

DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

VOLUME 36 NO.3 • FALL 2022



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Angel Romero

WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT IN BOWLING A “PERFECT” GAME IS A SCORE OF 300, most of us would probably be pretty happy to even get close to a score of 100. But not Angel Romero. An avid bowler, who plays almost every day, his average score is 190 which makes him a lot more skilled than the average player and a valuable member of his local bowling league.

Angel started bowling at the age of 18 through a program with Project Independence.

In fact, since 2013 (except for last year, due to COVID) he's joined his bowling friends for an annual two-day road trip to bowl together in Las Vegas. A 40-year-old who has a mild intellectual disability, Angel started bowling at the age of 18 through a program with Project Independence, the service provider that now works with him on Independent Living Services (ILS) and job coaching. Over the years, he's earned several bowling trophies and now has his own locker at his local bowling alley, where he keeps his bowling ball, shoes and shirt.

While bowling is his main recreational activity, his participation with Project Independence as a teen exposed him to lots of different activities, including downhill skiing, volleyball, soccer and basketball. In 1996, he was the youngest Special Olympics athlete in his skiing events.



Angel (left) and his RCOC Service Coordinator Jesus Vasquez.

He also likes to play baseball, video games and watch action movies like the Fast & Furious series. He's such a fan, he owns two cases filled with his favorite DVDs.

Angel is an outstanding role model for other adults who want to live independently.

According to his RCOC Service Coordinator Jesus Vazquez and others, Angel is an

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DIALOGUE

This newsletter can also be read online at RCOC's website: www.rcocdd.com.



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Please check the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website for the most up-to-date information regarding Board meeting dates and format.

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BOARD UPDATE

Two New Members Join RCOC Board of Directors

RCOC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPOINTED Yvonne Kluttz to serve a one-year term beginning July 1, 2022 while Rick Perez was chosen by RCOC's Vendor Advisory Committee to serve as the VAC representative on the Board, from June 2 through May 31, 2023. Both are unpaid volunteer positions.

She was honored with RCOC's Spotlight Award in the Self-Advocate category in 2013.

Yvonne, who has epilepsy and an intellectual disability, also serves on RCOC's Peer Advisory Committee, the Consumer Advisory Committee of California's Department of Developmental Services, and is a past member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (formerly known as Area Board XI). She was honored with RCOC's Spotlight Award in the Self-Advocate category in 2013 for her dedication to ensuring a voice for people with developmental disabilities and for advocating for others who may not be able to speak for themselves.



He has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities for over 16 years.



Rick is President and Program Director of Abilities Unlimited, a day program for adults that has offices in Lake Forest and Fountain Valley. He has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities for over 16 years and received his Master's degree in Counseling with an emphasis in Applied

Behavior Analysis from California State University, Los Angeles. He is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

How RCOC Uses Strategic Planning to Meet Community Needs

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



THE INDEPENDENT LIVING SUCCESS OF ANGEL ROMERO

who is profiled in our cover story, shows how essential strategic, long-term planning is for each individual RCOC serves. That's because most of the adults we serve need to

secure a housing subsidy (HUD voucher) to live on their own. That process can take 5-7 years, due to wait lists.

Similar long-term planning also drives RCOC's broader efforts to ensure we are prepared to meet our community's evolving needs and expectations. Central to this are the strategic goals RCOC's volunteer Board of Directors has created in three key areas: employment, housing, and health/wellness.

With these strategic goals in mind, RCOC's Service Coordinators are better equipped to ask thoughtful questions during planning meetings.

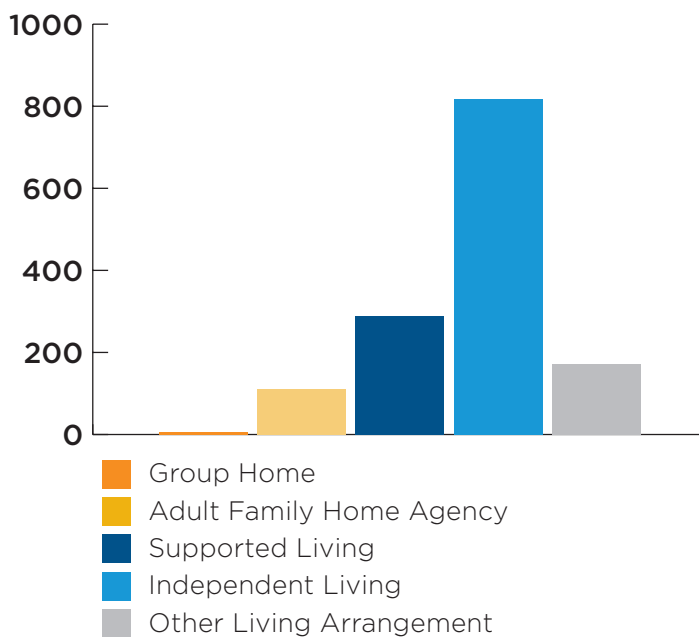
With these strategic goals in mind, RCOC's Service Coordinators are better equipped to ask thoughtful questions during planning meetings. These questions help to uncover current, unmet needs as well as future dreams – such as a desire to change employment – that can require complex planning. The result is truly person-centered IPPs (Individual Program Plans) and IFSPs (Individual Family Service Plans) as well as data the Regional Center uses to more efficiently and effectively allocate our limited operational resources.

In the area of housing, for example, our data show that while 80 percent of the more than 23,000 individuals RCOC serves live in the family home, nearly 1,200 are considering moving

out. Of these, more than 400 are considering a move in 3-5 years, 300 envision a move in 6-10 years, and the overwhelming majority favor a supported living or independent living arrangement.

In addition to guiding individual planning team decisions, this data and deeper understanding has led RCOC to enhance partnerships and advocacy for increasing the supply of safe, appropriate, and affordable housing in Orange County.

What type(s) of living arrangement(s) are you interested in?



With this and other strategic goals, our Regional Center is accountable to our Board, and by extension to the individuals and families served in the community, for making meaningful, progress. If you're interested in learning more, we provide updates at every Board meeting, all of which are open to the public and can be attended via Zoom.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

Plan to Attend Irvine Barclay Theatre's Sensory-Friendly Holiday Performance

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair



I'M EXCITED TO SHARE

that Irvine Barclay Theatre will again be presenting a sensory-friendly holiday performance for individuals and families served by RCOC! Scheduled for the afternoon on Friday, December 9, it will feature

holiday carols and parts of The Nutcracker ballet.

It's great the Barclay is doing this, because it gives families a fun and different activity to enjoy together during the holidays. I've seen ballet on TV and in person and I think it's so much better in person. Often, though, live performances aren't accessible to families because regular ticket prices can be expensive, so we appreciate the Barclay's generosity!

One of my best friends has autism, and I'm planning to bring him and another friend to the performance. For my friend with autism,



Photo courtesy of Irvine Barclay Theatre

knowing what to expect is important, so I'll be sure to let him know we won't be clapping like we might at a typical performance. RCOC has worked with the Barclay to train Theatre employees on how to ensure guests with disabilities have a good experience.

RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center will be sending an informational email with details about how to get tickets, so watch your email for updates. See you there!

RCOC Hosts School Backpack Giveaway

With support from sponsor Aveanna Healthcare, RCOC hosted a backpack giveaway for students with developmental disabilities on July 30. The event was 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 for helping at the event!





EVERYDAY WELLNESS: Tips for Enjoyable Holiday Gatherings

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, MANY FAMILIES ADOPTED NEW TRADITIONS as fewer people hosted typical holiday gatherings. As more of us are now looking to visit relatives and invite others into our homes, these new situations can be particularly challenging for those with developmental disabilities. Here are a few tips for more joyful holidays:

- **Prepare.** Before welcoming guests or visiting another's home, be sure to walk your child through what to expect. For example, share photos of unfamiliar guests and remind the person about behaviors that might be okay at home, but not acceptable elsewhere. Also prep those you'll be visiting, to avoid hurt feelings or awkwardness if your child refuses a hug or otherwise behaves differently.
- **Maintain Normal Routines.** Even while school is out of session, keep to the family's normal routines as much as possible. And, while holiday festivities will likely include some special meals, try to minimize disruptions by bringing some favorite foods as well as toys or other items that will help calm your child.
- **Make a Safe Space.** Many individuals with sensory issues will benefit from having a "safe zone" where they can retreat to be alone or simply away from the strong smells, bright lights and loud noises of big gatherings.
- **Choose Carefully.** To reduce individual and family stress, consider declining some invitations so you aren't overloaded and will have energy for the activities that matter most.

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

This free workshop is offered via Zoom and covers basic principles of positive behavior management, with a practical focus on helping parents 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 the series. Toilet training is the focus of the last session. Advance registration is required. Contact your Service Coordinator or Tracy Vaughan at 714.796.5223 or tvaughan@rcocdd.com for additional information, and to register.

Presented in English by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – January 10, January 17, January 24, January 31 and February 7

Time: 5:30-8:30 p.m.



ABC's of Special Education

How and When to Request an IEP Meeting

DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED BY PUBLIC SCHOOLS in partnership with the parents of a child receiving special education, an IEP (Individualized Education Program) spells out the educational goals, and the specific strategies and services the school will be providing to meet the child's educational needs.

Many parents are aware that schools are required to revisit each child's IEP at least annually. However, any time a parent has concerns about their child's education – whether that relates to school progress, ongoing communication, placement or something else – they can request an IEP meeting with their school district.

Because the IEP is a legal document and the IEP meeting is a legal process, it's important for parents to know the proper procedures to follow to ensure their concerns are addressed.

- You must submit your IEP meeting request in writing (ideally via email) to your school's principal or special education administrator.
- Begin with the details of your child's current placement, including name, age, grade level, school, and primary or homeroom teacher.
- Simply and respectfully share the specific concerns that prompted you to request an IEP meeting, describing the particular behaviors or conditions you think are hindering your child's education.
- If there are new or different assessments you think are important to address your concerns, specify those in your letter. Also list any questions you have about the process for those assessments, such as who will perform

them and where they will take place.

- Ask that the results of any assessment be provided to you at least five days in advance of the meeting so you can fully participate in the process.
- If your concern relates to an injury, include dates and photos of the injury.
- Provide your contact information, including email address and mailing address, as well as work, home and mobile phone numbers.
- Include "cc" to others applicable to your child's education, so each person knows they have been officially requested to provide assistance. This may include your child's primary teacher, special education director and school psychologist, as well as any private therapists or child care providers, for example.
- The district has 30 days from receiving your written request to schedule the requested IEP meeting, so follow up by phone if you have not received a response within 7-10 days.

RCOC has an Educational Services Resource Group that parents can consult regarding concerns they have about their child's education. To schedule a phone or videoconference consultation with the bilingual Resource Group leader or to get a sample IEP request letter, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Angel Romero, cont.

outstanding role model for other adults who want to live independently in the community.

Angel is now very self-sufficient and only sees his ILS worker every two weeks or so.

Though he comes from a big family, with many brothers and sisters, when he was a young adult, he decided he wanted more personal space and to have more freedom to do what he wants. For the past 12 years or so, he's lived on his own in a studio apartment at Anaheim's Integrity Cottages which he's able to afford with a HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) voucher that covers part of his rent.

Though he has received ILS support since he turned 18, Angel is now very self-sufficient and only sees his ILS worker every two weeks or so for help with his banking. He does all his own shopping, meal preparation and laundry and keeps his apartment tidy and clean. He is also very familiar with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) bus schedule and has a bus pass funded by RCOC that he uses to get back and forth to work, family gatherings, and to other places in the community.

Working three days a week, he needs only minimal support from his Project Independence job coach.

Angel is very independent at his job, having worked at an Anaheim Sonic Drive-In restaurant since 2010. Originally hired as a janitor to clean tables and empty trash, he was promoted after just a year and a half to work the restaurant's drink station. He was given training on how to make shakes, sundaes and other items and is now an expert in those tasks.

Working three days a week, he needs only minimal support from his Project Independence



Angel with one of his recent first place bowling trophies.

job coach who checks in with him periodically to, for example, monitor his weekly hours worked. He likes his job and offers this advice for others who aspire to successful employment: "Work hard and listen to your supervisors."

Asked about the secret of his successful, independent life, Angel acknowledged that it's important to have support.

"It can be hard to do some things on your own," he said. "But just stay calm and go one step at a time."



REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY

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DIALOGUE NEWSLETTER



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Regional Center of Orange County Locations

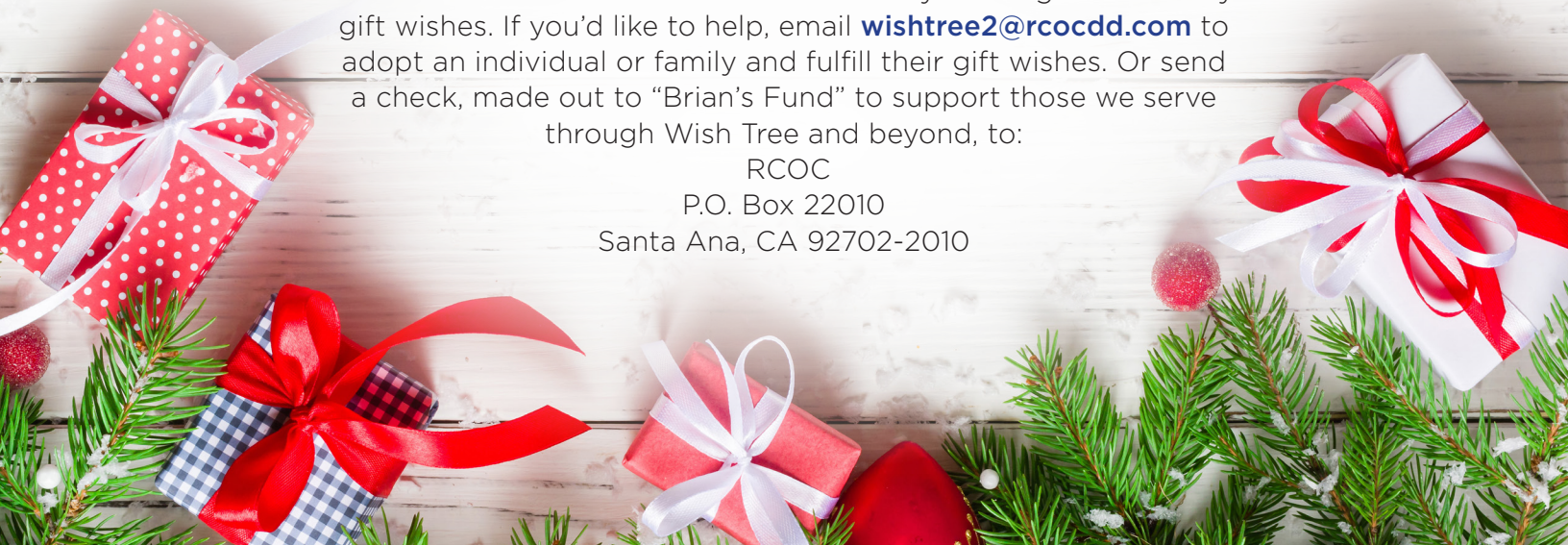
Santa Ana Office
1525 N. Tustin Avenue
24-hr Phone: 714.796.5100

Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A
24-hr Phone: 714.796.2900

How to Support RCOC's Holiday Wish Tree

RCOC's Wish Tree program helps brighten the holidays for low-income individuals and families we serve by fulfilling their holiday gift wishes. If you'd like to help, email wishtree2@rcocdd.com to adopt an individual or family and fulfill their gift wishes. Or send a check, made out to "Brian's Fund" to support those we serve through Wish Tree and beyond, to:

RCOC
P.O. Box 22010
Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010



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 Comfort Connection Family Resource Center Parent Service Coordinator Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Virtual Coffee Talk

Join other Spanish-speaking parents for these informal conversations via Zoom, which will feature Disability Rights CA. For more information and to RSVP, contact Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.



Wednesday, January 25

6-8 p.m.

Topic: Things to Know When Starting the Special Education Process

Wednesday, February 22

6-8 p.m.

Topic: CalABLE

Transition...Moving on at 3 Workshop

This transition workshop takes place virtually and aims to educate and support parents before, during and after their child's third birthday. Topics include assessment and eligibility determination for school district services, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, and ongoing eligibility for Regional Center services. Though presented in English, Spanish translation may be provided when requested in advance. Register online via the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com). For more information and for help with online registration, contact Patricia Garcia at 714.558.5400 or pgarcia@rcocdd.com.

Tuesday, December 6

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Potty Training: Creating Toileting Independence

Led by Tina Pappas, M.Ed., BCBA, who is the Regional Clinical Director at Coyne & Associates, this presentation provides basic, practical strategies every parent needs to implement a successful toilet training program. You'll learn about approaches important for all children, as well as how to address unique issues that arise for children with special needs. This workshop is presented in English, but Spanish translation may be provided when requested in advance. For more information and for help with online registration, contact Patricia Garcia at 714.558.5400 or pgarcia@rcocdd.com.

Tuesday, January 31

6:30-8:30 p.m.

How Are Public School Services Different From Regional Center Services?



When a child transitions from Early Start services provided through the Regional Center into special education services provided through their local public school district, it can be a confusing time for parents. Some may wonder why their child cannot simply continue to receive the same services through their existing RCOC-funded service providers.

A family whose child is determined to be eligible for Regional Center services under California's Lanterman Act can continue to receive certain RCOC-funded services. However, most of a child's services will be provided through their local public school district, because public schools are what the Lanterman Act refers to as "generic resources" which must be accessed to meet a person's needs before Regional Center funds can be spent.

Facts About Generic Resources

The simplest way to think about generic resources is that they are services available from other agencies, rather than the Regional Center.

Many generic resources are publicly-funded agencies that provide services to all members of the public – not just people with disabilities. Some of these, such as public schools and community colleges, public transportation, and local parks and recreation programs, are offered to everyone in the community regardless of the person's condition or income level. Others, such as Medi-Cal (known as CalOptima in Orange County) and California Children's Services are only available to people whose income is below a certain level. And others, such as the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Social Security, may have other qualifying criteria, such as medical need, age, or disability.

The simplest way to think about generic resources is that they are services available from other agencies.

Since most of a child's disability-related needs can be met with the educational services provided by public schools – a generic resource – the Lanterman Act prohibits RCOC from paying for those services. However, there are certain services that public schools and other generic resources do not provide that families can continue to receive through the Regional Center. Examples include respite and child care services.

Help from RCOC

If you have needs that are not being met, please contact your RCOC Service Coordinator for help. In addition to exploring RCOC-funded services and supports that may be available to you, your Service Coordinator can assist you in accessing transition and special education support available through RCOC.

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

Winter in the Grove

The City of Garden Grove presents its 5th Annual Winter in the Grove event, featuring children's activities, such as snow slides, tree lighting, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus and more. Food will be available for purchase. For more information, call 714.741.5200.



Saturday, December 3

3-7 p.m.

Village Green Park

12732 Main Street in Garden Grove

Moving on at 3...Transition Workshops for Parents

This free transition workshop helps parents understand the differences between Early Start and school-based services, learn about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process schools use to determine what services a child receives, and much more. This session takes place virtually via Zoom and is offered in Vietnamese. For more information and to register, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Thursday, February 16

6:30-8:30 p.m.

New Parent Orientation for Vietnamese Families

If your family is new to RCOC, you'll want to join this special virtual orientation for Vietnamese-speaking parents whose children are in Early Start (birth to 36 months), Provisional Eligibility for Lanterman services (3-4 years old) or receiving Lanterman services. Learn about help that's available through RCOC and the process for identifying the types of RCOC-funded services and supports that can benefit your family. You'll also learn about other free supports available through RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.

Tuesday, November 22

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Parent Support Group for Vietnamese Families

The pandemic has caused a rise in mental health issues in children and teens. Through this virtual support group, family members can join the discussion and learn practical ways to address these concerns in young people. Each session is moderated by Quynh Kieu, M.D., who has more than 40 years of experience working in pediatric medicine, and Thanh Tam Nguyen, M.D., who is clinically licensed in counseling. Register at www.projectvietnam.org or email info@projectvietnam.org.

Every 4th Tuesday

8-9:30 p.m.

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