



Dialogue

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Consumer Spotlight

Breanna Little

Breanna Little is a woman with a passion for cooking. Most weekends, she searches the Internet for recipes to try, plans the family meals for the week and prepares grocery shopping lists. One of her specialties is a home-made chili that she makes in a slow cooker, but almost every night, she serves up something delicious.

“She’s taken over my kitchen – it’s officially her kitchen now,” laughs Margie Dugan, Breanna’s mother.

*Now that she’s an adult,
the kitchen is her
favorite place.*

An RCOC consumer who has a moderate intellectual disability, Breanna lives in Irvine with her mother and older brother Jason. Margie said that when she was growing up, Breanna enjoyed cooking. Now that she’s an adult, the kitchen is her favorite place.

Recently engaged to her high school sweetheart, Mark, Breanna hopes to become a chef someday. With her mom’s help, she is exploring the possibility of taking culinary classes



Breanna Little loves her job at the Hyatt Hotel in Irvine, where one of her duties is washing dishes.

at Orange Coast College after she and Mark get married in September.

For a long time, many people, including Breanna’s family, thought that she would pursue a career as a home care worker. Her grandmother had Alzheimer’s disease, and Breanna seemed to have a special gift for working with elderly people with that condition. While in school, one of the internships she did was at a senior living facility. She even took first aid classes to help prepare for the job.

But then an opportunity to work in the food service program at the Hyatt Hotel in Irvine came up. Breanna was one of four students in the Adult Transition Program at Irvine Unified

School District (IUSD) accepted into the Hyatt training program. The training lasted 12 weeks. While the other three students went on to be hired at other jobs, Breanna’s strong work ethic and desire to do a good job made her a stand-out in the group and she was hired while still in school.

*Since graduation Breanna
has succeeded at work with
only natural supports.*

She graduated a year ago and has now been on the job for a year and a half. Working 30-40 hours per week, and sometimes putting in overtime, Breanna receives excellent benefits

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Dialogue

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Upcoming 2013-2014 Board Meetings

September 5 • October 3 • November 7
January 9

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

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Legislative Update

State Enacts Budget for Fiscal 2013-14

On June 27, Governor Brown signed into law AB 110, the main budget bill that reflects the agreement he reached with the Legislature for the 2013-14 fiscal year. The Governor did not exercise his line-item veto authority on any of the developmental services components of the bill, and the spending plans for regional centers are essentially unchanged from what the Governor originally proposed back in January.

The budget includes a small increase that acknowledges that there are more consumers needing services.

The 2013-14 budget went into effect on July 1 and does not include any new cuts in funding for regional centers. In fact, the budget includes a small increase that acknowledges that there are more consumers needing services than in the past year. It also allows the 1.25% cut in payments to service providers – amounting to \$46.7 million for the year – to end on June 30, 2013 as specified in current law. The budget also makes permanent the Annual Family Program fee, which assesses a fee of \$150 or \$200 per family on higher-income families.

To implement the spending plan, the Governor also signed a series of “trailer bills” – called this because they “trail” behind the main budget bill. The trailer bill dealing with developmental services is AB 89.

In addition to the provisions noted above, the developmental services trailer bill specifies December 31, 2014 as the closure date for Lanterman Developmental Center in Pomona. It also clarifies the circumstances under which regional centers can pay health insurance co-pays and co-insurance – an issue that came to the forefront when California required private insurance plans to cover behavioral health treatments (such as Applied Behavior Analysis) for those with autism. The bill prohibits regional centers from paying deductibles, but authorizes payment of co-pays and co-insurance under certain conditions.

The developmental services trailer bill specifies December 31, 2014 as the closure date for Lanterman Developmental Center.

For budget details and to read a summary of the enacted budget, visit the Department of Finance's eBudget website.



Executive Director's Report

Consumers' Message to Employers: HIRE ME

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

There is a new video, just under eight minutes long, that's making its way around the Orange County community and getting great reviews. It doesn't feature any movie stars or high-priced special effects. Instead, the stars of this video, which is entitled *HIRE ME*, are a group of young adults who are helping to break down barriers to employment by demonstrating the successes that can happen when employers put the abilities of people with developmental disabilities to work.

This past spring, almost 400 RCOC consumers graduated from Orange County public schools.

Funded by a donation from Liza and Stuart Krassner, the video is being used by a variety of community members – from school district staff, to supported employment service providers and RCOC – to help educate businesses, parents and others. Interviews and footage of consumers working effectively in diverse situations help viewers to visualize people with autism, intellectual disabilities and other conditions in the workplace. Among those featured is Breanna Little, who

is the subject of this issue's Consumer Spotlight cover story.

To view the *HIRE ME* video, go to the RCOC website – under the Consumers tab, click on Resources and then scroll to the bottom of the page for the link.



This video comes at a good time to support RCOC's broader work initiative, which is aimed at expanding opportunities for those we serve to

participate in integrated competitive employment.

This past spring, almost 400 RCOC consumers graduated from Orange County public schools. That figure is almost double what it was just a few years ago. Like their typical peers, most of these young people want to become more independent. When they finish school, they and their families have the reasonable expectation that they will take their place in an integrated community. For most, that includes an integrated workplace with typical peers.

Orange County is leading in the integrated employment movement.

I'm proud to report that Orange County is responding and, in fact, leading in the integrated employment movement. Most of our school districts have California Department of Education WorkAbility I and Department of Rehabilitation

Transition Partnership Projects to help students make the transition from school to work, independent living and post-secondary education or training. Many also have very forward-thinking staff who are going above and beyond the basics. They're collaborating with families, RCOC, hundreds of local business partners and others to identify and employ best practices that ensure a successful transition from public school to a more self-sufficient adult life.

Some are also participating with RCOC in the California Employment Consortium for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CECY). This project, funded by the federal government, aims to promote system change that will increase the number of young adults with intellectual disabilities in integrated competitive employment.

Those we serve almost invariably exceed even our highest expectations for them.

Each day, all of us in the community learn more through these efforts to broaden employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. But perhaps the most important lesson we've learned is that we really can't set the bar too high. Those we serve almost invariably exceed even our highest expectations for them. And when they do, they gain the self-esteem and confidence that only comes with achievement.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

Bonner Paddock Is An Inspiration to All

By Sylvia Delgado, CAT Chair

A lot of people talk about the things they are going to do. Bonner Paddock, our guest speaker at the May CAT meeting, doesn't waste time talking – he just does them. Bonner, who was born with cerebral palsy, has pushed himself beyond the limits of his disability over and over again. He is the first person with cerebral palsy to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa



Bonner Paddock with Consumer Advisory Team (CAT) Chairperson Sylvia Delgado.

unassisted and to successfully finish the Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii. Bonner shared pictures and videos of those events with us and trust me, they weren't all pretty! He struggled. He was in pain. Sometimes, it even looked like he might not reach the top of that mountain or finish that marathon after he'd already swum 2.4 miles in the ocean and biked 110 miles. But he did it! That's because Bonner doesn't accept defeat; and we shouldn't either. That was Bonner's inspirational message to CAT members. He encouraged us all to set goals that push us beyond the limits of our disability or any other circumstances that may hold us back.

Besides being a terrific role model for people with disabilities, Bonner is also a great example of how one person can make a difference. In 2009, Bonner founded the OM Foundation because he wanted to help children with disabilities get the therapies they needed so they could have better lives. Since then, his foundation has raised more than \$1 million. It was

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

August 21
September 18
October 16
November 20
December 18

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC's Santa Ana office, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue. Call Kelly Rico at (714) 796-5330 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

very exciting to watch a video about the great things that Bonner is doing to support and advocate for people with disabilities in our own community.

After his presentation, Bonner spent time talking with CAT members about their own personal successes. Many CAT members told him that he inspired them to take on new challenges. He inspired me to start riding a bike again. Some CAT members told me that Bonner helped them get a mental picture of what

they might want to do on their own. Others just said his message was awesome! CAT member Sean Sullivan said that Bonner's presentation had great meaning and importance because it reminded everyone that sometimes we are the biggest barrier to meeting our individual goals.

I can honestly say that this was one of the best CAT meetings ever and that everyone should hear Bonner's story. In closing, I want to share one of the messages that Bonner repeated during his talk:



Bonner (back row, second from left) poses with some RCOOC consumers who attended his presentation at the May CAT meeting.

It doesn't matter if you're having a good day or a bad day – have a positive attitude! And use that positive attitude

to work on meeting a goal that pushes you beyond the limits of what you think you can do!

Security Measures Protect RCOOC Consumers' Private Information

Regional Center of Orange County has always viewed technology as a powerful tool to make its employees more productive and to deliver better quality service to consumers and families. RCOOC has developed its own case management software, Virtual Chart, which is continuously updated with new features and capabilities and is a model for regional center information management.

Containing vast amounts of personal and confidential data regarding medical conditions and developmental diagnoses, Virtual Chart and other RCOOC information systems must be secure. People with developmental

disabilities place a special trust in RCOOC to safeguard their private information, and both state and federal laws make it a crime to violate consumers' confidentiality.

People with developmental disabilities place a special trust in RCOOC to safeguard their private information.

RCOOC encrypts employees' email if it contains confidential information and uses client/server software to access consumer information. RCOOC's service coordinators use virtual desktops. The hard drive on the notebook, laptop or desktop that service coordinators use to connect to the server contains no consumer information. If the device is stolen, it will not result in the loss of confidential information.

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.

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

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

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

*Presented in Spanish by Dr. Ana Lorenz, Ph. D.
(Lorenz & Associates)*

When: Tuesday evenings – Aug. 6, Aug. 13,
Aug. 20, Aug. 27 & Sept. 3

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Orange Office
3111 N. Tustin Street, Ste. 150

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

*Presented in Vietnamese by Thang C. Do, M.A.,
BCBA & Julia Kim, B.A. (Footprints)*

When: Tuesday evenings – Sept. 3, Sept. 10,
Sept. 17, Sept. 24 & Oct. 1

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Westminster Office
5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Ste. 100

Social Skills Training Workshop – Focus on Ages 12 through 18 Years (6 sessions)

*Presented in English by Janis Niemann, M.S.,
BCBA (Melissa Sweitzer)*

When: Thursday evenings – Sept. 5, Sept. 12,
Sept. 19, Sept. 26, Oct. 3 & Oct. 10

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
1525 N. Tustin Ave.
Parking is located in the structure
across from the RCOC office building

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

*Presented in English by Jeffery E. Salmons, M.S.,
BCBA & Julia Kim, B.A. (Footprints)*

When: Tuesday evenings – Oct. 1, Oct. 8,
Oct. 15, Oct. 22 & Oct. 29

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Orange Office
3111 N. Tustin St., Ste. 150



Breanna did several internships, including one at Henry's Market in Irvine, while in her school's transition program.

along with her wages. Best of all, she loves her work! Her duties include things like helping the chefs in the kitchen, doing dishes and organizing place settings in the dining room. It is a great fit with her skills, abilities and interests. And, while she had job coaches throughout her transition program with IUSD, since graduation Breanna has succeeded at work with only natural supports.

Breanna is a role model for others, and someone who inspires hope among families who want more for their children with developmental disabilities than programs years ago were able to provide.

Though formalized adult transition programs have been required since 1990, according to IUSD Transition Specialist Linda O'Neal, it was about a dozen years ago that major changes began to take place.

A shift in focus toward paid employment in an integrated workplace like Breanna's mirrored other changes in the developmental services community. With more and more children with special needs progressing through public schools in typical classrooms, families and students came to view integrated settings as the norm. Adult independent living skills continued to include education, financial skills, transportation, recreation and fitness but employment preparation took on a more central role.

"As a community, we changed our expectation levels," Linda said, noting that the program Breanna attended had just nine students twelve years ago, but now has around 60 students in five classes. "We have high hopes that before or shortly after high school, all of our students will have a paid job."

Parents can do a lot to help prepare young people with special needs for the work environment.

In addition to the on-the-job training in the community that is so important for students like Breanna to succeed, transition experts say parents can do a lot to help prepare young people with special needs for the work environment. This includes doing chores around the home, such as house cleaning, and helping with cooking and laundry. They also emphasize the importance of good hygiene habits to ensure young adults fit in and are comfortable in an integrated workplace.

IUSD has been able to secure grant funds to follow and collect data on students after they leave the program. Results over the last five years are very positive, showing that 70-86 percent of graduates are involved in paid employment one year after graduation.



Breanna (pictured with her brother Jason) enjoys preparing meals at home.

Person-centered planning that recognizes the uniqueness of each student's needs remains the key guiding principle for transition planning. However, Linda noted that the preference for integrated paid employment also reflects a greater appreciation for the rights and abilities of people with developmental disabilities.

The thinking, she says is that "Everyone has a right to work, but they also have a responsibility to work and pay taxes just like everyone else."

That expectation of full participation is shared by Breanna's mother, who said that she's always believed that there is a place for everybody. As far as her daughter's work is concerned, Margie said: "She doesn't have to be doing something that makes a lot of money, as long as she's in a job where she's accomplishing something and being a productive part of society."

Plan Now to Support RCOC's Holiday Wish Tree



It's still hot outside, but it's not too early to start thinking about supporting RCOC's Wish Tree program. Each year, Wish Tree helps brighten the holiday season for more than a thousand Orange County consumers.

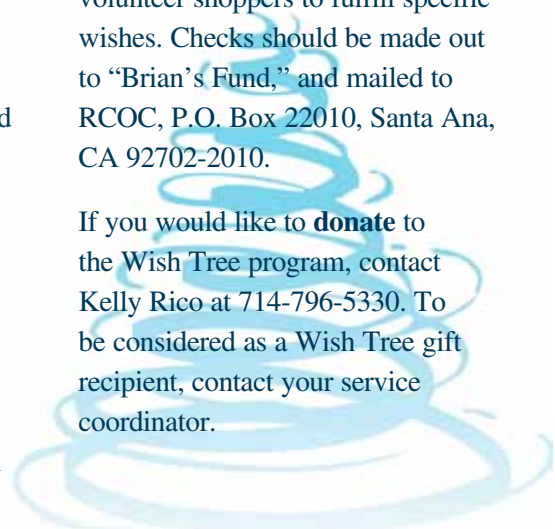
The Wish Tree begins when service coordinators contact low-income, needy individuals and families served by RCOC and identify their holiday gift requests. These wishes – ranging from children's toys and clothes, to

store gift cards – are fulfilled when Wish Tree supporters purchase the requested items and deliver them to RCOC. Volunteers then wrap the gifts and make sure they are delivered in time for the holidays.

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 by making a financial

contribution that will be used by volunteer shoppers to fulfill specific wishes. Checks should be made out to "Brian's Fund," and mailed to RCOC, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010.

If you would like to **donate** to the Wish Tree program, contact Kelly Rico at 714-796-5330. To be considered as a Wish Tree gift recipient, contact your service coordinator.



Regional Center of Orange County Locations

Santa Ana Office

1525 N. Tustin Avenue
24-hr Phone: (714) 796-5100

Orange Office

3111 N. Tustin, Suite 150
24-hr Phone: (714) 796-3700

Westminster Office

5555 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite 100
24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

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Dialogue Newsletter

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