

DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

VOLUME 36 NO.2 • SUMMER 2022



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

2022 Spotlight Award Honorees

REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY

hosted the 25th annual Spotlight Awards celebration via Zoom on May 2.

Special guest emcee Michele Gile, the Emmy Award-winning reporter for CBS2/KCAL9, joined RCOC Board Chair Chip Wright and Executive Director Larry Landauer and Department of Developmental Services Director Nancy Bargmann for the festive virtual event. Here are snapshots about the honorees.



Special Guest Emcee, Michele Gile, CBS2/KCAL9

Self-Advocate honoree Alex Zavala, who has autism, is a role model for others who aspire to successful employment.



Self-Advocate: Alex Zavala

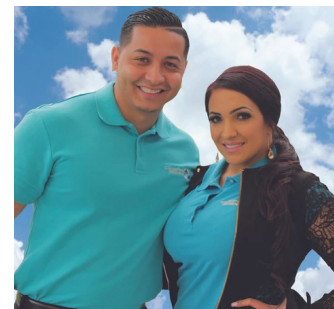
Alex Zavala, who has autism, is a role model for others who aspire to successful employment. With RCOC support, he applied for and was accepted into

Goodwill of Orange County's Project SEARCH program which led to an internship with Kaiser Permanente. Impressing staff with his warm smile, friendly demeanor and incredible work ethic, he put in the effort to master his tasks. After the internship program, Alex applied for and was hired as a part-time worker and earlier this year was promoted to a full-time

position, with benefits. He continues to bring his best every day and his supervisors at Kaiser Permanente say they consider themselves lucky to have him.

Service Provider: Clear Motivations

Clear Motivations founders Norberto and Valerie Colin were honored for successfully placing 136 of their adult day program participants in jobs throughout Orange County. Focusing on strengthening skills and empowering participants' personal growth, they provide a safe place to learn, grow, explore and eventually soar.



Cont. on Page 7

DIALOGUE

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



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Fernando Peña
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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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BUDGET UPDATE

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 State Budget Includes Some Good News

THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE reached a budget agreement for the 2022-2023 fiscal year that includes some good news, but also some disappointments for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

On the positive side, the Family Cost Participation Program and Annual Family Fee are suspended through this fiscal year. In addition, Early Start eligibility is being expanded and enhanced. Many families will also be pleased to learn that the budget continues to enable IPP (Individual Program Plan) and IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) meetings to take place remotely, if requested by the individual or family, through the end of the fiscal year.

Service Provider Rates

The compromise deal that was reached is an improvement over the Governor's proposed budget, in that it calls for faster implementation of higher rates for service providers that were recommended back in 2019. However, it still falls short of the major, immediate investment the Legislature, RCOC and many others believe is necessary to ensure service providers have the financial resources to attract and retain the direct care professionals who are essential to deliver vital services and supports.

The enacted budget calls for the first half of the increases to go into effect on January 1, 2023 with full implementation in July 2024.

While the Governor had proposed to greatly delay increasing rates to meet the baselines proposed in a 2019 rate study, the enacted budget calls for the first half of the increases to go into effect on January 1, 2023 with full implementation in July 2024. The agreement also calls for the creation of training stipends for direct support professionals, as well as entry-level training and internships for those interested in becoming direct support professionals.

For details on the state budget, go to the Department of Finance's budget website at www.ebudget.ca.gov or the Department of Developmental Services website at www.dds.ca.gov/transparency/budget-information.

Thank You to Our Community and to Our Legislators

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



THE PROCESS THAT EVENTUALLY PRODUCES A BUDGET AGREEMENT

between the Governor and the Legislature involves compromise. So, we are grateful to the elected leaders in California's Legislature who entered

those budget negotiations with full recognition of the tremendous challenges facing our regional center system of community care.

Thanks, in large part, to the many advocates and family members who responded to calls to share their support for adequate reimbursement rates for our dedicated service providers, the Legislature sought to address years of chronic underfunding with immediate financial help. We are grateful they heard our voices, and appreciate their efforts on behalf of adults and children with developmental disabilities.

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It is my fervent hope that the budget compromise deal summarized in the Budget Update story on page two will effectively address the direct care crisis now being faced not just by us in Orange County, but by communities across California. Still, I remain concerned.

Perhaps the small increases enacted earlier this year and those scheduled for January 1, 2023 will be sufficient to bridge the gap until full implementation of planned rate increases takes place in July 2024.

Perhaps economic circumstances will change dramatically, making it less necessary for service providers to offer much more competitive pay and benefits to direct care workers.

Perhaps large numbers of professionals who've left the direct care workforce entirely or gone to other, better paying jobs will return to direct care work delivering services and supports to people with disabilities.

However, the possibility remains that rates considered a baseline in 2019 may not be enough to shore up our system, even when fully implemented two years from now.

We at RCOC have a very open and collaborative relationship with our service provider community. I know we can rely on them to let us know how they are coping with staffing challenges. They'll let us know what they need from us to help them deliver quality services and supports. Equally important, we rely on individuals and families to be candid with us about how effectively we're meeting their needs.

No doubt, we are all very disappointed that the budget process did not deliver the much more significant investments we all believe our system needs. Nonetheless, our community is strong, resilient and resourceful. And we at RCOC intend to remain fully engaged with our elected leaders, conveying to them how our community is coping and continuing to advocate for those we serve.

The possibility remains that rates considered a baseline in 2019 may not be enough to shore up our system.

I'm convinced that as long as we remain committed to partnering in the spirit of productive engagement and collaboration, we can continue to work together to ensure California keeps its Lanterman Act promise of quality, community-based services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

CalFresh Provides Money for Groceries

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair



A LOT OF PEOPLE WANT to eat healthier, but it can be hard when you don't make a lot of money. With the CalFresh program, even someone who receives other benefits like Social Security or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) can get help buying groceries.

If you qualify for CalFresh, you receive your benefits through a debit-type card called an electronic benefits card (EBT) that you use to make purchases. The amount of money you receive depends on how much money you make. The first time I applied, I only received \$12 a month but the program has changed. Now, an individual can get up to \$250 and a family of four may be eligible for up to \$835 each month.

With CalFresh, I've been able to buy healthier foods like produce, but there are limitations. You can't, for example, buy hot foods like a hot rotisserie chicken, but you can easily get all the other groceries you need to cook healthy meals at home. You can also use the card at some restaurants, which is great if you're out and about. You just have to look to see which places accept the EBT card.

If you're interested in CalFresh, you can always talk to your RCOC Service Coordinator, your independent living worker, or someone in your family who can help you apply online at www.getcalfresh.org.

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

This workshop is free for parents, and is offered via Zoom (rather than in-person). It 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 Spanish by Footprints

When: Thursday evenings – October 13, October 20, October 27, November 3 and November 10

Time: 5:30-8:00 p.m.



EVERYDAY WELLNESS: Manage Stress for Good Health

TOO MUCH STRESS CAN BE BAD for a person's mental health. When we experience too much stress, we can feel anxious and worried, have trouble concentrating and become irritable. That can make us unhappy and affect our relationships with family, friends and coworkers. Too much stress can also affect our physical health. It can, for example, cause sleeping problems, upset stomach, chest pains, and more.

Often, there isn't a lot we can do to reduce the stress in our lives, but there are a lot of things we can do to manage stress so it's not as damaging to our mental and physical health. Here are some tips anyone can try:

- **Exercise Daily.** When you exercise, your body's stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol go down and your brain produces more of the natural "feel good" substances like endorphins. That's why many people find that exercise improves their moods. Exercise can also help you sleep better, which is key to overall health.
- **Eat Healthy Foods.** When it comes to stress, food can be your friend or your enemy. Unhealthy foods, like soda, alcohol, and sugary snacks actually cause your body stress, while many healthy foods reduce stress hormones in your body. Some good stress-fighting choices include herbal teas, nuts such as almonds and walnuts, fatty fish such as salmon, fruits like avocados and blueberries, and vegetables like asparagus and broccoli.
- **Relax with Deep Breathing.** Taking just a moment or two to practice breathing deeply can immediately calm your body and your mind. It's easy. Simply inhale deeply through your nose, feeling your stomach pushing outward as you inhale. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then slowly exhale through your mouth for five to 10 seconds.
- **Connect with Other People.** When we feel stressed, we often isolate ourselves from others, which can make the negative effects of stress worse. Whether getting together with loving friends or family members, or joining a support group of people who are going through challenges similar to yours, positive social engagement can be a powerful stress reducer.



ABC's of Special Education

Tips for Back-to-School

SOME CHILDREN LOVE THE IDEA OF GOING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER SUMMER BREAK, but many are challenged by the changes in routine, environment and people a new school year brings. Here are some tips to help ease the transition:

1. Become an expert on your child's IEP. No one knows your child better than you do, so carefully examine your child's Individualized Education Program and ensure that plans developed in the spring are still on-target with your child's current needs. If you think the plan may need adjusting, don't hesitate to request an IEP meeting.

2. Visit the campus before the first day of school, if it's accessible. With an entire summer away from school, it can be helpful to simply walk around the grounds and get familiar with the layout. You probably can't visit the classroom, but locate the playground, eating areas, restrooms, and any other places your child may encounter.

With an entire summer away from school, it can be helpful to simply walk around the grounds and get familiar with the layout.

3. Gradually move towards the new schedule. If your child has been staying up later and sleeping in later during summer vacation, change bedtimes and wake-up times by 15 minutes every few days to allow for a gradual adjustment. Also practice your morning at-home routine for getting up earlier, having breakfast and getting dressed. This is especially important if you're integrating school into your own pre-work routine since your stress can escalate your child's anxiety.

4. Take pictures of new people and places.

Once school has started, help ease anxieties about unfamiliar people and surroundings by taking pictures of the school, classroom, teacher and staff. It can be helpful to make a photo book or digital slide show to walk your child through the key people and places he encounters during a typical school day.

5. Be involved throughout the year.

- Find out when Back-to-School Night will occur at your child's school and put the date on your calendar. This is an important time to meet the teacher and chat about how your child is adjusting to the classroom.
- If you have concerns or questions, you can always schedule a meeting with the teacher to discuss your child's progress. However, it's critical to understand that only items that appear in the IEP – such as goals and services – are required to be provided. So, if you want to change goals, services or placement, you should formally request an IEP meeting.
- When completing school enrollment forms, look for an invitation to join the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Involvement in a CAC allows you to meet school administrators outside of an IEP meeting and can deepen your knowledge about special education services in your school district.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

2022 Spotlight Award Honorees, cont.

Direct Support Professional: Jordan Mapes



Through his work with L'Arche Wavecrest, Jordan Mapes creates opportunities for the home's residents to be involved in the community through attending local dances, church services, and community functions.

Maintaining healthy, caring relationships with the people he serves and developing trusting relationship with families, he's an exemplary direct support professional.

Family Member: Joan Williams

The mother of a son with autism who lives in Orange County, Joan Williams is also a dedicated advocate and registered nurse. Beyond her professional role, Joan has counseled direct support professionals and administrators about supporting people with autism and even provided training to help her son's group home staff understand the various medical devices used in the home, helping to provide a safe space for residents and their families.

Community Partner: Irvine Barclay Theatre

The Irvine Barclay Theatre was honored for partnering with RCOC to provide families an opportunity to experience a unique, sensory-friendly performance during the holidays and for participating in a program led by RCOC to train Theatre staff on supporting people with special needs attending performances.

RCOC Achievement: Beth Ann Pierce

An RCOC Service Coordinator for 15 years, Beth Ann Pierce has positively impacted the lives of countless people with developmental disabilities, their families and our community. An excellent



communicator, her person-centered approach reflects her sensitivity to individual uniqueness and creates an environment of trust with both persons she serves and her coworkers.

Employer: Chevron

Chevron was honored for its Neurodiverse Hiring Program, which aims to hire around 3,000 people with disabilities nationally. Partnering with Vocational Visions, the company currently employs 26 people with disabilities at its stations in Orange County. The participating stations also represent a learning platform and a great opportunity for career advancement.

Lifetime Achievement: Liza Krassner

The mother of son with autism, Liza Krassner is devoted to making connections for individuals and organizations in need and promoting inclusive communities through the arts. A volunteer board member for RCOC who has also served on the Board of the Irvine Barclay Theatre and numerous other organizations, she facilitated what has become an enduring partnership between the Barclay and RCOC. For Liza, public service is second nature as she selflessly gives of her time, treasure, and talents to make Orange County a better place for people with developmental disabilities.



Health & Wellness Achievement: My Day Counts

Fostering wellness and encouraging healthy lifestyle choices among the adults we serve is a high priority, and this year we recognized My Day Counts with a special Spotlight Award for their outstanding dedication to offering RCOC's Healthy Life, Happy Life wellness program during the pandemic. In 2021, 100 of their participants enrolled in Healthy Life, Happy Life and 85 completed the entire program.

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REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY

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Regional Center of Orange County Locations

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

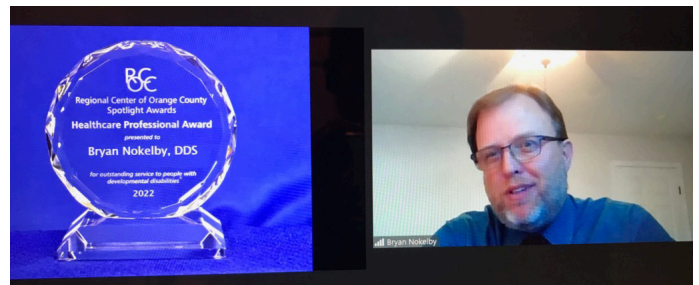
Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A
24-hr Phone: 714.796.2900

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

2022 Spotlight Award Honorees, cont.

Healthcare Professional: Bryan Nokelby, DDS

The Dental Program Consultant at the California Department of Health Care Services, Dr. Nokelby is a tireless advocate for people with developmental disabilities, helping those RCOC serves get faster access to the dental care they need. In addition to helping with individual cases, he has worked to improve the Medi-Cal Dental system by educating claims examiners about the unique needs of those with developmental disabilities.



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 this informal conversation via Zoom, which will feature Disability Rights CA discussing the Medicaid waiver process. For more information and to RSVP, contact Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.



Thursday, August 18
6-8 p.m.

Recreation Resources Guide

Looking for some new activities for your child? Check out the Recreation Resource Guide created by RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center. It has details on a wide array of fun classes and sports activities, as well as beach wheelchairs, state park passes, local accessible parks, and more. The Guide has been recently updated and is available in Spanish. To download it from the RCOC website, go to www.rcocdd.com and click on Community Resources under Family Support, then scroll down to Recreation.

Navigating Early Start Services for Your Child

If your family is new to RCOC and receiving services through the Early Start program, welcome! This Spanish-language workshop is free and will help you understand the Early Start program and how it can help your child thrive and narrow the developmental gap during a crucial time. Another major focus for this workshop is to educate parents about how to request additional RCOC services they may need, and to ensure they understand all the services and supports that are available through Early Start and through RCOC's Comfort Connection Family Resource Center. For information and to register for this Zoom workshop, please contact Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.

Wednesday, October 19
10-11 a.m.

Potty Training: Creating Toileting Independence

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.

Wednesday, August 31
6:30-8:30 p.m.

Introduction to the Self-Determination Program

In October of 2013, then-Governor Brown signed into law the Self-Determination Program (SDP), which aims to provide individuals with developmental disabilities and their families more freedom, control, and responsibility in choosing services and supports to help them meet objectives in their Individual Program Plan (IPP). After an initial pilot program, SDP was opened to all persons served by regional centers (except those living in licensed settings like skilled nursing and intermediate care facilities, unless they are preparing to move away from that setting).

How is SDP Different from Traditional Regional Center Services?

When you participate in the Self-Determination Program, you have more flexibility to directly manage the services and supports to achieve your IPP objectives. The principles upon which SDP is based are a major departure from the traditional model of services:

- **Freedom.** You plan your own life and make your own decisions.
- **Authority.** You decide how your individual budget is spent for your services and supports.
- **Support.** You choose your own paid and unpaid services and supports.
- **Responsibility.** You take responsibility for the decisions you make.
- **Confirmation.** You make decisions in your life by designing your own services.

California's Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has created detailed rules for SDP. Like services purchased through regional centers, services purchased in the SDP program must qualify for reimbursement from the federal government. A person cannot, for example, purchase products or services that aren't directly tied to achieving the goals in their IPP nor can they purchase services that can be funded through other resources such as health insurance or their school district.

While SDP isn't ideal for everyone, it can be a good option for individuals with very unique needs that are difficult to meet with traditional services.

What is Required to Participate in SDP?

California requires those interested in SDP to attend an orientation training hosted by RCOC. This orientation covers what services are available and tools that DDS has created to help participants choose qualified service providers. It also covers the steps involved, including creating your person-centered plan, selecting and working with a financial management agency, creating and getting your self-determination spending plan certified, and starting your SDP services.

If you think you might be interested in SDP, visit RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com) for informational videos, newsletters, and program updates in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. From the home page, click on the Self-Determination Program tab under RCOC Services. You can also contact your RCOC Service Coordinator for more information.

Spotlight Nominations are Online

Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized with an RCOC Spotlight Award? We're accepting nominations for next year's awards, so there's no need to wait. Information on categories and nomination forms are available online in English, Vietnamese and Spanish. From the home page (www.rcocdd.com) click on RCOC Annual Spotlight Awards under News & Events.

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.

Virtual Coffee Talk

Join RCOC Cultural Specialist Kaitlynn Yen Truong and other Vietnamese-speaking parents for these informal conversations via Zoom. These sessions will feature guest speakers from Disability Rights California. For more information and to RSVP, contact Kaitlynn Yen Truong at 714.558.5405 or ktuong@rcocdd.com.



Thursday, August 25

10 a.m.-Noon

Topic: Special Education

Thursday, September 22

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Topic: Alternatives to Conservatorship

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. 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. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and improve your advocacy skills, and you'll 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.

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, October 20

6:30-8:30 p.m.

Multilingual Family Resource Fair

Hosted by the Language Acquisition office of the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, this event at Mission Viejo High School aims to connect students who are learning English and their families with the wide array of community services available to them. The event will include booths, fun activities for the students and informational workshops for families. For more information, call 949.580.3347.

Saturday, August 27

10 a.m.-1 p.m.

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