

Advocate, educator, writer, recent grandfather, Marty Omoto

Marty's goal is to improve the quality of life by protecting and strengthening services and supports for people, including those who are developmentally disabled, have mental health needs (with traumatic brain and other injuries), veterans with disabilities, seniors, physically disabled individuals, family members, workers, community organizations including the Asian-Pacific Islander, Latino and African-American communities, and others across California.

Marty's publication, **CDCAN Disability Rights News**, initiated in 1987, is now distributed electronically to over 65,000 people, as often as several times a day during the fast-moving legislative budget phase, with announcements and reports on hearings and legislative sessions. He sponsors nearly a dozen hour-long telephone town halls every year with state officials, department administrators, and legislators. Marty was the first to use the telephone town hall to reach his constituents all over the state to talk about the policies that are being debated in the legislature. As many as 5,000 people participate in these calls, and Marty takes live questions and comments-an unprecedented and stunning amount of participation! Karen Keeslar, Executive Director of the California Association of Public Authorities and one of the most respected, knowledgeable, and longtime IHSS advocates in Sacramento, said, "Marty is often the first to convey information on vital policy and budget issues to thousands of people who are impacted by the decisions of state and federal policy-makers. He is a true phenomenon!"

Not only does Marty bring legislative and policy information, legislative alerts, and his website to his readers, constituents, legislators, and administrators thru **CDCAN Disability Rights News**, he also brings human connection to his readers. In "Remembering the Life of....," in each issue, Marty pays tribute to many of the extraordinary individuals who have lived with a disability and fought to improve the lives of all of us living in California.

Marty worked alongside Ernie Powell, formerly of AARP-CA and currently Grassroots Coordinator for the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare in Washington, DC. Of Marty, Ernie says, "Marty is one of the most dedicated, knowledgeable fighters and policy experts for people living with a disability that I've ever known. He's been a mentor to me because of his depth of knowledge, unlimited energy, and passion he brings to every moment of his work. Marty's newsletter, telephone town halls, and aggressive style of organizing have enhanced the quality of life for seniors and persons living with disabilities."

Marty's life and passion for social justice have been deeply influenced by his family, his Japanese-American ethnicity, and providing care for his developmentally disabled sister for over twenty years. Growing up during the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and later in the midst of the California farm workers' movement in the grape fields of Salinas, Marty experienced, first-hand, the issues he advocates: fairness, justice, access and the opportunity to improve one's quality of life.

Greg Thompson, PASC's Executive Director, says, "Not only do I rely on CDCAN for the most up-to-the-minute information on policy and legislation, but Marty teaches me and thousands of others how to advocate for change. I respect and admire Marty's genuine passion and energy. Every conversation we have inspires and motivates me to try and do more"

To watch the Interview with Marty Omoto and Executive Director of PASC, Greg Thompson, [click here](#)