

DIALOGUE

A Quarterly Publication of the Regional Center of Orange County

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Pei-Hsien Lin



Pei-Hsien Lin has been working at Edwards Lifesciences since 2021, beginning as an intern.

It was based on his success that the company accepted five more interns with disabilities.

As a full-time employee, Pei-Hsien works Monday through Friday and receives the company's standard benefits, including medical coverage and vacation time.

It was based on his success that the company accepted five more interns with disabilities who, like Pei-Hsien, receive job coaching support through Goodwill.

In the lab, Pei-Hsien performs a variety of important tasks, as he helps to maintain the lab equipment and is often called upon to prepare the lab for tours. Among his favorite tasks is cleaning the 3D printer equipment, which he finds relaxing. And, as a more experienced lab technician, he works with the interns to help train them.

AMONG GLOBAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATORS, IRVINE-BASED EDWARDS LIFESCIENCES IS AT THE FOREFRONT, getting its start when Miles “Lowell” Edwards set out to build the first artificial heart. And through its partnership with RCOCC service provider Goodwill of Orange County, it has also become a leader in its practices for employing adults with developmental disabilities.

That is, in part, due to the success of Pei-Hsien Lin, a 30-year-old person served by RCOCC who started working in the lab at Edwards Lifesciences as an intern in 2021. From that foundation, Pei-Hsien (pronounced “PAY-shen”) progressed to working on a contract basis with the company about a year later, before being offered full-time employment as a Research and Development Lab Technician in March 2025.



Among Pei-Hsien's jobs as a Lab Technician is cleaning the BDC testers for heart valves.

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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Attend Irvine Barclay Theatre's Sensory-Friendly Nutcracker!

IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE IS AGAIN PRESENTING A SPECIAL SENSORY-FRIENDLY PERFORMANCE OF THE BELOVED HOLIDAY BALLET, THE NUTCRACKER. Taking place on Friday, December 5 at 2 pm at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, the performance features accommodations to help RCOC families and persons-served feel at ease. This includes reduced soundtrack volume, ambient lighting, and open doors to let guests come and go as needed.

Visitors will also enjoy interactive musical experiences before and after the performance, along with sweet treats, therapy dogs, holiday-themed arts and crafts and photo opportunities with the dancers. Tickets are \$8 per person. To purchase tickets, scan this QR code or call the ticket office at 949.854.4646.



Call for Spotlight Awards Nominations

RCOC's 2026 Spotlight Awards gala is fast approaching, so be sure to get your award nominations submitted before the February deadline. Scan this QR code to view award categories and criteria, and to submit your nominations online.



Adults with Disabilities Build on Workplace Success

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director



AMONG THE HIGHLIGHTS OF EVERY RCOC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING IS WHEN THE BOARD PRESENTS CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION TO ADULTS WE SERVE WHO HAVE BEEN AT THEIR PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR AT LEAST 20 YEARS.

This type of employment milestone is not seen as often as it used to be in the general workplace. However, it is not unusual among the 630 or so individuals receiving supported employment services through RCOC and the 950 or so we serve who are engaged in employment without support provided.

Our experience is that a person with a developmental disability can truly thrive when they are able to find employment that is a good match for their interests and abilities. In these scenarios, that individual is able to develop personally and professionally, and be a real asset to overall workplace morale, the employer and fellow employees, with and without disabilities.

A person with a developmental disability can truly thrive when they are able to find employment that is a good match for their interests and abilities.

Often, they are “pioneers” — as was the case for Amy Jessee (see Person to Person column on page 4) who was the first person in a wheelchair to work at the Pacific Marine Mammal Institute. Frequently, they are role models whose strong example of work ethic, loyalty, and dedication to a job well-done can cause an employer to actively seek to add more persons with disabilities to their workforce.

Among the biggest challenges we and our employment-related service providers need to overcome is the fact that most companies

and organizations that might be open to employing those we serve simply don't know where to begin. However, when employers learn about the no-cost consultation and technical assistance to help them hire and train people with developmental disabilities, and the systems we have in place to match employer needs with employee job skills, many are open to the idea.

Among the biggest challenges we and our employment-related service providers need to overcome is that fact that most companies and organizations that might be open to employing those we serve simply don't know where to begin.

With this in mind, I always like to encourage parents and family members of those we serve to take stock of their own workplaces, to see if there might be potential to include workers with disabilities. While we have many outstanding employment service providers helping to open doors for those we serve, some of the most satisfying employer matches we see are those found by parents who know their loved one's hopes, dreams and talents better than anyone.

In these cases, a parent can make an introduction and one of our employment service providers can step up to help the prospective employer think creatively about roles that might be suitable for those we serve. And then provide the all-important follow up to ensure a good match for the person(s) served and support the employer with resources available to them through RCOC and other agencies.

We Want Your Feedback

Are there specific disability-related topics or topics related to the regional center system you'd like us to cover in Dialogue? Share your thoughts by emailing ED@rcocdd.com.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

All Types of Work Can Be Satisfying and Meaningful

By Yvonne Kluttz, PAC Chair and Amy Jessee, PAC Co-Chair



BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, WE HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH WORK AND WE THINK BOTH PAID WORK AND VOLUNTEER WORK CAN BE GOOD FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES.

Amy currently works three volunteer jobs she loves. As a volunteer at the Integrity House clubhouse and member of RCOC's volunteer Board of Directors, she enjoys helping others with disabilities. She is also proud to be the first person who uses a wheelchair ever hired by the Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC), where she has been a volunteer greeter for eight years.



She thinks it's important for people to remember that while a person may not make money in volunteer roles, they do get the opportunity to practice many of the skills used in paid work. At PMMC, for example, she has learned how to make customers feel welcome and also how to deal with difficult people.

Yvonne, who held many jobs before retiring last year, continues to contribute through volunteer service on the RCOC Board. For someone just getting started who might wonder what sort of work to pursue, she suggests consulting others who know you to get ideas and see what sounds interesting.

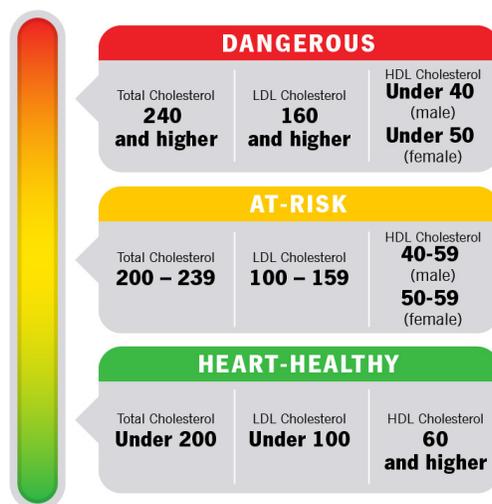
EVERYDAY WELLNESS: Know Your Numbers

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN HEALTHY CHOLESTEROL LEVELS because those with high levels tend to be at higher risk for heart disease – the leading cause of death in the U.S.

To see if you're at-risk, doctors typically measure different categories of cholesterol as part of a standard group of blood tests called a lipid panel. This includes – at minimum -- total cholesterol, LDL (low density lipoproteins) and HDL (high density lipoproteins).

Check this chart from the Cleveland Clinic to see if you're in a healthy range, and be sure to consult your doctor for ways to improve your cholesterol levels through healthy food choices, regular physical activity, and, if necessary, medications.

Cholesterol Levels



Workshops & Events



Person Centered Thinking: Family One-Page Description Workshop

This free workshop is presented in English and will give parents and other adult family members with a loved one served by RCOC the opportunity to practice person-centered skills. Participants will be introduced to key concepts of Person Centered Practices and have the opportunity to draft a one-page description for their loved ones. To register, scan the QR code.

February 12th 2026, 6 – 8:00 p.m.

RCOC Headquarters Office
1525 N Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana



Ask the Experts Zoom Conversations

RCOC partners with Chapman University, Department of Rehabilitation and the OC Local Partnership Agreement to present these free workshops for persons served, families, educators, service providers, disability support agencies and business partners. Each Zoom Conversation begins with a presentation followed by a Q&A opportunity. Scan the QR codes below to register.

Conservatorship and Alternatives to Conservatorship

Presenter: TBD

Thursday, November 13, 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.



Entrepreneurship and Meaningful Employment

Presenters: Hilda Sramek, family member and Carla Sramek, self advocate, Carla's Movie Restaurant microenterprise

Thursday, December 18, 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.



Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Student Services

Presenter: Trinh Van Erp, DOR Staff Services Manager

Thursday, January 15, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.



Creating Toileting Independence

Wednesday, January 28

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

RCOC Headquarters Office
1525 N Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana



Chrislyn Saxena, M.A.,BCBA will lead this free potty training workshop. Refreshments will be provided, along with free potty training books and diapers (subject to availability). Presented in English, with ASL and other language interpretation available upon request; please request prior to January 21. Childcare cannot be provided, so please DO NOT bring children. Scan the QR or register online via the Events Calendar on RCOC's website. For information, contact Sandy Marquez-Gonzalez at smarquezgonzalez@rcocdd.com or 714.558.5404.

Behavior Management Workshop for Parents

Thursdays, from 5:30-8 p.m.

January 8, January 15, January 22, January 29 and February 5

Presented in English by Advanced Behavioral Health, this five-session virtual workshop covers basic principles of positive behavior management. The focus is 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 their specific behavioral challenges. To register, contact Rosita Aguilar at 714.796.5223 or raguilar@rcocdd.com

ABC's of School Services

(formerly Special Education)

Communicating Effectively with Your Child's IEP Team



IT'S IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO UNDERSTAND WHO IS ON THEIR CHILD'S IEP (INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM) TEAM AND HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

with them to ensure the child's needs are met and concerns are addressed in a timely manner. Here are some tips:

Who is on the IEP Team?

A child's IEP team typically includes:

- School Administrator (often the principal or assistant principal)
- School Psychologist
- Special Education Teacher (sometimes called case carrier or case manager)
- General Education Teachers – If your child has more than one, it is important to include all of them
- School Nurse (if your child requires medical support during school hours)
- Related Service Providers. Examples include:
 - Occupational Therapist (OT)
 - Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)
 - Behavior Specialist
 - School Audiologist

If no one on your child's IEP team speaks your native language, ask the school to identify a staff member who does and request this person be included in all correspondence to ensure clear communication.

Best Practices for Communication

- Use Email: Communicating by email creates a written record and ensures appropriate follow-up. It also minimizes confusion and keeps the entire team informed.
- Include the Whole Team: Always send emails to the full IEP team to prevent

miscommunication and ensure everyone is updated at the same time.

- Stay Professional and Child-Focused: Keep messages clear, respectful, and focused on your child's needs rather than frustrations.
- Document Conversations: After phone calls or in-person meetings, follow up with an email summary to ensure clarity and accountability. For example: *Thank you, Ms. X, for calling me today. To ensure everyone is aware, here is a summary of our conversation: You shared A, B, and C, and will follow up on A, B, and C.*

The School District Structure

If communication with your child's IEP team does not lead to appropriate follow-up, contact your district's Special Education Office to obtain the email of the Program Supervisor assigned to your child's school and add them in all communication. If concerns remain, reach out to the district's Director of Special Education, whose contact information is usually listed on the district website.

By following these practices, parents can help ensure effective communication, reduce misunderstandings, and support their child's success in school.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Pei-Hsien Lin, cont.

The type of work he does in the lab is an excellent fit with Pei-Hsien's interests and his talents. However, it wasn't his first work experience. While in the Irvine Adult Transition Program, he had a series of internships, including with Trader Joe's, Marshalls, Bonefish Grill and a financial firm where he was required to wear a suit and tie.

Pei-Hsien's parents, Alan Lin and Angela Sun, couldn't be more proud of what their son has accomplished. "During the past two years with work, I've seen how he has become a blessing to others."

He also took part in the Project SEARCH program, doing internship rotations in several departments in a healthcare setting, including one that helped hone his mechanical and technical skills and made him an especially good candidate for his work in the Edwards Lifesciences lab.

Pei-Hsien's parents, Alan Lin and Angela Sun, couldn't be more proud of what their son has accomplished.

"During the past two years with work, I've seen how he has become a blessing to others," said Alan, who is a Ministry Director with the Global Life Enrichment Center.

Though he is now a solid role model who has grown tremendously in recent years, life has not always been easy for Pei-Hsien and his family. And there was uncertainty about what his future might hold.

It was when he was a toddler that his paternal grandfather first noticed that while Pei-Hsien was a beautiful boy who smiled a lot, he had difficulty making eye contact. And it was around age three that he was diagnosed with autism and began receiving support from RCOC.



The Lin family celebrating Pei-Hsien's birthday in 2024. L-R: Youngest brother Jasper, mom Angela, dad Alan, Pei-Hsien, sister-in-law Sarah and younger brother Justin.

In addition to his loving parents and extended family here in the U.S. and in Taiwan, Pei-Hsien has two younger brothers in his very strong circle of support, one of whom works as a high school instructional aide for students with disabilities.

RCOC Lead Service Coordinator Wendy Chen, who has worked with Pei-Hsien for several years, considers every member of the Lin family an excellent role model for others. She notes how responsive Alan and Angela have always been when she has shared opportunities that can benefit their son, and applauds how Pei-Hsien likes taking on new challenges and learning new things.

"He is very humble and smart and down-to-earth," she said. "He's a really great young man."



REGIONAL CENTER OF ORANGE COUNTY

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DIALOGUE NEWSLETTER    

INSIDE

- In the Spotlight: Pei-Hsien Lin.....1
- Attend Irvine Barclay Theatre’s Sensory-Friendly Nutcracker!2
- Call for Spotlight Awards Nominations..2
- Executive Director’s Report3
- Person-to-Person.....4
- Everyday Wellness.....4
- Workshops & Events.....5
- ABC’s of School Services.....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

RCOC Hosts Fun Back-to-School Resource Fair



Ava Teresa Ting, age 8, and Aristotle Ting, age 11, of Fountain Valley with their mom Cynthia attended RCOC’s recent Back-to-School Resource Fair.

With Aveanna Healthcare donating 400 backpacks, 24 Hour Home Care donating 100 backpacks, and a range of social-recreation service providers showcasing their programs, RCOC hosted a fun back-to-school event and resource fair at the Santa Ana Zoo on July 19. School age persons served by RCOC and siblings who attended received the backpacks and Down Syndrome Association of Orange County co-presented the event with RCOC. Thank you Aveanna, 24 Hour Home Care and our many service providers and volunteers for making the event a success!

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 Community Outreach and Access Coordinator Ingrid Jbeili at 714.558.5406 or ijbeili@rcocdd.com.

City of Santa Ana Tree Lighting



Join the City of Santa Ana in celebrating the start of the holiday season, with their annual tree lighting ceremony in the heart of downtown. This free community event is open to all and features live entertainment, holiday arts and crafts, and photo opportunities with Santa!

Saturday, November 22 from 5-8 p.m.
Plaza Calle Cuatro
324 E. Fourth Street
Santa Ana

**Down Syndrome
Association of Orange
County**



The Down Syndrome Association of Orange County will host its annual Breakfast with Santa at the Garden Grove Elks Lodge No. 1952.



Check the organization's website for registration information or scan the QR code to go directly to their events calendar.

Saturday, December 6 from 9-11 a.m.
11551 Trask Avenue
Garden Grove

Person Centered Thinking: One Page Description Workshop for Families

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Monday, January 26
from 6-8 p.m.
RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope St., Suite A
Cypress, CA 90603



Monday, February 23, 2026
from 6-8 p.m.
RCOC Santa Ana Office
1525 N. Tustin Ave.
Santa Ana, CA 92705



Help Available from Comfort Connection



Patricia Garcia, Ingrid Jbeili, Chau Do, Kaitlynn Truong, Giulia Rodriguez, Sandy Marquez-Gonzalez, Derrick Nguyen, Marlen Sanchez.

THOSE RCOC SERVES AS WELL AS OTHER FAMILIES IN NEED HAVE ACCESS TO A MULTITUDE OF RESOURCES AND SUPPORT - FREE OF CHARGE -- THROUGH RCOC'S COMFORT CONNECTION FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER.

Located on the ground floor of RCOC's headquarters office in Santa Ana, Comfort Connection can help families learn more about their loved one's disability through an extensive collection of resources (such as articles and websites) covering a variety of topics, from specific developmental disabilities and behavior management, to sibling issues, social and

Comfort Connection can help families learn more about their loved one's disability.

recreational opportunities, and much more. Many materials are available in multiple languages, and can be picked up in Comfort Connection's child-friendly office, sent to you, or accessed by scanning the QR code on this page which links to RCOC's website. Web pages on the site can be translated into multiple languages by selecting your preferred language at the bottom of the page.



Most of Comfort Connection's staff are parents or family members of individuals with developmental disabilities and all are bilingual.

All are happy to assist parents in locating whatever resources - including information on

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accessing public benefits - that could be helpful for their particular situation.

For families new to RCOC, the Comfort Connection team provides orientations in English, Spanish and Vietnamese to help them navigate the regional center system and advocate for their loved one. These orientations can take place in-person, via Zoom or by phone.

Comfort Connection also regularly sends emails in multiple languages to inform parents about events and activities happening in the community. To get on the email list, or for other assistance through Comfort Connection, please contact Comfort Connection at 714.558.5400. You can also stop by the office Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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 Derrick Nguyen at 714.558.5401 or dnguyen@rcocdd.com.



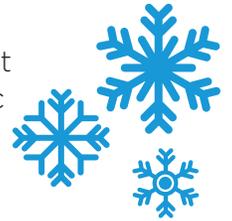
Remy, 5, and Owen, 1, Pham of Westminster with parents Cathy Trinh and Peter Pham

RCOC Co-Hosts Autumn Festival and Resource Fair

Families from diverse cultural backgrounds attended a free, fun and informative Autumn Festival and Social Recreation Resource Fair on September 27 at Garden Grove's Atlantis Play Center. Featuring cultural activities, magic show, lion dance, lantern distribution and informational booths showcasing community resources and social recreation programs, the event was funded by the DDS Language Access and Cultural Competency Fund.

Winter in the Grove

The Annual Winter in the Grove at Village Green Park features music and dance performances from local schools and performers, holiday crafts and inflatable activities for children of all ages, a holiday craft boutique featuring handmade gifts from local vendors, and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus! Free refreshments and kid activities. Call 714.741.5200 for more information.



Saturday, December 6 from 3-7 p.m.
Village Green Park
12732 Main Street
Garden Grove

Plan to Attend Our Lunar New Year Celebration!

RCOC families are invited to attend our 2nd Lunar New Year Celebration, presented in partnership with the Vietnamese Parents of Disabled Children Association (VPDCA). Celebrating the biggest holiday of the year, it is an opportunity to connect and engage with other persons served and their families, and learn about RCOC services and supports. Please look for our invitation with event details in January. Contact Derrick Nguyen at 714.558.5401 or dnguyen@rcocdd.com for more information.

Help Available from Comfort Connection



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Buena Park Holiday Events

The following seasonal events are geared for families of all ages. For more information, contact the Community Services Department at finearts@buenapark.com or 714.562.3860.

Christmas Tree Lighting: Everyone is welcome at this fun event, featuring food and dessert vendors, pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus, the return of the extremely popular Santa train, and of course the lighting of the Christmas tree.

Friday, December 5 at 6:00 p.m.
Buena Park City Hall
6650 Beach Blvd.
Buena Park



Candy Caneland and Craft Fair: Come out for this day of free holiday fun, filled with games, free raffles, food and entertainment, including a snow slide and visit from Santa. On-site parking is limited, so plan to use the shuttle to and from Peak Park Pool at 7225 El Dorado Drive.

Saturday, December 13 (shuttle runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
Ehlers Event Center
8150 Knott Ave. , Buena Park

ROAR Cultural Festival

The free event features a fun and festive mix of Korean music, art, food, family-friendly activities, Hanbok dress-up, and a wish lantern festival.



November 14-16
Downtown Plaza
125 E. Wilshire Ave.
Fullerton

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