

Dialogue

INTERNET EDITION

Dialogue is published quarterly for consumers, families, service providers, and members of the community by the Regional Center of Orange County. We welcome your ideas, contributions and suggestions. Contact the editor, Karen Taylor, by e-mail at kbuysman@rcocdd.com, or by mail at Regional Center of Orange County

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Parent Volunteer Assistants Needed

Regional Center is looking for parents who have had successful experiences integrating their children with disabilities in community programs. We are particularly interested in existing programs that have included children instead of developing special programs. If you have had a positive experience in this arena, please give us a call. We are looking for community programs such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and Boys, YMCA Indian Guides/Princesses parent/child programs, Sunday School, church choir, church youth groups, after school child care programs, city recreation such as sports, art classes, computer classes or other classes, or other community resources in which your child has been successfully included.

Please contact Juda Carter at (714) 796-5267 or Jacqui Kerze at (714) 796-5299 to share your experiences with us. We would like to develop a resource list that can be shared with other parents. We want to hear from you. Thanks for your help.

Natural Supports Improve Quality of Life

Have you ever heard of 'natural supports'? The phrase, "No man is an island," describes the concept succinctly. We all use natural supports in our everyday lives. Natural supports emanate from natural relationships, such as family, friends, school or work associates, and clubs or organizations we join. When you ask someone for a ride to work or when you help someone spell a word, you are sharing natural supports. It means serving each other without being paid.

Some long-lasting relationships and natural supports come about through faith-based organizations. One such place is Friendship Ministries. And it started through the willingness of one person.

Friendship Ministries: A Descriptive Name

When Eleanor Prime retired from teaching special education eight years ago, she approached her pastor, Albert Vaters of Orange County Worship Center in Santa Ana, and asked how she could serve in the church. Pastor Vaters asked about the work she had done, and her answer intrigued him. He suggested starting a ministry for teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities and offered to recruit helpers for Eleanor. The same eight people who started as volunteers are still involved with the ministry, which is highly unusual according to the pastor. The group has grown from virtually zero to 32 members today.

Pastor Vaters described the format of the group, "They have their own church service during one of the regular service times. They have lots of music and story telling, and it's very interactive and very loving. One of the things that has amazed me is how well they have been able to integrate into the church society. They are part of us, and they function in all of the social activities between our multiple services. There's such a natural interaction that I never dreamed would be possible."

And, of course, the consumers are welcome at the regular church services and some attend after their group meets.

Eleanor continued, "The whole thing is based on love, acceptance and respect. One thing that is so beautiful about the congregation is that they now look at these folks' abilities and not their disabilities."

Everyone involved gives and receives. While family members drive most of the consumers and their friends to church, some church volunteers share the responsibility of using the church van to pick up five fellows who live in a nearby group home.

Pastor Vaters asserts, "This is a ministry to the whole person and the whole family. If someone needs something, the church looks for a way to fill that need."

He has conducted weddings and funeral services for family members of consumers. The mother of a member with Down syndrome broke her arm and needed surgery. Other parents offered to take her to doctor appointments and to care for her daughter during the mom's hospital stay.

The members of Friendship Ministries also contribute to the life of the church. Once a month they serve donuts and coffee between church services. They bring in toiletries and paper goods on a regular basis for a Teen Challenge home in Santa Ana. On special occasions they sing as a choir in church.

The relationships developed through the church are genuine and reciprocal.

Friendship Ministries meets at 9 a.m. on Sundays at the Orange County Worship Center, 1440 E. Santa Clara Avenue, Santa Ana. Phone: (714) 547-9631.

Jeremiah Society: Stimulation for the Mind

Another group for teens and adults with developmental disabilities is the Jeremiah Society. Its founder is Rose Lacher, mother of Amy, a regional center consumer. This social group meets the third Sunday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 at the Jewish Community Center in Costa Mesa. About 20 people attend regularly, with 40 on the mailing list. The group comes under the auspices of the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Family Service.

Rose said, "The group focuses on interpersonal relationships, communication, problem-solving. The first hour of the meeting is devoted to activities such as role playing and peer support. Someone might bring up a problem he or she is having, such as, 'I'm having trouble at the club I attend. This guy keeps bothering me.' The group is then asked how they would handle the situation. Everybody has ideas. The group becomes more cohesive and integrated that way."

Family members and teachers volunteer to help facilitate the group meetings. The varied and creative program includes discussing new art pieces, dances, Bingo, barbecues, talent shows, and learning about Jewish customs and festivals.

Families sometimes share rides to the meetings and help provide resources for members as needed. The Jewish Family Service recently donated several miniature cars that the group will use as prizes for the Bingo games.

Says Rose, "The word is getting out that we have a good program." Good program is an understatement. Interest in this group extends as far as West Los Angeles and Riverside. The activities are planned with much care and thought to allow the members to relax and have fun while enhancing their personal growth and development.

Jeremiah Society meets the 3rd Sunday of the month from 1-4 p.m. at Jewish Community Center, 250 E. Baker, Costa Mesa. For more information, call Rose Lacher, (714) 997-8193.

Saddleback Church: Where the Little Ones Shine

Saddleback Church in Lake Forest offers a children's disability ministry called Special Stars. Sunday School classes are offered during three of the five church services. About 25 children attend regularly. Parents can check out vibrating pagers to alert them in case of a crisis. This allows the parents to attend church without worry or distraction.

The church also sponsors Challenger Baseball and Special Olympics teams as well as many parent support groups.

As with Friendship Ministries and Jeremiah Society, Special Stars was initiated by an individual with passion and the ability to inspire others. About seven years ago, Terri Green, mother of a child with a disability, saw the need and had a vision for a full-inclusion ministry, which blossomed into Special Stars. Eventually, Terri passed the torch to Dave Penton, who is the volunteer director of the ministry and truly has a big heart for little people with special needs. He and his wife, Laura, have taken care of children with disabilities over the weekend so the parents could have a time of respite. Dave has served as a 'buddy' for children with disabilities at church camps. Laura coached the Special Olympics team.

Dave said most of the Special Stars Sunday School teachers, "are people with a heart for kids with disabilities. A lot have siblings or family members with a disability and wanted to give back." Many also volunteer to babysit for families.

Saddleback Church is located at 1 Saddleback Way, Lake Forest. Phone: (949) 609-8000. These stories show how one willing person can inspire others to share their lives with people with developmental disabilities and develop lasting, rewarding relationships that just happen to include mutual natural supports.

Shooting for the Top: Eyes On Mt. Whitney

By Tracy Young, Project Independence

The TRAILBLAZERS is the only mountaineering team made up of individuals with developmental disabilities to attempt to climb the highest mountain in the continental United States, Mt. Whitney (14,496 feet). This challenge team is a part of Project Independence's Access To Adventure Program.



The trailblazing mountain climbers, from front left: Glenn Brabbin, Paul Hollingsworth, Michael Lumme. Back row: Phillip Valdez, Ryan Lundstrom, Ron Holland.

This is the first time that Project Independence (P.I.) has opened one of its challenge teams to other consumers in addition to those we directly serve. You may remember reading about Team Independence, the only developmentally disabled yacht racing team to participate in the world's largest international yacht race – The Newport To Ensenada Regatta. It is the goal of P.I. to champion the cause of those in the disabled community, regardless of where they live or their agency affiliation.

Tryouts for the elite alpine crew were held in October, November, and January. Those who made it are now embarking on an adventure of a lifetime! Congratulations to Regional Center of Orange County consumers Ryan Lundstrum (P.I.), Ron Holland (P.I.), Glenn Brabbin (P.I.), Phillip Valdez, and Michael Lumme for your selection. There is even one individual from the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center, Paul Hollingsworth, the team captain. The team members are very excited about their upcoming adventures!

The TRAILBLAZERS started training for their conquest of Mt. Whitney with a visit to Joshua Tree National Park in early February. This was the first official outing since the completion of the team in mid-January. The kick-off weekend was designed as a team building outing, giving everyone a chance to get to know one another. The team hiked Skull Rock Trail to warm up on Saturday morning before tackling Ryan Mountain before lunch. The afternoon was very exciting as Tracy Young, Head Coach, Shannon Garnos, Assistant Coach, and volunteer Gary Steube ran a rappel clinic for everyone. This was the highlight for many of the team members, as they dangled from a

rope down the side of the steep rock faces. The nights were full of fun and laughs as team members and volunteers alike enjoyed the good food, good company, and the warmth of the campfire.

The six month project began officially in January and closes with the ascent of Mt. Whitney's Mountaineer's route in June of 2000. The team is practicing twice a week at the Rockreation Sport Climbing Center, where the members lift, run, squat, and climb their way to tip-top shape. In addition to weekly training, the team takes monthly alpine outings to prepare for the summit push on Whitney. March saw the team scaling Mt. Baldy for winter alpine training; May and June will put the team atop Mt. San Jacinto (10,804 ft.) and Mt. San Gorgonio (11,500 ft.) for distance and altitude training.

The team is strongly supported by a large volunteer base drawn from the climbing community, with a total of 13 individuals who are assisting on the alpine adventures and in the weekly training. What makes this a unique program is that it requires no RCOC funds! The entire program is funded through corporate and individual sponsorships. Companies like Automobile Club of Southern California, Del Mar Analytical Labs, The Larson Advertising Group, Rockreation Sport Climbing Center, and Gregory Mountain Products are chipping in to help supply the more than \$20,000 necessary to complete the project.

We want to encourage everyone to follow the progress and success of the team members by looking at the P.I. Web site, www.p-i.org — look under News. Good luck and great adventure to the TRAILBLAZERS.

From the Executive Director



Our Board of Directors Fills Important Leadership Role by *Bill Bowman*

I would like to welcome our newest Board of Directors member, Stephen Brees. Please read the short "bio" about Stephen that appears on this page. Here is a man who has bridged the gap between the disabled and non-disabled in our community. He is not afraid to enter elementary school classrooms and let the children ask frank questions about the challenges of living with disabilities.

Stephen is an example of what we are looking for in new Board members: people with demonstrated leadership, influence and strong connections to the Orange County community. We seek leaders who see value in the Regional Center's contribution to people's lives.

As more leadership responsibility for developmental services falls to the local level, it is increasingly critical that our Board seek a balanced, reasoned approach to the local management and leadership of the Center. This leadership alliance is critical as the Board establishes policy and the staff strives to meet the expectations of those policies and our guiding principles. In order to be effective in carrying out the organization's mission, the Board and staff leadership must work together as partners.

In an effort to enrich the volunteer side of the team, our Board of Directors has reorganized itself. It has expanded the number of members to 19 and is seeking parity with a membership goal of six family members of people with disabilities, six people with disabilities, and six people from the

community. (The 19th member is the Vendor Advisory Committee Chairperson.) Hopefully, this balance will further strengthen the way in which programs are evaluated, while enhancing the role that consumers play in the decision-making process.

As the Board and the agency staff align themselves more closely, we are selectively searching for individuals who want to serve, who understand the stewardship responsibility of leading an organization of this size, and who have the ability to see the broad social implications of improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Each person chosen will bring unique perspectives and strengths to the table.

RCOC Board Elects new Member

Stephen Brees was elected to Regional Center's Board of Directors at the March 2, 2000 Board meeting and will serve through February, 2003. Stephen has a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from California State University, Fullerton. He has served as an educational consultant for the Fountain Valley School District and wrote a curriculum guide that was used to teach elementary students about people who have disabilities. Stephen is a Regional Center consumer who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair for mobility.

Stephen said his goals as a member of the Board are, "To serve the best I can...to serve not only consumers but the community. I think my experience as a consumer of the Regional Center will come in handy. I am also looking forward to being able to make a positive impact on the administrative level."

Former Board President Completes Term of Office

The RCOC Board of Directors said good-bye to former President Kurt Yeager at the January 6, 2000 Board meeting. Kurt provided leadership, vision and stewardship to the Regional Center for six years, serving as President of the Board for five of those years.

"Kurt Yeager has been an invaluable volunteer leader for our organization," said Bill Bowman. "He was instrumental in expanding the leadership role of people with disabilities on our Board. He truly listened to consumers, and they considered him an advocate, mentor and leader. He will be greatly missed."

R.A.D.D. Review

Tele-Friends Want to Meet You!

Are you a consumer of the Regional Center of Orange County? If so, you might be interested in Tele-Friend. The purpose of Tele-Friend is to help consumers meet new people who live nearby. We suggest that you always meet in a public place and that you provide your own transportation. To place an ad in Tele-Friend, call (714) 796-5270. Here are some people interested in making "Tele-Friends."

Gary of Yorba Linda... "I like sports, going to the show, going on walks to the park and other places. I like women 25 years and up. Call anytime after 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday or anytime on Sunday."

Julie of Laguna Hills... "Hi, my name is Julie. I am 26 years old. I enjoy meeting new friends. I like going to the movies, roller skating, Magic Mountain, and Knott's Berry Farm, the beach, club dancing, art galleries, museums, comedy clubs, and I also like going to the mall. I like all kinds of things."

Tomas of Anaheim... "I like to play Super Nintendo. I like to play football and I like to talk about school and how I am doing in my classes. I speak Spanish only."

Kyra Anne of Costa Mesa... "I like going to the movies, dancing, bowling, sitting in the Jacuzzi, going swimming, going out to dinner, talking on the phone and driving a nice car. I am 26 years old."

Eugene of Huntington Beach... "I like video games, movies, going to theme parks and going shopping. I'm looking for a girlfriend who is 18 to 23 and lives in Huntington Beach."

Jane of Orange... "I'm interested in meeting a friend, someone to go places with me. I am a very likable person and I enjoy watching television. I am deaf and I sign very well. I have worked at RIO for 19 years. I am 39 years old."

If you would like to talk to any of the people listed above, call (714) 796-5270. We will send you a roster of RCOC consumers who have placed ads. You must be a Regional Center consumer or parent to respond.

Consumer Advisory Committee



by Jay Connor, Committee Chair

A group of 13 Regional Center staff and Board members attended Grass Roots Day in Sacramento on April 12. Grass Roots Day is organized by the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) to provide an opportunity for representatives from all the regional centers to meet with their state legislators. We also participated in a rally on the steps of the Capitol building to urge the politicians to pass Senate Bill 1332, which would provide a rate increase for day program and in-home respite agency direct care employees.

We are still working on the consumer video project. We have a new person working on it now, and hopefully it will be finished sometime in June or July so we can show it at the Spotlight Awards in September.

In March I worked on a brochure for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) on AIDS prevention. I filled out a questionnaire after looking at the brochure to advise them how I thought it could be improved. DDS is getting input on the brochure from the Consumer Advisory Committee members of all the regional centers.

I would like to see more consumers from all areas of the county get involved with the Consumer Advisory Committee. If you are interested in making your voice heard to the RCOC Board of Directors, please ask for an application from Delia Lona at (714) 796-5263.

The Consumer Advisory Committee meets on the second Wednesday of every month at RCOC's Santa Ana office at 801 Civic Center Drive. All consumers are welcome to come, but please call ahead and let Delia Lona know you plan to attend. Her number is (714) 796-5263.

Check Out the Guys and Gals Group

This is a co-ed adult group (ages 18 and up) of more than 40 Regional Center consumers who meet on the third Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Shepherd of the Hills Church at Muirlands and La Paz in Mission Viejo.

This **FUN** group encourages a variety of enjoyable activities that promote friendship, interpersonal skills and social interaction. Some of our activities include: potlucks, dances, baseball games, pizza nite, health and wellness presentations, bingo, karaoke, holiday parties, personal safety training, and The Dating Game.

All Regional Center consumers are welcome to attend this group. There is no membership fee. For further information, please contact Lena Lynch at (714) 796-5213.
COME AND JOIN IN THE FUN!

A Parent's Story

The Sky's the Limit by Jacqui Kerze

This is a story about our family's wonderful experience on the slopes of beautiful Bear Mountain in Big Bear Lake, California.

Having grown up in Northern California, I have special memories of family outings, which included skiing in Lake Tahoe. When my husband Alan and I met, we also managed to enjoy a couple of great ski vacations.

Since Michael was born with Down syndrome six years ago, our lives have been very busy trying to satisfy all the demands of a young child. Lately, we've been anxious to experience family outings that we can *all* enjoy. In other words — we have visited all of the parks in Orange County and can tell you where the best swings are located.

The night before our big day on the slopes, I didn't sleep at all. Memories of my childhood days of skiing filled my head. I wondered — would Michael like skiing? Would he sit in the snow and cry? Are we crazy to try this? It was all a mystery, yet I hoped this could be the beginning of something good.

We awoke to darkness and loaded Michael into the truck while keeping him dressed in his warm and comfy PJ's for the long drive up the mountain. When we arrived at Bear Mountain Ski Resort, Michael woke up and gladly changed into all the necessary gear for a day on the slopes. We were off to a great start, considering he didn't mind the extra five pounds of clothing.

When we arrived at the Adaptive Ski School at Bear Mountain, Michael was matched with a wonderful (and very patient) volunteer ski instructor named Jeanine Cordullo. Since the volunteer instructors receive 40 hours of training, and many of the volunteers are training to be Recreational Therapists, we felt confident about the program.

Jeanine and Michael started the morning together on the standing conveyer belt lift, and after a half-hour, Alan and I could see from a distance that Michael was pointing to the BIG CHAIR LIFT! At that point, we weren't sure what to expect.

A few minutes later Michael and Jeanine were loading themselves onto the chair lift for a ride in the sky. Much to our surprise, getting on the chair lift didn't seem to be a big challenge for Michael, as it was when Alan and I first learned to ski. We looked on in delight and fear while Michael seemed to disappear into the sky. We couldn't wait to see him glide down the mountain... but first they had to get to the top.

Although we hoped Michael would ski down the mountain, Alan and I decided before the trip that whether or not he liked skiing, we would have a fun day. In case of a change of plans, we packed the toboggan.

After about 20 minutes, our little skier came gliding down with Jeanine's assistance. Now mind you, much of the time at the top was spent sitting in the snow, but we only saw him skiing. He seemed to enjoy the experience and looked like a natural! It was so much fun to watch him having a great time.

One more run up and down the mountain and we decided it was time to check out the cafeteria. No doubt, Michael's favorite; french fries, would be ordered.

After lunch, Michael was anxious to put the two "big sticks" back on his feet and head for the hill. This would be the third and final run of the day. After about 45 minutes at the top of the hill, we spotted Jeanine walking down the hill with Michael (AKA Little Skier) on her back while carrying his skis. Our day on the slopes had come to an end, but the joyful feelings will always remain.

Plans are underway for the next trip!

The United States Adaptive Recreation Center (USARC) is a non-profit organization that serves virtually any adult or child with a cognitive or physical disability, including those in wheelchairs, providing the instruction and resources to engage in a year-round variety of outdoor sports. For more information, please call (909)584-0269.

Rett Syndrome Group Welcomes Newcomers

There is a new support/networking group in Orange County that is waiting with open arms for others who may wish to join. The Rett Syndrome Group welcomes families of children with Rett syndrome or similar disabilities who wish to get together to talk and exchange information.

Rebecca Craft, who co-founded the group, said, "Our group is informal. We share information about doctors, medications, and educational options. It's nice to connect with people. We welcome any newcomers, even those families who don't yet have a diagnosis."

Rett syndrome (RS) is a neurological disorder seen almost exclusively in girls. Symptoms do not usually begin to appear until 6 to 18 months of age. The child may then seem to regress in development, losing speech and purposeful use of the hands. Characteristics of RS include repetitive hand movements such as hand wringing, "washing," or clapping; inability to talk; slowed head growth; shakiness of the torso, particularly when frightened or upset; and, if able to walk, an unsteady, stiff-legged gait or "toe-walking." Other symptoms may include breathing dysfunctions, seizures and scoliosis (curvature of the spine). For more information, see the Web site www.rettsyndrome.org.

The Rett Syndrome Group in Orange County plans a "family day" activity about every three months. The moms meet for lunch once a month in different parts of the county. For more information call Rebecca Craft at (949) 856-9320 or Susan McLaughlin at (949) 858-8411.

These Vendors Received High Marks

The following Community Care Facilities are commended for receiving excellent marks on evaluations conducted at their homes in recent months by Regional Center's Quality Assurance staff.

- ◆ Hall Family Home – Santa Ana (Adult 6-bed, Level 4I)
- ◆ Aloe Small Family Home – Huntington Beach (Children 6-bed, Level 4I)
- ◆ A.L. Home Care I – Santa Ana (Adult 6-bed, Level 2)
- ◆ Alternative Residential Services – Fullerton (Adult 6-bed, Level 4I)
- ◆ People in Progress – Yorba Linda (Adult 6-bed, Level 4A)
- ◆ LeVien #5 – Anaheim (Adults 6-bed, Level 3)

- ◆ Westview – Anaheim (Adult 6-bed, Level 2)

RCOC's Melinda Champlin commented about A.L. Home Care I, "During the full team evaluation, it was nice to observe that the consumers had many hobbies to be involved in. They also were active in menu planning, meal prep and clean up. This nice to see."

Thank you to all the service providers mentioned here for serving people with developmental disabilities with care and respect.

Welcome to New Vendors

Welcome to the following service providers that have been vendored with Regional Center of Orange County between January 1 and April 10, 2000.

- ◆ Alleluia House – Anaheim
- ◆ California Therapy Solutions – Fountain Valley
- ◆ Campina Home ICF/DD-N – Mission Viejo
- ◆ Cherub Home ICF/DD-H – Fullerton
- ◆ Childtime Children's Center – Garden Grove
- ◆ Alma P. DeGuzman Adult Residential Facility – Anaheim
- ◆ DeGuzman Homes, LLC – Garden Grove
- ◆ Elizabeth Homes – Anaheim
- ◆ Gilbert Care Home – Anaheim
- ◆ Kids View Child Care – Garden Grove
- ◆ Mainstream Supported Living – Anaheim
- ◆ Ocean Breeze ICF/DD-H – Garden Grove
- ◆ Rosart Home RFCE – Anaheim
- ◆ West County Family YMCA Child Care – Huntington Beach

CalOPTIMA Health Promotion and Wellness

Getting a Good Night's Rest: The XYZzzzs of Better Sleep

During our lifetimes, we will spend a total of about 25 years sleeping.

Why do we sleep? Sleeping is the time we spend "recharging" our minds and bodies. Most people need about 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night, but each person's sleep needs are different. How much sleep do you need? The best way to determine what's right for you is by checking how you feel during the day.

If you find yourself dozing off during the day, at meetings, while driving or when the lights are lowered, you may not be getting enough sleep or you may have a sleep problem.

How common are sleep problems?

About 36 percent of American adults reported suffering from sleep problems. Sleep problems can affect your health, safety, how productive you are, as well as the quality of your life. The most common sleep disorders are:

Insomnia: sleeplessness, restlessness, or waking up too early. Common causes of insomnia are related to stress or poor sleep habits, such as drinking too much caffeine too close to bedtime.

Sleep deprivation or lack of sleep: may be caused by long work hours, shift work, a new baby or an active social life.

Sleep apnea: is a disorder in which the sleeping person stops breathing and then awakens, sometimes accompanied with loud snoring. This can happen hundreds of times during a night. Waking up frequently during the night will cause excessive daytime sleepiness.

Narcolepsy: a condition that causes a person to have uncontrollable sleep attacks during the day, regardless of the amount or quality of their sleep the night before.

Taking care of yourself can help relieve most sleep problems. Below are some tips to help you get more restful slumber.

Tips for getting a good night's rest

- ◆ Exercise in the late afternoon or early evening to relax. Avoid exercising too close to bedtime.
- ◆ Make sure your bed, bedding and room temperature are comfortable.
- ◆ Move the clock. It will not help you sleep if you keep staring at the clock and seeing how late it is.
- ◆ Avoid heavy meals, spicy foods or foods high in sugar, alcohol, and caffeine within six hours of bedtime. Eat a bagel, banana or drink warm milk to help you relax.
- ◆ Avoid drinking fluids before bedtime.
- ◆ Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- ◆ Try relaxation to reduce stress and tension.
- ◆ Unwind and relax by reading a book, listening to music, or taking a warm bath.
- ◆ Avoid solving problems from your bed.

If you still are having trouble sleeping or if you often feel tired, cranky, tense or even depressed during the day after following the self care tips above, talk to your doctor.

Families Celebrated at RCOC's Holiday Party

December 19, 1999 marked another Family Support Holiday Party at the Anaheim Marriott attended by 450 parents and children. Jacqui Kerze, RCOC's family support coordinator, organized the festivities that included entertainment by Yahoo's Clowns, pianist Chris Jacobson, magician Devin Rosen and his assistant, Brandon Rosen. Many thanks to the following for their generous donations: Polaroid, Applause, Inc., Robert F. Driver Company Christmas Committee, Albums, Inc. of California, and Wilma Hoffman's family for the use of their heirloom Santa suit. The party could not have happened without the help of nearly 50 volunteers, which included many RCOC employees. Appreciation goes to Cathy Alcantara, George Alcantara, Nina Arrizon, Kimberly Bates, Abby Marie Brewer, Juda Carter, Jerry Carter, Elizabeth Carter, Will Carter, Francine Cazeau, Vikki Corso, Dani DiLoretta, Valerie DiLoretta, Lisa Doherty, Barbara Dominguez, Sharon Dunlap, Lori Eckenrode, Arlene Foster, Martha Garcia, Jorge Gonzalez, Naomi Hall, Hedy Hansen, Carol Kooner, Delia Lona, Ron Lona, Maria Teresa Lopez, Lena Lynch, Michael Maldonado, Nicole Meldrum, Thelma Molina, Cheri Morrisroe, Julia Pederson, Kathleen Pederson, Jogefa Rico, Carly Schneider, Jim Smith, Linda Smith, Carole Suzuki, Dennis Sweningson, Aurora Talavera, Marisol Tapia, Ginny Varju, Gloria Wildman, Jana Wilkerson, Bonnie Wilkinson, Lydia Yasukawa, and John Zeimantz.

Saddleback Students and Families Showed Generous Spirits

For the third year in a row, the students and their families at Saddleback Valley Christian School reached out in love last Christmas to South Area RCOC consumers and their families. Under the leadership of Principal Ed Carney and Project Coordinator Daria Marandola, students from kindergarten through high school as well as faculty and staff adopted 42 consumers and their families. The pupils bought gifts for entire families and helped raise money for a couple of needy families. Leanne Kieffer of RCOC's South Area office coordinated the gift requests and worked with the school.

Seven-year-old first grader Anna Karlsen said of the experience, "I was amazed that there was that much money that people sent in. It helps other people and makes me feel good." Anna and her family bought an art kit and a Barney video for Emily, age 7.

Fifth-grader Kimberly Jensen said, "I like to give gifts more than get them 'cause it makes other people happy. Because God gave me a lot, I want to give some back, and that's what the Bible says."

In addition to children, the students' generosity reached to adults with developmental disabilities, some of whom have no family of their own. One such person was John Giovannoli, 79, who delightedly welcomed eighth graders to his group home in Laguna Hills.

In all, 200 students and their families provided 1,000 gifts, along with smiles, goodwill and Christmas cheer.