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**10 Adults with Developmental Disabilities Honored
for Their 30+ Years of Employment: Honorees Pioneered Inclusive Workplaces**

EDITOR/REPORTER NOTE: Photos available upon request.

Santa Ana, CA (January 17, 2022) – The Board of Directors for [Regional Center of Orange County](#) (RCOC) honored 10 Orange County residents with developmental disabilities at its January 13 quarterly board meeting for each of their 30+ years of employment success.

“The people we honored are pioneers, said RCOC’s volunteer Board Chair Chip Wright. “When they began their jobs they still hold today, it wasn’t always expected to see people with developmental disabilities in typical workplaces out in the community.”

Decades ago, few people with developmental disabilities were able to get paying work. Many who had jobs were employed in what were sometimes called “sheltered workshops.” These types of workplace settings (which are no longer eligible for regional center funding) included only adults with disabilities, were isolated from the broader community, and frequently paid far less than minimum wage.

“Now we take for granted that people with disabilities can and should be able to work alongside coworkers without disabilities,” Chip added. “But it took dedicated, loyal and hard-working employees like our honorees to open a lot of employers’ eyes to the benefits of including people with developmental disabilities into their workforces.”

The honorees included:

- Shona Barter of Huntington Beach, a Courtesy Clerk at Ralph’s Grocery Store in Huntington Beach;
- Bonnie Boss, of Brea, who handles laundry duties at Orangewood Children’s Home, in Orange;
- James Cabrales of Garden Grove, a Sales Associate for Goodwill in Garden Grove;

- Thomas Christian of Orange, a Mail Room Attendant with the Orange County Fire Authority headquarters in Irvine;
- Ronald Einwich of Anaheim, a Facilities Coordinator and previous Employee of the Year award recipient with Orange Senior Center in Orange;
- Michael Hughes of Costa Mesa, a Custodian/Stockier/Animal Attendant at Huntington Pet Vet in Huntington Beach;
- Michele Martinkus of Garden Grove, a Dining Room Attendant with Del Taco in Anaheim;
- Tony Ramirez of Anaheim, a Dishwasher/General Kitchen Helper with The Pacific Club in Newport Beach;
- Rob Ross of Tustin, Bistro Server Assistant, The Pacific Club in Newport Beach; and,
- Bob Woelfle of Cypress, a Dining Room Attendant at McDonald's in Garden Grove

Several years ago, the RCOC Board of Directors adopted an Employment First policy that makes competitive integrated employment the first option considered by planning teams for every working-age adult RCOC serves. This aligns with the state policy that also favors inclusive employment. Toward that end, RCOC and its network of service providers partner with businesses of all sizes, community organizations and government agencies throughout Orange County to identify job opportunities and then match individuals' skills, talents, abilities and interests with the right job and the right employer.

For more information on the advantages of hiring adults with disabilities, visit the [employment resource page](#) on RCOC's website.

About Regional Center of Orange County: Regional Center of Orange County is the private, nonprofit organization contracted by the State of California to coordinate lifelong services and supports for more than 23,000 Orange County residents with developmental disabilities and their families. The Regional Center is the first stop for those seeking to obtain local services and supports to help them live safely and with dignity in the community. Developmental disabilities include intellectual disabilities, autism, epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Learn more at www.rcocdd.com.

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