



Dialogue

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Consumer Spotlight

Elaine and Raymond Whitney

“We are blessed, and blessed doubly.” Wanda Bales shared that her mother, Rose Whitney, responded this way when Wanda and her three siblings were children and someone commented on the unusual fact that two of the children, Elaine and Raymond, were born with Down syndrome.

Raymond and Elaine are fortunate to have had parents who planned for their futures.

Now that all of the siblings are grown up, and Wanda and her husband of 38 years, Bill Bales, are caregivers for Elaine and Raymond, Wanda says the same thing. Hearing her speak of family life, growing up in Garden Grove, where most of the family still lives today, it is clear the sentiment comes straight from her heart!

Raymond and Elaine are fortunate to have had parents who planned for their futures, and a loving sister and brother-in-law willing to step in when their mother passed away four years ago at the age of 83. (Their father had already

passed away many years earlier, when he was just 54.)

“My husband knew from the beginning that Raymond and Elaine were part of the deal,” laughed Wanda, a kindergarten teacher in Orange. Having her siblings live with her is something she had always planned.

In keeping with arrangements made in advance, Wanda and Bill left their own home – just two houses down the block – and moved into the family home when Rose passed away. This spared Elaine and Raymond the additional upheaval of having to move to a new home. It also enabled them to continue some wonderful family traditions, such as Sunday “open

house” dinners that include aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Rose also made sure to share the family’s plans with their RCOC service coordinator, Tim Anderson. Tim said futures planning – which includes noting preferences for future living arrangements, day time activities and other supports listed in RCOC’s records – reduces uncertainty and anxiety. It also allows for transitional supports, such as independent living and respite services, if needed.

Wanda said the preparations her mother made greatly reduced the burden on surviving family members who must deal with a multitude of

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(L-R) Wanda Bales, Raymond Whitney, Elaine Whitney and Bob Bales

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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2011 Board Meetings

March 3 • May 5

July 7 • September 1 • November 3

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.

RCOC Administration

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Board Update

Tresa Oliveri Elected RCOC Board Chair

Tresa Oliveri, the mother of a young adult son who has autism, has been elected

Chairperson of RCOC's Board of Directors after re-joining the board this past June. She previously served for seven years as an RCOC board member, including three years as Vice Chair, and was President of the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA). As a parent, board member and leader, Tresa has been a passionate and effective advocate on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. In 2008, she was honored with the E. Kurt Yeager Servant Leadership Award — a special Spotlight Award recognizing her outstanding volunteer service to RCOC and the community statewide.

Because of her diverse experience, Tresa is well-positioned to lead RCOC during challenging times. She anticipates that the pressures from the state budget deficit and lagging economy will continue to threaten funding for developmental services. Noting that further cuts to the regional center system are possible, she stressed the importance of continuing to find even more ways to make sure every dollar goes as far as possible to meet critical needs.

“With tax dollars so scarce, both the people RCOC serves and the taxpayers

need to have confidence that regional centers are exercising good stewardship,” she said. “We also need to make sure our elected leaders know the great value the system provides, by enabling people with developmental disabilities to live safely and with dignity in the community.”



Tresa Oliveri

At the same time Tresa was elected Board Chair, Jay Connor was re-elected Vice Chair, Alan Martin was re-elected Secretary and Clifford Amsden was re-elected Treasurer. All of the officers' terms go until June 1, 2012. In addition, two new individuals

have joined RCOC's Board of Directors, with terms running through December 1, 2013.

Meena Chockalingam, the mother of a regional center consumer, participated in the State Council of Developmental Disabilities' "Partners in Policy" program to help prepare her to join the board. The seven-month program helps people become more effective advocates and board members by educating them about topics like the Lanterman Act and the role of various agencies in serving people with disabilities.

Fernando Peña is a sales associate/greeter for Wal-Mart. An RCOC consumer who has cerebral palsy, he is very involved with others served by RCOC and knowledgeable about the regional center's mission. He also attends Adult Resource Group meetings regularly as a consumer advocate.

Executive Director's Report

Governor Releases Budget Proposal

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

On January 10, Governor Brown released his budget proposal for the 2011-12 fiscal year that begins on July 1. California faces a budget deficit for the current and coming fiscal years of more than \$25 billion and the governor's proposal contains significant reductions to most state-funded services. The proposal also calls for certain temporary tax increases to be continued.



RCOC does not oppose common sense standards that promote consistency, ensuring that people throughout California have access to similar types of services and supports. Our center has for many years operated under POS Guidelines that are already

strongly focused on good stewardship. However, it will be important that any standards issued at the state level remain true to Lanterman Act principles and that they preserve vital programs. This is a crucial point since the cost savings projected for statewide

standards in the governor's proposal is well over \$500 million. By virtue of the sheer size of the expected savings, many people around the state could see changes to their services.

Many things are still uncertain. Part of the governor's plan to balance the budget involves extending tax increases that require voter approval. Governor Brown is asking the Legislature to move more quickly than usual on his proposals so the tax questions can appear on a special election ballot in June. Legislators may or may not do this; they may also have different ideas about how to balance the budget. And, if a special election does take place, the voters' decisions will affect the final agreement reached by the Governor and Legislature.

It will be important that any standards issued at the state level remain true to Lanterman Act principles.

The governor's proposal contains significant reductions to most state-funded services.

While we recognize these are very difficult times across California and the budget proposal could have been worse, the governor's plan would stress RCOC and our service providers even more if it is adopted.

POS Standards Sought

Among the proposals for developmental services intended to save the largest amount of money is a plan to establish statewide Purchase of Service (POS) standards, along with new accountability and transparency measures.

4.25% Payment Reductions May Continue

Another of the governor's proposals is to continue the 4.25 percent cut in payments to regional centers and service providers that was enacted for the current fiscal year. These cuts, scheduled to end on June 30 of this year, have been extremely challenging. If the Legislature agrees to the proposal, the cuts will continue through the coming fiscal year, adding further stress to service providers already struggling to keep providing consumers with essential services.

Much Uncertainty Remains

When discussing the next year's budget, it is important to remember that the governor's January proposal is just the first step in the budget process.

As events surrounding the coming year's budget unfold, check RCOC's Web site (www.rcocdd.com) regularly for the latest news and for contact information for your state legislators.

Though we anticipate that the coming fiscal year's budget will be as tough as any we have faced recently, it is important for those we serve to know that RCOC remains fully committed to your well-being. I am proud of how our community has pulled together these past few years to find creative ways to do more with less. I am confident we will continue to innovate, ensuring that we are meeting people's needs while being good stewards of the tax dollars entrusted to us.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

CAT Team Enjoys Holiday Gathering in December

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

I am pleased to report that we had an excellent turn-out for December's Consumer Advisory Team meeting.

It was a great opportunity for the group to celebrate the holiday season together. We had a lot of



Top photo (L-R) Carrie Rogers and Jeffrey Schultz



Above (L-R): Jenny Gibson, Ryan Boone and Kristi Bailly

Right top row (L-R): Larry Landauer, Bobby Olea, Janis White and Susan Roatch; bottom row (L-R): Jay Connor, Fernando Peña and Cheryl Day



(L-R): Michael LaPilusa, Maryjean Francis, Jackson Johnson & Irene Riley

fun, so I thought I would share some of the photos taken that day.

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to get more involved in the community, I hope that you will consider becoming a part of the Consumer Advisory Team. And remember, our meetings are now taking place at RCOC's new Santa Ana office in the Tustin Centre Tower complex.

I hope we will see you there!



Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

March 16

April 20

May 18

June 15

July 20

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC's new office in Santa Ana, 1525 North Tustin Avenue. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5206 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.



Sue Gaxiola (left) and Betty Bath

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

RCOC offers these workshops at no cost to parents. 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. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 40-45 families. Contact your service coordinator or Thelma Day at (714) 796-5223 for additional information and to register.

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

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Eva Urena, M.A., BCBA, Rossirene Li, B.S., and Juliana Menchaca, B.S.

When: Thursday evenings – Feb. 24, March 3, March 10, March 17 and March 24
(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Orange Office
3111 North Tustin Street, Suite 150

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Vietnamese

When: Tuesday evenings – March 15, March 22, March 29, April 5 and April 12
(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Westminster Office
5555 Garden Grove Boulevard, Suite 100

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

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

When: Thursday evenings – April 7, April 14, April 21, April 28 and May 5
(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
1525 North Tustin Avenue

Social Skills Training Workshop – Focus on Ages 5 through 11 years (6 sessions)

Presented in English by Erin Davis, M.A., Parent Training Consultant

When: Tuesday evenings – May 3, May 10, May 17, May 24, May 31 and June 7

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Irvine Office
46 Discovery, Suite 200

Behavior Management Workshop with Toilet Training (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Ana Lorenz, Ph.D.

When: Thursday evenings – May 5, May 12, May 19, May 26 and June 2
(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus of the last session of this workshop)

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Westminster Office
5555 Garden Grove Boulevard, Suite 100

REMINDER: RCOC Headquarters Has Moved

If you have a meeting at RCOC's Santa Ana office, be sure to go to 1525 N. Tustin Avenue. With our lease on the old building expiring, and bringing with it an increase in rent, RCOC was fortunate to have found this new building which offers a larger, much improved space for less money!

Futures Planning Fosters Peace of Mind for Families

Many parents have told RCOC that it gives them peace of mind knowing that we will be there for their family member with developmental disabilities, even after they are gone. RCOC takes this responsibility very seriously, and a new “futures planning” section in the IPP (Individual Program Plan) aims to encourage families to think about and make plans for the time when they either pass away or become unable to provide the level of care and support their family member needs.

Where to Live

Where and with whom a person with developmental disabilities will live is one of the top issues to address, especially if that person has always lived in the family home. RCOC’s Web site features an easy-to-read guide called “It’s All About Options” (www.rcocdd.com, type “living options” in the Search box near the top of the page) that can help families learn about the various residential choices available in the community.

Where and with whom a person with developmental disabilities will live is one of the top issues to address.

A relatively new option that can be ideal for someone who may not be suited to supported living, independent living or a group home setting is the Adult Family Home Agency (AFHA), offered by service

providers such as OC ARC (www.ocarc.net), California Mentor (www.camentorfha.com) and Independent Options (www.independentoptions.org/afha). In an AFHA, the person with disabilities lives in a private home – the setting is much like a biological family, where the individual receives the services they need but can also participate in typical family activities and forge meaningful relationships.

Special Needs Trusts

Most parents want their children to inherit their money and property, also called their “estate,” when they pass away. However, when a son or daughter has special needs and receives government-funded services, receiving an inheritance of even a few thousand dollars can cause that person to become ineligible for programs like Medi-Cal and SSI (Supplementary Security Income) that are based on financial need.

For wealthy families with the resources to provide for all of their child’s lifelong needs, that may not be a problem. A more common situation, though, is the parent who leaves an inheritance large enough to help make their son or daughter’s life more comfortable, but not large enough to cover all of their costs for housing, medical care, food and other needs. For these families, a special needs trust may be the answer. With a special needs trust, the person with disabilities benefits from the assets placed in trust – by, for example, continuing to live rent-free in a family home that is paid off or by having the trust pay for things like cell phone service; however, since the person does not own or control the assets

in trust, he or she can still be eligible for most government programs.

Receiving an inheritance of even a few thousand dollars can cause that person to become ineligible for programs like Medi-Cal and SSI.

One of the resources used by many families throughout California is the Master Trust of California, operated by Inland Regional Center (go to www.inlandrc.org and click on “Master Trust”) which enables trusts to be established with as little as \$10,000. The Proxy Parent Foundation (www.proxyparentfoundation.org), based on Tustin, also operates the type of trust that is suitable for people who will be leaving smaller amounts of money and property to a child with special needs.

If you have questions about any aspect of futures planning, contact your RCOC service coordinator. RCOC’s Comfort Connection Family Resource Center can also provide information and referrals to resources for planning for the future.

RCOC’s Comfort Connection Family Resource Center will present a free **Estate Planning Presentation & Resource Fair** on Wed., May 11 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Topics to be covered include estate planning, protecting government benefits, financial planning and advocacy. For more information, call Comfort Connection at (714) 558-5400.

Elaine and Raymond Whitney
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issues and details when someone passes away. She noted their mother even made plans and paid in advance for Elaine and Raymond's funeral and burial arrangements, so they will each be laid to rest by their mother and father when the time comes.

Rose also made sure to share the family's plans with their RCOC service coordinator.

The family has always been very close and the advance planning, along with a gradual shifting of responsibilities in recent times, helped ensure that the transition from living with their mother to living with Wanda and Bill was easy for Raymond and Elaine.

Raymond, who loves music from the 1950s and 60s and is a big Elvis fan, has been able to stay in the bedroom that he has decorated with a huge collection of memorabilia and many of his own drawings of Hollywood stars. And Elaine, who enjoys playing cards and coloring, has not had to move her collection of two hundred or so coloring books.



Raymond Whitney



Elaine Whitney

While some things have stayed the same, this warm and caring family has created some fun, new traditions. Elaine loves to dance and both she and Raymond love music, so every Saturday morning – when a local radio station plays “oldies” music – Bill cooks breakfast and they have a dance party.

Tour of Living Options

To help people who want to know more about the types of homes and living arrangements that are available to adults with developmental disabilities, RCOC has organized a “Tour of Living Options” on **Thursday, April 7 from 1-4 p.m.** The open house style event will enable participants to visit all of the sites or just a few – including family home agencies, group homes and typical supported living/independent living arrangements. While there, they can speak informally with both residents and the people who operate the programs. All parents and consumers are welcome to attend the free event, which is ideal for those doing futures planning and those with children approaching adulthood. For more information, contact Delia Lona at (714) 796-5263.



Spotlight Awards to be Presented in March

The RCOC Spotlight Awards, initiated in 1997, honor the contributions of individuals and organizations that excel in their service to individuals with developmental disabilities in Orange County. This year, awards will be presented in 13 categories at a dinner and dance taking place at the Crown Plaza Anaheim Resort in Garden Grove on Friday, March 25.

Last year, RCOC did not stage an event or present any Spotlight honors. In 2009, honorees received their awards at a simple ceremony at an RCOC Board of Director's meeting. The decision to

forego the traditional gala in recent years was a difficult, but important, recognition of the fiscal challenges facing the community. Still, many of the people served by RCOC have missed the awards and the opportunity they offer to come together to honor outstanding role models. In response, RCOC initiated a creative new approach that ensures that no tax dollars are spent on the event – it issued an RFP (Request for Proposals) for a service provider to organize and manage the event. The non-profit Integrity House was awarded the contract to co-sponsor the event and

will receive as reimbursement any profits over and above the event costs.

Ticket prices are \$30 per person if purchased before March 4 and \$40 per person if purchased after March 4.

Space is limited and advance reservation and payment is required, so be sure to buy your ticket early if you want to attend.

For more information, contact Integrity House at (714) 542-1964. Or you can go to the RCOC Web site at www.rcocdd.com then click on the News and Events section and select Spotlight Awards.

Regional Center of Orange County Locations

Santa Ana Office	Orange Office	Irvine Office	Westminster Office
1525 N. Tustin Avenue 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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