

From The Executive Director Summer 2008 Newsletter

Beginning to write my first column as Executive Director is a bittersweet moment for me, filled with many different emotions. I am pleased and honored to be doing so, and yet I am saddened that this column is not coming, as it always did, from Charlie.

Charlie's death is still with us, these few months later, and his absence at IDDI is palpable. We miss his leadership, vision, and commitment, and truly it is not, and never will be, the same without him. Throughout this difficult time, what has helped me most, both professionally and personally, is the support I have received from everyone around me. All of your thoughts and prayers; your phone calls, emails and cards; your kind words and encouragement have made this time more bearable, and I cannot thank you enough for that.

And yet while these past weeks have had their share of difficult days and times, there have also been good days and hopeful times, when I feel that Charlie is looking down with pride, giving us strength, and encouraging us to move forward. Certainly at the graduation and prom his presence was felt, and what a wonderful day it was! I know I speak for everyone when I say how proud I am of our graduates, and I hope they and their families had as good a time as I did at the prom. We also had another very successful wine tasting fundraiser in June at the New Bedford Whaling Museum; if you have never been, I encourage you to join us for much fun, food, and excitement next year.

In addition to those events, it has been a busy time of moving ahead and adjusting to new roles. Prior to Charlie's passing, I had begun interviewing for a new Director of Children's Services, as Fran Chepren retired in May. With Charlie's death, this process was understandably held up a bit, and with my subsequent promotion to Executive Director, I was also presented with the task of finding a new Managing Director. I saw a number of qualified applicants over the course of several weeks, and I am happy to say that I found two people who I believe will strengthen our current management team and bring new and inspiring ideas to IDDI. John Kershaw, formerly our Director of Education, is our new Director of Children's Services; and Kimberli Bettencourt, currently Director of the Day School Program at the Schwartz Center, will be joining us as the new Managing Director. John stepped into his new role on July 6th, while Kim will join us on October 6th. In the coming months, I will offer more information on these two great additions to our team.

In closing, I want to thank you once again for the kindness and care you have shown me over the last few months. I am blessed to be surrounded daily by wonderful people - friends, colleagues, staff, and, of course, the kids and adults who live here - and I consider it a blessing to come here every day. Enjoying time with the kids and their families at graduation and prom, spending a Sunday at an MATP event with both children and adults, seeing them when I am on a tour - these are the moments that give me the motivation to continue my work at IDDI.

While Charlie's death represents the end of an era, in that IDDI has lost its visionary leader, I strongly believe that with his death comes a new beginning - a time in which we can carry on his legacy, develop and accomplish new goals, and continue to enrich the lives of every individual living here. I look forward to all that is to come and sincerely appreciate all of your support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.