

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE AT LEARNING LINKS



Becca, Preschool Teacher

When Becca first started as a preschool teacher at Learning Links in Burlingame, she was asked to instruct a dance class for children of all abilities, including those with special needs. One day, as the class danced to the “Airplane Song,” Teacher Becca was helping students master the movement of jumping when she noticed a student at the

back of the room who had stopped dancing. The student looked at Teacher Becca and said, defeated, “I can’t jump. I just can’t jump,” as he watched his friends leap around the classroom.

The student, Allan, insisted he couldn’t jump because he uses a walker. Although using the walker is second nature for Allan, it can make certain dance moves difficult to execute. Allan hadn’t really noticed many differences between himself and his friends, but in this instance, Allan only saw his walker as a hindrance, as something that set him apart. However, Teacher Becca saw an opportunity to instill an important life lesson: “sometimes our differences are our greatest strengths.”

As her coworker led the rest of the class, Teacher Becca told Allan, “You can jump, I promise. Let’s just try something a little

different.” Becca showed Allan how to brace his hands on his walker and push up to get his feet off the ground. Before long, Allan was jumping and spinning along with the rest of the class. Even Allan’s friends noticed that Allan could perform cool moves with his walker that they couldn’t!

Becca’s story illustrates how small moments of support, encouragement and engagement can make a memorable difference in the lives of children. At Gatepath, staff make continual efforts to empower people with special needs by encouraging inclusion and full participation at home, in the classroom, and in their community.

Learning Links Burlingame has successfully implemented a model of inclusion that Gatepath seeks to expand throughout the Peninsula, and we are getting closer to achieving that goal. Our second Learning Links location, which is in Mountain View, became an inclusive preschool in September 2016, offering classes where children of all abilities can learn, grow and prepare for kindergarten together. This model of inclusion goes beyond accommodating someone’s needs or making services accessible – it’s about helping a person realize what they’re capable of accomplishing.

*Please note, some names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals featured in this article.



BAY AREA GIVING DAY - CEO CORNER



Bryan Neider, CEO

action and make a difference.

Gatepath is proud to lead the initiative for *Bay Area Giving Day* on Thursday, May 4, carrying forward this spring tradition of celebrating the Bay Area's generous spirit of giving.

We appreciate seeing the community come together for this giving day tradition. It is a wonderful opportunity to support Gatepath's mission of creating a world where people of all abilities are fully accepted, respected and included.

Our ability to help people with special needs and

Each May, Gatepath has joined hundreds of Bay Area nonprofits for a 24-hour online giving event. This one-day fundraising event raises millions for local nonprofits. This focused day of giving is a simple way to connect donors to the charitable causes they care about most, providing them an easy way to take

developmental disabilities would not be possible without the support and generosity of our community members, fundraising ambassadors and partners. We are grateful to the Gatepath Auxiliary for providing a lead matching gift, and to our *Bay Area Giving Day* fundraising ambassadors, who will play an important role in sharing our message of inclusion and supporting this year's campaign.

From providing a child with speech therapy so she can say "I love you" for the first time to supporting an adult with autism who wants a job so he can earn a paycheck and greater independence, Gatepath has been creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities and their families for more than 96 years. Through this 24-hour giving event, you can help Gatepath expand services, create more innovative programs, and have an even larger impact in the community.

To join us for *Bay Area Giving Day* on May 4, or for more details, visit GivetoGatepath.org. Thank you for supporting Gatepath and those we serve.

STUDENTS IMPROVING LIFE THROUGH COLLEGE PATH

The college experience is something many people yearn for - the opportunity to expand their knowledge, develop their character, and sample what life has to offer. CollegePath is a program offered by Gatepath at the College of San Mateo (CSM), providing support for adults with special needs and developmental disabilities interested in furthering their educational goals.

By enrolling in CollegePath, Gatepath adult students have the opportunity to navigate a variety of social environments, participate in inclusive classroom activities, learn to manage time responsibly, and take an active role in planning their academic future that could result in earning an associate degree! Cameron, a current Gatepath student, said "the benefit of being in CollegePath at CSM is that you have someone to talk to. You have things in common with the instructor from Gatepath, who helps keep you pointed towards your goals."

CollegePath Lead Instructor, David Cady, said that one of the most satisfying outcomes of the program is seeing the students being genuinely included and engaged and watching



CollegePath Lead Instructor, David Cady (right), supporting one of his students

them flourish with new responsibilities and possibilities they've never had before. The Gatepath instructor assists the students with the registration process, determining financial aid options, and utilizing the Disabilities Resources Center and the Adapted Physical Education Center at CSM. The instructor also tutors students enrolled in a variety of classes at CSM including physical fitness, arts, math, reading and English.

Contact intake@gatepath.org to learn more about CollegePath and register for classes.

THE POWER OF POSSIBILITIES UNITES THE COMMUNITY

Thank You

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“When my son took his first steps after we heard he would never walk, it was an important lesson for us to never let others put limits on his abilities.”

- Colin Farrell

On March 23, nearly 550 community members attended Gatepath’s *The Power of Possibilities* event. Every aspect of the sold-out event offered moments of inspiration in realizing Gatepath’s vision of a world where people of all abilities are fully accepted, respected and included. Canvas paintings and papier-mâché flower arrangements created by Gatepath artists sold quickly, with all proceeds benefiting the individual artist and our art therapy program respectively. During Colin Farrell’s interview with Bay Area Journalist Diane Dwyer, he candidly shared his heartfelt experience as the parent of a child with Angelman’s syndrome.

The audience was riveted as Fernando Arce accepted the Neal Poppin Award, which honors an individual whose determination, spirit, and enthusiasm surpasses any limitations he or she has faced. Fernando was born nearly three months premature and has profound hearing and vision impairments. Gatepath has been an



Colin Farrell with Neal Poppin Award Winner
Fernando Arce



Gatepath Auxiliary member and volunteer, Carol Windsor, taught Gatepath adult participants how to make the flower arrangements that were sold at the POP event

important part of Fernando’s life from the beginning; he received Early Intervention services as a toddler and then job training and placement services as an adult. Fernando reminds us “to see with our hearts in addition to our eyes,” said Gatepath CEO Bryan Neider as he announced Fernando as the award recipient.

Fernando has worked in housekeeping at the Magnolia of Millbrae for 11 years. “When hiring someone with a disability, it’s not just the employee with the disability who gains an advantage in the workplace,” said Vincent Muzzi, owner of the Magnolia, “It’s a working relationship that benefits everyone involved.”

Thank you to our donors, who helped us raise more than \$700,000 in support of Gatepath’s mission and those we serve.

UPCOMING EVENTS



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350 Twin Dolphin Drive, Suite 123
Redwood City, CA 94065
650-259-8500 | Gatepath.org

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May

- 2 Autism Support Group
- 4 **Bay Area Giving Day**
- 5 Gatepath Social Connection's Hang Outs
- 8 Cerebral Palsy Parent Group
- 16 Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres
- 19 Gatepath Social Connection's Hang Outs
- 20 Free Workshop: Overview and Introduction to AAC

June

- 2 Gatepath Social Connection's Hang Outs
- 12 Cerebral Palsy Parent Group
- 16 Gatepath Social Connection's Hang Outs
- 20 Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres

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For more information visit: Gatepath.org/calendar

Stay Connected:     

SAVE THE DATE!



BAY AREA GIVING DAY

Give for Inclusion on Thursday, May 4

Bay Area Giving Day is a 24-hour online event to celebrate the spirit of giving and support local nonprofits. Your support will empower children and adults with special needs to achieve their full potential through inclusive programs like those highlighted in this newsletter.

Please join us in celebrating this day of giving when **contributions to Gatepath will be matched dollar-for-dollar!** The Gatepath Auxiliary will match the first \$5,000 in donations and information about additional matching gifts is available on our website. If you prefer to donate by mail, we invite you to use the enclosed envelope. For more information or to schedule your donation, visit GiveToGatepath.org.