



Dialogue

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Winter 2010

2009 Spotlight Award Honorees

Initiated in 1997, the Regional Center of Orange County Spotlight Awards recognize and honor people and organizations that are role models of service to people with developmental disabilities in the Orange County community. Nominations are made by people in the community, and are judged by a panel of past honorees.

In past years, RCOC has staged a festive dinner and dance where the awards have been presented. Though many of the costs for staging the annual gala have in the past been paid by corporate sponsors and ticket sales, RCOC's Board of Directors decided to forego a major event in 2009. Instead, Spotlight Award honorees received their awards at the November 5 Board of Directors meeting.

"Given the ongoing budget crisis in California, the Board decided that we could not justify any cost, however small, for a special event," said Chris Dubia, 2009 Board Chairman. "We did feel strongly, though, that especially in these difficult times, it is important to honor people and organizations that are role models."

Here are brief snapshots about the 12 honorees. Unfortunately, due to fewer



Consumer award honoree Virginia Rangel (second from right), with 2009 RCOC Board Chairman Chris Dubia (far right), and Maureen Sullivan-Starnes (far left) and Pethuru Lourthu (second from left) from Westview Services, Virginia's supported employment program provider.

pages in *Dialogue* instituted last year as a cost reduction measure, we are unable to include full-length profiles and photos of all of the Spotlight recipients. However, photos of all of the honorees are included on the RCOC Web site.

Consumer/Client Award: Virginia Rangel

Virginia Rangel was honored with the Consumer/Client award because she is a role model for others, and because her example increases awareness about the gifts and talents of people with disabilities. An employee of Home Depot for the past 17 years, Virginia lives independently.



Parent honorees Eric and Meri Smalstig.

She helped start and is president of People First in Orange County. Through People First, she has been a leader in promoting self-advocacy for people with developmental disabilities and has helped to build a sense of community and political awareness among many of her peers.

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Dialogue

Dialogue is published four times per year by the Regional Center of Orange County for people with developmental disabilities, their families and service providers.

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

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Board of Directors 2010

Thomasina Parker, *Chairperson and Interim Treasurer*

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Joseph DeCarlo

Sylvia Delgado

Lore Flavell

Kathy McCrystal

Martha Patarroyo

Hilda Sramek

Bob Watson

2010 Board Meetings

May 6 • July 8 • September 2 •
November 4

The public is invited to attend. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana.

RCOC Administration

Larry Landauer, *Executive Director*

Janis White, *Chief Operating Officer*

Bette Baber, *Chief Financial Officer*

LeeAnn Christian, *Director;*
Organizational Effectiveness

Peter Himber, M.D., *Medical Director*

Pat Glancy, *Intake Manager*

Rosalinda Lopez, *East/Central Area*
Manager

Keli Radford, *West Area Manager*

Patrick Ruppe, *North Area Manager*

Amy Williams, *South Area Manager*

Board Update

Thomasina Parker Elected to Complete Board Chairman's Term

At the January RCOC Board of Directors meeting, Chairman Chris Dubia announced his resignation from the Board, due to health problems. After expressing their sincere appreciation to Chris for his many years of dedicated service on behalf of the community, the Board elected Thomasina Parker to complete his term as board chair.



Her career background makes her ideally-suited for her board leadership role during this time of tight budgets and reduced funding.

A resident of Huntington Beach, Thomasina has been a member of the Board since July 2006, serving as treasurer since March 2007. She is also the RCOC board's representative to the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA). The parent of a 35-year-old son who has been a consumer of RCOC since he was just a few months old, she initially became involved with the Board out of concern for her son's long-term well-being.

"The best way I can ensure that he is protected and has a safety net when I'm gone is to make sure that RCOC is there for him," she said.

Being the parent of a son with developmental disabilities gives Thomasina an important perspective as she serves on the RCOC Board. However, her career background makes her ideally-suited for her board leadership role during this time of tight budgets and reduced funding. Recently retired after 34 years of service, she was deputy director for the federal

government's Defense Contract Management Agency, Santa Ana. In that role, she was responsible for managing upwards of \$60 billion in contracts with thousands of suppliers for the United States military. Among many other responsibilities over the years, she managed a special program to help the Department of Defense in hiring people with disabilities.

While her top priorities as Board chair are to help defend the Lanterman Act and ensure that RCOC is able to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities, Thomasina said she will also be focusing on long-term issues such as housing for adults with disabilities, and ensuring that quality service providers are able to stay in business.

Executive Director's Report

State Budget Challenges Continue in 2010-2011

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

When considering the topic for my column this issue, I had no doubt that the most significant issue facing our community is – once again – the state budget crisis.



As you may have read in the newspapers, California is again facing an enormous budget deficit. This time, it is projected at nearly \$20 billion for the 18-month period from January 2010 through June 2011. About \$7 billion of this is a projected shortfall in the current fiscal year's budget. As was the case last year, the State Controller has cautioned the Governor and Legislature that they must take action very soon to ensure the state does not run out of money.

Governor Proposes More Cuts

Governor Schwarzenegger has declared a fiscal emergency and has submitted a budget proposal that includes a combination of budget cuts and increased federal funding to balance California's budget. Although there are no new direct cuts to the regional center system in the Governor's proposed budget, it

does call for major new cuts to programs upon which many people with disabilities rely. These include reductions to Medi-Cal and In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). At the same time, the Governor has proposed giving around \$50 million to regional centers statewide to help meet consumer/client needs that would be created by the loss of these programs.

This is just the first step in the budget process and many questions remain.

Specifics on the Governor's budget proposal can be found

online at www.govbud.dof.ca.gov. However, it is important to remember that this is just the first step in the budget process and many questions remain. Legislators have not yet shared their ideas for balancing the budget, and there will need to be agreement between the Legislature and Governor before any budget is enacted.

Progress in Orange County

In the midst of the uncertainty and what can seem like unending budget crises, it is good to take a moment to reflect what is going well in California and in Orange County.

Challenged though we are, California's regional center system continues to help people with developmental disabilities achieve the Lanterman vision of community life. It also enables massive federal funding, without which the Lanterman promise would be seriously compromised. Statewide, the system

brings in \$1 billion in federal dollars, paying around 50 percent of the cost of services and supports that qualify for federal matching funds.

It is fair to say that right now no community in California is doing more than ours to ensure that we are exercising fiscal discipline with 100 percent of the funds we receive. While the past couple of years have seen RCOC exceed its annual funding allocation by as much as \$54 million, this year our spending is tracking very close to the amount the state has allocated for our community. Part of this is due to slower growth in the number of new people applying for services. However, most of the credit goes to consumers/clients, families, service providers and staff dedicated to doing their part to ensure that critical needs can continue to be met.

While still concerned about what the coming year will bring, I am encouraged by our community's spirit.

While still concerned about what the coming year will bring, I am encouraged by our community's spirit and by the progress we have made in Orange County to manage costs. And though there are still many unknowns, I am hopeful that the Governor and Legislature will partner in the coming months to resolve California's fiscal problems and keep its promise to people with developmental disabilities.

RCOC will be following the budget situation closely and posting up-to-date information on our Web site (www.rcocdd.com).

Consumer Advisory Team Update

Stay Active and Stay Healthy

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

At our November meeting, RCOC Consumer Advocate Brian Story delivered a presentation on staying active and staying healthy. The information he shared is valuable for all consumers, so I thought I would share some of his tips here in my column.

Brian emphasized the importance of taking care of your body to keep yourself as healthy as possible. Eating healthy foods and getting plenty of rest can help us keep from getting sick. Good hygiene, including daily baths or showers, and brushing

and flossing teeth is also important. Especially during flu season, he suggested that we wash our hands frequently and be sure to cover our coughs and sneezes to avoid spreading germs.

Brian also talked about the importance of exercise for all people with disabilities. Those who use wheelchairs or who are unable to move some parts of their body can still find ways to be active. Wheelchair users can perform upper body exercises, and many gyms have specialized equipment for people with disabilities – he mentioned the gyms at Goodwill and Orange Coast College as examples.

Since we all are more likely to do something more often if we enjoy it, Brian recommended trying different activities to find one we really like. He also talked about finding a

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

March 17

April 21

May 19

June 16

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC's Santa Ana office, 801 Civic Center Drive West. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5206 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

buddy to exercise with so you will encourage each other to stick with exercising.

As we begin the new year, I hope that all of the people RCOC serves will use Brian's tips to become as healthy as possible.

CAT members celebrated the holidays with a festive luncheon in December. Among those attending were Kathryn Schmidt and Ellis James (right). Michael LaPilusa performed holiday jazz numbers on his saxophone.



Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

Regional Center of Orange County offers these workshops at no cost to parents. To gain the most value from them, parents are encouraged to attend all sessions in a series. The Behavior Management workshop covers essential principles of positive behavior management, with a practical focus on helping parents of children with developmental disabilities change their own behavior and that of their children. The Social Skills Training workshop is focused on helping parents nurture social skills among children. In all of the workshops, parents are actively involved, and invited to discuss the specific behavioral challenges they are confronting. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 40-45 families.

Child care is not provided, so please do not bring children to the workshops.

Contact your service coordinator or Thelma Day at (714) 796-5223 for additional information regarding dates, times and locations, and to register.

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in English by Joyce Tu, Ed.D., BCBA

When: Thursday evenings – April 1, April 8, April 15, April 22 and April 29 (*NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop*)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC East Office
801 Civic Center Drive West

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Vietnamese by Casandra Nguyen, M.S.

When: Tuesday evenings – April 6, April 13, April 20, April 27 and May 4 (*NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop*)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC West Office
5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in English by Michael Messina, Psy.D., Parent Training Consultant

When: Tuesday mornings – May 4, May 11, May 18, May 25 and June 1 (*NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop*)

Time: 9:30 a.m. to Noon

Location: RCOC East Office
801 Civic Center Drive West

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Ana Lorenz, Ph.D.

When: Thursday evenings – May 6, May 13, May 20, May 27 and June 3 (*NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop*)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC West Office
5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100

RCOC Launches Updated Web Site

The first thing most visitors notice when they visit RCOC's updated Web site (www.rcocdd.com) is its fresh new look. With its blue-sky themed design and use of colorful photographs, the site is now an inviting place that encourages visitors to browse. When they do, they discover an abundance of timely information, organized in a way that is easy to follow and easy to share.

Announced in the last issue of *Dialogue*, the Web site project was undertaken as part of RCOC's organization-wide commitment to using cost-effective technology to help deliver better service at less cost.

"More and more families, especially young parents, are asking that we give them links to information on the Web, instead of paper documents," said Executive Director Larry Landauer, who said that the improved site is expected to yield thousands of dollars in reduced paper, photocopy, and mailing costs. "With the new site, we are able to better meet the needs of those we serve and the challenges posed by reduced funding from the state."

The site is now an inviting place that encourages visitors to browse.

Launched in March, the site is organized into nine sections:

- **About RCOC** – gives general information about the regional center, the Board of Directors and management team, as well as financial and performance data.



- **Clients** – describes the services offered through RCOC, and features lists of service providers and community resources, along with RCOC's Purchase of Service Guidelines; it also includes a section for the Consumer Advisory Team.

- **Family Resources** – provides information about parent training and other resources, including the Comfort Connection Family Resource Center.

- **Prevention** – shares details about the new Prevention program, including eligibility, services and how to apply.

- **Service Providers** – addresses a range of issues of interest to those who are, or want to become, service providers.

- **Links** – includes other Web sites covering a wide variety of topics concerning people with disabilities, family members and service providers.

- **Employment** – will post job openings at RCOC.

- **News & Events** – includes the online version of *Dialogue*, announcements from RCOC and others, RCOC's Monthly Calendar, and information about the state budget and legislation, as well as Spotlight Awards.

- **Contact Us** – provides locations and directions to RCOC offices, along with key department email and fax contacts.

The site now has a feature that enables visitors to easily share the content with others through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace. Visitors who speak

languages other than English are able to use the site's translation feature to convert the text into more than 50 languages. There is also a font sizing feature so visitors can increase or decrease the size of the type on the page to make it easier to read.

The site now has a feature that enables visitors to easily share the content with others through social networking sites.

While some documents and communications from RCOC to clients/consumers and families will remain in paper form for the foreseeable future, Larry noted that visitors can look forward to more exciting enhancements to the site.

"We will be expanding upon many areas of the Web site in the coming months and on an ongoing basis to keep it timely and relevant," he said.

Spotlight Awards
(continued from page 1)

Parent or Family Member: Eric and Meri Smalstig

Eric and Meri Smalstig are the parents of a young child with autism. Honored with the Parent/Family Member award, the Smalstigs strive each day to make their son's life better and more rewarding. Collaborating with his team at school, their RCOC service coordinator and the service providers who work with their son, the Smalstigs are role models for other parents of children with special needs.



Janice Retz of Spotlight Living Options Vendor honoree Independent Endeavor (center), with (left to right) Molly Van Norman, Jay Connor, Chad Arnett, Kathy McCrystal and Cheryl Day.

Lifetime Achievement: Cathy DeMello

Cathy DeMello was honored for her dedication to principles of self-determination, community involvement, and personal responsibility for people with disabilities. Her career has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting people with disabilities in making their own life decisions.

E. Kurt Yeager Servant Leadership Award: Jud Robert

The grandfather of a boy with autism, Jud Robert was honored

for his many years of service as a volunteer member of RCOC's board of directors and for his ongoing work on numerous RCOC initiatives and board committees.

Volunteer: Bonnie Gillman

Bonnie Gillman was honored for her work in founding the Grandparent Autism Network (GAN) which helps to inform grandparents about autism and the issues that affect their families, as well as her efforts through GAN to prevent bullying of those with disabilities, and collaboration with RCOC on developing work opportunities

for people with developmental disabilities, for example.

Professional Achievement: Gail Fernandez

Gail Fernandez was honored for her efforts to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities through her work as a psychiatrist at UCI Medical Center.

Frontline: Khanh Truong

Khanh Truong was recognized for providing job coach support to people with developmental disabilities for the past 14 years, and for his work as a mentor to new job coaches.

Employer: Home Depot/Huntington Beach

Home Depot/Huntington Beach was honored for providing integrated job opportunities to workers with



Lifetime Achievement honoree Cathy DeMello (center), with 2009 Board Chairman Chris Dubia (right) and chairman of the California Department of Developmental Services Consumer Advisory Board Sam Durbin (left).

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Spotlight Awards

(continued from page 7)

disabilities and setting an outstanding example for others in Orange County.

Living Options Vendor: Independent Endeavors

Independent Endeavors was honored for the excellence of its management and staff who have provided independent living and supported living services to people with developmental disabilities in Orange County since 1992.

Community Partnership: Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'a lot

Shir Ha-Ma'a lot, which has an inclusion specialist on staff, was honored for its efforts to help its congregants with disabilities to contribute and participate fully in their religious community.

Support Services Vendor: Project Independence day programs

Project Independence was honored for the agency's commitment to

quality and for its efforts to help people with even the most significant disabilities to find jobs and succeed in the workplace.

RCOC Achievement: Maria Gonzales

A service coordinator who has been with RCOC for 17 years, Maria Gonzales was honored for her outstanding skills, dedication and advocacy on behalf of children with developmental disabilities, especially those in Orange County's Latino community.

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

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