the three of us together. I still cherish this photo to this day and please know Donald cared more about the cup of coffee more than taking a photo with Mr. Eastwood. Kudos to Robert Freiri and for all he has done to improve the overall working conditions for all everyone working at Gateway Center. Our staff has received raises, an increase in our overall benefits package and most of all, Robert is a voice for us!

What makes Gateway Center's Day program so unique?

What makes our day program so unique is the individuals we serve and all of their special talents and various personalities. We listen to our individuals about their needs, desires and do what we can to incorporate these into our day programs. Our individuals choose what different activities they'd like to participate in on a daily basis.

What makes Gateway Center Staff so special?

I think it's about how diverse our staff is. I love how they bring all of their special artistic talents, individual cultures and many other attributes into our day program. They all treat our day program participants as if they are part of their own families.

This year has been challenging on all of us. Can you speak to how this has affected you and the Day Program?

What a year this has been! I think the most profound effect has been on our individuals' families and how they don't have an on-site day program to send their loved ones to. We've had to recreate our day programs through Zoom classes and other means, and provide Remote Services to our individuals who reside out in the community. As time goes on, our residents, who we also provide Alternative Services in their ICF's, are very anxious to get back out into the community and resume life as we all knew it as before.



INVITES YOU TO:

GATEWAY CENTER FAMILY & FRIENDS ADVISORY COUNCIL

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21
5 PM
VIA ZOOM:

<https://tinyurl.com/ydaookl8>

Meeting ID: 884 8706 0033

Passcode: 725252



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to our wonderful donors and sponsors!*

This list reflects donations made from January 1 - December 18, 2020.
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