



CDCAN REPORT

#012-2010 JANUARY 8, 2010 – FRIDAY EVENING

CALIFORNIA DISABILITY COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

**ADVOCACY WITHOUT BORDERS: ONE COMMUNITY –
ACCOUNTABILITY WITH ACTION**

California Disability Community Action Network Disability Rights News goes out to over 50,000 people with disabilities, mental health needs, seniors, traumatic brain & other injuries, veterans with disabilities and mental health needs, their families, workers, community organizations, including those in Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, African American communities, policy makers and others across California.

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A LIFE THAT MATTERED:

RUTH SHELTON LONGTIME BELOVED DISABILITY ADVOCATE PASSES AWAY

***Proclaimed At April 2002 Assembly Hearing On Olmstead Decision
Implementation: "I have a voice! I have a mind!. I have a choice! I am of
worth!"***

SACRAMENTO, CALIF (CDCAN) [Updated 01/08/10 11:30 PM (Pacific Time)] - Ruth Shelton, a longtime and beloved disability and senior advocate, and artist, who once proclaimed in 2002 to an Assembly Committee that was looking at implementation of the 1999 landmark US Supreme Court Olmstead Decision that "I have a mind! I have a choice! I am of worth! I am important! I am a child of God!" passed away Friday morning (January 8th) in her home that she shared with her friend and partner Laura Lee.

At the age of 10 years old Shelton was placed to live in a state hospital and lived there in other similar facilities for several decades before she was able to move into her own home in the community. Shelton, who had developmental disabilities including cerebral palsy and often needed Laura Lee to help translate her words after she spoke, was in her late eighties when she passed away.

After her placement in her own home, Shelton and Lee lived together for close to 30 years. Shelton, who was receiving hospice services before her death, had requested that donations to Capitol People First be made in her memory in lieu of flowers [CDCAN will send out address in later CDCAN Report including information about any services or go to the CDCAN website at www.cdcan.us]

Shelton was widely known, respected and loved for her advocacy, her art and her friendships with so many across the State.

Her passing comes ironically comes on the same day that the Governor's proposed State budget was released that proposed spending cuts and reductions in many of the services Shelton received in order to live in her apartment in downtown Sacramento, including In-Home Supportive Services, Medi-Cal and regional center funded community-based services.

Note: people who have memories or comments about Ruth Shelton – or photos, please send via email to Marty Omoto at martyomoto@rcip.com for inclusion in a follow-up CDCAN Report.

Shelton Was Longtime Member of Capitol People First

Shelton was a member of Capitol People First for about 23 years, a widely respected Sacramento-based advocacy group for persons with developmental disabilities, and was known not only as an outspoken advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to live in their own homes, but also as an artists whose work often was displayed in local art shows.

A Friend Remembers Shelton

Sharon Fallis, a friend who visited Shelton the morning before she passed away, said the family held a “birthday and happy holidays open house” for Shelton and Laura Lee a couple of weeks ago, with many friends and family stopping by.

Fallis, who also is a longtime advocate for people with disabilities, and a former advisor to Capitol People First, said Shelton’s passing would be mourned by many people in Sacramento and across the State who will remember “...what an amazing advocate and friend we had in Ruth”.

Recalling Shelton’s life and her love of art, her love of advocacy and her friends, Fallis said, in remembering her, that “...we believe she is running in her bare feet through heaven, painting masterpieces with her hands, smelling the roses along the way, and laughing in love with all those who have gone before her.”

Sacramento News & Review Article Reports On Shelton’s Method of Art

An August 7, 2008 article in the Sacramento News and Review titled the “Short Center North Surreal Art Show” reported on art work being displayed in Sacramento by artists with developmental disabilities, including art work by Shelton. The article covered several other artists but wrote this about Shelton:

“Ruth Shelton has cerebral palsy. She’s in her 80s and in a wheelchair. And she paints with her head. No, literally, with her head. She asks Skinner to show us how she does it. He removes her glasses and straps an elastic band with a long brush at the end onto her head. Skinner puts a canvas a couple feet away from her face. And using the brush jutting from her forehead, she paints. Beautifully. Colorfully.”

REMARKS BY RUTH SHELTON TO ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APRIL 30, 2002

The Assembly Human Services Committee, chaired by then Assemblywoman Dion Aroner (Democrat – Berkeley -14th District) held an informational hearing on the status of California's compliance with the 1999 US Supreme Court “Olmstead Decision” at the State Capitol in Room 4202.

The landmark 1999 US Supreme Court “Olmstead Decision” was the result of two women with developmental and other disabilities from Georgia who filed a lawsuit who wanted to move out of a state facility into their own homes in the community.

The US Supreme Court ruling, under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, required the states to take steps to avoid the unnecessary or unjustified institutionalization of persons with disabilities, mental health needs and seniors.

By 2002, many advocates for people with disabilities and seniors were unhappy with the progress in compliance in California of the landmark decision, with no state plan yet finalized. The state still had no specific entity or task force devoted to Olmstead Decision implementation.

The hearing room in April 2002 was packed with people, including Ruth Shelton and Laura Lee and others, registering concerns or complaints about the delay while Gray Davis was governor, of developing and implementing a state Olmstead Plan – at that point in time, 3 years after the landmark ruling.

Shelton was one of the final persons to provide testimony, titling her remarks “Close the Doors” and with assistance from her partner and friend Laura Lee, gave her moving and eloquent testimony to the committee. The complete text of her remarks is below:

[CDCAN Note: I was there for this hearing and will never forget how moving and eloquent Ruth’s testimony was, particularly when she said “we are of worth! I am of worth!”.

She said those things about struggle, injustice and hope and it gave me hope. At the time my sister – who had developmental disabilities – was still alive. I had hope then and when I thought I lost it, I remembered what Ruth said then and since - and I then I remember and know that we can all have hope again.

We can all pay tribute to her words and legacy, no matter what one’s views are about developmental centers, state hospitals or community based living.

Ruth was a person of worth. She also reminded us that we all are.

Now, when we face yet another crisis in 2010, it is more important than ever before that we remember her words and that special hope she gave us. What a gift her life was to us all. Her life mattered. And she was of worth. - Marty Omoto]

CLOSE THE DOORS

Testimony given April 30, 2002 to the Assembly Human Services Committee informational hearing on Olmstead Decision Compliance, State Capitol in Room 4202

I have come a long way.

When I was ten years old my parents put me in Sonoma State Hospital.

They had four little kids and another on the way.

This was during the depression.

I lived at Sonoma Developmental Center for over 45 years.

I was asked to live with a foster family in San Francisco.

*The Foster Mom died of a drug overdose.
I moved into a Skilled Nursing Facility in Sacramento
because there was no other place to go.
I lived there for 5 years.
It was certainly not much of a life.
I had no choices about anything.
I was told when to eat. What to eat.
Where to go and when to go there.
They did not know I was an artist.
They did not know that I could sing.
They did not know that I had the right to vote.
But I showed them.*

*I think people should have respect for one another.
Just because we look different or talk different
doesn't mean we don't understand what is going on.
We are of worth.
We have good minds and good ideas.
Let us have a voice in the decisions which effect us.
I now live with my best friend Laura Lee.
We live and work together as a team.
I use In Home Support Services.
Alta Regional Center pays for my transportation.
And they pay for me to attend the Short Center North
where I am an artist, performer, and teacher.
As a member of Capitol People 1st,
I know a lot of people who need services to live in the community.
We need homes we can afford.
We need Supported Living services & choices in providers.
Each person's support needs are different.
Today there are a lot more choices than when I was a child.
But even with all of the choices that we have now.
Why do we still need institutions?
Why do we still have state hospitals
when they deny people their freedom?
I have a voice!
I have a mind!.
I have a choice!
I am of worth!
I am important!.
I am a child of God!
Close the State Hospital!.
And open the doors to community living.
Thank you.*

URGENT!!!!

PLEASE HELP CDCAN CONTINUE ITS WORK!!!

We need your help. CDCAN Townhall Telemeetings, reports and alerts and other activities cannot continue without your help.

To continue the CDCAN website, the CDCAN News Reports. sent out and read by over 50,000 people and organizations, policy makers and media across California and to continue the CDCAN Townhall Telemeetings which since December 2003 have connected thousands of people with disabilities, seniors, mental health needs, people with MS and other disorders, people with traumatic brain and other injuries to public policy makers, legislators, and issues.

Please send your contribution/donation (make payable to "CDCAN" or "California Disability Community Action Network):

CDCAN

1225 8th Street Suite 480 - Sacramento, CA 95814

paypal on the CDCAN site is not yet working – will be soon.

MANY, MANY THANKS TO the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF ADULT DAY HEALTH CENTERS, Valley Mountain Regional Center, Toward Maximum Independence, Inc (TMI), Friends of Children with Special Needs, UCP of Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, Southside Arts Center, San Francisco Bay Area Autism Society of America, Hope Services in San Jose, FEAT of Sacramento (Families for Early Autism Treatment), RESCoalition, Sacramento Gray Panthers, Easter Seals of Southern California, Tri-Counties Regional Center, Westside Regional Center, Regional Center of the East Bay, UCP of Orange County, Alta California Regional Center, Life Steps, Parents Helping Parents, Work Training, Foothill Autism Alliance, Arc Contra Costa, Pause4Kids, Manteca CAPS, Training Toward Self Reliance, UCP, California NAELA, Californians for Disability Rights, Inc (CDR) including CDR chapters, CHANCE Inc, , Strategies To Empower People (STEP), Harbor Regional Center, Asian American parents groups, Resources for Independent Living and many other Independent Living Centers, several regional centers, People First chapters, IHSS workers, other self advocacy and family support groups, developmental center families, adoption assistance program families and children, and others across California