

www.sdrc.org



THE SDRC. REPORT

To serve and empower persons with developmental disabilities and their families to achieve their goals with community partners.

PBS To Spotlight Story Behind The ADA

by Shaun Heasley | March 17, 2025

A documentary about the decades-long fight for disability rights culminating in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act is set to premiere.

The film **"Change, Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act"** follows the twists and turns of a grassroots movement that pushed Congress to mandate curb cuts, ramps and much more to allow people with disabilities access to American life.

Relying on archival footage and interviews with activists, lawmakers and other key players, the onehour film chronicles how the disability rights movement organized and took to the streets to lobby for the ADA in the face of strong opposition. Things came to a head with the "Capitol Crawl," when people with disabilities including many wheelchair users dragged themselves up the steps of the U.S. Capitol, leading to the 1990 signing of the ADA.

"I think the message of this film is that civil rights for people with disabilities are just as important as the rights that everyone either has or should have in our society," said the film's director, Jim LeBrecht.

May 2025

Employee Spotlight	2, 3, 8, 10
Leading the Charge	4
Client Services Leaders	5
Social Showcase	6
Master Plan	7
Mission Moments, Employee of Distinction	9
Family Vendor Resource Fair-Save the Date	11
Social Work Appreciation Month	12- 14
Backpack Referrals	15
Birthdays, Anniversaries	16- 17
May Events, Advocacy with Purpose Award	18
Leap Training	19
Tributes, Zoo Picnic	20

Meet Deborah Hodge,

Office Manager

About Deborah

How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?

I have been with the agency 26 years in April. I'm an Office Manager for the South Bay Office. I spent from 2016 – 2019 as the Office Manager for KMSG at the Main, from April 2019 to present back in South Bay Office.

Why did you get into this business?

At the time I was looking for an Office Manager job close to home because two of my sons were still in school. I answered an ad in the want ads. At the time I applied I didn't know much about what Regional Centers did. Now I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. It is very rewarding knowing I have a part in helping our clients/families.

Tell us about one of your best days at work

My best day would be a day where I am able to finish my to do list without interruptions or any issues to deal with.

Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?

I was born in Berkley, CA and raised in San Diego. I'm the only child from my parents. I have two younger half sisters from my father's other marriages.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

My hobby is quilting, so I look forward to spending time in my sewing room. I also like spending time with my family and traveling.

Do you play or watch any sports?

I do not play any sports. I did play some volleyball in high school. I enjoy going to baseball, football and hockey games in person. I'm not really a fan of watching sports on TV.

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

Raising three boys to be productive, good men and being happily married to their father for almost 42 years.



Who is the funniest person you know?

Theresa Castel De Oro – She cracks me up! My co-workers Emilia and Joey are also funny.

What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

Being honest/trustworthy. That they not only listen, but actually hear what you say.

How many kids/grandkids do you have?

I have 3 adult sons and I have a 16 year old grandson, and a 9 (going on 39) year old granddaughter.

Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why?

I'd like to go to Ireland, England, Spain, Italy and Tahiti. I've always wanted to see these places.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Others can only steal your joy if you let them.

What's your favorite quote?

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take"-Wayne Gretzky and "Dreams only work if you do"- Unknown

Tell us one thing people would be surprised to know about you?

I'm pretty much an open book, the only thing that comes to mind is that Kathi Rubio and I have been best friends for almost 60 years. We definitely consider ourselves family.

Meet Kathi Rubio, Purchasing Coordinator

About Kathi

How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?

I have been here for 26 years hired in 1999 in the POS department paying vendor bills. I transferred over to the Accounting Department as one of the Accounting Coordinators. After many years there I transferred to the Facilities department as the Purchasing Coordinator. My position wears many hats, purchasing office supplies, ordering and keeping track of varies ergonomic supplies needed for staff, helping with the maintenance and upkeep of our various locations and keeping track of our items that need to be tracked for inventory.

Why did you get into this business?

I was told about the job opening in Business Services by my best friend Deborah Hodge who said there was a job opportunity in Accounts Payable. I was interviewed and hired in 1999.

Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?

I was born and raised in San Diego where I lived in Paradise Hills since I was 4 years old with my Mom, Dad and Brother. When I moved in the house in 1965, I met my best friend/sister who lived next door, Deborah Hodge. I also raised my three sons in that same house before we sold it in 2014.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to garden, find fun craft projects to do, go camping, travel and spend time with my three grandchildren.

Do you play or watch any sports?

I don't play any sports but I have always enjoyed football since going to Aztec games with my Dad who had season tickets for many years. I'm always up to watch a football game and have hosted Superbowl parties for years.

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

Raising my three boys to be great and responsible men that have careers, families and take care of themselves and push themselves to become better people.



Who is the funniest person you know?

Richard Hodge (Deborah Hodge's husband), he has some off the wall humor that is not expected!

Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why?

I want to take my husband back to England and Paris. In 2007 I traveled with my friend and her daughters' French class as a chaperone on a trip there and feel in love with the old architecture, culture and food.

What is the best advice you ever received?

My mom never really told me this I just observed her to always welcome people in any situation and make them feel comfortable and happy. So that is what I try to do in my life.

What's your favorite quote?

"Life is like a Camera, focus on what's important, capture good times, develop from the negatives and if things don't work out, take another shot at it"

If I could build a dream home where would it be?

I would build a home in the mountains of Oregon somewhere by a like or stream. I would have a fireplace, with a big deck around the house that overlooks the tall trees and mountains. I would love to drink a glass of wine on my deck and listen to the birds and observe any wildlife nearby.



Are you feeling inspired after last month's Leading the Charge conference?

Over 300 familiar faces shared their expertise and experience as individuals with developmental disabilities and those who advocate and provide support. The event brought a renewed passion to support our amazing community.











The Client Services Leadership Team Embodies The Theme of Compassion and Action

Our managers strive to advocate for the individuals and families we serve. They offer ideas and solutions to improve our procedures and practices and are actively involved in work groups, both internally and within our community. They are ambassadors for change and improvement of service delivery for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The primary role they embrace is serving the service coordinators. They provide guidance, vision, and support to their teams. Managers share their knowledge and empower their staff. They are also caring and present when things are hard. We are proud to work with smart, talented, caring and selfless leaders who are invested in supporting their teams and exemplifying the agency mission and vision. - Gabriella Ohmstede



Thank you for leading with heart!



Introducing Quentin

As an artist, video game enthusiast, and is a total pop music fan, Quentin is full of talent and creativity. Quentin's mother, Shelly, shared that having a strong support system is everything to her as a parent of a child with autism. **"It's given hope. It assures me that I'm not alone, that there's more families and kiddos like us."** SDRC has helped her feel seen and never alone on her and Quentin's journey.





0 (in (f)

You can watch Quentin's story here.

Check out more videos and stories about our clients:

MASTER PLAN

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES



Master Plan presentation at the Capitol. Secretary Johnson, Mark R. Klaus, Marty Omoto, Joe Perales (El ARC) and Kisha Weller.

The Master Plan for Developmental Services is a community-led roadmap designed to transform how California supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Developed through a year-long collaborative process, it brings together the voices of selfadvocates, families, service providers, and policy experts. The plan reflects the lived experiences of people who rely on developmental services and outlines a vision for a future where these services are consistent, equitable, and accessible. regardless of a person's background, location, or level of need.

By centering the expertise of those who are impacted, the plan ensures that real-world,

challenges and opportunities are addressed with care and intention. At the heart of the Master Plan is a commitment to personcentered care that empowers individuals with I/DD to make their own choices and lead selfdirected lives.

It includes comprehensive recommendations aimed at creating inclusive communities, strengthening the direct service workforce, and improving coordination across state systems. The plan also emphasizes the importance of complete accountability and transparency to ensure lasting impact.

Ultimately, the Master Plan offers an Unequivocal path forward, one that values dignity, respect, and opportunity for all Californians with developmental disabilities.



Meet Sharlene Diaz,

Service Coordinator

About Sharlene

How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?

I have been working at the regional center for a little over one year. I just celebrated my anniversary in January. I am a service coordinator in the South Bay office in Unit 39.

Why did you get into this business?

I am passionate about helping people reach their goals and accomplishments.

Tell us about one of your best days at work.

My best days at work are when I am able to connect with my clients and help them with what they need.

Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?

I was born and raised right here in sunny San Diego as an only child.

What do you like to do in your spare time? I enjoy baking cakes and reading books in my spare time.

How many kids/grandkids do you have?

At this time in life I do not have any kids.

Do you play or watch any sports?

I love rooting for the San Diego Padres and the Los Angeles Lakers.

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

One of my greatest accomplishments is being able to help out my parents and my family.

What is your favorite quote?

"Never regret anything that made you smile," Mark Twain



What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

Being able to listen to others and handle constructive criticism.

What do you value in a person most of all? Their sense of kindness and helpfulness.

Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why? Going back to Korea.

Who is the funniest person you know?

The funniest people that I know are my coworkers in my unit.

What is the best advice you ever received?

To give myself permission to take breaks and reset when I need to.

Tell us one thing people would be surprised to know about you?

You might be surprised to know that I have lived in the Philippines for a year. I attended school there as well.

Have an outreach event you need staffing for?



email us: communications@sdrc.org

A MISSION MOMENT

Great job Rene Zuniga!

My name is Leslie De Jong and I am the mother of Arie "AJ" De Jong (age 5.) We have been with the regional center since receiving my son's diagnosis years ago.

I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for our case manager Rene Zuniga. His kindness, support, educated guidance, and ability to connect with families is unmatched. As a single mom of three, and having zero experience with the regional center when we came on board, I was honestly rather skeptical, overwhelmed, and even frustrated, due to how my son and I were treated at his daycare, prior to his confirmed diagnosis at the regional center.

Our experience with regional center has been consistently positive, and I am very grateful for humans like Rene. His commitment and dedication to making sure families feel supported while navigating the unknown, is something I deeply appreciate and respect. Rene always made sure my son was set up to thrive and provided me with every option and opportunity to help my child grow, while being such a solid form of support and reassurance for a mom who was not only very new to this diagnosis entirely, but doing it alone.

I appreciate the regional center and our experience. Rene Zuniga is an exceptional case manager and any family assigned to him is receiving top quality care and service. From the bottoms of our hearts, AJ and I would like to say a BIG thank you for everything, and we look forward to continuing our journey with you guys.

I also want to share that when AJ and I were walking to the car after our last meeting with Rene the other day- we had made it across the park, and AJ pointed to him as we were departing and said, **"He might be an earth angel, Mommy."**



Monica Garcia **Employee of DISTINCTION**



Monica Garcia is a service coordinator in Unit 40 in Imperial County. She has been working at the regional center since September of 2018. Monica consistently goes above and beyond to take the time to learn and understand the (SDP) Self-Determination Program and apply her knowledge in a unique way for her clients.

Monica actively researches new laws and DDS directives, staying up to date with the latest SDP resources. Monica generously shares her knowledge and takes the time to train others in her unit, and other Service Coordinators who work with SDP. Monica has successfully transitioned more than ten clients from traditional services to SDP.

Monica regularly meets with families, presents her customized SDP binder, and walks them through the process and benefits of the SDP program. Thanks to Monica's strong customer service skills, caring nature, and commitment to SDRC and her clients, a great program like SDP is possible. And it continues to grow and flourish each month.

Meet Abigail Fellows,

POS SDP Coordinator

About Abigail

How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?

I started as a temp in August, and am thrilled to share that I started my permanent position as of December 30th!

Why did you get into this business?

I actually did not know anything about regional centers when I received the temp posting, I came with a background in accounting. It's been very gratifying being able to put my skills to use for the greater good.

Tell us about one of your best days at work

My best days at work are when I start the day with a long list of pending tasks, and at the end the day I have gotten through all of them – something that I could never do without the collaboration and support of multiple people and departments.

Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?

I grew up as an Ex-Pat, and lived in six different countries from infancy to 12, as well as spending all my summers and holidays with our extended family in Pasadena. I have one sister, who has continued the nomadic lifestyle as a foreign service officer.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I am an artist and bead worker. I like to sculpt, paint, draw, and try my hand at just about any art or craft my space will allow.

How many kids/grandkids do you have?

I have one magnificent child who is just beginning their adventures as an adult!

Do you play or watch any sports?

Although I am not an avid sports fanatic, I follow the Padres by default as a San Diegan, as they are the only acceptable dinner time entertainment in my home.



Who is the funniest person you know?

My grandfather. He could wind anybody up with a sparkle in his eye!

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

It's actually the little moments when I can rise above my own bad day to make someone else's life less difficult, or a little better, even if it's just putting a smile on their face.

What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

I believe good leaders are facilitators. They do not need to be the smartest or best person in the room, but instead surround themselves with excellence and manage the team so that it can be as successful as possible as a whole. I think good leadership requires a surprising amount of humility.

What do you value in a person most of all?

I value a person's commitment to treating others with dignity and respect. We all have difficult days, and we don't always get along or see eye to eye, but that does not keep us from treating each other fairly, and I greatly admire those who can rise above their own challenges to treat others with kindness.

Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why?

Hawaii and Fiji. I have seen many corners of the world, but have never been to either of those, and would love to visit – they look like stunning places to visit.

SAVE THE DATE

For The San Diego Regional Center Family-Vendor Resource Fair!



Bigger than Ever!

Saturday, October 4, 2025

9am to 3pm San Diego Convention Center



SIRs and Waiver Rager

Every 2nd and 4th Thursday 9:00AM - 11:00AM

https://sdrc.org.zoom.us/j/87442219870? pwd=cUzpWHTABeY03CWXzbrvRq4zhboCr4.1 Meeting ID: 874 4221 9870 Passcode: J3SFCr

Institutional Deeming Office Hours

https://sdrc-org.zoom.us/j/89237693873? pwd=SrHILpwvyJsGcUg0bBhKEvVU5Cu BeM.1 Meeting ID: 892 3769 3873 Passcode: Z5D8Gj

Social Work Appreciation Month

Carmel Mountain





Imperial Valley





Main Office











South Bay











Birthdays

May 1 Monica Espinoza Lhory lagers Mayra Contreras Frias May 2 Jamie Michalski Armida Degadillo Sarah Doss May 3 Yvonne Torres Annika Sorensen May 4 Michele Molina Elizabeth Lopez Monica Brownell Mav 5 Cheri Goodall Catherine Hernandez May 6 May 7 Michelle Flores May 8 Kathi Rubio Aleiandro Silva Penelope Martinez Erika Gil May 9 May 10 Silvia Malfavon May 11 Lorileigh Paul Alexis Leyva Lizbeth Serna Chadwick Siao Anna Aviles May 12 lared Lazerson Luzviminda Ricardo Marlen Garcia

May 13

Joey Gonzalez Karla Martinez Karla Ovalle Ilyanna Marin Martin Brill-Ortiz Daisy Mendez May 14 Alberto Noriega May 15 Martha Cervantes Denise Anderson Mav 16 Rhiza Daileg May 18 Iulia Cook Maria Wells Jordyn Ramos Theresa Rendon De Castro May 19 Michaela Johnson May 20 Blanca Castro Edrika Dave May 21 Liset Perez Janet Sanchez May 22 Cynthia Avila Denise Arango

May 23

Coraisma Moran Andrea Luna Domenick Grisanti May 24 Darin Trammell M Adham Akbari Janina Marin Maritza Orea May 25 Naomi Carpenter Carolina Valadez lasmine Becerra May 26 Marisol Campos Elva Morales May 27 Irene Hurtado Gabriela Miranda Madison Price May 28 Victoria Majors May 29 liamay Austria Lori Salas Mar 30 Rhonda Wilson May 31 Alena Berezenko Ashlee Cristinziani

LET'S Celebrate



ADAPT activists drag themselves up the U.S. Capitol steps at the "Capitol Crawl" demonstration in Washington, D.C. on March 12, 1990. (Tom Olin)

Cover story continued

The film's director, Jim LeBrecht, who also has a disability and is also known for his work on "Crip Camp," an Oscar-nominated documentary about the origins of the disability rights movement.

"There was a coming together of many people, disabled and non-disabled people. Legislators from both sides of the aisle came together in a bipartisan fashion," he said, referring to the ADA. "I hope that our film will remind our viewers and those in power, that preserving the civil and human rights of people with disabilities benefits everyone."

Narrated by actor Peter Dinklage, **"Change, Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act"** aired on PBS March 25 at 9 p.m. ET on "American Experience."

"Your mental health is everything - prioritize it. Make the time like your life depends on it, because it does." - Mel Robbins

"

Anniversaries

25+

Rene Pena Maria Chavez Donna Null Lupe Van Veghel Paula Hess Theresa Castel De Oro

20 Year Reyna Zuniga Araceli Corning

15 Year Yesenia Vargas

10 Year Rafael Gaucin

1 Year Cristina Calo Noe Garcia Marisa Villegas Korinna Salileng **Michaelle** Castro Kenya Armenta Sephun Dabi Bibian Rendon Nora Pozos Jaylyn Olguin Michelle Flores Lorileigh Paul Johana Zavala Dalia Palomino Christopher George Renato Escobedo Aimee Paul

Celebrate



Linking Individuals to a Network of Knowledge





Let's Get Better Informed! From Brenda Bello Vasquez

Community LINK (**Linking Individuals to a Network of Knowledge**) is a series of monthly webinars that provide information about our community's many resources.

This will be a great platform for you to ask questions and learn about the services and supports that our clients and families can access, often at no cost. **These webinars are open to ALL STAFF** and aim to equip you with the resources that can help you address the unmet needs of clients and families.

This month, on **May 7**, NeuroLab 360 Rehabilitation and Wellness, PUENTE – Padres Unidos en Transformación y Empoderamiento on **May 21**, and License to Freedom on **May 28**!

Registration and descriptions: <u>Community LINK</u> <u>May 2025.pdf / DEIA Team (pbworks.com)</u> **3rd** - Best Buddies Friendship Walk Balboa Park, link 3rd - Family Book Festival, Carlsbad, link 4th - Bilingual Health Fair, San Ysidro 8th - East Hills Academy Parent Resource Fair (Dia de la Familia) 8th - LMEC Spring Fling Logan Memorial Educational Campus 10th - 37th Balboa Park Annual Powwow link 17th - Rooted in Healing, Pala, link 17th - IEP Day, Doubletree Mission Valley link 17th - I Love My Park Day, San Diego, link 21st - TRACE Presentation on Social Rec and SE 22nd - North Inland SELPA/Community **Partner Fair**

1st - Autism Awareness Carnival, Imperial

23rd - EHS Summer Kick Off

310 Third Ave. Chula Vista 26th - Memorial Day

Advocacy with Purpose Award Viri Salgado

For leading with passion and a clear purpose

Thank you so much for being part of workgroup 5. Your life experiences and advocacy for those from diverse backgrounds made our recommendations much stronger. You always speak up for accountability and bring ideas that will help people with I/DD to be fully included in our schools, public spaces, and communities.--Anna

Very Impressive -Rights-focused-Individual I am honored to have worked with you. Your personal and professional experience added a much-needed voice to your workgroup and the master plan. You raised important questions to ensure all individuals with IDD were being included. Viri you are awesome! - Kat

Don't ever let the light go out on your advocacy. Through your experience and knowledge, you have a lot to offer to the system, don't ever forget that.—Nicole & Olivia







LEAP is a comprehensive and centralized system for training and to help you further your professional development. It offers a variety of training modules that tracks your progress.

The training modules offer both online and instructor-led classes.

Don't Have a LEAP Account?

New employees must register. If you have recently changed your name please log in using your existing account and update the information on your profile to reflect the new name/email.

Create your LEAP account HERE!

A Message from the IT Helpdesk

The IT helpdesk frequently recommends shutting down computers when they are not in use. <u>The one exception</u> to this rule is for conference room computers. If those are shutdown, they power off and would need to be manually turned back on for the conference room to be operational.

Instead of shutting down a conference room computer using the keyboard and mouse at the end of a meeting, it is recommended to use the table top touch panel and press/tap the red Room Off button (for conference rooms that has them). This allows the TV to turn off but keeps the computer on for the next person who needs to use that room.

If there are any questions, please feel free to email <u>helpdesk@sdrc.org</u>.

Mandatory Training

All SDRC staff are required to complete the following online

training (new employees must complete within the first 30 to 90 days of employment).

SDP 1: Staff Introduction to Self-Determination Basic introduction to the Self-Determination Program.

SDP 2: Staff Introduction to Individual Budgets in Self-Determination

Basic introduction to Self-Determination Individual Budgets.

Harassment-Free Workplace -

<u>Employee</u> / <u>Manager</u> New staff must complete within 30 days of employment and every two years thereafter. Tenured staff must complete training every two years.

Introduction to the Regional Center System – Enroll HERE

Privacy and Security Series - 7-Part Learning Path: <u>Enroll HERE</u>

Safety in the Workplace - Enroll HERE

Workplace Etiquette – Enroll HERE

SDRC Emergency Action and Fire Prevention Plan – online and in-person: <u>Enroll HERE</u>

Person-Centered Thinking – available in person. Enrollment opportunities will be announced when it becomes available.

Workplace Violence Prevention – Enroll HERE

Heat-Related Illness Prevention Training Presentation - Download HERE

The Annual Picnic is July 12, 2025!

For the first time in San Diego Regional Center history, we are having our annual picnic at the San Diego Zoo!

Come enjoy a fun day at the zoo with your coworkers, family, and friends! Join us for a 45minute Wildlife Encounter where you'll meet amazing animal care staff and learn all about wildlife, ecosystems, and conservation efforts.



Preferred payment is check or money order made out to SDICDSI. (Sorry, no PayPal, Venmo, Zelle or Cashapp).



• Tickets and wristbands will be distributed once payment has been received.

Your ticket will allow entry to the zoo when the park opens.

Registration is open. The deadline is Friday, June 25, 2025.

Click HERE for the picnic registration, the menu, directions, and schedule of events.

April Tributes



Congratulations to Our Recognized Staff!

Aveline Lea Estioko Cianna Sturkey Cornell Montgomery-Richardson Yazmira Romero Daniel Fletes Bridget Garrett Staphany Lu Debbie Johnson

Jefferson Lee JoeAnn Randall **Brittany Burkard** Celeste Graham Lauren Sugui Nelson Castillo David Sesma Roberto Grijalva Marisol Aguilar

Recognize Someone Todav!

Each tribute will be thrown into a monthly drawing for a chance to win an SDRC t-shirt or a \$30 stipend! Winners will be announced via email.

Congratulations March drawing winners:

Pamela Starmack **Michelle Morales** Kiera Clubb

Patrick Grossmann Natalie Mack Solis



Please refer qualified applicants to posted SDRC positions and receive a \$1000 bonus in appreciation. \$1,000 - taxable stipend on paycheck and subject to taxation. It is not retroactive. If more than one current employee made the successful referral, the amount will be evenly divided.

The referral bonus is paid after the completion of the 180-day introductory period.

Referral Bonus Program

(in) (f) (X)





CONTACT US