



Dialogue

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Consumer Spotlight

Team Western Transit

Many RCOC consumers and families are familiar with Western Transit Systems. The company operates 60 buses in Orange County that transport more than a thousand people with disabilities and seniors to and from their day programs and work sites each day. What a lot of people may not know is that keeping the interiors of those buses clean and detailed is the work of four men with developmental disabilities: John Baze, Alex Nishumura, Kevin Protteau and Ronnie Rodriguez.

They work at Western Transit through a contractual arrangement with their supported employment service provider OCARC.

They work at Western Transit through a contractual arrangement with their supported employment service provider OCARC, which supplies a job coach to supervise them on the job and handles employer-required things like workers compensation insurance and payroll taxes.

The men work in teams of two, cleaning each bus's floors, seats, walls and ceilings as well as dusting,



Team Western Transit (L-R) at work: Ronnie Rodriguez, Alex Nishumura, John Baze and Kevin Protteau.

removing trash and polishing glass and chrome. Working in four-hour shifts, three days a week, together they can clean 30 buses in a shift!

Their job coach, David Mendoza, oversees their work. He also provides training to help them improve, often demonstrating how to do the various jobs involved in keeping the buses in tip-top shape. Once a month, David switches up the duties among the groups. He said this gives each man the opportunity to learn more skills and to be challenged more in the job.

Western Transit's Operations Manager Diane Slagle has only good things to say about the team's work. While the four are not her direct employees, she said they are fully integrated with the other staff, sharing the same facilities and break room.

"They are very thorough and consistent," she said, noting that the company's bus drivers and other employees are also fans of the team. With Alex, Ronnie, Kevin and John on the job, she said, "Buses are

See **Team Western Transit** page 6

Spotlight Awards Coming in Spring 2011

Look for Spotlight event details and award nomination information in the next issue of *Dialogue* and online at RCOC's Web site www.rcocdd.com.

Dialogue

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Dialogue can also be read online at RCOC's Web site: www.rcocdd.com.

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2010 – 2011 Board Meetings

November 4 • January 6

March 3 • May 5

The public is invited to attend. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room. The November meeting will be held at the current office location at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana. Beginning in January, board meetings will be held at RCOC's new headquarters in the Tustin Centre Tower complex, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana. You can call (714) 796-5100 if you have questions about the location.

RCOC Administration

Larry Landauer, *Executive Director*

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Board Update

RCOC Board Creates Jake's LIFE Foundation

RCOC's executive management team is capitalizing on opportunities presented by real estate market conditions and low interest rates to solve the issue of long-term office space needs in a most innovative way. First, they found a perfectly suited headquarters building and incorporated an option-to-buy in its basic lease agreement. RCOC then created a supporting non-profit foundation, named Jake's LIFE, to purchase the building by issuing government approved tax free bonds. Jake's LIFE will lease its building back to RCOC. The 30-year lease, consistent with the terms of the bond offering, will stabilize RCOC's office expense and provide positive cash flow to Jake's LIFE. Several regional centers have recently employed this strategy and current conditions made it an excellent time for RCOC to do so.

As a supporting foundation, Jake's LIFE was organized and will be operated exclusively for the benefit of RCOC consumers. Any surplus funds that become available will support unmet needs like affordable housing for people with developmental disabilities.

The foundation's name – Jake's LIFE (Living Independently, Free and Empowered) – has significance.

It was named for Jake Robert, an RCOC consumer with cerebral palsy who passed away in 2006 when he was just 4 ½ years old. Although his life was brief, Jake inspired many people



Jake Robert

in many ways. That inspiration and influence continues today through the contributions of countless individuals who were touched by Jake's life.

Jake's parents, Steven and Alison Robert, fully support this effort that links their son's memory to the empowerment of people with developmental disabilities. Jud Robert, Jake's grandfather, who has served as RCOC board chair, continues to honor his beloved grandson by agreeing to serve as chair of the Jake's LIFE board of directors. Completing the volunteer board are Mark Antenucci, Rhys Burchill, Silvia Estabrook and Michael Hennessey.

By being creative and proactive, RCOC is securing a viable, long-term answer to the challenge of office space. This is a major step consistent with RCOC's disciplined approach of stewardship while continuing to provide the very best services to its consumers.

For more details about Jake's LIFE, visit RCOC's Web site (www.rcocdd.com) – under "About Us," click on "Help for Other Needs" for a link to the Jake's LIFE page.

Executive Director's Report

RCOC Office Move Expected to Save Money

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

Like many of the people with disabilities we serve who live in apartments, RCOC pays rent each month for the office space we occupy. For a large organization like ours that serves 17,000 people, that rent can be a substantial amount of money. So, as we started to approach the end of our current 12-year lease on the Civic Center Drive offices, it was important for us to take stock of our options and see if we could reduce our costs for office space without compromising on the quality of the services we deliver to consumers and families.



sadly, been a drag on our local economy, those factors combined to enable RCOC to secure better office space at a lower cost than we would have to pay if we stayed in the current location.

Located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue, near the intersection of 17th Street and Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana, the four-story building will be home to RCOC's management staff, human resources, accounting, health services, community resources, consumer services and intake department staff. It will also be home-base for the service coordinators and

other East-Central area office staff who have been working at the Civic Center Drive location.

RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center will also be housed on the ground floor of the new building, easily accessible for visitors to drop by.

Eventually, the South area office will move into the building, eliminating the costs of our most expensive branch office location.

We think that visitors will also appreciate the new building's close proximity and easy access to the 55, 5 and 22 freeways, as well as the plentiful parking – including many handicapped spaces. Importantly, there are major bus stops nearby that make the building convenient to reach for the many people who rely on public transportation to get to Board of Directors meetings and Consumer Advisory Team (CAT) meetings, for

example, which take place at the main RCOC office.

To minimize the disruption of the move on the people we serve, as well as costs, the post office box where almost all of our mail is delivered will stay the same, as will all of the RCOC telephone numbers. So, if you have a meeting at RCOC and are not sure about the location, you can always call ahead and confirm.

RCOC will be moving our combined headquarters office and East-Central area office to the Tustin Centre Tower complex in late November.

There are, however, even more reasons that this is a prudent move for RCOC as we work to gain as much value as possible from every dollar entrusted to us. In addition to the very favorable rates and terms that RCOC has negotiated for the new space, our Board of Directors has moved forward with the launch of an exciting new organization – a non-profit affiliated foundation called “Jake’s LIFE” – that will be purchasing the Tustin Centre Tower building we will be occupying. Over time, the foundation’s purchase will yield funds that will be used to benefit RCOC consumers and families. For details about this important new initiative, read the story on Page 2 and check our Web site (www.rcocdd.com) – under “About Us” click on the “Help for Other Needs” to learn more about the Jake’s LIFE foundation.

It was important for us to take stock of our options and see if we could reduce our costs for office space.

After a great deal of research and a thorough review of the alternatives, I am delighted to report that RCOC will be moving our combined headquarters office and East-Central area office to the Tustin Centre Tower complex in late November. While lowered real estate values and high commercial property vacancies have,

Consumer Advisory Team Update

OC Offers Many Education Opportunities for Adults

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

Maria Aguilar of Santa

Ana College attended the August CAT meeting to share information about the many courses the college offers for students with special needs. Santa Ana College works with people who have disabilities to provide them with supports they might need to achieve their education goals. Other community colleges in Orange County are also committed to serving adults with developmental disabilities, so I thought I would use my column to discuss some of the ways RCOC can help adult consumers who want to attend college.

When making the transition from the public school system to regional center services, many 18-22 year-old consumers go to their local community colleges. Often,



they take classes with other students who have disabilities and the classes focus on building skills for independence – things like nutrition planning, basic cooking and bill paying. However, consumers might also take classes that are

offered to all of the college's students, such as computer classes, art classes or physical education courses like aerobics.

Once they leave the public school system, though, it is important for consumers to know that they can continue their education. College courses help some RCOC consumers learn new skills that can help them get a job in the community. Some even earn college degrees (see the story on Steven Flanagan on the facing page). However, going to college may also be something that a consumer does just to explore a special interest or learn about something new.

Going to college does not have to mean that a person cannot also have a job. A lot of people go to college part-time, maybe taking just one class at a time, so they still have time for

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

November 17
December 15
January 19
February 16

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon. The November meeting will take place at RCOC's current Santa Ana office at 801 Civic Center Drive West. The December, January and February meetings will be at the new RCOC headquarters in the Tustin Centre Tower complex, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5206 ahead of time to let her know you will be there, and if you have questions about the meeting location.

work, as well as other activities and interests.

If you think you might be interested in attending college classes, contact your RCOC service coordinator. He or she will be able to share information about programs and opportunities in your area.



RCOC Consumer Earns AA Degree

Steven Flanagan knows a thing or two about hard work and commitment. The 60-year-old consumer, who has autism, recently earned an Associate Degree from Santiago Canyon College in Orange. He has been taking one class at a time for the past several years and has maintained a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.9 in his courses. His accomplishment is particularly impressive and inspiring since he earned the degree while also working two part-time jobs! Steven lives independently with his brother, and drives his own car to school and work.

Safety Stu's Corner

Safety Tips for Holiday Shopping

The holidays are here! Time for good spirits, acts of kindness and goodwill toward all people. Am I forgetting something? Yes, one more thing: someone trying to take things from you.

I know I sound like a grouch, but the shopping many of us do during the holidays can be prime time for thieves. I want you to have a great holiday, so keep in mind these tips when you are out shopping – now and all year long:

At shopping malls, look for a well-populated and well-lit parking space. If you are driving, be sure to lock your car. If you leave any of your

purchases in a car, be sure to put them in the trunk or out of sight. A lot of thieves look into car windows for things to steal – if they do not see anything they may just move on.

When leaving the mall, use the mall's escort service — the security team is there to help you and I can tell you that they would rather walk you out than sit around!

Better yet, do your shopping with a friend or family member. Make a deal that you will keep an eye on each other's wallet, purse, credit cards and purchases. Sometimes we get so involved in finding that perfect gift or sale item that we forget our stuff!

*Until next time,
The Safety Team!
Safety Stu, Stevie,
Jessie and Roy*



Team Western Transit
(continued from page 1)

cleaned more regularly and our maintenance staff loves that they can turn this (work) over and get the job done great.”

The relationship makes sense from a business perspective, but Diane said the company is especially pleased to be able to partner with OCARC because both organizations have been serving people with developmental disabilities for so many years. Since Western Transit provides transportation for the RCOG consumers who attend OCARC programs, “it completes the circle,” she said.

When OCARC’s Mike Fallon first approached her with the idea of developing jobs for consumers to clean the buses, Diane was very receptive but unsure how to proceed. However, she said that OCARC made the process easy.

For example, they performed a “time study” to determine how many workers would be needed to get a certain amount of work done in a given shift, and they used the criteria she provided to match the requirements of the job with the specific interests and experiences of consumers looking for work.

“It’s amazing what can be done when you are open to the possibilities of a situation,” she said.

Ronnie, Kevin, John and Alex had all been looking for jobs with OCARC, and their backgrounds and interests were a perfect fit to Western Transit’s needs.



(top photo) (l-r) David Mendoza and Alex Nishumura; (top right) Kevin Protteau; (above) John Baze



Ronnie Rodriguez and Diane Slagle

In fact, Alex, who lives with his family in Lake Forrest, had cleaned OCTA buses for several years before. Ronnie, who lives in Cypress, had previously done this type of work cleaning theaters for Edwards Cinemas.

In the past, John has worked for Home Depot and KFC. He has also worked in OCARC’s workshop, which is where he met his fiancée Amanda. One of the things he said he likes about this job, though, is that it gives him the opportunity to work outdoors.

Kevin, who lives on his own in Brea and drives his own car to work, has

worked in supermarkets as a courtesy clerk and said his favorite part of this job is sweeping. On the days he is not working at Western Transit, Kevin also works at OCARC’s workshop.

All of the men are hard workers who like earning money to help pay for their day-to-day expenses and to enjoy their free time.

John is saving up to buy a truck – it needs to be an accessible vehicle, since his fiancée uses a wheelchair. The two of them like to hang out at the local mall, but also have so much fun going to Knott’s Berry Farm that they have purchased season passes to the park.

Ronnie, who also works sometimes doing tile work with his step-dad who is a contractor, enjoys playing basketball in his free time. He is also looking forward to going to Las Vegas soon with his brother and a friend.

Kevin, too, has traveled to Las Vegas, and he is looking forward to going to Seattle in December to see his dad. His favorite place, however, is Disneyland and he moved to Orange County from Arizona two years ago to be closer to the Magic Kingdom! He has an annual pass and goes there almost every weekend.

Alex likes Disneyland, too, especially the “It’s a Small World” ride. Always smiling and laughing, Alex is clearly the jokester on the team. But David said that while Alex likes to have fun, he – like all of the men – can always be depended upon to get the job done.

Special Sitters Meet Many Families' Babysitting Needs

With the holiday season just around the corner, many RCOC parents will be wondering how they can find a babysitter so they can attend evening functions for work or holiday social events. UCP of Orange County and Camp Fire USA of Orange County may have the answer.

These two organizations have collaborated on an innovative program called "Special Sitters" that helps parents locate babysitters with the understanding and sensitivity to look after children with developmental disabilities.

Camp Fire recruits and trains the Special Sitters, while UCP puts families in touch with prospective sitters. The specialized training the Sitters receive covers CPR and basic First Aid, along with disability awareness, communication skills, responsive play and behavior management. Currently, the program has about 125 qualified sitters in Orange County who can meet most families' babysitting needs.

Families employ a Special Sitter just as they would a teen in their



Photo courtesy of UCP of Orange County

neighborhood. They are not employees of UCP or Camp Fire and are not RCOC-vendored for respite.

Families interested in hiring Special Sitters are first screened by UCP, since the Sitters are not equipped to work with children over age 12, or who have seizures, complex medical conditions, or injurious behaviors. Parents who pay a registration fee (which can be waived) are provided with a list of several Sitters in their area.

As with any other babysitter, it is up to parents to interview the prospective Sitters and negotiate their wages, availability, transportation and references.

Once a family is enrolled with Special Sitters, they may also participate in Saturday Club, a type of "day camp" that takes place once every other month, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Irvine. Suitable for children age 8 and younger, it includes both children with special needs and their nondisabled siblings. The cost is \$40 for the first child and \$20 for each additional child.

To inquire about hiring a Special Sitter or Saturday Club, call Janet Winter of UCP of Orange County at (949) 333-6428.

Grandparent Autism Network and RCOC to Host Conference

"Environmental Factors in Autism: Preventable Toxic Exposure and Positive Social & Education Settings" is the topic of a conference to take place Saturday, January 29 from 9 a.m. to noon at Mariners Church Worship Center in Irvine. Speakers will include Irva Hertz-Picciotto, Ph.D. and Peter Mundy, Ph.D., of the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute. For details, visit the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's Web site (www.rcocdd.com).

Make the Holidays More Festive by Supporting Wish Tree

Each year, RCOC's Wish Tree program helps brighten the holiday season for hundreds of people with developmental disabilities. This year, as our community continues to struggle with the effects of the economic recession and persistent high unemployment, your support can help ease the hardship being felt by many RCOC consumers and families.

The Wish Tree begins when service coordinators identify needy individuals

and families served by RCOC and fill out cards with their holiday gift requests. These wishes – ranging from children's toys and clothes to store gift cards – are fulfilled when Wish Tree donors purchase the requested items and deliver them to RCOC. Volunteers then wrap the gifts and deliver them to the families.

Individuals can participate, but there are also many companies and volunteer organizations that make Wish Tree a group project for the holidays.

Donors who may not have the time to purchase gifts can still participate. Financial contributions are used by volunteer shoppers to fulfill specific wishes from Wish Tree. If you would like to make a donation, checks should be made out to "Brian's Fund," and mailed to Regional Center of Orange County, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010.

If you have questions about the Wish Tree program, contact Karen Schaeffer at 714-796-5330.

Regional Center of Orange County Locations

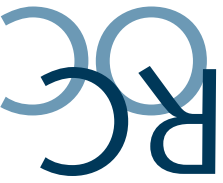
Santa Ana Office	Orange Office	Irvine Office	Westminster Office
801 Civic Center Dr. West 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-5100	3111 N. Tustin, Suite 150 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-3700	46 Discovery, Suite 200 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-4060	5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100 24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

INSIDE

Dialogue Newsletter

- Consumer Spotlight: Team Western Transit1
- Board Update2
- Executive Director's Report.....3
- Consumer Advisory Team Update4
- RCOC Consumer Earns AA Degree ...5
- Safety Stu's Corner5
- Special Sitters Meet Many Families' Babysitting Needs.....7
- Grandparent Autism Network and RCOC to Host Conference7

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