

In the Spotlight

Adam Reddel

“I am Adam. I have autism; autism doesn’t have me.”

Those are the words of Adam Reddel, a 38-year-old man with autism who has been served by Regional Center of Orange County since being diagnosed at the age of 12. And, they reflect the wisdom and determination of someone who has persevered through enormous challenges to achieve a good and full life in the community.

“I am Adam. I have autism; autism doesn’t have me.”

His parents, Jeanne and Larry Reddel, fondly describe Adam as “the kid who never shut up.” At that time, autism was not as well-understood as it is today and Adam was bounced from classroom to classroom and from school to school, before he was eventually seen by a UCLA behaviorist who recognized that he was on the autism spectrum and connected the family with RCOC.

An extremely intelligent child, Adam struggled with social norms. And while receiving the autism diagnosis led to lots of help, his parents were



Adam (front) with (L-R) his uncle David Caffrey, now-deceased grandmother Vi Caffrey, and parents Jeanne and Larry Reddel.

still frustrated at the school district’s inability to provide an appropriate education. At that time, special education was not as personalized as it is today. Children with many types of disabilities were simply grouped together, even though their needs might be very different. Schools were also not as focused on helping typical children to understand and accept others with special needs.

During his sophomore year in high school, Adam entered a deep depression, brought on by difficulties at school, especially taunting and bullying by other students. They would, for example, walk by him in the hallways and deliberately bump into him to knock things out of his hands.

“I was suicidal,” he said, noting that since the school district was not able

to meet his needs, it paid for him to attend Devereux, a school in Santa Barbara specializing in autism. Though it was difficult for him and his parents to be apart, the five to six years he spent at Devereux helped him to let go of his anger and become a more positive and independent person.

During his sophomore year in high school, Adam entered a deep depression, brought on by difficulties at school.

“Being kind is easier, and it’s easier for me to let go now,” he said. “It’s work to be mad!”

See **Adam Reddel** 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 Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Board Meetings

Nov. 7 • Jan. 9 • March 5
May 7 • June 4

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

RCOC Administration

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Self Determination Program Update

California continues to make progress in rolling out its Self-Determination Program (SDP), organizing trainings, creating materials, and putting in place the guidelines under which the Program will operate.



Different FMS companies provide differing levels of service.

Among the key program components are Financial Management Services (FMS) – the people and companies approved to help SDP participants with things like paying the invoices of those they contract with to provide services, as well as tracking and monitoring the budget that individuals are allocated to purchase the services and supports in their IPP. Different FMS companies provide differing levels of service, but most also are able to handle things like issuing and filing IRS-mandated forms such as the 1099s that are required for independent contractors and maintaining state-required documentation.

In September, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) posted on its website a list of FMS vendors serving the various regional centers statewide. Six have been approved to serve SDP participants in RCOC's service area.

In Orange County, a number of those who had originally registered for the SDP and been selected by DDS to participate in the pilot have opted out of the program. If you are interested in being considered for one of these openings, you can get more information and submit your name directly to DDS at www.dds.ca.gov/SDP. Information is also available on RCOC's website.

In September, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) posted on its website a list of FMS vendors serving the various regional centers.

If you have questions about the process, feel free to contact RCOC's Cathy Furukawa at cfurukawa@rcocdd.com or (714) 796-5181. For the latest program information, visit the DDS website at www.dds.ca.gov/SDP.

Engage with RCOC on Social Media

RCOC has official pages on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. When you follow us, you'll have access to timely information and news, as well as events and activities of interest to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Executive Director's Report

There's a Place for Everyone in the Community

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

In November, we expect the last few Fairview Developmental Center residents will transition out of that institution to their homes in the community. This marks an exciting milestone for all of us to celebrate!

Even those with the most severe disabilities can rely on their local regional center and local service providers to help them create a meaningful life in the community.

Back in 1969, when the Lanterman Act created California's regional center system of community care, there were very few resources to support parents of children with special needs who wanted to raise their children at home. And, for adults with developmental disabilities – especially those with severe challenges or medical issues – there were virtually no alternatives to life in an institution.

People with autism, like Adam Reddel who is profiled in our cover story, were not even covered by the original Lanterman Act. Back then, at a time

when autism was poorly understood, they would likely have fallen through the cracks or perhaps been



misdiagnosed with a mental illness. Now, even those with the most severe disabilities can rely on their local regional center and local service providers

to help them create a meaningful life in the community.

Half a century after it was passed, the Lanterman Act remains unique in the nation. A 1985 California State Supreme Court decision affirmed the Lanterman guarantee of services. I was just beginning my career back then, interning and working on my degree in social work, but I remember how everyone in the community celebrated that decision!

However, with inclusion policies now the norm in public schools and many of the pioneering parents and legislators from both sides of the aisle who created our system beginning to pass away, there is a risk of taking our community care system for granted.

The Lanterman Act remains unique in the nation.

That's why I think it's so important to remember that no other state in the nation has made a similar promise of community-based services and supports for people

with developmental disabilities and their families. It's equally important to remember why the community-based nature of California's regional center system is so fundamental to its effectiveness.

In most states, people with disabilities can only rely on services and supports funded by the federal government. And, unlike our system of private, non-profit regional centers, which are responsive to each area's needs, other states tend to put control of developmental services in the hands of state employees who are less accountable to local communities.

There is a risk of taking our community care system for granted.

Regional centers, especially our own RCOC, have not only demonstrated the ability to innovate and respond to evolving needs, we and our service providers are far more cost-effective at delivering quality services and supports than state-run facilities.

That, I think, is part of the genius of the Lanterman Act. It creates a critical balance – between locally-run regional centers and independent service providers that reflect the individuality and diversity of California, and the State's Department of Developmental Services which is responsible for ensuring that each of the 21 regional centers exercises good stewardship and lives up to its performance contract with the State.

Person to Person

RCOC is Here for All People

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair & Jess Corey, RCOC Peer Advocate

We have used this column to share some great things we're seeing happen for people with developmental disabilities as RCOC has embraced person-centered thinking.

But what about situations that can be difficult or challenging?

Many of us are considered "vulnerable" under the law. In the past, that might have been an excuse for people who thought they knew better than us to treat us like a commodity. We know what it's like to be ignored, forgotten about, bullied, and to have things assumed about us.

For Jess, that's what it felt like when he was entering his teen

years and it seemed that no one understood him. Sylvia's



Sylvia Delgado



Jess Corey

experience as a young adult having difficulties is even more intense.

When she was just 18 and still in high school, Sylvia and her mother had a miscommunication and hurt each other. The police got involved and the two of them didn't speak to

each other for days. When her mother then told her that she couldn't live at home anymore and had to go to Orangewood (a shelter for children), Sylvia turned to her RCOC Service Coordinator – crying as she told him what had happened.

He helped her to find a high school friend whose family was willing to take her in until they could find a permanent place

for her to live. Sylvia didn't want to live in a group home, so her Service Coordinator helped her get on the waiting list for a federal (HUD) housing voucher that would enable her to live on her own. She ended up living with her friend's family for three and a half years, but is now proud to say that she's been living independently for 17 years!

That situation took place long before person-centered thinking, but it shows how important RCOC support can be, especially in crisis situations.

We know it can be tough out there in the real world, especially when you're trying to do things for yourself. Difficult situations can happen in anyone's life, and at times you may think you aren't being heard, but you really are. It might take some time, but in the long run, you can always count on the Regional Center to be there for you.

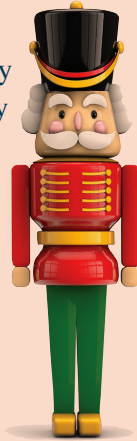
Everyday Wellness Tip: Try Different Foods

Whether it's a healthy fruit and protein smoothie or a burger and fries, we all have our favorite foods, so it's easy to get into a rut and eat the same things day after day. However, an important part of good nutrition is eating a variety of foods, so you get all the vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other nutrients your body needs to function at its best.

So, next time you're at the grocery store, consider trying a new fruit or vegetable. And, when you're eating out and tempted to order your regular burger, maybe try the chicken sandwich instead. It's good for your body, and you may just discover some new favorites!

Holidays at the Barclay!

UC Irvine's Barclay Theatre will host several RCOC day programs at a very special Holiday Open House. A limited number of tickets may also be available to families, so look for an email from Comfort Connection with registration information for the Tues., Dec. 17 event. The event will feature a relaxed performance of holiday songs by a local choral group. The theatre lobby will be lavishly decorated for the season with a Nutcracker theme, and there will be an opportunity to explore the theatre and take a look at the Nutcracker stage set.



Introduction to Person-Centered Thinking

Learn the basics of person-centered thinking and how it can empower family members and others in a person's circle of support to be more effective advocates for their loved ones. These free workshops take place at RCOC's Santa Ana office at 1525 N. Tustin Avenue. Free parking is available in the structure across the driveway. Please RSVP to Patricia Garcia at pgarcia@rcocdd.com. **NOTE: We are not able to provide child care, so please do not bring children to the workshops.**

Families of Children Age 3-15 – Thursday, Feb. 20, 6-9:30 p.m.

Families of Those Age 16 and Older – Thursday, Feb. 27, 6-9:30 p.m.

Moving On At 3...Transition



Specifically for parents of children 24 to 36 months, this workshop helps prepare families for the changes that take place when the child turns three years old and Early Start services end. It covers the differences between Early Start and the school-based education services children with special needs receive from public school districts from age three through age 22. Please RSVP to Patricia Garcia at pgarcia@rcocdd.com. **NOTE: Child care is not provided, so please do not bring children to the workshop.**

Thursday, Jan. 30 – 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Brea Olinda Unified School District
Second level of Brea Civic & Cultural Center
1 Civic Center Circle in Brea

Safety Stu's Corner

Holiday Safety Tips

The holidays are filled with good cheer, kindness, and good will. Am I forgetting something? Oh yes, and people trying to take things from you! I know



Stuart Haskin

I sound bah hum bug, but remember that when there is good cheer there is also bad, so here are some tips for a safe holiday.

Shopping Malls. Look for a well-lit parking space and use the mall's escort service when you leave. Better yet, shop with a friend and make a deal to keep an eye on each other's wallets, purses, credit cards and bags. Sometimes we get so involved in finding that perfect gift, we forget our stuff.

Lock Up Valuables. If you're driving, be sure to lock valuables in the trunk or out of sight, so you don't tempt someone to break in.

Cell Phone. Have your phone charged and ready to rock, with numbers for local police departments preprogrammed. If you have to call 911, remember the first thing to tell the operator is your location, street and city, in case the call gets dropped.

Home Safety. If you're leaving town, ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house and stop mail and newspaper delivery so you don't tip off thieves that you're gone.

Holiday Donations. There are lots of organizations that do great work, but also lots of scammers this time of year. Never give money over the phone, and remember "cash only" is a big red flag!

RCOC Hosts Sixth Annual Backpack Giveaway

With support from sponsors Premier Healthcare Services, 24Hr HomeCare, and BPSOS which provided free backpacks and school supplies, RCOC hosted two back-to-school events for children with developmental disabilities and their families. The events, on August 17 and August 24, were organized by RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center, which worked with service coordinators to identify children we serve from low-income families. Those families were then contacted by Comfort Connection and invited to participate.

Thank you to the volunteers, including RCOC Board Member Liza Krassner, for helping at the event, to KABC-AM news radio and KNBC-TV for doing stories about the events for their newcasts, and to VietAmerican Weekly magazine and Aliso Laguna News for publishing our back-to-school tips for parents!



(above) RCOC Board Member Liza Krassner (right) with Arlene Narrow and her son Emmitt Schwandt.



(left) Martha Gonzalez, with her daughter Yuridia and son Haron.

CURRENT RCOC STATISTICS

as of 10/23/2019

Number of Employees: 459
Fiscal Year Budget: \$422,937,669
Number of Service Providers: 1,749

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PERSONS SERVED

Males	14,413	64.59%
Females	7,901	35.41%
Children 0 - 2 Years of Age	3,657	16.39%
Children 3 - 17 Years of Age	7,015	31.44%
Adults 18 - 64 Years of Age	11,078	49.65%
Adults 65+ Years of Age	564	2.53%

DIAGNOSES (Children 3+ Years of Age and Adults)

Intellectual Disability	11,918	63.88%
Autism	7,465	40.01%
Epilepsy	2,919	15.65%
Cerebral Palsy	2,621	14.05%
Fifth Category*	1,284	6.88%

*Condition closely related to intellectual disability and requiring similar treatment Note: many individuals have multiple diagnoses, causing the percentages to total greater than 100%

LIVING ARRANGEMENT

In Home with Family	18,011
Supported Living or Independent Living	1,372
Community Care Facilities (group home)	1,712
Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF)	718

22,314

Number of Persons Served
(total caseload)

Adam Reddel (continued from page 1)

Adam appreciates the steadfast support and encouragement from his parents and also credits his long-time RCOC Service Coordinator Joyce Mangel who has a unique bond with Adam. She meets with him at least four times each year or more if he needs the service or desires the connection. She provides stability in his life, and offers guidance as needed.

His supported living service provider No Ordinary Moments (NOM) has been by his side for many years, beginning when Adam was just 12 and NOM founder Lou Pena worked with him as a behavioral interventionist. Adam quickly bonded with Lou, who took him on outings and offered friendship and understanding. Jeanne and Larry appreciated Lou's professional, warm demeanor and the calming influence he had on their son.

Later, when Adam returned home from Devereux at age 22, RCOC suggested No Ordinary Moments help with alternative living arrangements. The



Adam and his long-time RCOC Service Coordinator Joyce Mangel are good friends.

family was thrilled to re-connect with Lou, and grateful to have their son under the “protective umbrella” of both RCOC and NOM.

Now driving and living in an apartment in Costa Mesa, Adam needs only minimal support with things like financial management, help keeping him on track with medical appointments, and periodic visits from NOM.

***In many other ways,
Adam's life now
couldn't be more typical.***

With his doctors' approval, he is completely off all medications – including the Ritalin he previously needed to cope with his autism – though Adam says he does still allow himself what he calls “autism moments” such as watching a top spin on a table.

In many other ways, Adam's life now couldn't be more typical, and encouraging to today's parents of children who have autism. He has a girlfriend who lives in upstate New York, who he's been with for about five years and sees several times a year. He's active in the community, volunteering at Orange Coast College to help seniors who use wheelchairs with aquatic therapy. And, he has had his current job as a security guard for nearly two years, where his role is to deter vandalism, enforce parking rules, and help to ensure a family-appropriate environment at a local park. He got the job entirely on his own, without help from his parents or an employment service provider.



Adam at four years old.

At one time, Adam thought he wanted to work in early childhood education, helping others with developmental disabilities, and he even took several classes toward an Associate's degree at Orange Coast College. Ultimately, though, he decided he was not cut out for that type of work, due to the detailed paperwork requirements.

“It was more than I can realistically handle,” he said. “As a security guard, I only have to write about two reports a week.” He is very happy with his employer, which he said has been immensely supportive and understanding about both his skill set and his autism.

Adam has empowering advice for others who struggle with the challenges he had with anger and negative attitudes that keep them from enjoying a happy life.

“Don't spend energy ruminating on it, and don't let other people decide how you view the world,” he said. “Look at the world your own way.”

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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

You Can Help Brighten the Holidays for Those RCOC Serves

Looking for a fun way to help others during the holidays? We hope you'll consider supporting RCOC's Wish Tree program, which helps brighten the holiday season for more than a thousand individuals served by RCOC.

Through Wish Tree, RCOC Service Coordinators contact low-income individuals and families served by RCOC and identify their holiday gift requests, such as children's toys, clothes, store gift cards and movie tickets. Individual Wish Tree supporters – as well as companies, churches and volunteer organizations – then purchase the requested items, wrap them, and deliver them to



RCOC. Volunteers then make sure the gifts are delivered in time for the holidays.

If you would like to help, but don't have time to purchase and wrap gifts, you 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 Thao Mailloux at (714) 796-5330 or email wishtree2@rcocdd.com.

To be considered as a Wish Tree gift **recipient**, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.



Events and Activities in the Vietnamese Community

Regional Center of Orange County has prepared this insert especially for the individuals and families we serve who are most comfortable communicating in the Vietnamese language. These events, programs and activities are presented in Vietnamese and/or are geared specifically for those in Southern California's Vietnamese community. However, some are not funded or endorsed by RCOC and this information is provided as a courtesy. If you know of other opportunities you would like to share with others in the Vietnamese community, please contact RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Free Health Fair

Vietnamese Community Health at UCLA will host their quarterly health fair that provides community resources and an array of free screenings including bone density, dental, vision, hearing, glucose and cholesterol, hypertension, and developmental screening (for children from 0-5 years old). They also provide a free flu shot, as well as chiropractor and doctor consultations. Call (714) 702-5539 for more information.



Sunday, November 17

10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Delhi Center, 505 E. Central Avenue in Santa Ana



RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Truong (pictured) was recently honored by BPSOS, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of Vietnamese Americans, with a special award recognizing her service to the community in Orange County.

Christmas at the Cathedral

Celebrate the season in English, Vietnamese and Spanish with the choirs of Christ Cathedral. The Diocesan Choir, The Diocesan Children's Choir, and the Christ Cathedral Choirs will usher in the season with splendid carols both new and old. This will be the first Christmas at the Cathedral performance in the new Cathedral building and the hundreds of singers in this choral spectacular will be accompanied by the organ and the Cathedral Orchestra. Get your tickets early as last year's performance was sold out!

To purchase tickets, which range from \$10 to \$75, go to christcathedralmusic.org.

Friday, December 13

7:30 p.m.

Christ Cathedral

12141 Lewis Street

Garden Grove

(continued on back)

Write a Letter to Santa

Children are invited to write a letter to Santa, and receive a personal response! Each year, more than 500 letters are received and answered. To participate, send your letter by **December 13, 2019** to: Santa c/o Westminster Community Services & Recreation Department, 8200 Westminster Blvd., Westminster, CA 92683. Be sure to include a return address!

Winter in the Grove

Join the City of Garden Grove for this holiday event which will include holiday activities for children, including snow slides, tree lighting, and visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Refreshments will be provided and food will also be available for purchase. For more information, call (714) 741-5200.

Saturday, December 7 – 3 to 7:00 p.m.
Village Green Park
12732 Main Street in Garden Grove



The August 17 back-to-school event organized by RCOC and supported by our generous sponsors provided free backpacks and school supplies to several of the Vietnamese families RCOC serves.

Do You Need Respite?

If you have a child with special needs, or care for an adult son or daughter who has developmental disabilities, it is very likely you could benefit from respite care through RCOC.

Respite can provide parents or other caregivers with the occasional relief they need.

Respite can provide parents or other caregivers with the occasional relief they need, when the person's medical, physical or behavioral needs cannot be met by a regular babysitter. Some families use respite to enable out of town travel, while others may use it to cover overtime work or to simply help them handle family obligations – locally or away from home.

This service may be provided by an individual selected by the parents, who has also met certain criteria. Sometimes it is provided through professional respite agencies that have staff trained to work with children or adults with medical needs or challenging behaviors. Importantly, many RCOC respite service providers employ diverse staff members who are sensitive to cultural differences and fluent in many of the languages spoken in Orange County.

Many RCOC respite service providers employ diverse staff members who are sensitive to cultural differences.

In addition to giving parents the opportunity to rejuvenate and deal with every day challenges, respite

can help a child with special needs to develop independence. It can also provide excellent social and emotional benefits to the child, as he or she gets practice interacting with others and accepting direction from a caregiver other than a parent. For these and many other reasons, respite is a key service that can help children, while also strengthening families and marriages.

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If you'd like to learn more about respite, or think you might benefit from these services, be sure to contact your RCOC service coordinator.



Events and Activities in the Hispanic Community

Regional Center of Orange County has prepared this insert especially for the individuals and families we serve who are most comfortable communicating in Spanish. These events, programs and activities are presented in Spanish and/or are geared specifically for those in Southern California's Hispanic community. However, some are not funded or endorsed by RCOC and this information is provided as a courtesy. If you know of other opportunities you would like to share with other Spanish speakers, please contact RCOC's Giulia Rodriguez at (714) 558-5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Success in Special Education Workshop

Presented in Spanish, this workshop is designed to help families become active and knowledgeable IEP team members. With a focus on collaborating effectively with schools, this workshop is interactive and easy-to-understand. Reservations are required and there is a \$20 fee. However, scholarships are available upon request for families in need of financial assistance. For more information and to RSVP, call (949) 267-0400.

Saturday, November 16

8 to 10:00 a.m.

Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders
2500 Red Hill in Santa Ana

Breakfast with Santa for Children with Down Syndrome

If your child has Down syndrome, join us for breakfast, Christmas music, arts and crafts, and an opportunity to take a picture with Santa. Don't forget to bring your camera! Suggested donation per family is \$10. For reservations, call Alicia Sanchez of the Down Syndrome Association (DSAOC) at (714) 540-5794.

Saturday, December 7

9 to 11:00 a.m.

Garden Grove Elks Lodge
11551 Trask Avenue
in Garden Grove



Storytime in Spanish

To help foster the joy

of reading in young children,

the Library offers storytime presentations at the Main Library. A craft activity usually follows after the reading. Suitable for all ages. Please call (714) 647-5258 for specific dates when storytime is scheduled.



Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m.

Santa Ana Public Library

26 Civic Center Plaza in Santa Ana



Several family members of persons served by RCOC participated in a recent Introduction to Person-Centered Thinking workshop. Simultaneous Spanish translation was provided by RCOC to ensure all participants were able to get the most from the workshop and have all of their questions answered. If you're interested in attending an upcoming workshop, please contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.

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City of La Habra 4th Annual Tamale Festival

You're invited to the City of La Habra's 4th annual Tamale Festival, the largest tamale festival in Orange County. Activities will include a tamale contest, dance performances by local studios, and musical performances by Soto and the Mariachi Divas. There will be many tamale vendors, as well as other vendors selling a variety of items, from traditional Mexican arts and crafts to handmade soap, desserts and more. Festival entrance is free.

Sunday, December 1

9 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Euclid Street, between La Habra Blvd. and

E. Bridenbecker Ave., and in Brio and Portola Parks

Winter Fest OC

Part of Orange County becomes a winter wonderland with a large snow play and slide area – including ice tubing down a 150-foot-tall mountain – plus Southern California's largest outdoor ice skating rink, a nightly Christmas tree lighting, more than 20 carnival rides, entertainment and holiday eats. Weekday ticket prices starting at \$12, with weekends and holidays starting at \$14. For more information, visit www.winterfestoc.com.

Dec. 18 through Jan. 5

OC Fair and Event Center

88 Fair Drive in Costa Mesa



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