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Developmental Disabilities: Dedicated Caregivers Help Woman with Disabilities in Her Battle with Cancer

*Regional Center of Orange County Honors Jessica Morales and Sandra Martinez
National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, Sept. 9-15, 2018*

Santa Ana, CA (Sept. 2018) – Sandra Martinez and Jessica Morales, who work for the [Life Steps Foundation](#), are more than direct support professionals to the woman with disabilities they serve. They are Carla’s roommates, and like family to her and her parents. Their dedication to enhancing Carla’s life was most evident after she was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. The two Rossmoor residents helped this young woman and her family fight back, with a combination of faith and hard work.



L-R: Sandra Martinez and Jessica Morales

Through three surgeries, 60 radiation treatments, two years of chemotherapy and a multitude of appointments, Sandra and Jessica were her constant caregivers, cheerful companions, and passionate advocates. At her side for doctor appointments and chemotherapy sessions to make sure she was calm and felt safe, their unflinching support amazed the medical professionals treating her. Today Carla is healed and planning her 35th birthday party: “Invite everyone I know!” she says.

In recognition of this exceptional dedication, the two women were honored by Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) with the organization’s 2018 Direct Support Professional Spotlight Award.

Describing what she loves most about her work, Jessica said: “It’s a personal relationship, and she has taught me a lot – to be strong and to be brave. I learn from her every day!”

“Sandra and Jessica are wonderful examples of direct support professionals who are always there for people with developmental disabilities,” says Larry Landauer, RCOC’s Executive Director. “California’s regional center system of community care simply couldn’t function without talented professionals like them, and we’re grateful for the passion and commitment they bring to this very important work.”

About Regional Center of Orange County

Regional Center of Orange County is the private, nonprofit organization contracted by the State of California to coordinate life-long services and supports for more than 21,000 Orange County residents with developmental disabilities and their families. Developmental disabilities include intellectual disabilities, autism, epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Learn more at www.rcocdd.com.

About Direct Support Professional Recognition Week

[Direct Support Professional Recognition Week](#) is part of an American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) national advocacy campaign. Celebrated annually across the country, it honors the tens of thousands of workers who enable people with developmental and other significant disabilities and their families to live healthy lives in their communities.

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