

In the Spotlight

Dan Cardenas

“Do your work, and do the best you can.”

You might expect to hear wise words of advice like those from a successful business owner, or perhaps a manager coaching employees when they start a new job. Instead, they are the words of Dan Cardenas, a young man with a developmental disability who receives services through Regional Center of Orange County.

Clearly, though he’s just 27 years old, Dan knows a thing or two about how to be successful at work.

Dan knows a thing or two about how to be successful at work.

Since March, he has worked part-time as a cafeteria aide for Hope International University, a small Christian college in Fullerton. With supported employment help from Goodwill Industries, he does a variety of janitorial-type work. This includes bussing and cleaning tables, sweeping floors, and cleaning up other messes in the cafeteria. He likes the job a lot more than the warehouse-based job he had before, because this one allows



Dan Cardenas with Monster, one of his pet tortoises.

him to interact with lots of different people, including students at the university who are very friendly.

Born and raised in Orange County, Dan dreams of living on his own someday, and hopes to get an apartment of his own soon. Since his current job includes many janitorial duties, he’s already comfortable knowing that he’ll be able to handle many of the housekeeping responsibilities that come with a home of his own.

“But I need to learn how to cook,” he laughed.

Unfortunately, like many adults served by RCOC, he isn’t able to

afford the high cost of housing in Orange County and would need financial assistance to help pay rent. Eight years ago, with RCOC’s help, he got his name on the waiting list for federal housing (HUD) vouchers. However, there is no way of knowing when his name might come up, so Dan continues to live at home with his parents in Westminster.

He’s really good at advocating for himself.

Though he is looking forward to living independently, he admits that living with his parents does have

See **Dan Cardenas** on page 7.

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 website: www.rcocdd.com.

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Upcoming 2016 Board Meetings

September 1 • November 3

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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Budget Update

Budget for FY 2016-17 Contains New Money for Community Services

The state budget and related bills for fiscal year 2016-2017 that were signed into law by Governor Brown on June 27 included great news for individuals and families served by regional centers. For the first time in years, there were no line item vetoes by the governor to cut spending, and the budget included a significant amount of new dollars for California's community care system.

The budget included a significant amount of new dollars for California's community care system.

The overwhelming majority of additional funds go to wage increases for the direct care workers upon whom the entire system relies to deliver quality services and supports to people with developmental disabilities and their families. This news was welcomed by the broad cross-section of advocates, family members, elected officials, and professionals – including Regional Center of Orange County – who have long stressed the importance of adequate wages to attract and retain quality caregivers.

The budget also specifies targeted, five percent rate increases for several categories of service providers, whose

rates are set at the state level by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), including independent living and supported living, respite, and transportation.

Between the “pass through” increases for direct care worker wages, administrative increases, and the five percent rate increases, several service provider categories will see double digit increases. These additional funds will go a long way toward rebuilding resources that have struggled greatly in recent years.

The budget also includes a 2.76 percent cost-of-living increase in California's portion of the SSI/SSP (Supplemental Security Income/ State Supplementary Payment) grants, which many adults with developmental disabilities rely on to pay daily expenses.

Though the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program is administered by a separate agency, many of those served by regional centers depend on IHSS. So, it was also good news that the state allocated additional funding of approximately \$437.3 million to pay overtime costs for IHSS workers, and created a mechanism to allow exemptions from state limits on overtime.

These additional funds will go a long way toward rebuilding resources.

For details on the state budget, go to the Department of Finance's budget website at www.ebudget.ca.gov. Detailed information for service providers also appears on RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com).

Executive Director's Report

RCOC Adopts New Mission, Vision and Values Statements

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

Those who have read Lewis Carroll's classic, *Alice in Wonderland*, will recognize this quote: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." When Robert Costello, RCOC's Board Treasurer, shared this quote to help set the stage for the Board of Directors' 2016 strategic planning session, it brought both chuckles and nods of agreement from all who attended.

These statements and documents act as RCOC's compass.

That's because we all know how easy it can be for a large, well-established organization like ours to let the multitude of day-to-day responsibilities push longer-range strategic planning to the back burner. And it's the reason that, every two years or so, RCOC's volunteer Board members and its senior staff dedicate a full weekend day to this crucial task.

This year's session was particularly impactful, because it also led to the adoption of new mission, vision, and values statements, along with revised guiding principles for RCOC. These statements and documents act as RCOC's compass, and I encourage

everyone who has any involvement with RCOC to visit our website (www.rcocdd.com) and read them.

Together with a strategic planning document, they help keep the organization's actions aligned with the Board's priorities, and ensure that staff at all levels of the Regional Center



are clear about our highest priorities. Importantly, for an organization like ours – where stewardship is fundamental to our identity – they are

a means of explaining the values we expect to guide staff members' actions and decisions. They also hold us accountable for achieving goals and outcomes that make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

It will come as no surprise to many RCOC stakeholders that employment and housing top the Board's strategic goals for us. What may surprise some, however, is the terminology we're now using to talk about those we serve. Some years ago, as part of the community care system's shift from a medical model to a service model, we began using the term "consumer" to refer to people with developmental disabilities who receive services and supports through RCOC. Use of the word "consumer" was intended to reflect the fact that the individual with disabilities would no longer be viewed as a "patient" but instead as a "consumer" who deserved excellent service.

Thus, among the most significant changes in all of RCOC's new statements and documents is that the term "consumer" has been removed and replaced with person-centered language, such as "the people we serve" – a change driven by the adults with developmental disabilities who sit on RCOC's Board, as well as those who sit on RCOC's Consumers' Advisory Committee which advises the Board.

In keeping with this direction, we have changed the name of *Dialogue's* cover feature from "Consumer Spotlight" to "In the Spotlight" and changed the "Consumer Corner" column to "Person to Person." I am pleased to report that we are also in the process of updating our website, training materials, and other documents with the new language.

"Every person served by RCOC is a valued member of the community and achieves his or her individual potential."

Most exciting for me, however, is the vision statement the Board adopted, which is: "Every person served by RCOC is a valued member of the community and achieves his or her individual potential."

We did not have a vision statement before. And though I believe this sentiment has always resided in the hearts of everyone at RCOC, it's important to make it official, to help ensure we always take the right roads to get us there.

Person to Person

Our Mission at RCOC: To Empower You!

By Fernando Peña, CAC Chair and Jess Corey, RCOC Consumer Advocate

Every person served by RCOC is a valued member of the community and achieves his or her individual potential. That is RCOC's newly adopted vision statement. What an empowering statement! Each and every one of us on the Consumers' Advisory Committee (CAC) embraces this vision and hopes to help those served by RCOC have the life they envision for themselves.

Our voices were heard and respected!

For the past few months, RCOC's Board of Directors has been reviewing the organization's mission statement and guiding principles. Part of that review process included gathering input from the CAC. At our CAC meeting in May, we reviewed drafts of new mission, vision and values statements, as well as revised guiding principles.



Fernando Peña



Jess Corey

We suggested some changes to the drafts and when the Board of Directors approved the new statements and principles in June, we were thrilled to see that they reflected the changes we recommended. Our voices were heard and respected! That's empowering!

We felt strongly that these important statements need to use language that will be understood by the people served by RCOC, and now they do. One of the most significant changes was to remove the term "consumer" and replace it with "people served." First and foremost, we are all people first and with this one change the CAC feels that those served by RCOC will feel more empowered and uplifted.

Important statements need to use language that will be understood by the people served by RCOC.

The purpose of the CAC is to serve in an advisory role to RCOC's Board of Directors by providing information from the perspective of those served by RCOC. We take our responsibility seriously and work hard to connect with

you and give you a voice. We were excited to be part of the process for developing RCOC's new mission, vision and values statements, as well as revising the guiding principles.

First and foremost, we are all people first.

We hope you are excited about this news too! We look forward to continuing our advocacy work on your behalf! Connect with us any time. You can call or email Jess, RCOC's Consumer Advocate, at (714) 796-5135 or jcorey@rocodd.com.

Plan to Attend: Fiesta Educativa

Fiesta Educativa Orange County, an advocacy organization that helps Spanish-speaking families access services for their children with special needs, will host its 16th annual conference on October 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at River Arena in Anaheim. The event is supported by RCOC and features a variety of speakers and workshops of interest to parents. For more information and to register, please contact Cecilia Mercado at (714) 533-5815 or cmercado@fiestaeducativa.org.

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. 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 8-15 families.

Please note that the workshop below will be the last one of 2016. 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 Footprints

When: Thursday evenings – Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 3, Nov. 10, Nov. 17

(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 the RCOC office building

Moving on at 3...Transition Workshops for Parents

Every child in Early Start (birth to 36 months) receives transition services to help prepare the family for the changes that will take place when the child turns three years old and Early Start services end. Many parents say this support is invaluable in helping them understand the differences between Early Start and the school-based education services children with special needs receive from public school districts from the age of three through age 22. The upcoming workshops listed below are offered in English, however, Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters can be provided to ensure all parents get the information they need. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Patricia Garcia at (714) 558-5400 or pgarcia@rcocdd.com. These workshops are offered every other month.

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

When: Thursday, Sept. 22

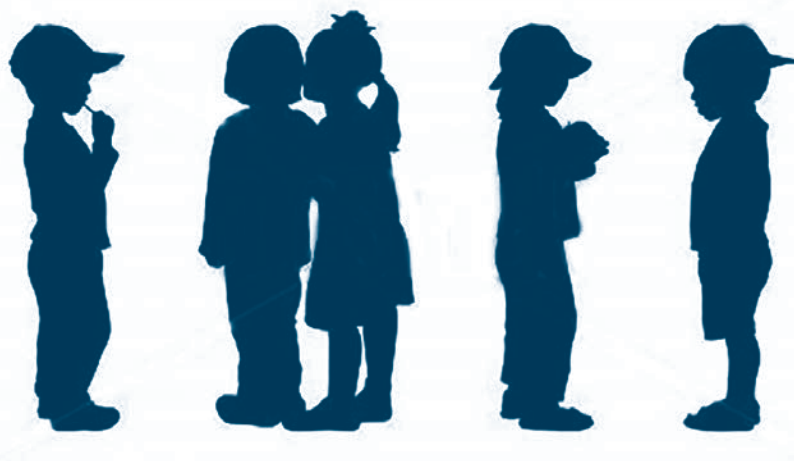
Time: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Location: Education Leadership Center
(behind the Teacher Center)
Fullerton School District
1401 W. Valencia Drive in Fullerton

When: Wednesday, November 30

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Location: Early Childhood Learning Center
1 Smoketree in Irvine



Everyday Wellness

Want to feel better and have more energy to do the things you want to do? Adopting a healthier lifestyle is easier than you might think! Here's a quick wellness tip to make a part of your daily life.



Read Food Labels: A lot of foods are high in fat, sugar and sodium – all of which are best consumed in moderation. When you're at the grocery store, read and compare the labels on prepared foods and canned goods you're thinking about purchasing. In addition to looking at the calories per serving and other nutritional information, be sure to check the serving size. Some food makers present nutritional information for a much smaller serving than the average person would likely consume. For example, a single can of soup may actually have two servings, and a single package of microwave popcorn may contain two and a half servings. That means if you eat the whole thing, you could be getting a lot more calories than you think.

RCOC Launches Community Outreach Effort

Today in California, when new parents learn their child has a developmental disability, it's often also their first introduction to the Regional Center and the Lanterman Act promise of community-based services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. Our state's commitment to lifelong services and supports, helping each person with developmental disabilities realize his or her full potential, is unique. It's a very special feature of life in California, and a system upon which thousands of individuals and families rely.

It can be a different story, though, for those who come here from other parts of the United States and especially from other countries where developmental services are much more limited. These families may arrive in California with no knowledge of the community care system. That can hinder young children receiving services that may reduce their developmental delays or disabilities, and prevent adults with special needs from receiving all of the help they need to live as independently as possible. When there is a language barrier, the challenges may be magnified.

To help bridge that gap and ensure that everyone who is eligible for Regional Center services gets their needs met, RCOC has launched a new community outreach effort that builds on the Center's long-time outreach to local healthcare providers and other social service agencies. The new outreach effort is being paid for with funds earmarked for this purpose by the California Legislature, in response to statewide concerns about disparities in the provision of services to underserved populations.

RCOC's Board of Directors – which represents the diverse population of Orange County – is providing input and cultural expertise regarding the area's Asian and Hispanic communities. RCOC staff members are also collaborating with a broad cross-section of community leaders, including Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do, members of Orange County-based ethnic-focused business groups, faith-based organizations, and others to gain their insights on how to better reach and serve individuals and families in their communities.

When there is a language barrier, the challenges may be magnified.

Recognizing that families of those already being served by RCOC may also have excellent ideas, RCOC is organizing a series of community input meetings for parents and others in the community. These meetings are aimed at gaining deeper insights about the best ways to increase awareness about RCOC services among those in underserved communities, and better understanding the barriers that may cause some families and adults with developmental disabilities to avoid seeking RCOC's help.

Details about upcoming community input meetings will be shared on our website and in emails and calls from service coordinators. Parents are encouraged to attend. Translation services and refreshments will be provided to make it easier for more people to participate.

Dan Cardenas (continued from page 1)

some benefits, including the fact that their home has space for his pet tortoises. When he moves out, he also thinks his parents will miss him and the help he provides with work around the house.

Cristina Mercado, an RCOC Training and Organizational Specialist who was Dan's service coordinator before being promoted to her current position, indicated that this appreciation for family is common in many Hispanic families.

“He has confidence because people have believed in him.”

“In our community, it's not unusual for families to live in multigenerational households,” she said, noting that when a son or daughter has a disability the concern for their well-being is often magnified. She is, however, confident that Dan will be very successful in an independent living or supported living situation, and considers him a role model for other young adults with developmental disabilities.

“Daniel has a really positive attitude,” she said. “He's really good at advocating for himself, and challenging himself in the right way.”

By way of example, Cristina noted that Dan wasn't happy at the job he had before his position at the University. He had been working in a job that was a longer commute from his home, and where he didn't have as much opportunity for social



Dan had a great time on a cruise he took with the YMCA's New Horizons program.

interaction with coworkers and others. However, instead of simply quitting, he kept working at that job until he found the new one he has today.

“He told me ‘I don't want to be a quitter’ and I respect that about Daniel,” she said. “In general, the job market is not great for anybody right now, so for him to acknowledge that he may need to be patient while he waits for the right opportunity to come along tells me a lot about his character.”

She also commented on the maturity and patience Dan's shown with the long time he's been on HUD voucher waiting lists.

“He's not let it [the wait list delay] bring him down,” she said, noting that he has such a positive outlook

that he's just determined to be happy while he's waiting for his name to come up for a voucher.

“If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything!”

Both Cristina and Dan attribute much of his success to the supportive family environment his parents provided for him and his older brother, who also lives in the area.

“He has confidence because people have believed in him,” she concluded.

In fact, when asked about his personal motto, Daniel said “If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything!” he said.

Dialogue Newsletter  

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Regional Center of Orange County Locations

Santa Ana Office

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

Cypress Office

10803 Hope Street, Suite A
24-hr Phone: (714) 796-2900

**Camp TLC:
Teaching Loving Care**

Nearly 230 parents, children and RCOC staff volunteers gathered at the Irvine Ranch Outdoor Education Center to enjoy a weekend of workshops, networking and fun at the Family Support Network’s 23rd Annual TLC Conference: Teaching Loving Care, May 13-15. Called “Camp TLC” by many, the event provides a safe and supportive setting for parents to learn from special needs experts and get to know one another, while their children (with and without disabilities) participate in a host of summer camp activities. This year, activities included swimming, zip-lining, arts and crafts, and a climbing wall. A video with highlights of the event is on the Family Support Network’s website (www.familysupportnetworkca.org/camptlc.html).



Zip-lining was among the many activities children enjoyed at this year’s Camp TLC.

A video with highlights of the event is on the Family Support Network’s website