

DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

VOLUME 37 NO. 3 • SUMMER 2023



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

2023 Spotlight Award Honorees

REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY HOSTED ITS 26TH ANNUAL SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

celebration on April 20 at Fullerton's Spring Field Banquet Center, with 260 people attending. Special guest emcee Michele Gile, the Emmy Award-winning reporter for KCAL News and CBS Los Angeles, joined RCOC Board Chair Chip Wright and Executive Director Larry Landauer to present the awards. Here are snapshots about the honorees.

Self-Advocate: Stephanie Carlson

A 27-year-old with an intellectual disability, anxiety, and fragile health, Stephanie is a role model for approaching her challenges with inspiring determination and perseverance. While she was sometimes bullied by other students and was not always provided the supplemental support she needed in high school, Stephanie persevered and earned her High School Certificate. When she learned the Certificate would not allow her to fulfill her goal of working at a childcare center, she did not give up. Currently enrolled at North Orange Continuing Education, she is working toward a full high school diploma, taking one class at a time. Undaunted by the time and effort it may take to accomplish her goals, she refuses to allow her disability to keep her from living a full and meaningful life.



Self-Advocate honoree Stephanie Carlson with RCOC Executive Director Larry Landauer (left) and RCOC Board Chair Chip Wright (right).



Direct Support Professional: Eli Goldstein

As the direct support professional for Tyler, a young man served by RCOC, Eli was singled out for the effective and creative ways he's helped meet Tyler's needs by taking him out in the community, exploring local parks and hiking trails, and exercising. With Eli's support, Tyler has lost 40 pounds and become much healthier, while learning new ways to control his emotions and growing his self-care skills. The pair also have an Instagram account with over 25,000 followers that showcases Tyler's athletic skills and promotes inclusion of people with special needs in the health and fitness community.

Cont. on Page 7

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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RCOC Launches New, User-Friendly Website

WITH THE RECENT LAUNCH OF RCOC'S UPDATED WEBSITE

(www.rcocdd.com) visitors are finding it much easier to locate the people, information and resources they're seeking. Made possible by special funds from the State of California aimed at making regional centers more accessible to everyone in our community, the new site replaces an outdated version that had received no major updates for several years.



While the old site contained a wealth of important and useful information, it was often difficult to navigate – especially for non-English speakers. Among the most impactful changes with the new site is an improved translation feature that enables visitors to easily specify translation of the full site to the language of their choice. Previously, translation was cumbersome and limited to one page or section at a time.

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The new site shares the fresh, more modern look of the Dialogue newsletter and its more user-friendly navigation makes it easier for visitors to find what they need. For example, there is now a searchable staff roster that allows visitors to locate contact information for an individual RCOC staff person (such as their RCOC Service Coordinator) or identify someone in a particular department (such as Intake or Accounting) who can help them.

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Many individuals and families will also appreciate the site's Monthly Calendar. In addition to listing upcoming events and activities, the Calendar includes links to flyers or additional information about each event and, where appropriate, links for online event registration.

Direct Care Worker Shortage Continues to Hamper Services and Supports

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



MANY OF YOU WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH RCOC FOR SOME TIME are familiar with the National Core Indicators (NCI) survey, which our regional center pioneered decades ago to obtain objective data about the quality of services and

supports in Orange County and the satisfaction levels of the individuals and families we serve.

We were gratified several years ago, when the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) also adopted NCI, and these surveys are now conducted across all 21 of California's regional centers.

These surveys are now conducted across all 21 of California's regional centers.

In May 2023, we received the results of NCI's most recent surveys for fiscal year 2021-2022. As always, we were pleased to see where we're performing well and to also have solid information about areas for improvement.

We are continuing to review all of the results. However, it was troubling to see objective evidence that the direct care worker shortage we have discussed in this newsletter and with legislators is, in fact, impairing families' ability to access critical services and supports.

One example is respite. In the Adult Family survey, families are asked if they are able to get respite services when needed. In the previous survey (FY 2019-20), an average of 42% of families statewide responded "always" and 22% responded "usually." By FY 2021-22, those figures plummeted to just 22% and 14%, respectively.

Our figures in Orange County are similar to these averages, and still very concerning because our data show respite hours are authorized by RCOC, but not being used.

In FY 2019-20, when asked about whether they were able to get respite services when needed, 48% of RCOC families responded "always" and 28% responded "usually" to these questions. This dropped to just 21% responding "always" and just 18% responding "usually" in FY 2021-22. Clearly, service providers are not able to secure adequate staff to meet families' needs.

It was troubling to see objective evidence that the direct care worker shortage we have discussed is impairing families' ability to access critical services and supports.

As we do each year, RCOC will host a public meeting to present the full NCI survey results to our community. We will then post that presentation on our website. These surveys are an important opportunity to provide detailed feedback about your individual and family situation, so we hope that when you are contacted by NCI that you will take the time to participate and share your experiences.

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We also hope these objective data will persuade our elected leaders to respond to the urgent appeals from regional centers, service providers, and other advocates to provide the funding necessary to resolve the direct care worker crisis.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

Submit Your Spotlight Awards Nominations Year-Round

By Sylvia Delgado, PAC Chair



DURING THE PANDEMIC, WE ALL MISSED BEING TOGETHER IN PERSON FOR RCOC'S SPOTLIGHT AWARDS, so it was wonderful to see everybody for this year's event at a new venue. The theme was The Wizard of Oz, and Integrity House did an amazing job!

You can now submit your nominations online year-round for a vendor, service coordinator, person served, or someone else you think deserves recognition.

There were some great people honored, and who truly deserved the Award for their hard work, especially a young man who works one-on-one with an individual who has Down syndrome. Their story was heartwarming, and I appreciate the work he does in the community.

Congratulations to all of this year's Spotlight Award honorees.

We all need people like this direct care worker, so I want to remind everyone that you can now submit your nominations online year-round for a vendor, service coordinator, person served, or someone else you think deserves recognition. This is awesome because sometimes it can be hard to find the time, and now you can prepare your nomination when it's convenient for you.

Congratulations to all of this year's Spotlight Award honorees. I can't wait for next year's event to be in person again, and look forward to seeing everyone on the dance floor!

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

This workshop is free for parents, and is offered via Zoom. 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 for additional information, and to register.



Presented in Spanish by Footprints

When: Thursday evenings – October 5, October 12, October 19, October 26 and November 2

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



EVERYDAY WELLNESS:

Get Enough Sleep

GOOD SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOOD HEALTH, because it's when you're sleeping that your body does a lot of "repair" work on cells, muscles and organs. As students get back to school and days become more structured, a good night's rest can help both children and adults perform at their best. While sleep disturbances are particularly common among those with neurodevelopmental disorders, these tips can help everyone in the family cultivate good sleep habits.

Scheduling for Good Sleep

- Set a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up in the morning at the same time, even on the weekends.
- Avoid screen time before bed. The blue light emitted by TVs, phone and computer screens stimulates your brain at a time when you need to relax.

As students get back to school and days become more structured, a good night's rest can help both children and adults perform at their best.

- Get regular exercise in the morning or early afternoon. Exercise helps reduce stress and promote relaxation, but vigorous exercise immediately before bed may keep you awake. Balanced routines are especially important for children with special needs, so make sure your child is getting the right amount of sensory and/or physical activity throughout the day.

Eat for Better Sleep

- Keep eating times consistent and avoid snacks after dinner. Going to bed with a full stomach can cause heartburn, which can lead to a restless night's sleep.
- Steer clear of caffeine, alcohol and nicotine. These can all make it difficult to sleep. Even alcohol, which may initially make you drowsy, interferes with proper sleep. And remember, many sodas and snacks with chocolate are also high in caffeine and sugar.

Quiet Time Before Bed

- Prepare for sleep with a "quiet time" routine that might include turning down the lights, which signals winding down. Also try relaxing activities, like reading a book together, giving a bath or gentle massage, or listening to music.
- Each child is different, but favorite blankets, pillows and stuffed toys can help create a calming place for sleep. If sounds are relaxing for your child, play soft music, nature sounds, or white noise.

ABC's of Special Education

Pathways to a High School Diploma



PREVIOUSLY, PARENTS OF A STUDENT WITH AN IEP HAD JUST TWO OPTIONS to explore how their child would graduate high school: earning the traditional diploma pursued by most typical students, or a certificate of completion.

As part of the 2022 California Education Budget Trailer Bill (effective June 30, 2022), a new section was added to the Education Code, which established an alternative pathway to a high school diploma exclusively for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

School districts are now required to exempt eligible students from all coursework and additional requirements adopted by individual school districts that are beyond what is required by California's Education Code to receive a high school diploma. Before the student with an IEP begins grade 10, the IEP team must determine if the student is eligible for this exemption, which requires the student to take the California Alternative Assessments (CAAs) for various subjects in grade 11 and complete coursework

aligned with state standards. Families are encouraged to email their IEP team to obtain more information on this new third option and how they can go about exploring it with their IEP team.

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Remember, RCOC has an Educational Consult Resource Group that can provide parents with support and expertise regarding their educational concerns. To schedule a phone or videoconference consultation, contact your RCOC Service Coordinator.

Special Education Workshop: IEP Toolbox for Parents

Presented by RCOC's Special Education Consultant, this free workshop takes place via Zoom. It provides practical tools to help parents advocate more effectively for their child's IEP needs. To register, go to the Monthly Calendar on RCOC's website (www.rcocdd.com) or contact Ingrid Jbeili at 714.558.5406 or ijbeili@rcocdd.com with questions.

Presented in English with Vietnamese and Korean Interpretation

Monday, Sept. 11 from 10 a.m. to Noon

Presented in Spanish

Thursday, Sept. 14 from 6 to 8 p.m.

2023 Spotlight Award Honorees, cont.

Service Provider: Rainbow Home Care



Honored for its more than two decades of service, Rainbow Home Care provides an array of services that help increase independence via in-home assistance with personal care, meals and exercise, as well as professional coaching

through difficult behaviors, and assistance accessing appropriate medical care and medical equipment.

Family Member: Debby Becket

The mother of a son who receives services from RCOC, Debby is active with the Huntington Beach Lion's Club and the Prader-Willi Foundation. She also works closely with the Special Olympics of Southern California, as head swim coach for the Surf City Swimmers and coach for the swim team for the 2022 Special Olympics USA games. On the job, Debby is also very involved with 'Hyundai CARES' – a group to support employees directly or indirectly affected by developmental disabilities.



Community Partner: Lorri Guy, NOCE



As Disability Support Services Workforce Program Coordinator for North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE) at the North Orange County Community College District, Lorri was honored for her efforts to promote inclusion and workplace

diversity, and to actively promote pathways for students with disabilities to achieve their higher education goals.

Employer: Edwards Lifesciences

A global leader in patient-focused medical innovations for structural heart disease, as well as critical care and surgical monitoring, Edwards Lifesciences was recognized for its leadership in providing life-enhancing opportunities for adults with disabilities as a host site for various paid internships, some of which have resulted in full-time employment with the company.

RCOC Achievement: Cathy Furukawa

During her 15 years with RCOC, Cathy has changed the lives of countless people with developmental disabilities. Most recently, as Self-Determination Program Coordinator, she's helped educate and ease the transition for those interested in moving from traditional services to SDP, led training for RCOC staff about the program, and ensured RCOC procedures do not create barriers for those entering SDP.



Healthcare Professional: Thomas Megerian, MD

A pediatric neurologist, Dr. Megerian has worked to improve the systems of care for children with autism. As Clinical Director of the CHOC Thompson Autism Center, he has helped expand access to health care and partnered with public and private institutions and government entities to investigate innovative diagnostics and therapies for Autism Spectrum Disorder. He is also bringing clinical trials to the community, offering safe options for trying new treatments, and offers an "all treatment under one roof" concept that is welcomed by families with complicated lives.

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INSIDE

In the Spotlight: 2023 Spotlight Award Honorees.....	1
RCOC Launches New Website	2
Executive Director's Report	3
Person to Person.....	4
Behavior Management Workshops.....	4
Everyday Wellness.....	5
ABC's of Special Education.....	6

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

2023 Spotlight Award Honorees, cont.



Lifetime Achievement: Elizabeth Santos

Elizabeth has been operating residential facilities for over 35 years, helping integrate people into the community, providing them with a safe place to live, in homes they can be proud of, and enabling people to flourish in her care. Operating Intermediate Care Facilities, Adult, Elderly, and Children's homes, Elizabeth's diverse range of options allows residents to remain in her organization's facilities, with access to a continuum of care should their needs change. Well maintained and decorated in the preferred style of each individual, Elizabeth's homes feel like *home*.

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. For more information and to RSVP, contact Giulia Rodriguez at 714.558.5402 or grodriguez@rcocdd.com.



Wednesday, August 30
6-8 p.m.

Topic: Regional Center Hearings and Appeals

Wednesday, October 25
6-8 p.m.

Topic: Language Development (Infants and Young Children)

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. 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 pgarcia@rcocdd.com or 714.558.5400.

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

Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders

The Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CAND) is collaborating with community partners on these free virtual events for Spanish-speaking parents or caregivers.

Tuesday, September 12
10-11 a.m.

Topic: Virtual Technology Training (using Zoom for virtual meetings such as IEPs, IPPs, doctor appointments, and more)
To register, call 949.267.0442 or email tallerenespanol@hs.uci.edu

Saturday, September 16
9 a.m. to 12 noon

Topic: CAND Autism Conference (Spanish)
To register and for more information, call 949.267.0200.

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, 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.

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.

About Respite Service Providers

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.

Respite Can Benefit a Child

In addition to giving parents the opportunity to rejuvenate and deal with everyday 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.

How to Get Respite Help

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 any time. We're here to help!

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Fall Festival

Join the City of Westminster in celebrating the season at the City's annual Fall Festival which features live entertainment, delicious food, craft vendors, a resource fair, fun children's activities, and more. For more information, contact the Community Services & Recreation Department at csronline@westminster-ca.gov or 714.895.2860.

Saturday, September 23

Westminster Civic Center
8200 Westminster Blvd. in Westminster

Halloween Festivals

The City of Stanton and City of Westminster are both hosting Halloween Festivals that are open to ghosts and goblins of all ages, and will feature games, entertainment, costume contests, food booths and fun for all.



City of Westminster: Friday, October 27

For more information, contact the Community Services & Recreation Department at 714.895.2860 or csronline@westminster-ca.gov.

City of Stanton: Saturday, October 28 from 4-8 p.m.

10660 Western Avenue in Stanton
For more information, call 714.890.4270.

After School Parks & Playgrounds Program

Elementary school aged children can enjoy quality recreational activities offered on a free, drop-in basis through the City of Westminster's Parks & Playgrounds Program. Activities include arts & crafts, homework help, games, sports, and "just plain fun." For more information, contact the Community Services & Recreation Department at csronline@westminster-ca.gov or 714.895.2860, or visit one of the parks listed below.

Monday through Friday from 2:30-5 p.m.

Bolsa Chica Park, 13660 University Street in Westminster

Sigler Park, 7200 Plaza Street in Westminster

Liberty Park, 13900 Monroe Street in Westminster

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