

[Founding family member and current Valley CAPS Board member Carol Bone` -](#)

My brother Gerald G. Wright was born July 20, 1933 and was one of the first students to attend Manteca CAPS when it was founded in 1976. He went on to be the longest attending student, until he passed away on April 26, 2006. On "Gerry's" first day of kindergarten (1938), he was sent home with a note pinned to his shirt collar that said, "keep Gerald at home, he is not educable." So, Gerald stayed home with my deaf mother for the next thirteen years, while father worked. In 1951, the year I was born, a Civil Rights bill passed that gave free and equal rights to all children...the last sentence tacked on mentally retarded as well (the term back then for developmentally disabled). Thirteen years after Gerry was sent home with that letter pinned to his collar, he went back to school (now, age 18) and learned to read and write! Imagine the joy my parents felt, particularly after a judge, years earlier, had labeled him a "high functioning imbecile."

In the fall of 1950, ninety persons from across the country came together in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to participate in the first national parent conference. Minnesota Governor Luther Youngdahl was the featured speaker. Governor Youngdahl, a pioneer of the humane concept of care, was one of the first public officials to speak about the rights of people with disabilities and nondiscrimination. Parent organizations went on and filed lawsuits to force states to recognize the civil and legal rights of their children...

[Transcript from the Governor of Minnesota (Fall, 1950): - "The point is this, ladies and gentlemen, the retarded child is a human being ... And for reasons for which neither he nor his family are responsible, he is retarded. He has the same rights that children everywhere have. He has the same right to happiness, the same right to play, the right to companionship, the right to be respected, the right to develop to the fullest extent within his capacities, and the right to love and affection ... We cannot discriminate against this child, deny to this child the rights other children have because of the one thing that neither he nor his family can help, because he is retarded ... He has a right to these things and his parents have a right to know that he has these rights. For they, too, are entitled to peace of mind about what is happening to a retarded child separated from them. Laws were passed to enforce these rights, services were established, and delivery systems were required to provide appropriate services to children and adults with disabilities." *The disability rights and nondiscrimination movement began.]*

Growing up with my autistic brother Gerry, I was extremely curious why he was "different," this curiosity drove my decision to become a teacher. As an educator, I was curious that not all the students in my high school classes were learning. This curiosity drove my decision to go back to school and earn a master's degree in Education; with an emphasis in Special Education. Eventually, curiosity and desire to help others would result in me ending up with 5 credentials, including multiple subject, career-vocational, emotionally disturbed, mild-moderate, and my administrative credential, as well as a Resource Specialist Certificate.

Obtaining advanced education and the accumulation of my life experiences, provided the perfect segue to becoming a mentor for new teachers for the last 8 years of my career.

From the day Gerald was born, our mother was Gerry's primary caretaker, providing the love, support, and guidance he needed; until 1989, when she passed away. That is when I became my brother's conservator and advocate for the next 16 years of his life. During this time, my brother was a bronze medalist at the first Special Olympics in Los Angeles, California and became the first Consumer to attend Manteca CAPS Senior Center program, which created an environment for Senior consumers to socialize with one another, connect with the community, and when possible, give back to their community as volunteers.

My dream upon retirement was to become a "room mother" at CAPS in my brother's class! Alas, God had other plans and three days after my retirement my brother passed away of complications of Parkinson's. In lieu of my dreams as a room mother, I decided to continue my service as a member of Manteca CAPS Board of Directors and have continued serving for the past fourteen years. As a staunch advocate for individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, I believe I offer a unique perspective to the Board of Directors by providing my knowledge and experience as a Special Education educator, and life-long, loving sibling to my brother Gerry; one of Valley CAPS first Consumers.

Today, Consumers are protected by The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act, also known as the Lanterman Act, which is a California law, initially proposed by Assembly member Frank D. Lanterman in 1973 and passed in 1977, that gives people with developmental disabilities the right to services and supports that enable them to live a more independent and normal life. The legislation significantly expanded upon its landmark predecessor, the Lanterman Mental Retardation Services Act, initially proposed in 1969. The original act extended the state's existing regional center network of services for the developmentally disabled, while mandating provision of services and supports that meet both the needs and the choices of each individual.