

The Communicator: August 2011

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Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back.

By Allison Doughty

On Saturday, June 25, Sandia/California's 15-person Relay for Life team walked and ran over 150 miles, raising over \$4,000 to fight cancer. The team was captained by Bryn Miyahara (8226) and Christy Turner (8237), both long-term participants in Relay for Life, the American Cancer Society's largest volunteer-driven fundraiser.

"I participate in Relay because I lost one grandparent to colon cancer, another to lung cancer, and have two aunts who are breast cancer survivors," explains Bryn. Both she and Christy became active in Relay for Life as college students.

"The most rewarding part of the experience is watching the opening ceremony to celebrate the Survivor Lap," adds Bryn. "There seem to be more survivors each year, which is very inspiring." Each Relay for Life event—there were over 5,000 in 18 countries last year—begins with a lap walked by cancer survivors.

"I loved the Luminaria Ceremony, where survivors and caregivers share their stories," says Christy. "The most touching story was from an 18-year-old who has been a cancer survivor for 17 years."

The Relay for Life slogan is "Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back." and the Luminaria Ceremony constitutes the "remember" part. Participants decorate luminaria bags in remembrance of a loved one who has died of cancer or in support of someone battling cancer. The luminaria bags are then placed around the perimeter of the track at Livermore High School, the site of Livermore's Relay, as well as in the stands to spell the words "Hope" and "Cure." As night falls, the glowing luminaria bags symbolize cancer's wide and devastating reach.

The other members of the Sandia team were Dolores Antonio (8650), Rene Bierbaum (8245) and husband Neal Bierbaum, Cathy Branda (8623), Tina Chou (8229), Morgan Edwinston (8527), Marilyn Hawley (8116), Will Loo (8244), Terry Spraggins (8527), Deneille Wiese-Smith (8128), Janson Wu (8112), Elaine Yang (8226), and Derek Young (8229). Four team members accounted for over half of the team's miles: Neal Bierbaum with 25, Christy Turner with 21, Rene Bierbaum with 19, and Deneille Wiese-Smith with 13.25.

Sandians Randy Clarin (8231) and Jason Zaha (8132) also hit the track for team Live Aloha in loving memory of their friend Leslie Ocreto-Baloran, who passed away from uterine cancer last year. The 10-member, mostly Hawaiian, team raised \$2,457 and completed 80 miles.

“Our team name signifies the lifestyle and purpose of why we continue to participate in Relay for Life every year,” explains Randy. “Our dedication and fight against cancer continues in honor of everyone with cancer, including Jason’s mother, Kathy Zaha. She was diagnosed in 2010 and is a breast cancer survivor.”

The Sandia team’s fundraising total includes a \$1,000 corporate contribution from Lockheed Martin. Special thanks to Morgan Edwinson for first initiating the corporate contribution last year. The 2011 Livermore Relay for Life raised a total of \$160,505 for cancer research, education, advocacy, and patient services. Learn more about Relay for Life at <http://www.relayforlife.org/relay/>.

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Sandia team members William Loo, Neal and Rene Bierbaum, Lisa Anderson, and Tina Chou. (photo by William Loo)



Cathy Branda and her daughter Melanie taking a break at Relay for Life. (Photo by Morgan Edwinson)

First farmer's market a huge success

By Alison Doughty

On July 26, people turned out in scores for the first-ever Sandia and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) farmer's market. Held in the General Access Area (GAA) in front of the Combustion Research Facility (CRF), the market was filled with eager shoppers, busy vendors, tantalizing aromas, and an air of excitement.

Strolling by, you saw a well-worth-it, long line to the Mediterranean Casbah for steak sandwiches, gyros, and falafels while LLNL employees played the Boston song "Peace of Mind". To complete the experience, there were many healthy and organic food vendors, as well as interesting olive oils, soaps, flower arrangements and kitchen items.

Terra Bella Family Farm and Frog Hollow Farm provided fresh produce, Beckner Farms showcased their dried fruit and wide array of flavored nuts, and Victorine Valley Farms offered unique olive oils and great soaps such as lemongrass, ginger with toffee, and lavender with flowers. Food vendors included Mediterranean Casbah, Simply-To-Go, Feel Good Bakery, and Joe's Gluten Free.

Pans on Fire displayed their cooking items and Knodt's Flowers gave a preview of custom flower arrangements. Teresa Price (8511-1) was the lucky winner of the "Best of Market" basket raffle which featured an assortment of items from participating vendors.

Feedback on the first Sandia/LLNL farmer's market was very positive, from both shoppers and vendors. "We didn't know what to expect, we're running low on some items, but it's great to see the support," said Jeff Bordes, Director of Marketing for Frog Hollow Farm.

Stacey Chase (8529) said that she was impressed by the turnout and would love to see the farmer's market happen more often. Others commented on the variety of vendors, convenience, and live music.

Next month the location in the GAA will be expanded, all 10 vendors will be returning, and 3-4 new vendors will be added. Some vendors do accept credit, so bring cash and credit to this month's market. The next farmer's market will be on Tuesday, August 23 and continue every fourth Tuesday of the month through October from 11 am-2 pm.

An informal gathering of LLNL employees provided the live music and Sandian musicians are encouraged to perform at future farmer's markets as well (if interested, contact Morgan Edwinson [8527] at 294-3501 or muedwin@sandia.gov). Questions, comments, or suggestions about the farmer's market can be sent to saluca@sandia.gov.



Sandians contribute to successful pet adoption

On Saturday, July 16, Sandians helped contribute to the East Bay Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)'s most successful Adoptathon to date. Catherine Culhane (8522) organized the activity as a community service event for summer interns. She chose to work with the SPCA because she feels passionate about helping animals.

"Animals offer us unconditional love and friendship," explains Catherine. "Volunteering my time to help the less fortunate animals whom our society has left behind, is my way of giving back."

With 23 volunteers, Sandians and their friends and family accounted for nearly one-third of the over 70 volunteers who helped out that day. Nine of the Sandia team were Catherine's family members, including her husband, mother, aunt, uncle, and four cousins.

The Sandia volunteers stayed busy all day, unloading and loading materials and crates, setting up tents, tables, and chairs, holding leashes, manning the Ben & Jerry ice cream cart, answering questions, and helping out as needed.

Dana Bushouse, volunteer services manager for the East Bay SPCA, described it as an amazing event with almost 5,000 people in attendance. Seventeen rescue organizations and 10 vendors attended. A total of 48 animals were adopted, with another 30 potential adoptions for rescue organizations that don't allow same day adoptions.

The event raised almost \$300 in donations, including \$55 from Ben & Jerry's ice cream sales and an \$80 donation from John Paul Pet. An additional \$500 was raised from sales of t-shirts, hair-bling, water bottles, bags, and a raffle.

"We had very positive feedback from all in attendance, and a few rescues commented that this is the best event they've attended," said Bushouse. "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

The event was one of several community events organized by the California human resources department for summer interns. Look for a story on the Mount Diablo hike in the September issue of The Communicator. Catherine and Kristy Sibert (8522) plan to organize more events like these next summer.

The Sandia volunteers were interns Allison Doughty (8529), Jeffrey Fein (8132), Malek Musleh (8953), and Jocelyn Shaw (8522); Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory interns Korressa Williams and Shaida Arbabha; Kristy Sibert; Sara Anaya (8517); Bryn Miyahara (8226) and her husband Nick Loper; Erin Quinn (3555), her boyfriend BJ Chandler, and friends Kelly Weekes and Hannah Salassi; and the "Culhane Crew"—Catherine and her husband John, mother Rosemary Dutra, aunt Laura Vaccaro, uncle Claudio Vaccaro, and cousins Courtney Smelser and Michael, CJ, and Christopher Vaccaro.



Assertiveness for life

By Allison Doughty

On June 29, Employee Assistance Programming (EAP) counselor Tamara Cagney explained how being assertive leads to better communication. This class was part four of the Sandia series of stress reduction programs, which focused on communication last month.

“You are assertive when you stand up for your rights in such a way that the rights of others are not violated,” explains Cagney. She went on to demonstrate that being assertive is not rude or aggressive, instead it is communicating effectively, directly, and confidently; dealing with conflict calmly; handling feedback effectively; and focusing on behavior and problem-solving instead of attacking or ignoring someone.

Cagney clarified that we may be taken aback by assertive people because we are not used to people telling us what they think, but we do not feel threatened by assertive people. “Assertive people aren’t mean. Aggressive people are mean,” she says.

Assertiveness is not aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, or passive-resistant behavior. Aggressiveness can impede on the rights of others and includes communicating sarcastically, using intimidating body language, and trying to control others. Passivism is the other extreme—passive people ignore their own rights and allow others to dismiss them. Passive-aggressive behaviors include gossiping, procrastinating, having a poor attitude, and tardiness. Teenagers are the masters of being passive-resistant when they learn that if they resist long enough, someone else will do the take on the work, thus training others to give up and leave them alone.

“Assertion is not just getting your point across; it’s also being able to listen. The higher the emotion, the more difficult it is to hear. They’re inversely proportion,” explains Cagney. Acknowledging your emotions is important so you can calm yourself before reacting.

You can prepare yourself to listen by taking a step back and then clarifying what you believe the other person is communicating to you. This can be achieved through paraphrasing and asking clarifying questions. By keeping the emotional response low, people listen and respond more clearly and effectively. “Being assertive doesn’t make people feel bad because you’re listening to them,” says Cagney.

To practice asserting yourself, use “I-statements” to state your emotion; reflect on what you have heard and paraphrase back to the other person; ask open-ended questions to encourage the other person to be more specific; and repeatedly say what you want, think, or feel, especially in an emotionally charged discussion.

Cagney suggests Toastmasters as a way to develop assertiveness. She describes it as assertiveness training that helps you express yourself confidently. Toastmasters can help with public speaking skills by improving communication and leadership capabilities in a diverse, supportive and fun environment.

Drop in on a Toastmasters meeting any Wednesday from 12-12:30 pm. Contact Jim Prestwood (jcprest@sandia.gov or 294-4852) for details or visit the Thunderbird Toastmasters web site. [http://www.sandia.gov/ca_toastmasters/].

The connected Sandian

By Reese Ramos – Ombuds (Org.30)

A few years ago, a pair of premature twins made the news. Weighing about two pounds each, the babies were put into separate incubators. Soon it was clear that one baby was doing better than the other. That second baby was just not improving and it looked like she was going to die. Despite the hospital's policy that babies be kept in separate incubators, the intensive care unit nurse decided to put the twins together. Amazingly, the healthier twin snuggled up to her sister and put her little arm around her. Almost immediately the weaker baby's vitals began to stabilize. The stronger baby kept hugging her weaker sister and eventually both babies lived—because of an embrace by one baby towards the other. This story is a powerful reminder about the need for connection.

I believe that unmet basic human needs are the source of all conflicts. Behind every problem, crisis, and conflict situation that presents itself at the Ombuds Office is one or more basic human needs that are unsatisfied or threatened.

Most of us have heard of Abraham Maslow and his “Hierarchy of Needs,” which suggests that all humans (regardless of their background, culture, or belief systems) are driven by the same interests. Maslow states that before achieving self-actualization, people first must satisfy their biological needs (food, water, shelter) and then their needs for safety, love and connection, and esteem. Connection is a need that is so critical, its absence jeopardizes the quality of our lives.

In the workplace we need to connect to people and/or an idea to feel like we are part of a team, that there is a common purpose. We need to be part of a social structure—a tribe, if you will. This need has made Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other social media platforms wildly successful.

At the Ombuds Office, the loss of connection is apparent in many conflicts. People express frustration due to lacking connection with a colleague, feeling excluded from the team, losing a friendship at work, or distrusting a new staff member or manager.

Research has shown that feeling connected generates a reward response from our brains while feeling disconnected generates a threat response. In fact, a [2003 neuroscience study](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/302/5643/290.abstract) [http://www.sciencemag.org/content/302/5643/290.abstract] indicated that social rejection is processed and experienced similarly to physical pain. Similarly, [research](http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2006938,00.html) [http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2006938,00.html] also shows that being connected to people not only feels good but helps you live longer. The secret's out! If you want to live longer, have more friends.

In a recent conversation here at Sandia, I was astounded to hear a co-worker report that their manager had never, in 10 years, popped into their office or made a connection on a personal level. So, how can we create an environment in the workplace in which we connect and understand each other better?

Asking the following questions of ourselves may help us connect more effectively. For an

added challenge, ask them in relation to colleagues we don't trust, like, or know.

- ☐ What kind of relationship would I like with my colleague(s)?
- ☐ What is one thing I respect or admire about this person? How would it make them feel to hear those things acknowledged? How would I feel if they articulated what they respected or admired about me?
- ☐ What do I have in common with this other person?
- ☐ How do I know I can trust this person? (If trust is an issue, then ask: what would need to happen in order for me to trust this person more?)
- ☐ What is one commitment I could make towards the other person?
- ☐ What is one thing I would want the other person to do to show they value my contributions to the team?
- ☐ What is the unifying purpose of the team?
- ☐ What could I do right now to help my colleague(s) feel they belong in the work group?

A [study](http://www.anatomy.uci.edu/journal_10-11_pdf/Schneider_3_30_11.pdf) [http://www.anatomy.uci.edu/journal_10-11_pdf/Schneider_3_30_11.pdf] has indicated that we are less sympathetic to people we perceive to be in competition with us. Such perception may influence team dynamics at work where people in the same department feel that they are competing against each other.

Asking yourself these questions could be the first step in creating a more connected workplace. By creating such bridges we can develop more civil relationships, stronger teams, and a fixity of purpose in truly serving the nation.