

**SLDC Chosen
OC Register's
"Season of Caring"**

**Students Jonathon Lo
and Emily Foley Profiled**



Speech pathologist and AAC specialist Bernadette Kennard assists as reporter Vicki Vargas interviews Jonathan Lo and his mother, Elizabeth, and cameraman Jay captures it all.

Speech and Language Development Center was one of 10 local nonprofit organizations chosen by a panel of judges to be

"This was a great opportunity to draw attention to the wonderful work our staff does daily."

a part of this year's *Orange County Register's* "Season of Caring Presents the Possible Dream." SLDC was featured on KNBC on December 3, and in the *OC Register* on December 5 and 26, 2008.

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**Peterson Family
"Real Deal" Fundraiser
Nets \$31,000**

SLDC supporters and Murrieta residents Terre and Elden Peterson recently opened their 24-acre La Cresta home to 200+ guests when they hosted the inaugural "An Evening at the Real Deal." The event, which featured a silent auction, casino night and dinner catered by the Blue Agave Southwestern Grill, raised more than \$31,000.

As attendees arrived, they were greeted by members of the Peterson Family Racing team and had their photo taken with the customized hill-climbing motorcycles. Kerry Peterson, Elden's brother and co-owner of Peterson Brothers Construction, Inc., was a five-time world champion in the sport before he retired in 1999.



Team Peterson (shown here with owner Kerry Peterson, far right) proudly displayed their powerful hill-climbing racers.

Guests were escorted to the Peterson stables for a tour and photo with one of the dozen cutting horses housed and trained there. The transport van then took everyone up the hill to the Peterson house. There, they tasted wines provided by Callaway, Hart, Miramonte and Wilson Creek wineries, and bid on such silent auction items as vintage wine lots, a Cabos San Lucas vacation or an original painting by noted artist Dennis Lewan.

As the sun set over the beautiful Murrieta valley, guests were called to dinner before the casino gaming night began.



Hosts Elden and Terre Peterson welcome guests to their Murrieta ranch, The Real Deal.

In keeping with the casino night theme, event sponsorships were available in such humorously named categories as "The Real Deal" "Oh Craps!!" "Red or Black?" and "Hit Me!" categories. The Title Sponsor was Coats/Rapp Surety Services. In all, more than 30 other companies and individuals stepped forward to help underwrite the event (see donor page for a complete list of event sponsors).

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Red Cross Honors SLDC



SLDC was one of only two organizations recently honored by the Orange County American Red Cross for its commitment to disaster preparedness. The award, which recognizes organizations that have developed and implemented comprehensive emergency plans, was presented at the 24th Annual Disaster Preparedness Academy, with more than 600 people in attendance. JoAnn Hill (shown above) is chair of SLDC's Disaster Prep Committee.

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Benefit Golf Tournament Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Perennial Favorite Nets \$84,000

There is a reason people return year after year to play in SLDC's annual benefit golf tournament.

"They fix what doesn't work and don't mess with the rest," quipped one golfer.

Judging from the smiling faces of the many golfers who, at times, braved this year's windy conditions, many of the features of the benefit golf tournament don't need fixing.

The location (Alta Vista Country Club) and format (scramble) remained the same. The schedule, which featured a shotgun start at noon, also ran smoothly. Even crowd favorite Dick Gorrie returned as tournament chair and event emcee for his 30th consecutive year.

"I must have been 12 years old when this tourney started," joked Gorrie.

But even after 30 years of tradition, there was still room for two pleasant surprises at this year's tournament.

The first surprise was when the Teamsters made its annual support of the golf tournament a national effort. Led by Local 399 and Tony Cousimano, Teamsters from as far away as Boston and Seattle donated money to underwrite the tournament. Their contributions totaled more than \$12,000.

The second surprise was when two SLDC students (former student Matt Tarr and current student Brooks Clarkson) played in this year's tournament.

"I had the pleasure of golfing with Brooks today," said SLDC supporter Elden Peterson. "All my volunteer work at SLDC has been paid back by that one round of golf. God bless Speech and Language Development Center."

"Brooks is a product of this school," said his dad, Scott Clarkson. "When he started at SLDC as a nonverbal two-year-old, we had no idea of what his future would bring. He could not be doing all that he does without this school. It's not so much about today as it is tomorrow. SLDC can change a child's tomorrow."

Despite the tough economy, event sponsorship remained solid this year, including major sponsor Peterson Brothers Construction, Inc. (see donor page for a complete list of sponsors). The support did not go unnoticed.

"I need to tell you how important you all are," said SLDC Co-Founder and Chief Advancement Officer Aleen Agranowitz. "Because of what you did today, something good will happen to our students."



SLDC student Brooks Clarkson joined his dad, Scott, and grandfather Tom at this year's benefit golf tournament.



Former SLDC student Matt Tarr returned to the links this year and played golf with his stepfather, David Glavas, an annual participant in the event.

“Real Deal” Fundraiser

continued from front page

“Live within your means, but love beyond your means.’ I heard this phrase at church a few weeks before the event and it fit so well into the reason behind our fundraiser,” said Elden Peterson. “SLDC has exceptional success with its students that can only be measured by the individuals and the parents they serve.”

“Live within your means, but love beyond your means.”

“I myself have two sons that I wish had been given the opportunity to attend SLDC because I believe all kids have special needs and the SLDC staff and teachers are simply world class,” said Peterson.



SLDC Board President Trish Wright found her new “car” at the Real Deal. Too bad it’s not street legal.

“Season of Caring”

continued from front page

“This was a great opportunity to not only raise funds, but to draw attention to the wonderful work that our staff does daily,” said SLDC CEO Dawn O’Connor. “The publicity also introduced the Center to many new people. We thank the Lo and Foley families for allowing us to share their stories.”

As the main fundraiser of the Register charities, Season of Caring has raised more than \$6 million since 1999. For more information, visit www.ocregister.com or www.slhc.net.

CEO’s Corner



Dawn O’Connor, CEO

It’s been six months since Dawn O’Connor assumed the role of SLDC’s CEO. In this one-on-one, O’Connor talked about the changes that have taken place and the ones still to come.

Q: What’s different on the SLDC campus?

O’Connor: I don’t think that visitors will notice any dramatic changes from last year...and that is good. Our intent was to allow parents and staff to adjust to new leadership and make the transition as smooth as possible. If you haven’t noticed any big changes, we achieved our goal.

Q: Does that mean that there haven’t been any changes?

O’Connor: Not in the least, but I think the changes have been more subtle. I’m still involved in the day-to-day operations of the school, but more in a backup role thanks to a supervisory staff who really stepped up.

Q: Can you give an example?

O’Connor: EIP (Education Individual Plan) meetings are a perfect example. Supervisory staff now take the lead on most of the meetings. They’re the ones observing the daily interactions between teachers and students and are in the best position to make recommendations. This support then allows me to focus on the broader issues such as the economy and its impact on special education.

“One of the keys to SLDC’s success is the strong partnerships it has formed with referring agencies.”

Q: Has the economy affected the school?

O’Connor: The most visible impact is the continued flat reimbursement rates we’ve experienced the past several years. They continue to fail to keep up with the cost of doing business. We also braced for the financial impact if we experienced a drop in enrollment, but we didn’t have one. District reps say that “fallout” may not occur until next year so it’s even more critical to prepare for the future.

Q: What are you doing to get ready?

O’Connor: We need to continue to be more active and creative in discovering alternative funding sources. The Clinical Services pilot program is a good example of this type of exploration. (See article on back page.) We’re also exploring the feasibility of a new program for our older students, although discussions are very preliminary.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to share?

O’Connor: I’d like to thank everyone for his or her continued support. One of the keys to SLDC’s success is the strong partnerships it has formed with referring agencies. I feel that we’ve gotten the same level of support from parents, staff and board. This collaboration continues to make SLDC special.

Four New Board Members Elected Under New Term Policies

SLDC Board of Directors recently elected four new board members after it approved a new two-year renewable term policy. Joining the SLDC Board are Gary Elder, Trish Mauller, Ron Rothschild and Daniel Saucedo.

Elder, a construction and real estate consultant, first became acquainted with SLDC through the Vintage 2000 Wine Auction event. He has been actively involved with the Center ever since. Buena Park resident Trish Mauller is a manufacturers representative for the Scheffey Group. She had a grandson enrolled at SLDC for five years and is a member of Soroptimists with Aleen Agranowitz and Gladys Gleason. Member Patti Bauman first introduced Ron Rothschild, who spent his career in public finance, to the board. Saucedo, a financial advisor and insurance agent from Saucedo and Associates, first become associated with SLDC through longtime board member Dinko Bozanich. (Watch for more in-depth profiles on these new SLDC Board Members in the next issue of *StairSteps*.)

The board set a new term limit policy in an effort to attract new board members and increase its ability to adapt to the changing dynamics of the special education environment. Under the new policy, board members will be elected for two-year renewable terms. After six years, members must rotate off the board for a minimum of one year.

“A common question asked of the board as it was approaching prospective board candidates was the amount and duration of the time

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SLDC Receives Grants Totaling \$104,400

Funds Will Support Student Programs and Classroom Technology

A gloomy economic outlook for SLDC was brightened by recent grant news. From July to December 2008, seven different funding sources awarded grants that will enhance the learning experiences for SLDC students.

Disney VoluntEARS (\$5,000) the **Friedman Foundation** (\$20,000), **The Green Foundation** (\$15,000) and **Target** (\$1,000) awarded funds to support SLDC’s Art & Music Program. This innovative educational offering, which goes beyond exposure to art and music, engages students in interactive experiences that stimulate the brain.

Both non-verbal and pre-verbal children benefit from this program, which helps children develop motor and listening skills, math and spatial awareness as well as abstract reasoning.

The grants will allow the program to expand to all SLDC students, purchase additional musical equipment for the classroom, and help fund two part-time program specialists.

The George Hoag Family Foundation (\$20,000) and **The Ueberroth Family Foundation** (\$5,000) provided funds for the general support of SLDC’s programs and services.

The Ludwick Family Foundation (\$38,440) granted funds to upgrade SLDC’s classroom technology. Thanks to this generous grant, SLDC will purchase new iMac computers and educational software for every classroom. New learning programs, therapeutic approaches, and teaching opportunities will now be available across the campus.

“Our recent grant success is due, in no small part, to the hard work of SLDC staff,” said SLDC Development Director Ray Bell. “They develop the innovative programs that inspire foundations to give.”

Grandparents and Special Friends Day



Development Committee Member Lillian Maglione, Volunteer Andrea Maglione, Board Members Patty Bauman and Marlene Henry, and SLDC Co-Founder Gladys Gleason welcomed guests to the second annual Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Nearly 30 people attended the educational event where they visited classrooms, watched presentations and got to meet SLDC staff.

2nd Annual WCRC Charity Golf Tournament Benefits SLDC

West Coast Radiology Centers held its 2nd Annual Charity Golf Tournament in November to benefit SLDC. The tournament, held at Arroyo Trabuco Golf Club in Mission Viejo, raised more than \$7,500 thanks to SLDC parent Heidi Sheldon. Sheldon works at the radiology company and suggested SLDC when executives were looking for a cause they could benefit through their charity golf event.

"I feel doubly blessed to have found such a great school and to work for such a supportive company," said Sheldon. "My son, Zachery, has made such progress since he enrolled at SLDC. West Coast Radiology has been so understanding. I feel they've joined this journey (raising Zachery) with me."

Development Director Ray Bell said third party fundraising events such as the WCRC golf tournament pay important dividends. "Not only do they raise money for needed services, but the events introduce us (SLDC) to a new community," said Bell. "We're indebted to parents like Heidi who continue to think of ways to help SLDC."

Four New Board Members

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commitment involved," said SLDC Board President Trish Wright. "Setting term limits provides those guidelines for consideration. Setting term limits also encourages the board to have to regularly reach out to prospective board candidates, aids in keeping the Board flush with fresh ideas, perspectives and connections, and aligns SLDC's board practices with those of most other well-recognized nonprofit organizations."

SLDC's Coaster Run Named The USA Track & Field 2009 Southern California 5K Championship Race

Excitement already is building for SLDC's Coaster Run. Now in its fourth year, the race again is designated as the USA Track and Field Southern California 5K Road Championship. It will return to Knott's Berry Farm on Sunday, March 15, 2009.

But that doesn't mean that the race is for elite runners* only. The Coaster Run race committee is still committed to holding a family event with something for everyone. In addition to the 5K elite race, the 10K run and the 5K run/walk, there's even a 1K kids walk that courses through Camp Snoopy.

Also returning will be the popular health and fitness EXPO. Vendors will offer everything from free samples and giveaways to raffles and displays catered to the active family.



Family Affair! The entire family enjoyed the 1K Kids Walk through Camp Snoopy

pie for every registered entrant.

"We couldn't hold this event without the support of Knott's Berry Farm. Their dedication to being an active participant in the community means everything to this event, not to mention SLDC," said Event Organizer Muff Elstran.

The flat and fast course is certified by USA Track & Field. Entry fees range from \$15 for the kids walk to \$25 and \$35 for the 5 and 10K events. For more information and registration, call Elstran at SLDC at 714/821-3620 ext. 226. Online registration is at www.make-u-fit.com and www.active.com.

**USA TF members who can complete the 5K in less than 17:00 minutes (men) or less than 20:00 minutes (women).*



They're Off! Elite runners start fast at the 2008 Coaster Run.



Fast Finish! An elite runner crosses the finish line in fine form at the 2008 Coaster Run.

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July - December 2008



Former Super Bowl Quarterback Vince Ferragamo, a long-time SLDC supporter, delighted Aleen Agranowitz, SLDC Chief Advancement Officer, and Dawn O'Connor, SLDC Chief Executive Officer, with checks from his Foundation to help the children and young adults of the Center.

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The ever-popular Hi-Tops performed at many SLDC special events throughout the year, including the "Real Deal" pictured here.

Clinical Services Pilot Program Launched

Earlier in the fall, Aleen Agranowitz and Dawn O'Connor met with representatives from the Orange County SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) to outline SLDC's new Clinical Services Program. The outpatient program, which is available to private clients and the general public, offers such clinical services as:

- **Speech/Language Evaluation**
- **Speech/Language Therapy**
- **Occupational Therapy**
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication Evaluation**
- **Physical Therapy**
- **Social Communication Training**
- **Counseling**
- **Neurofeedback**

The services primarily will be offered after school, although appointments can be arranged during the school day if a therapist's schedule permits. Speech Pathologist Frances Burt will oversee the program, with support from Administrative Assistant Nicole Dorsey.

Founded in 1955, the Speech and Language Development Center (SLDC) is a non-profit corporation comprised of: a non-public school and therapy center serving the special needs of 340 children and young adults with language, learning, and behavior disabilities; and a school and residential program for 24 emotionally disturbed boys. SLDC is certified by the California State Department of Education and licensed by the Department of Social Services.

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