



Dialogue

Volume 33 No.2
Spring 2019



Spotlight Award Honorees

On March 22, nearly 600 people served by Regional Center of Orange County, their families, service providers and other community members gathered at the Embassy Suites in Garden Grove for the 22nd Annual Spotlight Awards dinner-dance. Created by RCOC to honor individuals and organizations whose efforts enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Orange County, the event was organized by Integrity House, a clubhouse directed by people with disabilities.

This year's event was made extra special as guest emcee Michele Gile, the award-winning Orange County-based reporter for CBS2/KCAL9, announced the honorees who received their awards from RCOC Board Chair Alan Martin and Executive Director Larry Landauer. Contributions by numerous sponsors (listed on page 2) helped to underwrite event costs and keep ticket prices accessible to the people served by RCOC. Here are brief snapshots of the honorees.



L-R: RCOC Executive Director Larry Landauer, Jennifer Bright, CBS2/KCAL9 Reporter Michele Gile, and RCOC Board Chair Alan Martin

Self-Advocate: Jennifer Bright

The Self-Advocate award honors an individual who has a developmental disability and who brings greater public awareness of and recognition to the abilities of all people with developmental disabilities in Orange County. Jennifer Bright uses a motorized wheelchair and has little use of her body with the exception of two fingers, but she has nonetheless earned both a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree and has proven her ability to succeed in the workplace with minimal supported employment help. It wasn't, however, an easy road for her. In addition to overcoming her physical challenges, Jenn had to overcome being told "no" following 78 different job interviews before she found an employer who could see past her disability. Her incredible example of determination and perseverance is an inspiration, and she is regularly asked to share her perspective on employment with others with developmental disabilities and their families.

See **Spotlight Award Honorees**
on page 6.

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 2018-2019 Board Meetings

June 6

The Board of Directors will adopt its FY 2019-2020 meeting schedule in May. Check the Monthly Calendar on the RCOC website for up-to-date information.

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

Larry Landauer, *Executive Director*
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Stacy Wong, *Human Resources Director*
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Jennifer Montañez, *Central Area Manager*
Keli Radford, *West Area Manager*
Arturo Cazares, *Associate Director of Employment*
Jack Stanton, *Associate Director of Housing*
Marta Vasquez, *Associate Director, Finance*

Board Update

Mine Hagen Joins RCOC Board

The RCOC Board of Directors appointed Mine Hagen to serve a one-year term that began in January. The parent of an adult son with autism who is served by RCOC, Mine is a retired engineer who previously worked for Raytheon.

In her personal statement about why she wanted to serve in this volunteer role, Mine noted that she wants to give back to the organization that has provided such invaluable support to her own family over the years.



In addition to excellent organizational skills gained from a long career in corporate management, she brings a deep understanding of the developmental services system and how it affects families, and compassion for others in the special needs community.

Thank You to Our Spotlight Table Sponsors

We want to express our deep appreciation to the generous sponsors who provided the financial support to make this year's Spotlight Awards dinner-dance possible. The individuals and organizations listed below enabled many of the people RCOC serves to attend and helped to keep ticket prices low for others. Thank you, also, to the volunteers and staff at Integrity House, who contributed countless hours organizing the event.

Adult Enrichment Center

Alan and Sandy Martin

California Mentor

Coyne & Associates

Easter Seals of Southern California

Goodwill of Orange County

Independent Options

Integrity Cottages

Mercedes Diaz Homes, Inc.

My Day Counts/Orange County Adult Achievement Center

No Ordinary Moments

Theresa DeBell and Dr. Robert Siegel

Westview Services

Executive Director's Report

Quality Service Providers Deserve Our Support

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

Reading the Spotlight Awards issue of *Dialogue* always makes me proud of our Orange County community. I'm especially inspired by the extraordinary individuals who devote their lives to serving people with developmental disabilities and their families. Our direct care professionals and our service providers are the bedrock of our regional center system of community care. Without them, it would be impossible to keep the Lanterman Act's promise of community-based services and supports.

Though funding has increased, it has not kept up with higher costs of providing quality services and supports.

Unfortunately, though our California economy has rebounded dramatically in the last few years, the State has never fully restored the significant budget cuts imposed on our system during the budget crises of the early 2000s and the Great Recession. Though funding has increased, it has not kept up with higher costs of providing quality services and

supports. New funds allocated to help pay for the recently raised minimum wage were helpful and important, but not sufficient.



In high cost areas like Orange County, increased costs for everything from rent to fuel to insurance, combined with upward

pressure on wages due to increased competition for qualified workers is creating significant challenges for our service providers.

The situation is even more acute in California's highest-cost areas, such as San Francisco. In fact, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) reports that in 2017, there were 14% fewer (43,000 down from 50,000) service providers statewide than there were just five years previously. Meanwhile, the number of people served by our system continues to grow every year. Additionally, the needs of many we serve are more complex as they get older and those who might at an earlier time have lived at a state developmental center are now being served in the community.

Appreciation is not enough to keep a business afloat.

The State Legislature recognized that rates paid to many service providers no longer make sense and commissioned a rate study in 2016.

The full report was issued in March and incorporates thousands of pages of documentation. We are hopeful it will lead to some much-needed modernization, but we also expect it could take some time for both legislators and the community to fully assess the report -- time that many in our community do not have.

That is why RCOC and our fellow regional centers statewide are asking the State for California to approve an eight percent budget increase for regional center services in fiscal year 2019-2020. Though many view that eight percent as a down payment on what should ultimately be a much larger increase, it will go a long way toward shoring up a system that has struggled with underfunding for nearly two decades.

RCOC and our fellow regional centers statewide are asking the State for California to approve an eight percent budget increase for regional center services.

At RCOC, we're pleased to be able to present our annual Spotlight Awards program to honor and show how much we appreciate Orange County's remarkable service providers. However, appreciation is not enough to keep a business afloat and we urge our elected leaders to support a system wide funding increase as we also work together to establish a new, more sensible and sustainable rate structure for the future.

Person to Person

You Can Save for Your Future!

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

Greetings readers! On February 28, more than 240 people attended an RCOC workshop where CalABLE's Deputy Executive Director Carrie Fisher Stone spoke about CalABLE accounts and how we can use them.

Both of us attended the workshop, and Jess also helped organize the event.



Sylvia Delgado



Jess Corey

Sylvia plans to open an ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) account and thinks

they are good way to save up for things you need or want. Both of us think they're a great idea because they allow people who receive public benefits to put up to \$15,000 a year into savings without affecting their benefits. Before, if we had more than \$2,000 saved, we would have to take it out and spend

it, or risk losing public benefits like SSI. Now, if you earn extra money from work or your family gives you some money,

you can put that into an ABLE account.

What would you use ABLE account money to buy?

If you're able to drive, you could use it to buy a car. If you're looking for a job, you could use it for training or to buy a computer. Or, say your equipment needs to be fixed or modified and insurance won't cover the cost – you could pay those costs with ABLE account funds. However a person chooses to their money, we're happy that ABLE savings accounts will allow more people to be more independent!

To learn more, visit www.CalABLE.ca.gov.

Everyday Wellness Tip: Be Active!

If you want to be healthy, one of the most important things you can do is to be physically active. If you're trying to lose weight, exercise can help you burn more calories. Physical activity is also really important for keeping your bones and muscles strong. It's also been shown to help control cholesterol and blood pressure. It's even good for your mental health. Physical activity can help to manage stress, which can put you in a bad mood and also be really hard on your body.

The great news is that even a small amount of physical activity can make a difference. The recommendation for most adults is to get at least 150 minutes of exercise each week. That works out to just over 20 minutes a day, and could include anything from swimming, jogging and chair aerobics, to a brisk walk around your neighborhood.



Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

These workshops are free for parents, and cover 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. To gain the most value from the experience, parents are encouraged to attend all sessions in a series, though toilet training is the focus of the last session. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 8-15 families. Contact your Service Coordinator or Tracy Vaughan at (714) 796-5223 for additional information, and to register.

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

Presented in English by Advanced Behavioral Health

When: Thursday evenings – Aug. 8, Aug. 15, Aug. 22, Aug. 29 and Sept. 5

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A

Presented in Spanish by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – Oct. 8, Oct. 15, Oct. 22, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5

Time: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Location: RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A

Safety Stu's Corner

Hello Safety Friends!

In this issue, we're talking about what to do if you are approached by someone in law enforcement. I speak to students a lot and many of them express fear of law enforcement, so the first thing we need to remember is that police officers and sheriff's deputies are here to help and protect us. In fact, I want you to know that Safety Stu works as a reserve deputy with the Orange County Sheriff's department! You know that I care about your safety, and it's the same for full-time officers and deputies. They want to help people, but we have to remember that their job is a dangerous one, and they must be alert to keep themselves and others safe.



Stuart Haskin



If an officer approaches you, the first thing is to make sure they are who they say they are. You can tell they are real officers if, for example, they are in full uniform. They might also have their police car nearby.

It's also important to be polite and stay calm – the officer may just want to say “hi” to you! If he or she asks you questions, keep

your hands out in front of you so the officer feels safe. If you put your hands in your pockets or behind you, the officer may think you have a weapon.

Next, you can tell the officer you have an emergency identification card from Regional Center of Orange County and that it has information about people they can call. Remember, though, not to just reach for the card. Be sure to first ask the officer if it would be okay to get it from your pocket, wallet or purse.

Get Safe and RCOC always want to make sure you are safe and that if something happens to you, that you are heard. So, if you have lost your emergency identification card, be sure to ask your RCOC Service Coordinator for a new one.

Have a SAFE DAY!

Lifetime Achievement: Theresa DeBell



L-R: Theresa DeBell with RCOCC Executive Director Larry Landauer

Theresa DeBell's advocacy on behalf of people with developmental disabilities started as the crusade of a sibling, providing another voice for her brother who

lived at Lanterman Developmental Center. While leading CASHPCR and serving on the Board of Fairview Family and Friends (both of which were formed to support and advocate for residents of California's developmental centers), she helped other family members become even stronger advocates. Though her brother passed away some time ago, she continues to travel regularly to Sacramento to advocate for the rights of those with disabilities. She also served as the Governor's Advisory Chairperson on Developmental Center Transition for many years, served on the California Health and Human Services Agency's Developmental Center Task Force, and is currently on the California Department of Developmental Services Developmental Services Task Force.

Healthcare Professional: Marc Lerner, M.D.

Dr. Marc Lerner, the Healthcare Professional award recipient, has been a leader in the field of autism and other developmental disorders for more than 30 years. A tireless advocate for children and their families at the county, state, and national



Marc Lerner, M.D.

level, he has worked directly with thousands of Orange County children while also working to improve systems of care for children with special needs. Passionate about early detection to enable children to get the care they need as soon as possible, he has also organized and participated in numerous developmental screenings. In 2009, he received the California Pediatrician Advocate of the Year Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics-California.

Employer: White Bottle

Arash Anvaripour and Dante Torres, co-owners of an Irvine-based vitamin and supplement company called White Bottle, were honored with the Employer Award for their proactive efforts to



L-R: RCOCC Board Chair Alan Martin with Dante Torres

create an inclusive environment for their employees with developmental disabilities. At Dante and Arash's company, several adults RCOCC serves work alongside those without disabilities on a variety of important tasks, including packaging and shipping orders.

Direct Support Professional: Kelly Williams

Employed for more than 10 years by Creative Support, which provides independent living services (ILS), Kelly Williams works directly with adults with developmental

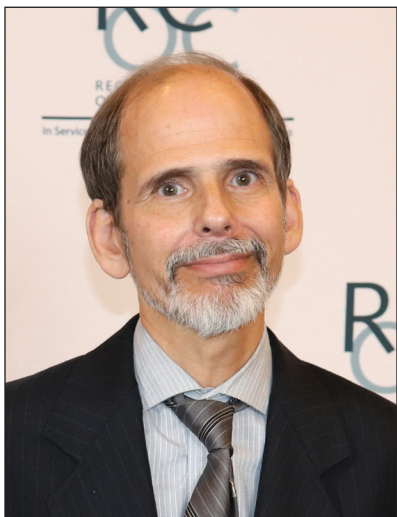


Kelly Williams

disabilities and demonstrates a strong passion for enhancing their lives. Driven by a desire to ensure that each person she serves has the opportunity to live the type of life they want, she respects the wishes of those she serves, while also guiding them through challenging situations. Known as a direct support professional who never gives up on people, Kelly strives to help each person she serves to become more self-reliant, independent, and self-confident.

RCOC Achievement: Peter Himber, M.D.

A pediatric neurologist who became RCOC's Medical Director in 2000, Dr. Peter Himber leads a multidisciplinary team that determines eligibility for RCOC services, provides guidance on medical issues to RCOC staff, interacts with other medical professionals on behalf of the people RCOC serves, and performs a multitude of other duties to ensure the healthcare needs of people with developmental disabilities are met. Among his most important duties is representing the interests of individuals RCOC serves who have no family members available to provide consent for needed medical procedures.



Peter Himber, M.D.

Family Member: Joseph Preston

The parent of an adult son and adult daughter who both resided at Fairview Developmental Center until recently transitioning to homes in the community, Joseph Preston has been a leader with the Fairview Family and Friends organization, where he has helped countless other parents understand the developmental services system so they can better advocate for their loved ones. He also served on



L-R: Larry Landauer, Joseph Preston and Alan Martin

RCOC's Board of Directors in the 1990s, where he was a strong voice for the well-being of all people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Service Provider: No Ordinary Moments

For more than four decades, Lou Pena and his team at No Ordinary Moments have successfully worked with people whose severe medical and behavioral challenges make them difficult to serve in the community. He and his dedicated staff provide both supported living services and crisis intervention services. At all hours and any day of the week, they step up at a moment's notice to bring stability to volatile situations, support families, and enable individuals to live safely and thrive in the community. Known for his unmatched experience, calm demeanor and quiet strength, Lou is one of California's most skilled and caring crisis experts.



Lou Pena

Spotlight Award Honorees (continued on back)



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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

Spotlight Award Honorees (continued from page 7)

Community Partner: Santiago Canyon College

Chrissy Gascon, Executive Director of Santiago Canyon College's Adult Education Program accepted the Community Partner award. Under Gascon's leadership, SCC has developed a variety of excellent new programs and resources to support adults with developmental disabilities seeking job skills to prepare them for successful employment. The college has also developed online courses for employers, helping to educate them about hiring and working with individuals with disabilities.

L-R: Chrissy Gascon, Executive Director of Santiago Canyon College's Adult Education program with Angela Guevara, Assistant Professor and Faculty Coordinator of Adults with Disabilities





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 Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

RCOC Service Provider Fair

For the first time, RCOC will host a special service provider fair for Vietnamese speaking families. Come and meet with RCOC service providers that have the capacity to serve Vietnamese-speaking families, and learn more about the programs, services and supports that are available to help your loved one reach his or her full potential. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Tuesday, May 21
6:30-8:30 p.m.
RCOC's Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street

New Parent Orientation for Early Start Families

Your child is receiving services through the Early Start program (birth to 36 months), but do you fully understand what the program offers and how to monitor your child's development? Would you know how to ask for additional services if they're needed? Attend one of our two upcoming orientations to get your questions answered and meet other parents in the Early Start program. These events are offered at no cost and will be provided in Vietnamese. Unfortunately, we cannot provide child care, but feel free to bring your child with you to the orientation. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at (714) 558-5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Wednesday, June 12 from 6:30-8 p.m.
Wednesday, August 28 from 10-11:30 a.m.

RCOC Headquarters in Santa Ana
1525 N Tustin Avenue

Free parking is available in the parking structure across the driveway.



Last year, more than 25,000 people attended the Fountain Valley SummerFest, enjoying the entertainment, food, carnival rides, and resources. This year's event is sure to be just as fun!

For more information, call (714) 839-8611 or email FVRecreation@FountainValley.org or visit the website at www.fvsummerfest.com.

June 20-23

Fountain Valley Sport Park
16400 Brookhurst Street in
Fountain Valley

(continued on back)

Transition Planning ... Creating a Life Full of Possibilities

This transition workshop provides a welcoming environment for family members, individuals with disabilities, and others to learn about transition-related topics in a small group setting. There will be seven rooms, each covering a different topic, where groups of 25 or so people will be able to share concerns and have their questions answered by local transition experts. Each workshop participant will have the opportunity to explore four of the following transition topics:

- Employment programs to promote competitive integrated employment
- Pre-employment transition services to support development of job skills
- Family Resource Center and a family's role in promoting self-sufficiency and independence
- Person Centered Planning and developing an individualized plan to improve quality of life
- Post-secondary education and training to support jobs, career development and independence

- Preparing for life after high school, with a focus on education, employment and independent living
- Benefits planning, including Work Incentives Planning & Assistance (WIPA) and Cal ABE (Achieving a Better Life Experience)

The event will be facilitated by Linda O'Neal, M.A., RCOC Consultant for Adult Transition Programming, and RCOC's Arturo Cazares and Anita Kwon.

Please RSVP to Kaitlynn Yen Truong at ktruong@rcocdd.com or (714) 558-5405.

Thursday, May 30
6:30-8:30 p.m.

RCOC Headquarters in Santa Ana
1525 N Tustin Avenue

Free parking is available in the parking structure across the driveway.

How to Access Behavior Services

If a person who receives RCOC services has challenging behaviors that are affecting his or her ability to learn, hold a job, or interact with others, that person may be eligible to receive behavior services. For people with developmental disabilities, especially those on the autism spectrum, behavior services often involve a well-regarded type of therapy called Applied Behavior Analysis, or ABA.

ABA employs a variety of techniques, such as positive reinforcement, to encourage appropriate behaviors

and discourage behaviors that can make it difficult for a person to learn, cope, and interact with others. Often, parents and other family members also receive training from ABA professionals so they can reinforce the therapy in their home.

Several years ago, the State of California mandated that private health insurance and Medi-Cal cover behavior services such as ABA.

Several years ago, the State of California mandated that private health insurance and Medi-Cal cover behavior services such as ABA, so

RCOC generally does not authorize or pay for these services any longer. However, a family's RCOC Service Coordinator can be very useful in helping parents to understand behavior services, questions to ask prospective service providers, and how to ensure that their insurance company or Medi-Cal (which operates as Cal-Optima in Orange County) covers the cost. If an insurance company refuses to cover behavior services, RCOC Service Coordinators can also help families to understand and pursue the appeals process.

If you'd like to learn more about behavior 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.

Family Autism Nights at Pretend City

These evening events provide an opportunity for children and their parents/siblings/caretakers to have some fun in an autism-friendly environment with other families. Many community partners who specialize in supporting children on the autism spectrum will be on-hand to enrich your family's play experience with welcoming smiles and practical support. These events are free, but registration is required. Call (949) 428-3900 or visit www.pretendcity.org/autism to reserve your space and receive a confirmation number.

Mondays, June 24, July 29,
Aug. 26, Sept. 30, Oct. 28
5 – 7:30 p.m.

Pretend City
29 Hubble in Irvine

Yoga and Storytime

This free, eight-week yoga program is for caregivers and children ages three to five years old. Participants will read and learn about Nothando's Journey while practicing yoga poses that Nothando herself learns from animals along her adventure. For more information and to reserve your space, call the Minnie Street Family Resource Center at (714) 972-5775.

Tuesdays from 10 – 11:30 a.m.

May 7, May 14, May 21, May 28, June 4,
June 11, June 18 and June 25

Minnie Street Family Resource Center
Kennedy Elementary School
1300 E. McFadden Avenue,
Room 13 in Santa Ana



(continued on back)

Baby Development: Let's Get Moving

In late February, RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center hosted a fun and informative workshop on baby development. Attended by 14 young mothers and their infants, the interactive session included translation for more than half of the participants and focused on simple daily activities that can support a baby's growth and development. For information about future workshops at Comfort Connection, contact RCOC's Giulia Rodriguez at (714) 558-5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Aurora Barrera with
seven-month-old
Katy Juarez.



Cecilia Bustamante with
seven-month-old Noah
Romero.

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