

My name is Barbara Gegan. I am the conservator and younger sister of Matthew Gegan. Mat moved to the Sonoma Developmental Center Community on November 14 in 1957. He was four years old. My mother and father felt it provided the best environment and hope for Mat's further development and growth. I believed it has. Mat is happy and healthy. I am able to visit him and take him for walks in his wheelchair out in the sun and along the beautiful grounds of the SDC. He is loved and cared for by a professional, dedicated and trained team of people. His medical care is superb. His medial and behavioral issues are provided for with a minimum of drugs and restrictions. There are many special events and trips which Mat enjoys—parades, concerts, trips to the fair, parties, dances, time outside enjoying the feel of sunshine, wind, and sounds of nature.

The loss of this community of care and support would be tragic. If Mat is taken away from the Sonoma Developmental Center, his home of 57 years, my greatest fear is the loss of his care team. The Sonoma Developmental Staff is a group of trained and loving individuals who have chosen to pursue a profession dedicated to the care of their clients at the Developmental Center. I fear that in the community facilities the pay and benefit levels will not allow for a strong team of care givers. There is a vital need for stability, commitment, and continued training for the care givers. They need to be compensated at a level that enables them to make this a career not a temporary job. If the SDC closes what is the long term commitment to fair compensation to the hard working professionals who now care so well for our loved ones?

I support the concept of transforming the SDC. There is a shortage of trained staff, housing, and support services in the community. Use what you already have at the SDC. Expand and open up the medical, dental, equipment services to our friends and neighbors who live in the community. Close some of the units where the infrastructure is weak. Build some new housing on SDC land. Retain the wonderful staff we already have. Share the grounds and beautiful natural habitats with the neighboring parks and communities. Share the wealth and resources of this beautiful place. Let Mat and his friends at the SDC remain in their community and spread the resources here to benefit a wider community. Transform the Sonoma Developmental Center do not tear apart our wonderful community here at the Sonoma Developmental Center, share its resources, beauty and love with more people.