



Dialogue

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Consumer Spotlight

Meri and Jennifer are 'Best Buddies'

*"A friend is a gift you give yourself."
Robert Louis Stevenson*

Do you have a best friend? Someone that you go places with and can talk to for hours about all kinds of things? Making and keeping friends can be challenging for anyone. Some people are shy, some feel uncomfortable in social situations, others don't have much free time, and still others may have specialized interests not shared by many people. Sometimes, people with developmental disabilities have a difficult time cultivating friendships, too. They may have communication or mobility limitations that hinder them from reaching out effectively to others. Maybe the people around them don't take the time to listen and get to know them.

That's why Best Buddies was created. It's a program that matches people with developmental disabilities into one-to-one friendships with peer volunteers in the community. The Best Buddies friendship incorporates the following commitment:

- Weekly contact by phone, e-mail or in person,
- One-on-one outings at least twice a month, and
- Participation in Best Buddies group outings.

Meredith Ballard and Jennifer Swanson are beneficiaries of a Best Buddies Citizens relationship. Over the past few months, as they have gotten to know one another, they have developed a genuine friendship,

which is the whole point. Merideth, nicknamed Meri, is a Regional Center consumer with cerebral palsy and mild mental retardation, and Jennifer is her community friend. They love to go shopping together, to the movies, and especially to the park to walk their dogs. They've stopped at almost every pet store they drive past.

Meri described their friendship this way, "Sometimes we go out to parks. We hang out. Problem is, we don't have any money."

But who needs money when you have good company?

As Jennifer said, "This amazing friendship I've been blessed with has touched a place in my heart I didn't know existed. I went into this volunteer program to be of service, which is supposed to be a selfless thing. It's a paradox because it seems like the less I want, the more I get in terms of happiness and fulfillment. Nothing makes me happier than seeing Meri smile. We just have a lot of fun being together."

Meri's dad, Richard, is happy for his daughter. He said, "The Best Buddies program and YMCA New Horizons keep her going.

Those two activities are the heart of Meri's social schedule. She likes Best Buddies because she and Jennifer can choose where to go. It's really been a very good program for both of them. Meri is quite pleased to have a Best Buddy, and Jennifer is a terrific gal."

Jennifer and Meri enrich each others' lives, which is what friendship is supposed to be about.

Jennifer explained, "I enjoy

seeing Meri enjoy herself. I love seeing her overcome some of her fears in social situations. I can see that she is unsure, but she does it anyway, and I applaud her for having the courage. I completely understand fear and nervousness and being uncomfortable and it gives me great hope that I could act as Meri does when faced with a new situation. I appreciate Meri's honesty, her humor and her ability to just be."

If you are or you know of a Regional Center consumer who would like to make a friend through the Best Buddies program, please contact your service coordinator for more information and for a referral. Here are the guidelines for joining Best Buddies Citizens:

- ✓ Must be age 18 or older
- ✓ It's not a mentoring or caretaking relationship
- ✓ Can't accommodate anyone with major uncontrolled mental illness
- ✓ Can't accommodate anyone who requires extensive caretaking
- ✓ If you're interested in the Best Buddies program, talk to your service coordinator about getting a referral.



'Best Buds' Jennifer Swanson (left) and Meri Ballard.

What's Inside This Issue

<i>Consumer Spotlight: Meri and Jennifer are 'Best Buddies'</i>	1
<i>LAO Report Acknowledges System Challenges</i>	2
<i>Message from the Executive Director</i>	3

Just for Consumers

<i>R.A.D.D. Review New Tele-Friends Are Waiting!</i>	4
<i>Consumer Advisory Team Update</i>	5
<i>Safety Stu's Corner - Safety Lesson: Calling 9-1-1</i>	5

Parent and Family Pages

<i>Support Group List</i>	6
<i>Have You Heard About Camp TLC?</i>	7
<i>Sonicare Electric Toothbrushes Offered to Consumers</i>	7
<i>Education Corner: What's the IDEA?</i>	7

Other Features

<i>Chante White: New CalOPTIMA Community Liaison</i>	8
<i>Martinez Family Thankful for New Van Lift</i>	8
<i>Long-Term Caregiver Tax Credit Available</i>	9
<i>Earned Income Tax Credit May Be Available to You</i>	9
<i>Pathways to Adventure Event</i>	10
<i>Important Things to Know</i>	11

Report from the RCOC Legislative Committee

LAO Report Acknowledges System Challenges

By Holly Nogales, vice president, RCOC board of directors

I hope you read Bill Bowman's message on page 3. In it he explains the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) assessment of where the state could cut back on funding for developmental services in order to prevent the impending budget deficit of approximately \$17 billion.

What I found significant about the LAO report was the recognition that the regional centers' mandate and funding are out of synch. The report states,

The cost of operating regional centers (RCs) ... have more than doubled since 1995-96, from \$943 million to more than \$2 billion, driven up by multiple factors, including annual caseload and cost adjustments for service entitlements, a decline in federal waiver support, and an absence of statewide service standards. Despite

this rapid growth in expenditures, some RCs are having financial problems and some communities may be facing shortages of certain services. The Governor's budget includes a modest proposal to reduce RC spending but does not address fundamental fiscal problems with the RC system. In this review, we propose some initial steps the Legislature could take to achieve additional savings in RC programs that could be used either to slow General Fund
See Legislative, page 3

State Budget Debate Continues

By Bill Bowman

The implications of the state budget crisis for people with developmental disabilities are starting to reveal themselves.



Shortly after the special winter edition of Dialogue came out in February, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released a review of the Governor's proposed budget for 2002-2003 that includes options and recommendations for addressing the state's fiscal problem. If you would like to read the LAO review of the proposed state budget, you can find it on the Internet at www.lao.ca.gov.

It is now expected by many sources that the range by which California's revenues will fall short of planned expenditures in the coming fiscal year will be about \$17 to \$20 billion. That magnitude of a deficit is going to require either raising taxes or cutting public services, or both.

I want to draw your attention to several options that were identified in the Health and Social Services program area that, if implemented, would mean major changes to the Lanterman Act.

First, let me emphasize that these items are presented by the LAO only as possible options that would reduce costs to the state. At this point, the LAO has not indicated a position either supporting or opposing implementation of these options, and legislation to change the Lanterman Act would be required to make them reality. That said, these alternatives

are now on paper, and the state legislature and the Governor will be scrutinizing all possible expenditures.

One very positive recommendation that the LAO is making is that the state take advantage of additional federal funding made available through the Home and Community Based Waiver program. This would increase reimbursement from the federal government for services to certain people with developmental disabilities that qualify for the program.

The LAO report also acknowledges the financial difficulties that the community system is experiencing and suggests that the increased federal funds could be reinvested into the regional center system to strengthen community services: Of course, it might be preferable to the Governor and Legislature to use the savings to address the state's current fiscal shortfall.

The options that were presented to achieve cost savings include increasing the monthly fee paid by parents of children under age 18 who receive 24-hour residential care, implementing a share of cost for respite services and possibly for other services such as speech therapy and behavior management, and setting a maximum annual limit on respite hours. Remember, these are only options, and much discussion would have to occur in order that such changes would become law.

I'm presenting this information to try to keep you informed about how the activities of our state government in Sacramento may affect the lives of the people we at RCOC serve.

For a parent's perspective on this issue, please read RCOC Board member and parent Holly Nogales' column on page 2.

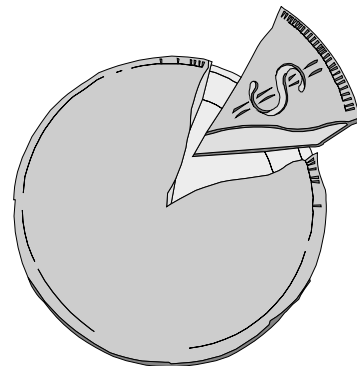
Legislative (from page 2)

spending on RCs or to reinvest in the RC system.

In an analytical fashion, the report basically says what we in the developmental disabilities community have been saying for several years: that the community has been having to "make do" with tighter and tighter margins and services are suffering as a result. It was encouraging to me that the Leg Analyst proffered the idea of investing any savings or additional federal dollars into the community system as an alternative to using those monies to bolster the state budget.

As for the options presented by the LAO that involve cost sharing by families who could afford it, perhaps that's a necessary compromise in order to retain fundamental services. Although it's unlikely that any such scenario will materialize during this legislative session or even the next, California's uncertain fiscal future makes these possibilities food for thought. Personally, as a parent, I would certainly be willing to carry part of the load in order to maintain or even improve vital community services for my son.

In any case, it will be interesting to observe the turn of events in the coming months as our Governor and legislators grapple with a huge fiscal problem while campaigning for re-election. If a call to action is needed, we at RCOC will notify you, probably before July 1, since that is when the new fiscal year is set to begin.



R.A.D.D. Review

New Tele-Friends Are Waiting to Hear from 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 for the form you need.

Several new people have signed up to become Tele-Friends, so read about them here. If you would like to talk to any of the people listed, call (714) 796-5270. We will send you a roster of RCOG consumers who have placed ads. You must be a Regional Center consumer or parent to respond.

Daryl of Anaheim ... “I am a 40-year-old woman and I like watching movies, listening to music, making greeting cards on my computer, working in my puzzle book, and going bowling. I work at a restaurant and live with a roommate.”

Rebecca of Brea ... “I am 23 and I enjoy listening to music, watching movies, using my computer, shopping, going to amusement parks, and talking on the phone. I work at McDonald’s and live with my family.”

Tammy of Costa Mesa ... “I like watching movies and having fun. I like to play video games. I live to go to Disneyland. I like to ride my bike, go to the malls, and go bowling. I’d like to meet somebody with a car. I work at Marshall’s in the clothes department and I also stock picture frames. I am 42 years old, live in an apartment and take the bus.”

Marian of Costa Mesa ... “I like cooking, TV, music, reading, going out to eat, bowling with family and friends, shopping, and talking. I work assembling packages. I’m 49 and live independently.”

Jackson of Costa Mesa ... “I like to go to the movies and go out for dinner once in

a while. I also like to take walks, go window shopping, go bowling, watch baseball, and go fishing. I would like to have friends. I’m 55 years old and live in my own apartment.”

Daniel of Fullerton ... “I like to listen to music and watch movies, and I also like to cook. I like riding my bike, swimming, bowling, fishing, weight lifting, and talking on the phone. I like going to amusement parks, roller-skating, and am looking for a girlfriend. I work in customer service in the hardware department at Home Depot. I’m 27 and have my own apartment.”

Tina of Garden Grove ... “I am 44 years old. I like to write letters, walk, do puzzles, listen to country and hard rock music, cook, watch video movies, sing, go horseback riding and swim. I like to go bowling every Saturday, and I do outside roller-skating and western dancing. I go to Creative Identity and live with a roommate.”

Consumer Advisory Team Update

By Sam Durbin, president

The Consumer Advisory Team (CAT) is busy these days. Michael Bailey and I have been invited to speak at the People First conference in Sacramento this June. The title of this year's conference is "Walk and Roll into 2002." Michael and I will use "We Believe We Can Fly" as our theme to talk about self-determination and independence.

The team is holding several fund raisers to sponsor as many team members as possible to go to the conference. We are selling candy bars for \$1.00 each, and we held a pancake breakfast at the Integrity House clubhouse on April 6. Yum!

After the March meeting, team members participated in the Project

GET SAFE training at RCO. It's a great way to learn how to protect yourself, like what to do if someone is following you. The instructor, Stu Haskin, really gets everyone involved and shows you self-defense movements. He makes it fun so it's easier to learn. Be sure to read Safety Stu's safety lesson about calling 911 on this page.

What do you think about that picture of good looking people in this column? That's the CAT team! Wouldn't you like to be part of a great



CAT Team Members, front, from left: Molly Van Norman, Joey Bilow, Kevin Tremelling, Mary Ayres, Maria Garza. Back, from left: Sharon O'Keefe, Peter Settas, Virginia Rangel, Kathy McCrystal, Michael Bailey, Sam Durbin, Michelle Sieloff.

Safety Stu's Corner

Safety Lesson: Calling 9-1-1

Hi Safety Friends, this is Safety Stu, and in this month's Safety Corner, we will learn about calling 9-1-1. Before

I tell you more about 911, I have a story to tell you about a member of the Orange County Regional Center family who showed courage in an emergency. John Canada was visiting an elderly friend when the person fell and could not get up. John called his mother, who instructed him to call 9-1-1. When the ambulance arrived, John flagged it down. He stayed calm until help arrived and the person was safe. Yea, John!



Well, let's get back to 9-1-1. When can we use it? We can use 911 if we are hurt, lost or scared. For example, if I went to the park with my buddy but lost him, and especially if I didn't know how to get home, then I could call 911 and tell them that I was lost. Once you call 911, stay on the phone until help arrives, and don't hang up. If you happen to call 911 from your home and are afraid to speak because someone may hear you, then just set the phone down and the 911 operator will send help.

It is very important to remember that we only use 911 in an emergency and not for fun. If you call 911 as a joke you can get in trouble, but more important than that, someone who needs help may not get it. So, if I am bored on a Friday night, can I call 911 to say hi? NO! If I am hurt, need help and no one is around, can I call 911? YES.

team of consumers? We have fun at our monthly meetings and plan some great activities. The next CAT meeting will be Wednesday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Call Betty Bath at (714) 796-5263 to make a reservation and get the location. You'll be glad you did. Whatever you decide about CAT, I want to wish you well and God bless you!

Kristen Spadanuta submitted the safety question of the month. She wrote, "Dear Safety Stu, what do you do if you come home and your door is open?" That is an excellent question, Kristen. First, never go inside. Second, go to a neighbor's house and ask them to call the police so they can walk through your house and make sure it is safe. Remember that it is better to be safe than sorry. Kristen, for your question, you will receive the special GET SAFE T-shirt.

If you have a safety question, write to me at Safety Stu, c/o Regional Center of Orange County, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702. If I use your question in Safety Stu's Corner, I will send you a GET SAFE T-shirt, absolutely free.

Until next time, Safety Stu signing off!



Parent/Support Groups *Grupos para Padres*

For meeting times and locations, see the monthly RCOC Community Calendar that comes in the mail to you, or call the group contact or Jacqui Kerze at RCOC, (714) 796-5299.

- ❖ **A Touch of Love** - For limb deficient children and their families. (800) 493-5462. Hablamos español
- ❖ **Ain't Misbehavin'** - A support network of parents interested in exchanging information on behavioral issues. Call (714) 889-7260
- ❖ **Asperger Syndrome** - Contact Caroline Wilson, (562) 425-2292 or South County call (949) 454-6302
- ❖ **Autism Support Groups** - Huntington Beach area, contact Leaza Howe, (714) 841-6766; North County, contact Paula Peterson, (714) 288-9005; South County, contact Beverly Lee, (949) 249-9277; Newly diagnosed autism, contact (310) 543-0662 (Long Beach area)
- ❖ **Cerebral Palsy** - For info. & support, meetings & groups, contact Family Support Services at UCPA, (714) 557-1291
- ❖ **Chinese Parent Support Group for the Disabled** - Contact Kitty Tsan at (949) 588-0123
- ❖ **Circle of Support** - A monthly meeting for consumers, parents and assistants. Contact Gary and Claudia Eien, (714) 648-4185
- ❖ **CLASP (California League of Angelman Syndrome Parents)** - Contact Katie Hendren, (714) 962-4152
- ❖ **Compassionate Friends** - For parents who have experienced the loss of a child. Call Roy Redman, (714) 993-6708
- ❖ **DADS' Group** - For fathers of children with autism and related disorders. Call Norm Booth, (714) 961-1315
- ❖ **Family Visions** - For parents of visually impaired children. Contact Karin Crilly, (714) 573-8880, ext. 109
- ❖ **Fathers Support Network** - Contact Jeff Braun at the Family Support Network, (714) 543-7600
- ❖ **First Evangelical Free Church Disabilities Ministry** - Contact Connie Hutchinson, (714) 529-5544
- ❖ **Fragile X Group** - For parents or family members of people with Fragile X. Contact Sali Farber at (714) 544-9551
- ❖ **Friendship Ministries** - Christian group at Orange County Worship Center for teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities; call the church at (714) 547-9631
- ❖ **Guys and Gals Group** - A recreational group for adult consumers. Contact Lena Lynch, (714) 796-5213 or Jacqui Kerze, (714) 796-5299
- ❖ **Hearts United Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (HUG)** - Contact Irene Kontz, (714) 636-5430
- ❖ **Mitochondrial Disease Group** - Call Sherry Clitheroe, (714) 968-9373 or Lissa Mirand, (562) 920-9981
- ❖ **Mom's Group** - For moms of children with autism in North Orange County. Contact Jill Riley, (714) 288-1566
- ❖ **Moving on at 3 Parent Group** - To support and educate parents of children transitioning from Early Start services. Contact RCOC's John Zeimantz at (714) 796-5339
- ❖ **Non-Ketotic Hyperglycinemia (NKH) Family Support Group** - Contact Tammy L. Hanna (714) 444-4454
- ❖ **One In A Million Kids** - For parents of children with rare or undiagnosed disorders. Call Georgia or Gary Freedman-Harvey, (310) 588-2562 – not a support group but does assist over the phone
- ❖ **Orange County Parents of Disabled Multiples** - Contact Bree Dennis at (909) 734-3616
- ❖ **Parent Connection** - To connect with other parents of RCOC consumers (Eng., Spanish & Vietnamese), call (888) FRC-BABY
- ❖ **Parents of Kids with Epilepsy** - A support group. Contact Mary Repp at (949) 462-1927
- ❖ **P.R.O.U.D. - Parents Regional Outreach for Understanding Downs** - Support for parents of children with Down syndrome. (714) 547-2895
- ❖ **Rett Syndrome Group** - Contact Rebecca Craft, (949) 856-9320 or Susan McLaughlin, (949) 858-8411
- ❖ **Sibshop** - Workshop for siblings ages 8-13 of children with special needs. Call Kathleen McFarlin, (714) 557-1291
- ❖ **Single Parent Group** - For single parents of children with special needs. Contact Jacqui Kerze, (714) 796-5299
- ❖ **Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK)** - Educational assistance and support for parents of children to ages 3 to 22. Call (714) 533-TASK (8275)
- ❖ **Tuberous Sclerosis** - Support group for families. Contact Lee Ann Addison for more information, (949) 495-7126
- ❖ **Vietnamese Parent Support Group** - Contact Queenie Hoang at (714) 557-1291; pager number (714) 664-6899
- ❖ **Williams Syndrome** - Support for families of people with Williams Syndrome. Call Darlene Ginnett, (562) 598-5559

Grupos En Español

- ❖ **Grupo de Autismo Angeles** - Para más información llame a Gloria y Jose Hernandez, (714) 995-1955
 - ❖ **Grupo Arcoiris Síndrome de Down** - Para más información llame a Maria Piceno, (714) 558-5400
 - ❖ **Hacia Los 3 Años...Transición** - Un grupo de padres con niños recibiendo Servicios de Intervencion Temprana Para Educacion y Apoyo durante el proceso de transición. Para más información llame a Consuela Morales (714) 685-5514
 - ❖ **Noche de las Madres** - Para más información llame a Barbara Dominguez (714) 998-4912
 - ❖ **Nuevos Horizontes** - Para más información llame a Barbara Dominguez, (714) 998-4912
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Have You Heard About Camp TLC?

Camp TLC (Teaching Loving Care) is a get-away weekend held each summer for families of children from six months to 36 months old who have special needs. This year, the 11th annual Camp TLC will be held July 26-28 at the Oak Glen Christian Conference Center in Yucaipa.

At Camp TLC parents attend educational and inspirational workshops, network with other parents and the speakers, and relax in a beautiful mountain environment. The conference speakers include parents, professionals and people with disabilities. Workshop topics may cover speech, behavior, therapy and/or medical issues. Fun events and activities for the whole family are always included. Cheerful volunteers pamper children and parents alike with tender, loving care.

Here are some comments from parents who attended Camp TLC last year about what they liked best.

“Being able to talk to Dr. Gary for almost an hour and getting his input as both parent and provider. I felt very cared for and very encouraged... a real servant attitude.”

“The speakers and the craft time for women!”

“Dads group was helpful.”
“Getting away!!! Being served meals. Connecting with other families!”

Camp TLC is a collaborative effort of many individuals and organizations under the leadership of Linda Smith, executive director of Family Support Network. Regional Center of Orange County is a major sponsor of the camp, and each year many RCOE employees donate their weekend to work at the camp.

The only cost is an application fee of \$25 which may be waived if a family is experiencing extreme financial hardship.

For more information and an application, please contact Family Support Network at (714) 543-7600. We hope you will take advantage of this restful and informational opportunity.



Sonicare Electric Toothbrushes Offered to Consumers

The Regional Center made a one-time purchase of Sonicare electric toothbrushes to assist its consumers in maintaining good dental health. The brushes, made by Philips Oral Healthcare, Inc., are suitable for children or adults. They have a retail value of about \$80 each and are being offered at no charge to RCOE consumers.

Last year RCOE provided Sonicare toothbrushes to consumers who receive residential services from group homes, intermediate care facilities and independent/supported living programs, and now we are offering them to consumers of any age who live at home with their families.

To obtain one of these toothbrushes for your child or family member with a developmental disability, you will need to come to the Comfort Connection Family Resource Center, located at RCOE's Santa Ana office, 801 Civic Center Drive West, during the week of June 10 – 14. Comfort Connection will be open between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday that week and from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 12. An instructional videotape will be available for viewing, and parking will be validated.

You do not need to call ahead to register, but we ask that when you come to pick up a toothbrush, please check in with the Comfort Connection receptionist, Patricia Arnold, and be prepared to give your child's name and birthdate.

A limited supply of the toothbrushes is available, so they are being offered on a first come, first served basis.

Education Corner

What's The IDEA?

By Juda Carter, M.A.
RCOE Education Training and Standards Coordinator

IDEA is federal legislation that guarantees a free and appropriate public education to all students with disabilities. Prior to 1975 when this landmark legislation was passed, students with disabilities had no right to educational services in the public system. Now all

children with disabilities have a right to public education services in the least restrictive environment. This column will provide highlights of this law as it applies to children in Special Education.

This month's highlight is the IEP, or Individualized Education Plan. Every student who is eligible for Special Education services has an Individualized Education Plan developed to meet their individual needs. Parents are active participants in this process.

See IDEA, page 11

Chanté White Becomes Community Liaison with CalOPTIMA



Many of you are familiar with CalOPTIMA's regional center community liaison. In the past you may have spoken with Lena

Lynch. A few months ago, Lena was promoted to supervisor of the community liaison program at CalOPTIMA. On December 26, 2001, Chanté White joined the team as the new regional center community liaison. She has worked in managed care for about 10 years and has a bachelor's degree in social work.

Chanté is the liaison between RCOC consumers who are CalOPTIMA members and the various health networks, such as Blue

Cross, Arta and UCI. She can help with the authorization process for various services such as wheelchair requests, diaper issues, referrals to specialists, and prescriptions.

Chanté said, "My main focus is RCOC consumers who are members of CalOPTIMA. I connect the dots with access issues. If someone has a delay in services or care, or if a patient needs a referral to a specialist, I can help facilitate the process. For instance, I got a call recently from a mom looking for a dentist who works with people with developmental disabilities. Another question I received was from someone looking for a psychologist familiar with people with autism."

One thing Chanté encourages CalOPTIMA members to do is attend the new member orientation, which is held at the CalOPTIMA office in Orange once a month. The orientation is only about an hour long, it is held in English, Spanish and Vietnamese, and is invaluable for educating

members about how the CalOPTIMA system works, benefits available, and the prescription process. Every meeting is made fun with refreshments and a drawing for prizes like movie tickets.

Another important tip from Chanté is to read the literature provided to members. Chanté said, "If members read the information, [navigating the system is] not that much of a mystery." CalOPTIMA provides a pharmaceutical brochure, provider directory and vision plan brochure.

Chanté shared, "I am really blessed to be here. It's amazing to see the dedication everyone has for consumers. Even though I'm with CalOPTIMA, I feel part of Regional Center. I feel we're all working together in unison to help the consumers, to ensure their independence and health care. As we go along, the consumers help and teach us, too." You can reach Chanté at (714) 796-5213.

Martinez Family Thankful for New Van Lift

It takes Raul and Marcella Martinez two to three hours to get their daughter, Gina, a Regional Center consumer who has cerebral palsy, ready to go out. When their old van lift stopped functioning, it became nearly impossible to take Gina anywhere. Then, their Service Coordinator Bonnie Wilkinson heard about a new motorized lift being donated, and she put in a request for Gina's family.

The lift became available when the City of Orange Firefighters Union Local 2384 bought a used van to take to fund raisers and special events in the city. The union had no need for the lift that came mounted to the rear of the van, so Union President Richard Alarcon notified the membership that the union wanted to donate the lift to someone who could put it to good use. Arson Investigator Keith Marshall connected with RCOC and soon Gina had mobility again. The union also paid about \$800 to have the lift installed in the Martinez van.

Raul said, "They helped me all the way around. Bonnie is the one who arranged everything for us. Now I can help others, too. We have a lot of experience with handicapped people, and I'm willing to take them places they need to go."



Above: RCOC Service Coordinator Bonnie Wilkinson



Pictured above, left to right: Tom Groseclose, division chief fire marshall; Keith Marshall, arson investigator; Raul Martinez, Gina Martinez, and Marcella Martinez.

Long-Term Caregiver Tax Credit Available

California's long-term caregivers filing tax year 2001 returns may be able to reduce their state income taxes by \$500 for each individual they cared for. This article answers common questions you may have about this long-term care credit.

How do I qualify?

To qualify, you, your spouse, or your dependent must require long-term care. The person receiving the care must meet age-related long-term care requirements, must be in a specified relationship with you, and must have a physician's certification to verify long-term care needs. In addition, your California adjusted gross income for the tax year must be less than \$100,000.

What are the age-related long-term care requirements?

There are three distinct age groups for this credit: under two years old, two to five years old, and six years or older. Each age group has specific long-term care requirements.

Under two years old

To qualify, the child must require **one** of the following:

Specific durable medical equipment because of a severe health condition, **OR** a skilled practitioner trained to address the child's condition if the parents or guardians are absent.

At least two but less than six years old

To qualify, the child must be unable, due to a loss of functional capacity, to perform (without substantial assistance from another person) at least **two** of these three activities: eating, transferring, or mobility.

Six years of age or older

To qualify, the person must require **one** of the following:

- Substantial assistance from another individual to perform at least three defined activities of daily living (bathing, eating, continence, toileting,

dressing, transferring) due to a loss of functional capacity.

- Substantial supervision to protect himself or herself from threats to health and safety due to severe cognitive impairment.

The person must also be unable to perform at least one defined activity of daily living.

If you have questions regarding these requirements, you may want to discuss them with your qualifying individual's physician.

What are the requirements for a physician's certification?

The physician's certification is a signed statement from the physician stating that the individual has long-term care needs that will last for at least 180 consecutive days.

To be eligible for the 2001 tax year, a portion of the period during which a physician certified the individual as having long-term care needs must have occurred during 2001. Also, to be eligible for the 2001 tax year, a physician must have signed the certification sometime between January 1, 1999 and April 15, 2002 and in subsequent years, the starting and ending dates will increase by one year.

What if I do not have a physician's certification?

You must have a written physician's certification to claim this credit. If you don't have the certification, be sure to request one from your qualifying individual's physician by April 15, 2002.

How do I apply?

When preparing your California income tax return, complete California form FTB 3504, Long-Term Care Credit. Just follow the step-by-step instructions provided with the form to determine how much you will save on your state income tax.

Information from the California Franchise Tax Board.

Earned Income Tax Credit May Be Available to You

Earned income tax credit (EIC) is a special credit for low- to moderate-income workers that can reduce taxes, and in most cases, result in an increased income tax refund. EIC is available for certain people who work and have earned income for 2001 under \$32, 121. People who qualify for the credit may even receive more money back than they paid in taxes. Qualifying workers may be eligible to receive up to \$4,000. Even if you have already filed your tax return, if you think you are eligible for EIC, you can file an amended return to claim the credit.

The six basic rules that apply to everyone are:

1. You must have a valid social security number.
 2. Your filing status cannot be "Married filing separately."
 3. You must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien all year.
 4. You cannot file Form 2555 (relating to foreign earned income).
 5. Your investment income must be \$2,450 or less.
 6. You must have earned income.
- Also, to receive EIC, you must file a tax return, even if you know you owe no taxes.

Earned income credit has no effect on certain welfare benefits, among them Medicaid, supplemental security income (SSI), and low-income housing.

There are several additional rules governing the EIC, so it's important to consult with a tax expert or carefully follow the guidelines in the IRS Publication 596, available by calling the IRS at (800) 829-3676 or online at www.irs.gov. Free tax assistance is available to consumers through VITA – see "Important Things to Know" on page 11.

Maybe what your Family really needs... is some fresh air!!



What is it?

A one day, interactive, multi- station tour designed to help families and children learn how to enjoy the outdoors through camping and fishing.

Learn the basics of camping: tents, backpacking, orienteering & where to go

Learn the basics of fishing: gear, baits, fish identification & where to go

When you finish the first eight stations, you will learn to cast and have a chance to catch a fish!

When:

Saturday, May 18, 2002

Where:

Mile Square Park-Shelter #10

16801 Euclid St
Fountain Valley, CA 92708



Time:

9:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Who:

Developmentally disabled youth
(ages 5 thru adult) and their families. All attendees
must be accompanied by an adult or companion!
Free lunch to all who attend!!!

Reservations: Call the Regional Center at (714) 796-5314

Please be aware that photographers and media representatives may be present at the event. If you would not like your child or family photographed, please let them know!!

Charter Program Sponsors

Shimano	Berkley Trilene	Wenzel	Pepsi	Pure Fishing
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Masterbuilt	Media Directions	Totally Themed		Red Wolf
Southern California Marine Association				

This event brought to you by: The Regional Center of Orange County
Area Board XI

Must bring flyer to park free in the park!

Important Things to Know...

Free Income Tax assistance...

The Internal Revenue Service offers free tax assistance to Orange County residents through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE). Volunteers prepare federal and state income tax returns for low income individuals and families, senior citizens, physically challenged, and non-English-speaking taxpayers. Contact your Regional Center service coordinator for a list of the sites. Information on the locations changes constantly, so please call the site before you go to verify that it is open at the times and dates listed. Consumers who have worked and had taxes taken out of their checks should file a tax return. Consumers may be eligible for an earned income credit. VITA and TCE volunteers are trained to assist people in claiming Earned Income Credit.

RCOC Recreation Resource

Guide... the fourth edition for consumers is now available through the Comfort Connection Family Resource Center. The Recreation Resource Guide provides specific information about recreational activities in all areas of Orange County for all ages of children and adults. Some activities

are geared particularly for people with disabilities and some are community programs that welcome people with disabilities. The requested donation for the Recreation Resource Guide is \$3.00 to help cover printing costs. To obtain your copy of the Recreation Resource Guide, please call Comfort Connection Family Resource Center at (714) 558-5400 or send your request to Regional Center of Orange County, Attention: Jacqui Kerze, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702-2010. If you are including the requested donation, please make your check or money order payable to RCOC.

E-mail at RCOC... RCOC now has external e-mail capabilities, so if you would like to correspond electronically with your service coordinator or someone else at RCOC, you can now do so. The e-mail address consists of the person's first initial, last name, plus @rcocdd.com. For example, for fictional employee Jane Doe, the e-mail address would be jdoe@rcocdd.com.

List of Dentists available... Regional Center of Orange County recently surveyed local dentists to

compile a list of providers who have special interest or skill in caring for people with disabilities. This list includes names, addresses, phone numbers, languages spoken, and information about the types of insurance accepted. To obtain this list, please contact Patricia Arnold, information specialist at Comfort Connection Family Resource Center at (714) 558-5400.

Coastal guidebook for wheelchair

users... A new resource available in the Comfort Connection Family Resource Center is the Coastwalk and Coastal Conservancy guidebook to assist wheelchair users to enjoy the Orange and L.A. County coasts. The 106-page guidebook highlights the beautiful and interesting places along the California coast that are now easily accessible to wheelchair users and others with limited mobility. It is possible to view tidepool life up close, ride wheelchairs with balloon tires across the sand and explore trails and wetlands, to name just a few of the fun activities available. To obtain this free guide, please contact Patricia Arnold at Comfort Connection at (714) 558-5400 or call Coastwalk at (800) 550-6854 or visit online at www.coastwalk.org.

IDEA (from page 7)

IEPs are developed annually to address student needs. However, a parent may request an IEP at any time and the district must schedule that meeting within thirty (30) days. Be sure and put those requests in writing! For more information on IDEA check out these Web sites: www.ideapractices.org and www.nichy.org. Regional Center

service coordinators also receive training on student and parent rights under IDEA. Don't hesitate to contact your service coordinator with more specific questions regarding your son or daughter. Check out this column in the next Dialogue for another tidbit on IDEA.



Board of Directors 2001 - 2002

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2001-2002 Board Meetings:

May 2 ❖ June 6

*The board of directors meets at 6:00 p.m. at 801 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana.
The public is welcome.*

The Regional Center of Orange County has four locations to serve you:

Orange Office

3111 N. Tustin Street, Suite 150
24-hour phone no.: (714) 685-5555
TDD: (714) 685-5575

San Juan Capistrano Office

26311 Junipero Serra Road, Ste. 180
24-hour phone no.: (949) 234-8800
TDD: (949) 488-3399

Santa Ana Office

801 Civic Center Dr. West
24-hour phone no.: (714) 796-5100
TDD: (714) 667-6021

Westminster Office

13950 Milton Ave., Suite 200
24-hour phone no.: (714) 889-7200
TDD: (714) 889-7234

RCOC Web site: www.rcocdd.com

*Dialogue is normally published four times per year for consumers, families, service providers, and members of the community by the Regional Center of Orange County. We welcome your ideas, contributions and suggestions. Please send all correspondence to: **Karen Taylor**, Dialogue Editor, Regional Center of Orange County, P.O. Box 22010, Santa Ana, CA 92702 or call her at (714) 796-5208.*

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*The Regional Center of
Orange County is a nonprofit,
private agency that contracts with
the California Department of
Developmental Services to provide
services to individuals with
developmental disabilities.*

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Look for Tele-Friends on page 4!

R.A.D.D. Review

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