

COMPASS NEWSLETTER

Celebrating 20 years in business!

March 2016

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THROWBACK



BRAVO BUCK 2013

We are celebrating 20 years in business and we could not be more excited about it! Reflecting on the last 20 years has been a fun part of the celebration process. With that

being said, these pictures are a throw back to our Bay Area Bravo Buck Event in 2013. We hope you enjoy this trip down memory lane just as much as we do! Stay tuned for more throw backs!

COMPASS

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2016 Winter East Bay Edition



Why I Started Compass by Sadie Hess, CEO & Founder

Many of you have heard various versions of my journey that brought us to this place. I plan on taking this year to tell you all the major milestones of this journey, as we celebrate our 20th year in business. But today I start at the beginning.

My beginning was as a twenty-year old kid who wanted a paid internship. I applied at a small mom and pop agency that had freshly received vendorization. They had but a few clients. It was a Wild West season in Supported Living as regulations hadn't even been finalized and philosophy was the main staple of a program plan. This is to say this agency had an idea of SLS, but had not actually done SLS. They needed staff and my advisor allowed me to use care giving as my internship for my psychology program.

I will never forget the day I walked into Cindy's house. I felt nervous and unsure. I had never spent time with a person with disabilities and I wasn't sure what to say or if we would have anything in common. My training was quick—too quick really. The owner, Mary, and a staff I would later get to know as the one with horrible boundaries, introduced me to Cindy. We will call her Stacy because I can't remember her name.

I don't remember if I even heard Cindy speak that day. I was given a few basics about Cindy's house and shown a pivot transfer. There is something to be said about the courageous ignorance of youth. I didn't even attempt one transfer. I just watched and we all seemed to think that would be enough. I arrived to my next shift with a fair amount of trepidation. I was going to be alone with Cindy and I was convinced we would have

nothing to talk about. The staff with bad boundaries (still calling her Stacy) showed me one more time how to do a pivot transfer and left.

I was on my own. I was too naïve to fully understand the gravity of my situation, but it was never lost on Cindy. She at once began to train me. She was the most patient and kind coach I had ever had. I learned so much sitting at her Park West apartment.

When I am extremely nervous I talk....a lot. I began to talk Cindy's ear off. She was so graceful about it as she listened. She asked me to share what I had done the last summer. I had been in the Philipians the summer before and was anxious to share about my trip. All my nervousness vanished as I came to realize I was going to spend time with a companion. I was going to get the rare and special gift of caring for not a patient or a client, but a wise and loving friend. In those initial moments, the first thing she taught me was that she was a person and we would be having a relationship, not a transaction.

She then taught me about transfers and positioning, but in the midst of that there was a deeper, lifelong lesson. She taught me about how to have grace when in unbearable pain.



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I would transfer her poorly or go over a bump too quickly and you could see the pain etched on her face, but she would always say in her Cindy way, "That's okay." If you knew her, you can probably hear the falsetto voice she would use to say that phrase. It was one of Cindy's hallmarks.

I remember vividly the agonizing process of getting her into bed. I would go out to the couch once she was in bed and marvel at what she did each and every day to be part of society. She would endure unspeakable pain to live amongst us. There, I realized heroes come in all forms and I had met one.

Most importantly, Cindy taught me about friendship and awakened an unknown part of my heart. My professor remarked on it when he saw us together. He said, "Sadie, you are an athlete and your body working well is so important to you. Did you ever think that you would use your body to help another person live her life?"

It was in that moment that I knew I wanted to do this for the rest of my days. I wanted to use my voice for those who had no voice. I wanted to use my legs to push others who could not propel themselves. In turn, Cindy would give me

things I did not have. She would share her experiences and let me into her world. She would also give me her wisdom she had acquired through both her pain and triumphs. Compass was not born on this day, but my heart for people with disabilities was.

Later, Cindy became our client here at Compass. We served her for over fifteen years. Last year, Cindy decided she was done with her job on this earth. The day she passed away, family, friends, staff and former staff gathered from all over to be with her: to have one more moment of her strength and courage.

I will admit I was scared to go see her that last day. I wasn't ready to lose my mentor and I wasn't prepared to say goodbye. But when I walked in her room, over six people were crammed in around her and the love was palpable. I witnessed the indelible mark she left on so many. I was reminded of an earlier lesson: conquerors come in all forms.

I heard it said that the amount of pain you feel in mourning is proportionate to the love you feel in life. If so, I must have

really loved Cindy because her death hurt like hell. I loved Cindy for Cindy, but I also loved what she opened up inside of me and what I now share with this community. I will be eternally grateful that she took a chance on a twenty-year old kid and opened me up to not only a career, but also a passion for people with disabilities. She gave me far more than I could ever repay. She will forever be my hero.



SLS Feature: Gail, George & Mary by Ashley Valenzuela Case Facilitator

If you have ever had the pleasure of moving, you would probably agree that it is something that people do not choose to do for fun. The move itself is stressful, laborious, and overall draining. So when Gail, George, and Mary found out the care home they were living in decided to close its doors the moving "blues" came on rapidly.

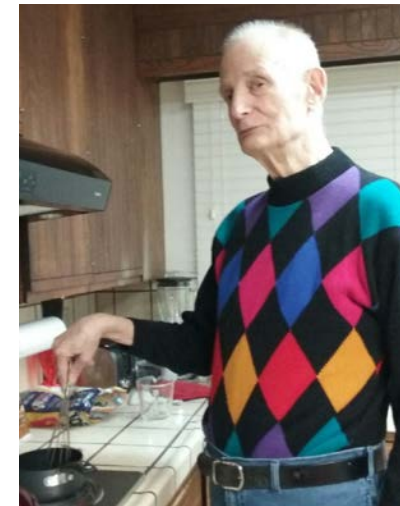
We can all agree that change is good, but it is also a scary reality of life. Something we are not always ready for. Although it is sad that the care home was no longer open for business, this life change is what brought these three special people into our Compass family. George, Gail, and Mary are now living together as roommates in a wonderful four bedroom home and are enjoying every moment with each other and their staff.

George is warm hearted, with a love for architecture and trains. George has shown a knack for being able to remember and reproduce floor plans and draw maps to scale. George has even constructed model houses complete with intricate electrical wiring. George is full of talent.

Mary is musically inclined; she has an amazing talent for playing the piano. Mary enjoys everything musical and theater. She enjoys going to watch plays and concerts as well as putting them on herself at home for her staff, friends and roommates.

And last but most certainly not least is Gail. She like George and Mary loves to have a good time, she enjoys hosting parties with friends and spending time in her community. Gail also enjoys cross stitching in her spare time and creates beautiful pieces of work.

Gail, George and Mary are inspiring. They took the change that had occurred in their lives, and embraced it. The transition is still a process; lessons are still left to be learned but one thing is for sure they will face any challenges they have head on, and together.



Unfortunately, there were times where Zach had been told that he didn't have the skills or the know-how to live independently. With pure determination, Zach went out to prove his own strength and personal belief in himself! In the last 4 months, Zach moved into a new apartment with a roommate and took over the responsibility of managing his own finances. It is the first time Zach has lived by himself without any form of in-house staffing or family support! Moving into a new place on his own just wasn't enough for Zach though. He also obtained a new job at a local school and for a time was working at both his program and this new position. It is a good thing Zach likes to be busy!

Nowadays, Zach is enjoying his apartment and getting to know his new roommate. He enjoys his new job and still has time to spend with his friends. Zach was able to recently put a new stereo system in his car with the money he earned from work. He also has continued to pursue one of his passions: making music. Zach loves rap and hip-hop music. He writes his own lyrics and has posted his music online to share with others. He tells us that he feels happy and energized when online listeners let him know they enjoy his music.

Though so much has changed so quickly, Zach has handled all of it so well! We are all very proud of Zach and his big accomplishments. We feel honored to be able to walk alongside him on his incredible journey and lend him the coaching and support to keep him on track toward his dreams.



ILS Feature: Zach by Alicia Woodworth, ILS Manager

At Compass, we regularly take the opportunity to recognize our clients for the progress they've made by awarding monthly certificates of acknowledgement. In the East Bay, these winners are called East Bay Extraordinaires. Sometimes, though, we have clients who make such monumental accomplishments or such drastic changes, that they deserve a special spotlight in our newsletter.



Zach joined Compass' ILS program in September 2015 after deciding that he would like to increase his level of independence. Previously, he was living in a home where staffing support was available any time he needed and where the rules provided all the structure needed in the house and between the roommates. He also had higher levels of support and oversight with his finances. Even in his living situation, Zach was known to be a pretty independent guy. He had his own car that he used to bounce all around town in. He also worked almost full time at his supported employment program.