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# Aphasia Center of California

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Volume 7 Issue 2 ♦ Fall 2004

## Walk to Talk 2004

**“Even if you’re on the right track, you’re gonna get run over if you just sit there.”**

*-----Will Rogers*

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**By Roberta J. Elman, Ph.D.**  
*President and Founder,  
Aphasia Center of California*

Once again, we had a successful fundraiser for the Aphasia Center of California. Saturday, June 19 was our second annual “Walk to Talk” event, at beautiful Lake Merritt in Oakland. More than 85 people walked and rolled to raise funds for the ACC and to promote awareness of aphasia. More than \$15,500 was donated for the program services at the Aphasia Center!

Aphasia Center of California members strolled and rolled as a large group for a quarter of a mile along the shores of Lake Merritt. Following the entire group stroll with our Center



*Aphasia Center of California supporters “Walk to Talk” at Lake Merritt*

banner, many of the participants decided to walk or roll around the entire 3½ miles of lake shoreline. The “Walk to Talk” event included refreshments in the Downtown Oakland Senior Center’s lounge, an art exhibit from the ACC’s art class, a resource table with materials on aphasia and stroke, and drawings for great prizes. In addition, Susan Musicant and Sharon Medairy of [www.womenscontradance.com](http://www.womenscontradance.com) provided live fiddle and guitar tunes that had our toes tapping and fingers snapping. A big hit this year was our black t-shirt with “got aphasia?” The

back of the T-shirt included the definition of aphasia and our website address.

Top fundraisers included Jim Santanna, George Yee, and Judi Briano. Judi once again received donations from the most number of people. A heartfelt thank you to all who helped and participated—your efforts and enthusiasm are keeping the Aphasia Center’s doors open!

I wish we had room in this newsletter to list every donor individually...but we would need a book rather than a newsletter. So an

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**Our Mission statement:** *The mission of the Aphasia Center is to encourage and expand communication and psychosocial well being for those with aphasia. We are dedicated to helping families and stroke survivors understand the ramifications of stroke and aphasia on their daily lives and to improve the quality of life for all those affected.*

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## A Remarkable Team

by *Martha Lynch,*  
*Stroke Survivor*

What a pair! Diana Sullivan is a volunteer on Wednesdays at the Aphasia Center. She is spirited, effervescent, laughs easily, and had a stroke in 1991. Her husband, Dan, has been her partner for more than 50 years. They seem to be perfectly matched: they grew up within a few streets from one another in Oakland; they went to the same Catholic school and church; they met, fell in love, got married and had three children and five grandchildren. One more thing, they are both the children of immigrants. Dan's parents were from Ireland and Diana's father was from Italy. Even their one big difference has not come between them. Dan didn't have a stroke, but he is a major part of Diana's recovery. There are other differences, too. Dan has a gift of words and a quick Irish wit; Diana has an intense passion for doing the right thing. But they draw strength from their differences and, together, they form a remarkable team.

An example of Diana's desire to do things right came when her mother suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Before Diana's stroke, she took care of her mother for nearly 15 years. While making daily visits to her mother's nursing home, Diana found that the institution had many problems that affected patient care. She became the patients' advocate and, according to Dan, "All the patients in that home would perk up when they saw Diana."

Because of her diligence and support of the elderly, Diana was presented with the Whistle-Blowers



*Dan and Diana Sullivan*

award by Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy in 1987 for her work. She was also featured in *Parade Magazine* for her courageous work to protect nursing home residents. Diana hadn't realized at the time that many of the women sitting in the hallway at the nursing home had suffered from a stroke. She says, "The women couldn't speak, but their eyes said it all, and they would always smile." Diana remembered those women from the nursing home when she had her stroke.

After Diana's stroke in 1991, she struggled with language skills, especially reading. She would look at a newspaper and just see "black ink" without knowing what the words meant. Dan quips, "She's Italian and she's stubborn. She would sit in front of the TV and listen and watch their lips then emulate them in speaking. And she did it all on her own."

Diana says that it is wonderful to

have Dan who is such a positive, supportive partner to help her go forward. In talking to Diana today, most people wouldn't know that she had survived a stroke. She remembers, in the early days after her stroke, repeating a word or a sentence until she got it. "I knew I was going to have to rewire my brain," she says.

Diana says she still misses the days before her stroke when she could get so much accomplished quickly. Now she works much slower, and instead of doing three things at once, she does one thing. However, she continues to make progress with her aphasia, even 13 years after her stroke, and that is what pushes her to continue her recovery efforts.

Diana met Dr. Roberta Elman and Ellen Bernstein-Ellis more than ten years ago when they were working at the Easter Seals Medical Rehabilitation

*Continued on page 8*

# Aphasia Center News

Aphasia (uh fay' zhuh) n: an impairment of the power to use or comprehend words, usually acquired as a result of a stroke and sometimes from head injury or a brain tumor. More than one million Americans have acquired aphasia.



“I jenti ferbis...”

State Assemblywoman Wilma Chan, declaring June as California Aphasia Awareness Month. Kudos to Lynne Tabor for helping raise awareness across the entire state of California—one person CAN make a difference!

## Grants for Participants with Low Incomes

The Aphasia Center was the recipient of grants from the Cisco Systems Foundation and Kaiser Permanente to fund ACC services for those individuals with aphasia with low incomes. The Aphasia Center is seeing a dramatic increase in participants whose income places them at or below the poverty level. Thank you to Cisco Systems Foundation and Kaiser Permanente for helping us serve these very needy individuals!

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## June Declared Aphasia Awareness Month in California

It only takes one person to make a difference. Proof of this is what happened when Aphasia Center

participant, Lynne Tabor, took the time to write a letter to State Senator Don Perata. She started the ball rolling by initiating dialogue between Senator Perata’s staff and the Aphasia Center. The result was the following California State Resolution, co-sponsored by

# Aphasia Awareness Month Resolution

### Resolution SCR 83, Perata. California Aphasia Awareness Month.

This measure would declare that the Legislature recognizes June of each year as California Aphasia Awareness Month.

WHEREAS, Aphasia is a communication impairment caused by brain damage, typically resulting from a stroke; and

WHEREAS, While aphasia is most often the result of stroke or brain injury, it can also occur in other neurological disorders, such as in the case of a brain tumor; and

WHEREAS, Many people with aphasia also have weakness or paralysis in their right leg and right arm, usually due to damage to the

left hemisphere of the brain, which controls language and movement on the right side of the body; and

WHEREAS, The effects of aphasia may include a loss or reduction in ability to speak, comprehend, read, and write, while intelligence remains intact; and

WHEREAS, Stroke is the third largest cause of death, ranking behind “diseases of the heart” and all forms of cancer; and

WHEREAS, Stroke is a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States; and

WHEREAS, There are about 4.8 million stroke survivors alive today; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that there are about 700,000 strokes per

year in the United States, with approximately one third of these resulting in aphasia; and

WHEREAS, Aphasia affects at least 1,000,000 people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, More than 200,000 Americans acquire the disorder each year; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes June of each year as California Aphasia Awareness Month; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

## Thank You to Our Generous Donors

January - June 2004

If we have made any errors in this listing, please accept our apologies and contact us at (510) 336-0112.

### In Memory

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# Walk to Talk 2004

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extra big THANK YOU goes to all who made donations to the Aphasia Center of California for the walk! Please know that your generosity is already helping individuals affected by aphasia. Individuals who made contributions of \$25 or more are listed in an accompanying section.

Thanks to the following companies that donated services or merchandise for our participant prize drawing. We encourage you to remember their generosity and support their businesses! Albertson's-Montclair/Oakland, Berkeley Bowl Marketplace, Compadres Bar & Grill-Oakland, Crogan's Restaurant-Montclair/Oakland, El Charro Mexican Dining-Lafayette, Glenview Florists-Oakland, Italian Color's Restaurant-Montclair/Oakland, Jamba Juice-Montclair/Oakland, Long's Drugstore-Rockridge/Oakland, Michael's Ristorante-Moraga, Mother's Cakes & Cookies-Oakland, Movie Express-Montclair/Oakland, Neldam's Bakery-Oakland, Pac & Save-Emeryville, Pastino's Restaurant-Oakland, Peet's Coffee & Tea-



*"Walk to Talk" Participants at Lake Merritt*

Lakeshore/Oakland, Purple Plum Restaurant-Oakland, Rite-Aid-Montclair/Oakland, Safeway-Moraga, Starbuck's Coffee/Moraga, Svenhard's Swedish Bakery-Oakland, Trader Joe's-Lafayette, and Ultimate Grounds-Oakland.

Finally, this walk would not have taken place without the help of numerous event volunteers. The walk would not have even been possible without the efforts of Enid Meyer, our event co-coordinator. A big thank you goes to the people who volunteered

their time to help things run smoothly both before and on the day of the event: Mary Jane & Rich Laufenberg, Sid Domes, Vicki & Don Welcome, Harold Parsley, Steve Fry, Patricia Terry, Dan & Diana Sullivan, Ellen Bernstein-Ellis, Christy Lloyd, Mary Lew, Bill Wong, Esther Akiba, Elaine Ivankovich, Cathy Carey, Linda Colon, Sharon Potts, Margie Westbrook, Fran Signori, Pat Woodward, and Paula Crosatto. Your time and talents helped to make our "Walk to Talk" a magnificent success!

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**Esther Akiba, Tracy Cook**

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**Mary Lew, Patricia Olson**

## 2004 "Walk to Talk" Donors

*A big THANK YOU to ALL donors who contributed to our second annual "Walk to Talk." Space limitations prevent listing all donors, but those who contributed \$25 or more are listed below. (If we have made any errors in this listing, please accept our apologies and contact us at (510) 336-0112.)*

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*Continued on page 6*

## More Walk to Talk Donors

*Continued from page 5*

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*Judi Briano received "Walk to Talk" donations from the most number of people.*

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## More ACC News

*Continued from page 3*

### Great News! The Aphasia Center Now Accepts Vehicle Donations

The Aphasia Center of California is excited to announce our new vehicle donation program. We've teamed up with Donate For Charity, a company that specializes in processing vehicle donations for nonprofit organizations. Donate For Charity arranges for vehicle pickup, handles all the DMV issues, sells the vehicle at auction, and distributes the net proceeds to Aphasia Center of California. So if it's time to replace an older car, or if you have a boat and trailer that are just taking up

space in the garage, consider making a donation. You'll avoid the headache of selling a used vehicle, help the Aphasia Center of California fund its ongoing efforts, and receive a receipt entitling you to deduct the fair market value of your vehicle as a tax deduction. When you're ready to donate, or if you have relatives or friends that wish to donate, simply call Donate For Charity toll-free at (866) 392-4483 or donate on-line at [www.aphasiacenter.org](http://www.aphasiacenter.org). We hope you'll take advantage of this new opportunity and help us expand our commitment to improving the quality of life for all those affected by aphasia.

Shopping at [www.iGive.com/ACC](http://www.iGive.com/ACC) helps the Aphasia Center

Everybody shops. Think of how much money will go to the Aphasia Center of California if supporters do some or all of their shopping online at [www.iGive.com/ACC](http://www.iGive.com/ACC) where up to 27% of every purchase is donated to the Aphasia Center of California. At [iGive.com](http://iGive.com), membership is free and there is no extra cost or obligation to you. And [iGive.com](http://iGive.com) will currently donate an extra \$5 to the Aphasia Center of California for all new members! You can shop at over 240 merchants, including Lands' End, Gap.com, PetSmart, Barnes and Noble and more and help the Aphasia Center at the same time! Please go to: [www.iGive.com/ACC](http://www.iGive.com/ACC)

"got aphasia?" shirts were popular at this year's "Walk to Talk"



Please remember the Aphasia Center of California!

For many fall workplace campaigns, including the United Way appeal, you can designate the Aphasia Center of California by listing its name and mailing address. Please share this information with your family and friends and help us to help those affected by aphasia.

## Thanks to Our Generous Donors

*Continued from page 4*

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The Generous Donors for "Walk to Talk!"

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Kenneth & Starr Lieber

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## A Remarkable Team

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Center. After volunteering at Easter Seals for about a year, Diana joined the Aphasia Center of California. In speech therapy, Diana started writing poetry about having a stroke and aphasia. In her first poem, she wrote, "Alone, sadness, confusion! Isolation from my previous life is profound." Diana says that writing poetry is a way for her to express complex ideas and feelings simply.

Diana has been volunteering at the Aphasia Center since 1994. It is inspiring for other stroke participants to see how much Diana has improved. Her husband Dan, who is a volunteer for many Aphasia Center of California projects, agrees. "I'd rather be around the people here at the Center with aphasia than anybody else I can

think of," he says.

"We depend on volunteers to help the Aphasia Center run smoothly," says Dr. Elman. "Diana has been volunteering for the ACC since 1994, when she helped out in our initial group communication treatment efficacy research study."

"Dan and Diana are an inspiring couple," Dr. Elman continued. "Diana helps with our communication groups

on Wednesdays and makes sure that participants find their way to the correct paratransit vehicles. Dan helps the Aphasia Center through his fundraising efforts, especially for our "Walk to Talk" event in June. We are so fortunate to have them as part of our Aphasia Center family."

Diana says that in the aftermath of her stroke she had to re-organize her life and do whatever else it took to recover. Dan was with her throughout it all. Diana and Dan Sullivan—a truly remarkable team!

## Thanks to our Generous Donors

*Continued from page 7*

Enid Meyer & Sid Dommes  
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**This newsletter is a publication of the Aphasia Center of California**

**Written and edited by Martha Lynch and Roberta J. Elman**

**Design and layout by Morris Older**

[www.aphasiacenter.org](http://www.aphasiacenter.org)

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