Why Jim Stream is honored today. Tuesday, October 29, 2019

Jim Stream, Executive Director of the Arc of Riverside County, is honored today with this recognition of his unique and needed contribution to his city and county and state and nation and family, friends and colleagues. I have been honored to be asked to share with you today some of the contributions he made locally, Statewide and nationally.

I first really met Jim in 2001 when he agreed to collaborate on a grant I had received from the Children’s Justice Act Task Force to address abuse of children with disabilities. This turned out to be the first of many grant-funded projects. Although I had met him casually before that, I had no idea of the amazing qualities of Jim Stream.

He readily responded to those seeking his support, such as Eva Carner, when she asked him to help in the area of FASD. He responded to my request to help with the issue of abuse of people with developmental disabilities…of course in turn he asked me to help on the FASD front!!! He also highly & completely admired the advocacy of Billy Edwards, a defense attorney in Los Angeles, who fought and continues to fight daily for his clients who have developmental disabilities.

Although not the specific mandate of the Arc, he opened his arms to me, to Eva, and I suspect many others who needed it. In 2011, Jim and I wanted to do a national survey on the extent of abuse, in the absence of any national study since 2001. We began on May Day in 2012. Jim and I collaborated on designing the content of the survey, and he put me in charge of dissemination. We chose an internationally known expert on the topic to study and report the results. He told me that if I got more than 999 responses, he’d take me to a steak dinner! He didn’t know it but I wanted to outdo him, but first he took us out for the steak dinner….and I stopped sending out surveys after we had collected 7,289! But, there were no more dinners!! Our expert was, in the end, unable to study the results so the Executive Director of Spectrum Institute, Tom Coleman, an attorney, pitched in and produced the first report. That report has been quoted in many reports, publications, and presentations all over the country…and too many times to count. It made a difference in awareness of the massive problem of abuse among people with I/DD.
As to the activities of the grants Jim supported with me, were four national/international conferences, held at the Riverside Convention Center, the quarterly convening of a State level Task Force on abuse of children with disabilities over the 3 year grant period, the development of two law enforcement training DVD’s that earned recognition by way of a national award from the U.S. Attorney General, and the development and dissemination of a nationally recognized curriculum for law enforcement to improve response to suspected abuse cases. He widened my perspective greatly in creating the conferences and local meetings. Once, he asked me to prepare a report for the Board, and in preparation I decided to add up all the grants we’d been awarded, and it came to the tune of $1 million! I’m sure Jim knew that, as he was a numbers guy, but I had no idea, and he was very very pleased to provide this information to the board...all because he said “yes” when I asked him for help. He used to laugh at me when I would try to trick him, for example I’d call and say, “oh, dear!, we have to talk about the grant,” and after the first couple of cries for help after hearing from the source of the grant, he’d caught on, and would say, “OK, how much more money did they give us?” That happened several times! It was disappointing to not be able to trick him after the first 2 or 3 false alarms.

I don’t know if he ever said “no” to those seeking his help. If he were an ice-cream cone he would have 30 or more scoops, as he helped community members of all kinds. He hosted many golf tournaments, fairs, and other events, and with me hosting the four national / international conferences on abuse and people with disabilities. One year Dr. Peter Alsop was our opening keynote and he told me that the Board was ecstatic that he was able to lure Peter in to the gathering, a favorite apparently of several Board members who had Peter’s albums! And they got them signed by Dr. Alsop!

Jim was fastidious about making sure the budgets were balancing, and that the center was fully and properly staffed. From the outside, it seemed he ran a smooth sailing ship, although as with any endeavor, I’m sure he faced the usual challenges. But, he never ever complained. He was a family man, always speaking proudly and lovingly of his wife, Patti, and his children, Erin, Jaime and Ben, and his brother Ken & his wife Vicki, who hosted a gathering for the Arc of Riverside in his home, here in Riverside. They were happy to welcome Dodger star Wes Parker, a friend of mine to the party, and the voice-over artist who narrated one of our films, who instantly made a connection with Stan Morrison. And, now, Erin is the Executive Director, and I am sure that Jim is by her side every day guiding and supporting her.

Jim made sure family was first, and everyone else ran a very close second! He was more than an asset to his community, he was a leader and supported those who came to him for guidance or assistance. He built the Arc of Riverside County to a much more diverse and outstanding organization than before he took over.
He also generously helped a crime victim who needed a car, and was able to help get one donated to her. He never said “no” to those seeking his help or guidance. Because of his generosity of spirit, there are now many people with disabilities & their families, whose lives are better because he supported efforts to reduce the risk of abuse, to support providing effective therapy to them and their families, to help reduce the incidence of abuse, to make sure abuse/crime victims got services equal to those without disabilities. Jim was one of those human “stars” that most of us just look at and say, “Wow. He’s amazing.” I think all of us here are silently thanking Jim for all he did on professional and personal levels. I am. Thank you, Jim.

I’m sure that there are many more stories to tell of how he made contributions not only to the City of Riverside, but the county and to the State. And on the national scene, he was well known at the national Arc Conferences, and his reputation of honesty, fairness, and courage in the face of many challenges, was amazing to watch. This commemoration is richly deserved, and is appropriately awarded to recognize the contributions of Jim Stream.
In Memory of Our Friend and Colleague Jim Stream

James Nichols Stream (right) passed away on June 9, 2017. Jim was Executive Director of the Arc of Riverside County for 30 years. He was a longtime supporter of the Disability and Abuse Project and a trusted advisor to the Disability and Guardianship Project of Spectrum Institute.

Jim cared deeply about the well-being of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and spent much of his life in service to individuals with special needs. In 2012 Jim worked closely with Dr. Nora Baladerian to design and implement the largest national survey on abuse of people with developmental disabilities. Over the years, Jim arranged for The Arc of Riverside to host several international conferences on abuse and disability sponsored by the Disability and Abuse Project.

A memorial service for Jim was held in Riverside on June 24, 2017. For a copy of the memorial booklet distributed at that service, click here. Jim's insights were profound and his enthusiasm was contagious. He will be dearly missed and lovingly remembered.

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