



Dialogue

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Consumer Spotlight

Will Navarette

When many of us think of “family,” we think about the people to whom we are related – parents, siblings, cousins and other relatives. Some of us, including Regional Center of Orange County (RCOC) consumer Will Navarette, think mostly about others who have cared for us in ways that made us feel like family.

He has not had any contact with his biological family since he was just eight years old.

Born and raised in Orange County, Will has cerebral palsy and an intellectual disability, and has been receiving RCOC services since he was a baby. Now 29 years old, he has not had any contact with his biological family since he was just eight years old. For 18 years, he lived in a community care facility, living as part of the family with the home’s administrator and her children. Understandably, Will came to think of the family he lived with as his own.

To this day, he remains very close to the people he grew up with, referring to the woman who operated the home



Will Navarette (left) with Isaac Harmon, his case manager at Goodwill.

as “Mom” and her children as his “brothers and sisters.” And they are the ones with whom he celebrates the holidays, and who come to see him on his birthday. Sadly, though, in 2011, the woman he called Mom became very ill and passed away. That meant Will had to move.

Will came to think of the family he lived with as his own.

With RCOC’s help, he found his current home in Garden Grove where he lives with five other adult

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Get Your Tickets for Spotlight Awards 2014

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the 2014 Spotlight Awards Ceremony and Gala! The event will take place on **Friday, March 7, 2014** at 6 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Orange County in Garden Grove. (Please note the new location.) Check the RCOC website (www.rcocdd.com) for ticket information. Remember, you must purchase your tickets in advance to attend. See you there!

Dialogue

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

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Upcoming 2014 Board Meetings

March 6 • April 10 • May 8 • June 5

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.

RCOC Administration

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Adult Consumers Organize Self-Advocacy Conference

On October 23, more than 100 of RCOC's adult consumers gathered at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge for the first annual Orange County Self-Determination Conference. Presented by RCOC and Integrity House, the day-long conference was geared primarily around the interests of those who are in or interested in Independent Living Services (ILS) and Supported Living Services (SLS).

Organized by and for adults with developmental disabilities, the conference was made accessible by a low registration fee. The consumers chose the "Let's Talk About Sex" theme. Sam Durbin, an RCOC consumer and Integrity House member who delivered the conference's keynote address, emphasized that the agenda was aimed at ensuring that adult consumers have basic information about sexuality to help them be healthy, develop positive relationships, and avoid becoming victims of abuse.

Among the other conference presenters were RCOC's Dr. Mary

Parpal and a panel of consumers who took questions from the audience. To foster open and direct dialogue on sensitive topics that matter to adults with developmental disabilities, each table featured a question box to allow consumers to submit questions to the panel anonymously. A fun, interactive session modeled on the "speed dating" concept, was aimed at helping participants develop social skills to foster healthy friendships.

Representatives from local law enforcement and health agencies also spoke, and consumers who attended received a resource pamphlet listing organizations, in addition to RCOC, that people with developmental disabilities can turn to for help with family planning, health, self-help and substance abuse problems.

A group of consumers also acted out skits, videotaped in advance and shown at the conference, on how to talk to one's parents about the possibility of moving out of the family home and living more independently. The video was a big hit with the audience and can now be viewed online. For a link, go to RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com). From the home page, click on the "Housing for People with Development Disabilities" link under the "RCOC Services" tab.



Executive Director's Report

Remember Service Providers in the Budget Debate

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

On January 9, Governor Brown shared his proposed budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. A few weeks earlier, Assembly Speaker John Perez and Assembly Budget Committee Chair Nancy Skinner released what they called a "Blueprint for a Responsible Budget." Both documents are basically starting points for our elected leaders to begin debating budget priorities for California and deciding what, exactly, will be in the state's spending plan for the next fiscal year.

Most experts think the slowly-improving economy and lower unemployment will translate into more tax dollars to the state.

The Governor and the two Assembly leaders differ in their projections for how much money the state will have to spend in the coming year. The Assembly leaders, along with the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), are expecting the state to receive more revenue than the Governor predicts.

While no one knows for sure how much money there will be, most experts think the slowly-improving economy and

lower unemployment will translate into more tax dollars to the state.

If that turns out to be the case, it will be very good news for everyone who relies on state-funded services, including people with developmental disabilities. It will probably mean that we will not have to worry about how to absorb yet more budget cuts. It is possible – though not certain – that there could be additional funds available for urgent needs in the community care system and other critical service areas.



There could be additional funds available for urgent needs in the community care system.

Between now and June 15, the constitutional deadline for the Governor and Legislature to agree on a budget, the debate about budget priorities will be vigorous. On behalf of the thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities and families we serve, RCOC will be taking a stand in favor of repairing the frayed safety net for basic, life-critical services.

There is no shortage of valuable programs that are worthy of government support. However, as the economy is still recovering and tax dollars remain relatively scarce, we want to make sure elected officials are aware that our service providers – especially day programs and those delivering residential

services – continue to struggle to make ends meet.

It was an important relief this current fiscal year that the 1.25 percent cut to service provider payments ended. However, restoring that cut only brought funding back to 2009 levels. The fact is that day programs and residential providers have not seen a rate increase for more than a decade.

Can you imagine how your family budget would suffer if you had not received a salary increase since 2002?

Over the years, costs for everything from fuel to taxes have risen significantly. Worker's compensation insurance has skyrocketed, and the recent increase in the minimum wage puts upward pressure on wages across the board. Remember, while the state has agreed to fund service providers' costs directly related to the minimum wage increase, it does nothing to address pay for workers who earn above that base level (such as supervisors and managers).

Service providers continue to struggle to make ends meet.

As Governor Brown and our legislators weigh many competing budget priorities, we urge them to remember the thousands of consumers who have no family home and no living relatives, and who thus rely completely on regional center services for their most basic needs. In the coming months, we will do our best to help them see the wisdom in starting now to begin repairing the frayed safety net of residential and day program service providers.

Consumer Advisory Team Update

Do You Vote?

By Sylvia Delgado, CAT Chair

Did you know that RCOC's adult consumers are just as entitled to vote as any other adult citizen? Since not everyone knows this, two people from the Orange County Registrar of Voters attended our November CAT meeting to talk about voting. The Registrar is in charge of organizing elections in Orange County, and making sure that the elections are fair and accurate.

In addition to sharing information about voting rights for people with disabilities, Brandy Miller and Imelda Carrillo asked if CAT members would be willing to participate in a focus group and survey to help the Registrar better understand the needs of voters with developmental disabilities. I'm excited to report that about ten consumers agreed to participate!

I want a say in our government, so I vote in every election. And I'm excited that the people who run our elections want all consumers' voices to be heard.

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

February 19
March 19
April 16
May 21
June 18

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

Holiday Fun!

In December, CAT members enjoyed some holiday cheer and socializing at their annual Holiday Luncheon.



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: Thursday evenings – Feb. 6, Feb. 13,
Feb. 20, Feb. 27 & March 6
*(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

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Footprints

When: Thursday evenings – April 3, April 10,
April 17, April 24 & May 1
*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

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

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

Presented in Vietnamese by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – March 4, March 11,
March 18, March 25 & April 1
*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

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

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

Presented in English by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – May 6, May 13,
May 20, May 27, June 3 & June 10

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

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

Santi Rogers Named Director of DDS

In January, Governor Brown announced that he appointed Santi J. Rogers to be director of the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS), succeeding Terri Delgadillo who retired in December. Many people in the community know Santi Rogers well and respect his long-time service to people with developmental disabilities. For many years, he was director of the San Andreas Regional Center which serves people in Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. Previously, he was director of Agnews Developmental Center and Porterville Developmental Center. Early in his career, he served at DDS as a deputy director. The appointment requires State Senate confirmation.

Medical Consents Help Ensure Consumers Get the Care They Need

Like most of us, adults with developmental disabilities typically rely on a close family member to speak on their behalf, when they cannot explain to doctors and dentists the specific kinds of treatment they want or don't want. Thankfully, most of the adults RCOC serves have family who can help them advocate for appropriate healthcare. However, for some of the adults with developmental disabilities that RCOC serves, those sorts of natural supports are simply not available. There are, for example, consumers who are unable to speak for themselves and their parents may have passed away and they have no siblings. Or, the siblings they have may not be able to shoulder that responsibility.

For some of the adults with developmental disabilities that RCOC serves, natural supports are simply not available.

No matter what the reason consumers do not have anyone else who can make medical decisions on their behalf, they need a caring advocate to step in to guide and give consent to doctors to perform needed treatments. In these situations, RCOC staff is there to help.

“Advocating for consumers who don't have anyone else is one of the

most important responsibilities the regional center has,” said RCOC's Executive Director Larry Landauer. “I'm very proud of the RCOC staff who work so hard to make sure our consumers get the care they need, and to educate the medical community about the people we serve.”

“Advocating for consumers who don't have anyone else is one of the most important responsibilities the regional center has.”

Over the course of a year, RCOC staff sign an average of 280 medical and dental consent forms on behalf of adult consumers. These consent forms give doctors and hospitals permission to perform a range of procedures, from routine healthcare to major surgery. However, the regional center's role includes far more than simply approving care. Before RCOC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Peter Himber or one of RCOC's registered nurses signs a medical consent form, they thoroughly evaluate the requested medical or dental treatment to ensure that the recommended care is appropriate. In addition to reviewing test results and speaking with the treating doctors, Dr. Himber may even examine the consumer himself if needed.

Usually, the recommended treatments are justified and appropriate. Though infrequently, RCOC has had to advocate for a different treatment, especially with medical professionals not accustomed to treating people with developmental disabilities.

In both cases, though, medical professionals are very appreciative of RCOC's efforts to ensure consumers receive proper care.

Dr. Himber recalls a situation when RCOC was asked to sign consent to have all of a consumer's teeth removed because he was banging his head against the ground and other hard objects, severely injuring his mouth and face. “We refused to sign the consent until other diagnostic tests were done to rule out another cause for the head banging, such as pain,” he said. “Diagnostic x-rays were done and it turned out the consumer had an infected nerve root. That was treated, the head banging stopped and, happily, the consumer still has his teeth.”

In another situation, a 71-year-old consumer was diagnosed with colon cancer. Though most patients in this person's situation choose to receive chemotherapy, the oncologist was initially opposed to chemotherapy since the consumer could not fully understand the risks. RCOC's expectation, though, is that people with developmental disabilities receive the same treatment as typically developing people. After discussing the various alternatives and weighing their side effects with the oncologist, Dr. Himber gave authorization for chemotherapy, rather than hospice care.

“It's always important to have a zealous advocate when you're in a situation where you can't advocate for yourself,” he said. “RCOC staff approach each request for a medical consent as if the consumer was our own family member.”

Will Navarette (continued from page 1)

consumers. Lilia Duelas, the home's owner, has only wonderful things to say about Will.

"He gets along with everyone," she said, noting that he is very considerate of the other residents. Will enjoys watching television in his room, but he always uses headphones so he doesn't disturb others.



Will recently started working in the merchandise processing area at Goodwill.

Though he gets along well with all of his roommates, Will spends more time with his buddy Karl, who shares his interest in bowling. The two of them go to their local bowling alley every weekend. Since they play so frequently, Will has gotten to be a very good bowler and has even won numerous trophies that he displays in his bedroom.

Almost everyone who knows him well, comments on Will's friendliness and his great sense of humor. But Isaac Harmon, the case manager who has worked with Will for the past several years at Goodwill Industries, says that in addition to being very social and well-liked, Will is a wonderful role model for his friends and co-workers.

"He always gives things a try," he said. "If it doesn't work out, he's always willing to try another way."

One example is the job Will is currently doing in the packing and assembly operation at Goodwill. Since he is able to use only his left hand for tasks, the staff created a special "jig" to assist him in putting together packages that include sheets of paper that need to be folded. The jig holds the paper in place and has bars across the device where the folds are to be made. This keeps the paper straight, so Will can fold it perfectly. In fact, Will is such a good worker that he can put together about 1,000 kits in just five or six hours!

As a result of Will's success with the jig, Isaac said that Goodwill now uses similar set-ups for many others with similar challenges.

Having mastered his package assembly job, Will is eager to learn more. One of his goals now is to get more involved in the processing of merchandise for the store. He is skilled at hanging clothes on shirt hangers, but Goodwill staff members are still working to come up with a device that will make it easier for him to handle the skirt and pant hangers

with just his left hand. Right now, it is difficult for him to hold the hanger and squeeze open the hanger clips while getting the clothes into the clips correctly.

Will is a wonderful role model for his friends and co-workers.

His RCOE Service Coordinator Jeff Johnson is confident that Will's great attitude will help him to achieve his work goals. He is also hopeful about the potential for him to use the regular OCTA bus, rather than Access, to go more places that require a change of bus – a skill he is working on in Goodwill's life skills program.

Will says that one of the main reasons he wants to learn to ride the regular bus is that it will allow him to see his girlfriend, Carmen, more often. Carmen used to participate in Goodwill's workshop program, but has moved into supported employment. Though Will does not get to see her very often, he often talks with her by phone when he is at home. He's excited about gaining more independence that riding on the Big Bus enables.



Will is a very good bowler, and has many trophies displayed in his room at home.



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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

RCOC Supports Fiesta Educativa Conference for Spanish-Speaking Families

More than 100 Spanish-speaking parents of children with special needs gathered at the Garden Grove Community Center on October 4 for the 2013 Fiesta Educativa Orange County. RCOC supported the day-long conference, which included a variety of speakers as well as break-out sessions on topics such as regional center services, education,

benefits, and autism. In addition to printing the event programs and exhibitor forms, and leading a break-out session, RCOC employees staffed a table where they provided information and answered questions about RCOC services and supports. Among the many other sponsors and exhibitors were Area Board XI, Cal Optima, Disability Rights California, Down Syndrome Association, TACA, and Goodwill. A grassroots organization with chapters in several California regions, Fiesta Educativa provides support to



The Fiesta Educativa Orange County conference provided an opportunity for Spanish-speaking families to learn more about resources available to people with developmental disabilities.

families and advocates on behalf of Spanish-speaking families of people with developmental disabilities.