

In the Spotlight

Judith Allen

Though 69-year-old Judith (Judy) Allen has difficulty communicating, those who know her best are convinced that she's never been happier than she is now, living at Peppermint Ridge in Corona. Formerly a resident of Fairview Developmental Center, Judy moved into the intermediate care facility (ICF) in August of 2016.

*Back in the 1940s,
the study of autism was
in its infancy.*

Karlene Allen, Judy's mother, says that since she was a child, Judy has talked about a place called "Shay-Hee High High." No one in the family had ever heard of such a place, but over the years, circumstances led them to believe that when she spoke



Judy enjoyed competing in the Special Olympics when she was younger. This is Karlene's favorite photo of her, taken in 1983 when Judy was 36 years old.

of Shay-Hee High High, Judy was referring to heaven. So, when she moved into Peppermint Ridge and told her mother "This is Shay-Hee High High!" Karlene knew she loved living there.

Now older and needing some assistance herself, Karlene is thrilled to have her daughter living closer to her, and in a place where she is clearly very happy and healthy. It was, however, a long journey getting there.

*While she was very young,
the Allens were able to cope
with Judy's challenges.*

Karlene was just 19 years old when Judy was born. Judy was her first baby, and she had no experience with children, but she knew early on that something wasn't right.

"As a newborn baby, she didn't want to be cuddled," Karlene said, noting that Judy doesn't want people touching her, and would push her hand away when she was feeding her. Back in the 1940s, the study of autism was in its infancy, and there were no community resources, no services, and no supports for families like theirs

See **Judith Allen** on page 7.

Tickets on Sale for 2017 Spotlight Awards Gala

RCOC's 20th Annual Spotlight Awards Gala is scheduled for **Friday, March 24** at the Embassy Suites Anaheim South in Garden Grove. Supported by sponsors and organized by Integrity House, the event honors individuals and organizations who improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities in Orange County. This fun event sells out each year, so be sure to get your tickets early!

For information and to purchase tickets, contact Integrity House at (714) 759-1499 or visit RCOC's website at www.rcocdd.com/news-and-events/spotlight-awards to download the ticket order form.

Dialogue

Dialogue is published four times per year by the Regional Center of Orange County for people with developmental disabilities, their families and service providers.

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

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Upcoming 2017 Board Meetings

March 2 • May 4 • June 1

The public is invited to attend RCOC board meetings. They begin at 6 p.m. and are held in the Regional Center Board Room at RCOC's headquarters, located at 1525 North Tustin Avenue in Santa Ana.

RCOC Administration

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Board Update

Two New Members Join RCOC's Board

Amy Jessee receives services from RCOC, and has been an active member of Integrity House for nine years, advocating for friends who can't speak for themselves. She has also attended disability rights meetings in Sacramento and worked on transportation issues for people with disabilities. Her hobbies include going to disabled art shows in the Santa Ana and Garden Grove areas, going to the movies, and attending a disabled women's Bible study group each week. Amy has cerebral palsy, and also has a photographic memory for anything having to do with numbers. Her term began Jan. 1, 2017 and ends Dec. 31, 2017.



Amy Jessee



Liza Krassner

"I have been an advocate for people with all types of disabilities," she said in her application to join the Board. "I will fight for the rights of people who can't fight for themselves."

Liza Krassner is the parent of a son with autism. She is Administrative Manager for Academic Programs and Facilities for the Program in Public Health at UC Irvine. She also

has experience producing special events and works as an independent film producer, producing short films employing a diverse crew, including those with special needs. Passionate about promoting employment for adults with special needs, she also has significant

community service experience. She has, for example, served as a parent volunteer for the Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders, and has been a member of the Family Advisory Committee for the

Autism Speaks Autism Treatment Network, as well as Secretary and Member of the Board of Governors for the Center Club.

Liza holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from UC Irvine and a Master's degree in Public Administration from California State University, Long Beach. Her term began Jan. 1, 2017 and ends Dec. 31, 2017.

Board Officers Elected

During its November meeting, the RCOC Board elected a new slate of officers. Alan Martin continues as Board Chairperson and Robert Costello continues as Treasurer, while Magnolia Guardamondo takes on the position of Vice Chair and Sylvia Delgado is Secretary. Their terms as officers began Jan. 1, 2017 and will end June 30, 2018.

Executive Director's Report

Reflecting on 50 Years of Regional Centers

By Larry Landauer, Executive Director

We're at the beginning of a new year, but did you know that last year marked a major milestone for Californians with developmental disabilities and their families? Yes, 2016 was the 50th anniversary of the opening of the two pilot regional centers – one in Southern California and one in Northern California – which were the forerunners of our current network of 21 independent, nonprofit regional centers across the state.

To mark this historic year, the regional centers produced an updated history of regional centers in California. We have posted the 48-page book on RCOC's website, where it can be downloaded for free. From the Home Page, go to About Us, then Who We Are. Click on History of Regional Centers and scroll down to the link.

The regional centers produced an updated history of regional centers in California.

Reading through that book provides a vivid reminder of how very different life was then for individuals with

disabilities. Our "In the Spotlight" cover story about 69-year-old Judith Allen, who only recently moved into the community after spending most of her life in developmental centers, also sheds light on the heartbreaking choices faced decades ago by parents like Karlene Allen. She and others



had none of the services and supports now available to enable parents to meet their children's needs at home.

More than anything, though, this 50th anniversary is inspirational, reminding us of the momentous progress that is possible through advocacy. Advocacy brought us the Lanterman Act, and this past year it helped us to begin rebuilding community services that were devastated during the Great Recession. As we look ahead, advocacy will continue to play an essential role in protecting these gains, and enabling us to continue enhancing and innovating our system to meet critical and ever-changing needs.

Advocacy brought us the Lanterman Act.

At RCOC, we believe that responsible stewardship goes hand-in-hand with effective advocacy. We must operate transparently, openly sharing our processes and the results we achieve on behalf of the individuals and families we serve. It seems the California Legislature agrees with that

philosophy, because in connection with the current year's budget, the Legislature required the Department of Developmental Services to create and post on its website a "Performance Dashboard." This Dashboard, to be published annually, will make it easier for elected officials and the public to see how regional centers are doing on a variety of key metrics.

It is gratifying to see that the current data for RCOC shows us performing exceptionally well in a number of areas, including fair hearings and various types of complaints. RCOC is also significantly above the California state average for all of the Dashboard's National Core Indicator questions that measure how responsive we are to the people we serve, and how well they feel we are doing in making sure they get the services they need.

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Much has changed since those first two regional centers opened their doors, serving just 559 people with a total budget of just \$966,386 (that's an average cost of \$1,728 per person). We at RCOC are proud to carry forward their legacy, and want everyone we serve to know that we are dedicated to continued advocacy to ensure the system endures for the next 50 years and beyond.

Person to Person

Regional Centers at 50: More to Come!

By Sylvia Delgado, Peer Advisory Committee Chair and Jess Corey, RCOC Peer Advocate

Happy New Year everybody! It's hard to believe that it has been 50 years since the first regional centers opened their doors in 1966. That was quite a few years before we were born, and it is hard to imagine what life must have been like then for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities and their families had none of the community services and supports that are so important to us now.

We do know, though, that people with disabilities and their families had none of the community services and supports that are so important to us now. And we know we have these things because people who came before us cared enough to advocate for the rights of people with developmental disabilities. We are grateful for their advocacy because it brought us the Lanterman Act.

Many of us also had parents or other family members who advocated for us to get what



Sylvia Delgado



Jess Corey

we needed when we were younger. They spoke up for us before we could speak for ourselves, and their example helps guide us in our work and inspires us to be the best advocates we can be for ourselves and for others who receive services from RCOC.

Now, we are beginning a new year with many exciting things to look forward to. Competitive integrated employment, person-centered thinking and planning, and the ABLE Act are just a few of them. In 2017, we will also see more people moving into the community from Fairview Developmental Center and we are excited to help them make new friends and become part of their new communities. We are also happy to report that at the January meeting, the RCOC Board changed the name of the Consumers Advisory Committee to the Peer Advisory Committee.

All of these things are happening because of advocacy!

We may be too young to know what life was like before the Lanterman Act, but we are old enough to know that our lives today would not be the same without it.

As we begin this new year, we hope you'll join us in our commitment to continue advocating to make life even better for ourselves and for the people who come after us.

As always, we are here to serve you and would love to hear from you. You can contact Jess at (714) 796-5135 or jcorey@rcocdd.com.

Asking Our Readers

Is there a topic you'd like us to cover in *Dialogue*, or a tip you'd like to share with other readers? Perhaps there's a website you've found particularly helpful, and want to get the word out to other parents or self-advocates. If so, let us know by calling or emailing either your RCOC service coordinator or RCOC's Peer Advocate Jess Corey at (714) 796-5135 or jcorey@rcocdd.com. We'll be sure to look into your idea, and you may see it in a future issue!

Behavior Management Workshops for Parents

Regional Center of Orange County offers these workshops at no cost to parents. To gain the most value from them, parents are encouraged to attend all sessions in a series. The Behavior Management workshop covers essential principles of positive behavior management, with a practical focus on helping parents of children with developmental disabilities change their own behavior and that of their children. Parents are actively involved, and invited to discuss the specific behavioral challenges they are confronting. Advance reservations are required and group size is typically limited to 8-15 families.

Contact your service coordinator or Tracy Vaughan at (714) 796-5223 for additional information regarding dates, times and locations, and to register.

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

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish by Footprints

When: Tuesday evenings – April 25, May 2,
May 9, May 16 and May 23

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

Presented in English by Dr. Joyce Tu

When: Tuesday evenings – Aug. 1, Aug. 8,
Aug. 15, Aug. 22 and Aug. 29

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Cypress Office
10803 Hope Street, Suite A

Behavior Management Workshop (5 sessions)

Presented in Spanish

When: Thursday evenings – Oct. 12, Oct. 19,
Oct. 26, Nov. 2 and Nov. 9

*(NOTE: Toilet training is the focus
of the last session of this workshop)*

Time: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
1525 N. Tustin Ave.
*Parking is located in the structure across
from the RCOC office building*

Upcoming Autism Presentation: *Understanding and Advancing Learning in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders from Infancy to High School*

Professionals and parents, alike, are invited to attend this presentation by Peter C. Mundy, Ph.D. Dr. Mundy is a professor in the School of Education and the School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director for Educational Research at the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California, Davis. Cost to attend is \$20 for RCOC parents and \$30 for professionals; the registration fee includes a boxed lunch. Continuing education (CE) hours are available.

When: Tuesday, Feb. 28

Time: 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Location: RCOC Santa Ana Office
1525 N. Tustin Avenue

Preregistration is required. For additional information, please contact Jennifer Casteel at (714) 796-5330 or jcasteel@rcocdd.com

RCOC Events Brighten the Holidays for Families We Serve

Our Orange County community demonstrated the holiday spirit in a big way this past year, supporting several holiday programs organized by RCOC volunteers.

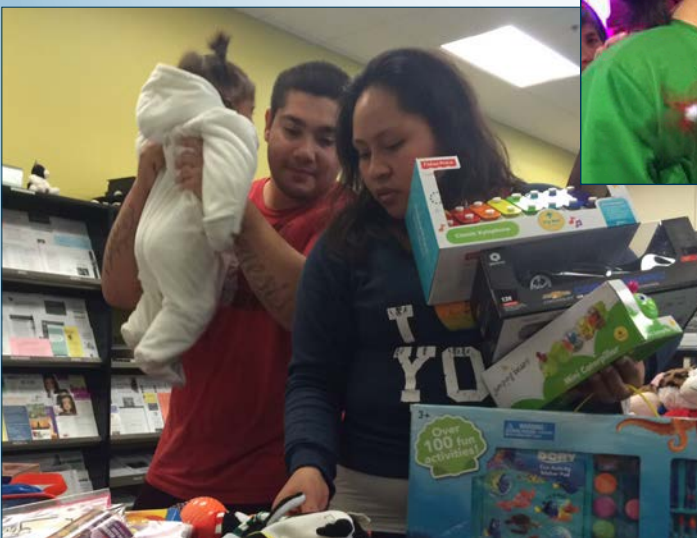
RCOC Family Resource Center “Shop and Wrap” Event – Over the course of several days, approximately 125 low-income parents of children in the Early Start program were able to “shop” at RCOC’s Family Resource Center for donated gifts that volunteers then wrapped up for them to take home and put under the tree. While the parents shopped, their children were entertained by Santa Claus and RCOC volunteers. You might have seen or read about this in the news, as the Orange County Register, NBC4, CBS2 and KCAL9 covered the event. Supporters and contributors included 24Hr HomeCare, The Giovannello Law Group, RCOC’s Peer Advisory Committee, the families of Rod, Scott and Ryan Steele, and Sheri Foelsch. Orange County’s Vietnamese community was also a big contributor,

with major support coming from Saigon City Supermarket’s Jayce Yenson, Advance Beauty College’s Tam Nguyen (who is a former RCOC Board member), Sonny Nguyen of 7 Leaves Café, Gary Nguyen of 24/7 Care at Home, and David Truong of Mimi’s Jewelry.

Wish Tree – Hundreds more low-income children and adults with developmental disabilities received holiday gifts through RCOC’s Wish Tree program. Among the many individuals, companies and organizations that purchased and wrapped items that were then delivered by RCOC volunteers were: Brandman University, AECOM, CASTO, CBRE, Girl Scouts, Premier,

Troutman Sanders, and numerous RCOC Board members, staff and families. Community donations to RCOC’s Brian’s Fund were also used to purchase gifts.

Vietnamese Holiday Party – Around 400 people, including 100 or so children with developmental disabilities, gathered on Dec. 9 at the Diamond Seafood Palace in Garden Grove for the annual holiday party that RCOC volunteers organize for Vietnamese families with special needs children. This was the 32nd year for the fun and festive event, which families have looked forward to each year as an opportunity to celebrate the season in a safe and welcoming environment.



(above) Jacqueline On (center), District Director for California State Senator Janet Nguyen (R-34), attended the Vietnamese Holiday Party on behalf of Senator Nguyen.

(left) Parents with children in Early Start were able to “shop” for donated holidays gifts at RCOC’s Family Resource Center.

Judith Allen (continued from page 1)

who were attempting to raise children with special needs at home.

While she was very young, the Allens were able to cope with Judy's challenges. They lived on a large family farm in Norco (Hillside Farm), where Karlene grew up and still resides. It offered lots of space for Judy to expend her boundless energy.



Judy at age two, with her mother Karlene.

Unfortunately, there were few public places her parents could take Judy, who was always moving, throwing things, and was easily agitated. They enjoyed taking her to local parks and nurseries like Roger's Gardens. They also discovered that car rides would often calm her down. Years ago, two circus companies wintered in Norco, and watching the elephants in training was another favorite activity.

"We would sit and watch for hours," said Karlene, who had read about and recognized the symptoms of autism in her daughter long before she received a formal diagnosis at around age 30.

As Judy grew up, it became more and more difficult for the family to manage.

"I had no help," Karlene said. "I went to doctor after doctor, and nobody could handle her."

Even after the local school district finally started a class for children with special needs, the situation didn't work for Judy.

"They pushed her out of that," she said. "They couldn't do anything with her, because she was so active and noisy."

Karlene remembers one day Judy's father was ill and sitting in the living room for the day. He kept track of her movements, and reported that Judy never stood still for longer than 15 seconds the entire day.

Finally, when Judy was 12, she went to live at Fairview Developmental Center. Her parents visited frequently, and it was a shock for them when, eleven years later, Judy was transferred without their knowledge to Camarillo State Hospital. They had no input into the decision, and were notified by mail after the fact.

***Judy was transferred
without their knowledge to
Camarillo State Hospital.***

"We wore out two cars driving to Camarillo," she said, noting that Judy lived there for 30 years before returning to Fairview in 1997, where she lived until moving into the community this past August.

Karlene and her husband Bob, who passed away three years ago just before their 70th wedding anniversary, were very involved with the Fairview community while Judy was a resident.

In fact, the barn they built at Hillside Farm continues to be the site for an annual holiday craft fair, famous for its ginger cookies, which for more than 30 years has raised thousands of dollars for disability charities such as Special Olympics. Funds from the cookie sales were also used to purchase Christmas gifts and other special items for Fairview and its residents.



Judy as a little girl, pictured here with her younger brother Rick.

"This year we sold over 70,000 cookies," Karlene said. "We could not do this year after year without the help of our wonderful community volunteers and organizations – Norco High ROTC, churches, and over 300 Girl Scouts. We are deeply appreciative."

With Judy now living nearby, in a home with several other older adults with developmental disabilities, Karlene has again opened her heart and home to Judy's peers and caregivers. This past Christmas, when Judy came home for the holiday she brought along ten other residents and ten caregivers from Peppermint Ridge – all of whom received gifts and a delicious Christmas dinner at the farm.



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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

**Everyday Wellness:
 Eat (Breakfast) Like a King!**

You’ve probably heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It’s true! While you’ve been sleeping, your body hasn’t had any food all night and it needs refueling. Plus, skipping breakfast makes it more likely you’ll overeat later in the day.

The ideal for most people is to make breakfast the biggest meal of the day. Then eat a moderately sized lunch, and make dinner the smallest meal of the day.

Here’s a tip to help you remember: eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a queen, and dinner like a pauper!

