Name that Newsletter!
We are looking for a name for our newsletter. The DESP? Submit your suggestions by e-mail to desp@wvm.edu. The person submitting the name that is selected will win two movie tickets.

Welcome to fall 2010 and the first edition of DESP’s new electronic newsletter! We have launched the newsletter in an effort to better communicate with our current students and stay in touch with our alumni and friends. Included in this issue is information about counseling services, a profile of our very own John Farley, West Valley College valedictorian at spring 2010 commencement and a preview of an upcoming fundraiser. We hope that you find the information helpful, interesting and even inspiring. We would appreciate your interest and involvement. Feel free to e-mail us your comments at desp@wvm.edu.

DESP will look different to all of you who are returning students. Heather Sawler, our office assistant, who has greeted you with a smile and friendly “How can I help you?” will no longer be sitting at our front desk. Patty Montgomery, our Alternate Media Assistant, whose patience and cheerfulness were known by students who worked in the DESP computer lab, will no longer be available to help students. Both of these positions were eliminated due to state budget cuts that affected DESP and all disabled students programs across the state. In addition, the Mobility Specialist position was reduced, another casualty of the state budget cuts. So, we are leaner, but our commitment to assisting students with disabilities achieve their educational goals remains strong. For current information about our program, you may check out our website at www.westvalley.edu/desp. We will update information in the “Important Information” section.

We look forward to working with both new and returning students and reconnecting with DESP alumni and friends.

Cheryl Miller
DESP Coordinator

Meet DESP Counselor: Ross Smith
By Mira Stauffacher,
West Valley College
Class of 2009

One of the great things about the DESP department is that it provides counseling for their students, advising them throughout their West Valley College journey.

Ross Smith has been a DESP counselor at WVC for six years now. Before acquiring this position, Smith worked in the Department of Rehabilitation for seventeen years, after receiving his master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling with additional studies in marriage and family counseling at San Francisco State University.

Smith believes that while in college, students need a counselor more than ever in order to keep them on track towards reaching their goals. “When students meet with a counselor, they are more likely to meet their goals in a more timely fashion. We can put an educational plan together that will help them to complete whatever they’re doing here in a reasonable time frame.

Ross expressed what he likes most about working in DESP. “I just like working with students. Most students are pretty idealistic, and it’s fun to work with people who are positive.”

To make an appointment with one of the DESP counselors either stop by the office or
In time for Christmas, DESP will be selling See’s candy to benefit the Disability and Educational Support Program. Monies raised will go directly to support students in DESP. Look for more information about this fundraiser on our DESP website this fall.

John Farley  
West Valley College 2010  
Commencement Valedictorian and DESP Student  
By Mira Stauffacher,  
West Valley College  Class of 2009

At the end of every academic year, West Valley College announces one graduating student as the class Valedictorian, based on his or her academic excellence and student involvement. This past year, that honor was given to John Farley, a student in the DESP department. Farley began attending WVC in the fall of 2006. He was very involved on campus as he was a member of the AGS Honor Society, and a part of the WVC Chamber Choir Singers for four semesters. He also volunteered his time in the library, working on an archives project and shelving books. For one semester he also worked on the Voices Literary Magazine, where he edited and reviewed other peoples poetry and writing.

“My experience at West Valley has been nothing short of incredible,” said Farley. “Everyone from professors, staff, admin have been helpful in getting me to where I am today. West Valley has been like family to me. I can walk around campus and just have the feeling that people are looking out for my best interests.”

As a student with a learning disability, Farley believes that the DESP program played a large role in his educational success. He explained that he has had to overcome a few disabilities throughout his life. For one, he has a fine motor disability that affects his hand writing speed, and therefore makes it difficult to take notes and complete tests on time. In addition to that, he has had to overcome a processing delay, meaning that it takes him longer than the average student to process what a question is asking and then develop an answer. The accommodations that DESP provided for him helped a great deal. “I had to think a lot about my answers and it would eat up a lot of time on tests,” he said. “The double amount of time for tests helped a lot and put me on an equal playing field as other students. Also, I could deal with a moderate amount of notes, but it was nice to have the option of a notetaker to help me out when necessary.”

When he first started at West Valley, he was unsure what the college experience would be like. “The DESP staff made my transition to the college a smooth and pleasant experience,” said Farley. "With the accommodations I was able to get with DESP I feel that, in spite of my learning disabilities, I was able to succeed. That’s everything to me." As this year’s Valedictorian, Farley expressed his feelings of humility and honor. “It feels really awesome to have the backing of the school, recognizing my accomplishments and achievements, and allowing me to speak for my fellow classmates,” he said. “It feels even more special as a DESP student to know that, in spite of my obstacles, I was able to do it. My accomplishment is DESP’s accomplishment. I owe them my ability to overcome obstacles and become the person I am today.”
Graduating with an AA in Music, as well as in Liberal Arts, Farley will be starting at Sacramento State in the fall. He wants to complete his bachelor’s degree in Humanities, and minor in Art History. “From there I would like to attend graduate school in Humanities, eventually becoming a college professor, while composing music on the side,” he said. Farley is very appreciative of his time here at West Valley and believes that DESP was crucial in bringing him success as a student. “I would just like to thank DESP for all its done for me,” he said. “Words can not express how happy I’ve been with the program and its results. I would advise all DESP students to take advantage of the things that the department has to offer because it can really help in your success.”

Latisha Dorsey and Daughter
2010 West Valley College graduate
“DESP has provided me with effective resources to work with my learning disability…the help of learning support classes, extended test time, books on tape and a notetaker in lecture classes has allowed me to successfully reach my educational goals.”

DESP Alumni and Friends Fund
The West Valley College DESP Alumni and Friends Fund will make it possible to continue to provide on-going support to students. Your membership or donation will be gratefully received and recognized. The DESP Alumni and Friends accepts support through membership contributions, outright gifts, or cash securities and property. The Fund also accepts a wide variety of deferred giving options, including bequests, charitable remainder trusts, securities transfer, and life insurance.

The West Valley College DESP Alumni and Friends Fund is part of the West Valley-Mission District Foundation, a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization. One hundred percent (100%) is used as specified without administration expense. All your contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.