

By Pearl Loustalot for Kimberly Loustalot:

This is my story about SDC and Kim.

Kim was born in 1960 without issue and little was know at the time about people with developmental needs. She was diagnosed with developmental needs at the age of one after her DPT shot. Kim's needs became greater as she grew older. She needed to go to "school" or a program by the age of seven. We tried other schools and programs. They were few and far between in the local community and state and none worked for Kim. Her behavior problems interfered.

Sonoma Developmental Center, then Sonoma State Hospital, was just three miles down the road. There was a newly opened school on the grounds, Oak Lodge School. Dr. Butler was the Ex. Dir. at the time. It was a real school with a principal, teachers and teachers assistants. It was the only service available to Kim.

Kim was accepted into the school with the understanding she had to live there. So, after a court process, she began her life at Sonoma Developmental Center. We had to pay about \$200 a month at the time. It opened her world and was of great help to the family. SDC staff and residents were becoming a great part of the Glen Ellen and Sonoma communities. This worked for Kim and our family. It was close enough for her to come home on weekends. I became a teacher's assistant at SDC and retired at age 68. My eldest daughter also worked at SDC as a teacher's assistant and then went on to work at DDS in Sacramento.

As time went on, in the 80's, Kim and several others became part of a pilot program that was started by the state for the community. Long story short Kim lasted five years in the community facility. When the program ended funds and ran short it was turned over to the Regional Center. I got a call one night that Kim was taken away in a police car and no longer part of the program. She taken to jail then in a facility for the mentally ill. After a month of being over drugged and in the wrong placement Kim finally returned home to SDC, thankfully to Deputy Dir. Gary McCumber with DDS. Kim has lived there ever since. She, as others, does not transition well which has worsened with age.

SDC has been the safe haven, home, for so many individuals with developmental needs; and the saving grace for the families. It is hard to believe something cannot be worked out for those who live there and those who would continue being born that would need the great service SDC provides.

I was hoping we could all work together. At the age of 92, I never thought I would be fighting this fight for my daughter. I thought she would be safe for her life. This current "planning" process brings me back to the Holocaust when those with intellectual and developmental needs were targeted. Individuals with needs will continue to be born and will continue to need a safe and least restrictive place to live a full live with the freedoms known by those who currently live at SDC.

Please know that my comments and concerns come from the heart and my love for my daughter. I only see tragedy with the current plan. What would you do for your child?

Thank you for listening to my story.

Pearl Loustalot