A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

RCOC

Dialogue

Volume 25 No. 4
Fall 2011

Consumer Spotlight

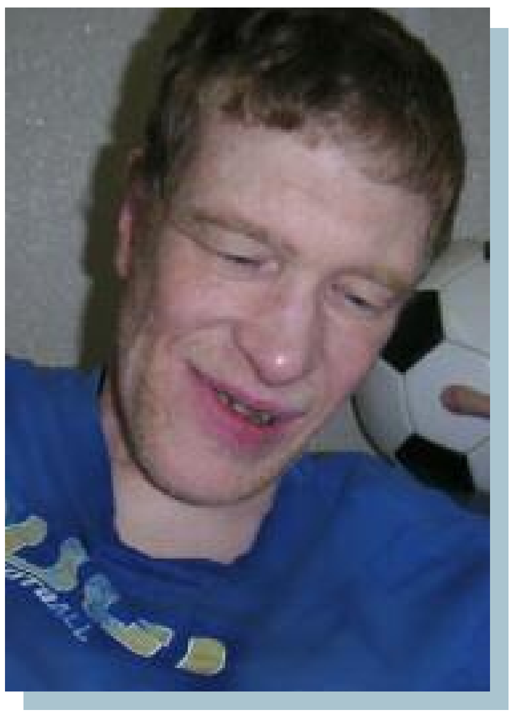
Gene Gibbs

Gene Gibbs lived at Fairview Developmental Center for 39 years, until 2004. And if his parents, Arlene and Glenn Gibbs, had had their way he would still be there. Though missed at home, at Fairview, they believed, he was safe.

The second of four children, Gene was born with brain damage that resulted in a severe intellectual disability. He does not speak, did not sit up or crawl as a baby, and did not walk until he was about seven years old. He also has pica, a serious eating disorder that causes him to try to eat non-food items and puts him at risk for poisoning as well as choking since he does not chew.

Gene went to live at Fairview when he was four.

Now 51 years old, Gene went to live at Fairview when he was four. It was before California's Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act was enacted, creating the statewide network of regional centers. At that time, parents of children with developmental disabilities were on their own. For parents like the Gibbs, there were no community services and supports to help them keep their children in their home. There were also no public education resources to help people with developmental disabilities learn even the most basic life skills. The developmental center was the only option for families stressed to the breaking point by the challenges and hardships of raising children with the severest disabilities.



Gene Gibbs

In those early years, Arlene and Glenn would pick Gene up from Fairview as often as they could, and bring him home to Westminster for the day. Over time, though, Gene developed daily routines and visits to the family home became a disruption for him. But his family's devotion to him and his well-being never wavered.

When staff at Fairview and RCOC told them they needed to consider letting their son move into the community, the Gibbs were strongly opposed. Convinced that Gene's challenges were too severe for him to live safely in the community, they worried and remained skeptical throughout the process of selecting his home and day program.

His family's devotion to him and his well-being never wavered.

All that changed once the transition took place. While Gene's father passed away a year ago, he and Arlene along with Gene's siblings saw Gene blossom in the community in ways no one previously thought possible.

"It's the best thing that ever happened to him," said Arlene. At the developmental center, she said, he was one of many residents and the staff were unable to give him the individual attention he now receives. Today, with the help of the people who work with him, both at his Independent Options home and the Helping Hands for Better Living Adult Day Healthcare program in Garden Grove, "He's developed a personality, and he's happy…He giggles and laughs. This never would have happened if he'd stayed at the developmental center," she said.

See **Gene Gibbs** page 7

2011-2012 Board Meetings

January 5 • February 2 • March 1
April 5 • May 3 • June 7

The public is invited to attend. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room at RCOC's new headquarters in the Tustin Centre Tower complex, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana.

Budget Update

Decision on Budget "Trigger Cuts" Expected in December

Even after California's fiscal year 2011-2012 budget was passed, concerns remained about the potential for additional cuts to state-funded services. That is because the budget plan agreed to by the Legislature and Governor relies on the state receiving about $4 billion more in revenues this fiscal year than it did last year. If it does not receive that additional revenues (in taxes and fees, for example) the budget plan calls for Governor Brown to implement additional "trigger" cuts to ensure a balanced budget. These pre-determined budget cuts are called "trigger cuts" because it would be a shortage of funds that would cause, or trigger, the cuts to be made.

Since the economy has continued to be sluggish, and revenues have been less than hoped, the concern about trigger cuts is real. The State Controller's monthly financial reports show revenues for the fiscal year through October were $1.5 billion less than was forecasted when the budget was enacted, and most economic forecasts are not optimistic.

What Happens Next

In December, the Governor will look at the information about budget revenues that he gets from his Department of Finance and from the Legislative Analyst's Office. If it appears that California will end up receiving the extra $4 billion in revenues it hoped for this fiscal year, then the trigger cuts will not be implemented. If it looks like there will be a big shortfall, the Governor will make cuts of up to $2.5 billion. Most of the cuts would go into effect January 1, 2012.

The concern about trigger cuts is real.

If it looks like California will be short $1 billion or less, there will be no trigger cuts and the shortfall will be rolled into the next fiscal year's budget. If the shortfall is $1-2 billion, there will be $600 million in trigger cuts that would include $100 million from the developmental services budget and $100 million from In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), among other cuts. Should the state fall even further short of its original budget forecast, as much as $1.9 billion in additional cuts would be made, mostly to education.

RCOC will be following the situation closely and will post key developments on our website. Go to www.rcocdd.com and click on "Latest Budget News" for the most up-to-date information.

Executive Director's Report

Lanterman Act Guides OC's Response to Budget Challenges

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

One of the great strengths of California's community care system is that each of the 21 private nonprofit regional centers is able to reflect and respond to the unique needs and characteristics of the people they serve. This was a key aim of the original Lanterman Act. Wise elected leaders – then and today – recognize that in a state as large and diverse as California, people with developmental disabilities and their families can never be as well-served by a state-run bureaucracy as they can by local, community-based organizations.

While California's population has increased just 14 percent since 2000, the number of regional center consumers has increased 57 percent.

In an environment of limited financial resources, however, our system is challenged to allocate scarce tax dollars among the regional centers in a way that ensures people's critical needs are met and rewards good fiscal stewardship, while acknowledging regional differences.

Another complicating factor is the dramatic growth in the number of people needing regional center services. While California's population has increased just 14 percent since 2000, the number of regional center consumers has increased 57 percent.

With such dramatic growth in the need for services, simple methods like basing a center's allocation on the past year's budget plus a percentage for general population growth do not make sense.

For some months now, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has been working to develop a new way to determine how much money each regional center will receive to meet consumer needs. Ultimately, their goal is to allocate available funds based on the characteristics of the consumers each center serves.

In concept, RCOC has supported such an approach as a means to correct inconsistencies regarding specific service sets to meet individual consumer needs. For example, some centers have authorized funds for horseback riding therapy for some consumers, while others, such as RCOC, have not.

If DDS is successful, its new method for allocating funds will resolve these types of inconsistencies so consumers statewide can be assured that – wherever they live – the service sets provided in response to their IPP are both effective and equitably provided throughout the state. At the same time, taxpayers can be assured that they are receiving the best value for the dollars they devote to caring for people with developmental disabilities.

It is hoped that this new approach to allocating funds to regional centers will be completed soon, and that it will be effective and appropriate. In the meantime, however, DDS is employing a method to help rein in costs that, basically, rewards centers that have spent less and penalizes centers that have spent more.

All centers are receiving fewer funds, simply because California has less money to spend, but the cuts are smaller for those that have cut costs the most in the past. DDS evaluates each center's past year's spending in various service areas, and a center may be penalized for higher spending in some areas, but rewarded for lower spending in others. The end result for RCOC is that we are receiving about $15 million less than we might have expected this year.

DDS is employing a method to help rein in costs that, basically, rewards centers that have spent less and penalizes centers that have spent more.

This is an enormous loss, but I am proud that our community has managed to cope with the lesser amount while maintaining the Lanterman Promise. Consumers and families have cooperated on meeting new requirements from the state, while service providers have worked with us to ensure that critical needs continue to be met.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

Emergency Preparedness Tips for Consumers

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

At our September meeting, Jack Stanton, RCOC Chief Counselor, talked to CAT members about how RCOC works with "first responders" like the police and fire departments to make sure that they can find and get help to consumers who need them if an emergency happens. He also told us it is important for all consumers, especially those who live on their own, to have an emergency plan in case of a major earthquake or other disaster.

Jack said that group homes are required to have emergency plans so the people they serve will have things like the food and water they need. But adult consumers who live on their own should have their own plans that they work on with their Independent Living or Supported Living service providers and their RCOC service coordinators. He said there is even a section on disaster planning in every consumer's IPP.

Since it could be a while before police officers or firefighters are able to reach people, Jack said it is a good idea for consumers to get to know our neighbors who live close by and can check to see if we need help. He also said that with almost any kind of disaster, if consumers can stay at their homes, they should stay there because that is the address RCOC has for them, so that is where emergency personnel would come to look for them.

If a consumer does have to leave home, he said we should be sure to leave a note saying where we have gone. He even handed out special door hangers for us to use – one side is green and says "I'm safe" and the other side is red and says "I need help."

The door hangers are part of an emergency preparedness kit that RCOC provided to all consumers a few years ago. He has some extra kits, so if you did not get one before, or have lost yours, you can call Jack at (714) 796-5308.

Consumers can find more information about emergency readiness from the Department of Developmental Services website (www.dds.ca.gov). From the home page, click on "Consumer Corner" at the top of the page, and then "Emergency Preparedness."

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

December 21 –
Holiday Party
January 18
February 15
March 21
April 18
December 21

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC's new office in Santa Ana, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5217 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

TLC Conference: Teaching Loving Care

The Irvine Ranch Outdoor Education Center was the setting for Family Support Network's 20th annual TLC Conference: Teaching Loving Care, in September. Funded by a variety of sponsors, the weekend event was an opportunity for parents to attend workshops related to their child's special needs, and to network with other parents and experts. While parents were in workshops, their children were in the capable hands of doctors, nurses, and experienced volunteers who oversaw numerous activities for the children with special needs and their siblings, including swimming, archery, and arts and crafts. Among the volunteers were a number of RCOC staff. RCOC Executive Director Larry Landauer led one of the parent workshops with Dr. Greg Buchert.

Pictured clockwise from the top: Raziel and Enexia Melendez; Thomas Cantu and Angel Zamudio; Eddie Valdez.

Save the Date for Spotlight!

Mark your calendar, and save the date for the Spotlight Awards! The event will take place **Friday, March 16** at the Crowne Plaza Anaheim Hotel. If you know someone who deserves to be honored with a Spotlight Award, be sure to complete the nomination form inserted with this newsletter and submit it by February 3, 2012. The nomination package can also be downloaded from RCOC's website. Go to www.rcocdd.com and click on "Spotlight Awards" from the home page. If you are not able to download the forms, call Nas Knights at (714) 796-5206 and she will mail the form to you. Consumers who would like help completing a nomination form can contact their RCOC service coordinator.

Costs for the Spotlight Awards event will be covered by donations from individuals and local businesses, as well as by event ticket sales. Information about purchasing tickets will be posted on RCOC's website in the coming weeks.

Facts About the New Annual Family Program Fee (AFPF)

One of the many new measures the Legislature has put in place to save money on community-based services is the Annual Family Program Fee (AFPF) which regional centers must implement by June 30, 2012.

The new fee is being assessed on families with children age 17 and younger who live at home and receive services paid for by regional centers. Only families whose annual income is at least 400 percent of the federal poverty level are affected. It is a single fee, to be paid once a year, regardless of the number of children the family has receiving services.

The new fee is being assessed on families with children age 17 and younger who live at home and receive services paid for by regional centers.

The fee is $150 for families whose income is at least 400 percent, but less than 800 percent, of the federal poverty level – for a family of four, that income range is $89,400 to $178,799 per year. The fee is $200 for families whose income is 800 percent or more of the federal poverty level – for a family of four, that is $178,800 a year and above.

It is important to remember that there are several exemptions to the new fee. It does not apply to families who only receive eligibility determination, needs assessment, or service coordination from the regional center. It also does not apply to those whose children have Medi-Cal. In addition, the new fee does not apply to families who only receive respite, day care, or camping services since those families already share in the cost of their children's care through the Family Cost Participation Program (FCPP) that was initiated several years ago.

Only families whose annual income is at least 400 percent of the federal poverty level are affected.

RCOC families have not yet been assessed the fee, since the center is still working on its implementation plan. However, they will be notified of the amount they will need to pay by early next year. That is because the law requires regional centers to complete the AFPF registration form for families at the time they are developing, reviewing or changing the Individual Program Plan (IPP) or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP).

It is important to remember that there are several exemptions to the new fee.

In future years, regional centers will re-determine each family's assessment amount annually, based on the family's size and income for that year.

RCOC families have not yet been assessed the fee, since the center is still working on its implementation plan.

Your service coordinator will be able to answer any questions you might have about the AFPF. You can also visit RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.org) to learn more. From the home page, click on News & Events, then Legislation & Budget, and you will find the Annual Family Program Fee Implementation document.

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

Due to the holiday season, there will be no Behavior Management Workshops in November or December. These workshops, which RCOC offers free to parents, will resume after the first of the year. A schedule of upcoming workshops will be printed in the next issue of *Dialogue* and will be posted on RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com). From the home page, click on Family Resources, then on Parent Training.

Gene Gibbs
(continued from page 1)

Arlene now lives in Murrieta, and isn't able to visit Gene as often as before. But she and his brothers and sister call to check on him regularly, and when she does visit, she is happy to see the life he has now. She has especially high praise for Upkar Mangat, the QMRP Administrator in charge of the home where Gene lives with five other men, and the other people who work with Gene there and at his day program.

"He's developed a personality, and he's happy."

"They truly care about him," she said, noting that Upkar is especially conscientious about ensuring that Gene's medical issues are carefully monitored. "In the developmental center, he had to eat alone, because he would grab at others' food. But not anymore – they have worked with him to break that habit."

According to Dana Bintz, Gene's current RCOC service coordinator, the Gibbs' perspective is not unusual among families of developmental center residents. It is one of the reasons the transition is a very gradual and thoughtful process.

Before Gene moved out of Fairview, staff from Independent Options visited him at the developmental center for several months to get acquainted with him and his routines and activities. And before moving into his new home, Gene visited many times – at first for just a few minutes, working up to several hours

Direct care staff house leader Yeraldin Huerta and Gene play ball at his home.

and then moving permanently when it was certain he was comfortable and adjusting well.

Similarly, he began attending Helping Hands For Better Living Adult Day Healthcare about a year before he moved out of Fairview. Like Gene, the other seven people in the class he attends have pica so all of the objects in the room are made of non-toxic materials and are too large to fit into the mouth. It is a safe environment, but with an enriching and challenging curriculum.

Dr. Vanessa Tatum, administrator and staff physician for the program, has seen a remarkable transformation in Gene these past few years. When he first started attending the program, she said he was extremely touch-sensitive and would pull away from physical contact. Now, she said, he is happy to hold hands. His balance and mobility have also improved. Among his activities there are bowling and playing ball – tossing a basketball into a basket, kicking a soccer ball, or playing catch with a beach ball. He also likes to go for walks around the facility and at home.

Transition is a very gradual and thoughtful process.

Dr. Tatum also said that Gene enjoys music. He does not express a preference for a particular music genre, but he likes shaking the tambourine and maracas, and rocks rhythmically to the music's beat.

Gene participated in a gardening program at his day program.

Wish Tree Helps RCOC Consumers and Families Enjoy the Holidays

Last year, RCOC's Wish Tree program helped to brighten the holiday season for more than a thousand Orange County consumers who received gifts, and nearly 1,200 families who received holiday food gift cards. As our community continues to struggle with the sluggish economy and high unemployment, the need is expected to be even greater this year. Your support can help ease the hardship and bring joy to consumers and families.

The Wish Tree begins when service coordinators identify low-income, 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 supporters 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, volunteer organizations and church groups that make Wish Tree a group project for the holiday season.

Those who may not have 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 donating to the Wish Tree program, contact Kelly Rico at (714) 796-5330.

Regional Center of Orange County Locations

Santa Ana Office	Orange Office	Westminster Office
1525 N. Tustin Avenue	3111 N. Tustin, Suite 150	5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100
24-hr Phone: (714) 796-5100	24-hr Phone: (714) 796-3700	24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

RC OC
Regional Center of Orange County
P.O. Box 22010
Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010

Dialogue Newsletter

INSIDE

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SANTA ANA, CA
PERMIT NO. 1285