



THE SDRC REPORT

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

The 2024 Capitol Tree Lighting

Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom hosted the 93rd Annual California State Capitol Tree Lighting during a ceremony inside the State Capitol. Viewing: The event was streamed on the California Governor’s Twitter page, the Governor’s Facebook page, the Governor’s Instagram, and the Governor’s YouTube page on December 11, 2024 at 7 pm.

Carter Morris, a nine-year-old from Merced, joined Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom to light the California State Capitol Tree this year.

History of the California State Capitol Tree Lighting Ceremony

For over 90 years, the Governor’s Tree lighting has evolved from a small office celebration into California’s statewide commemoration kicking off the holiday season.

[Continue reading on page 4](#)



January 2025

Adopt-A-Family	2
Staff Spotlight	3, 9, 11, 15
Tree Lighting (continued)	4
Holiday Luncheon	5-8
Mission Moment/Tributes	10
Outside the Lens	12
Imperial Valley Craft Fair	13
Santiago López Artwork	14
Unit 30 Holiday Lunch	16
LEAP	17
Birthdays & Anniversaries	18-19



CHEERS TO THE COMMITTEE

Alessandra Aldai	Gracie	Maria Danielson
Jennifer Levin	Herrera-Castro	Mia Mandler
Cynthia Esquivel	Christina	Rebecca Engard
Miguel Larios	Alexander	Ruby Reyes
Kimberly Whitney	Joanne Mull	Samantha
Alexia Marquez	Sarah Ponce	Van Norman
Ashley Lopez	Angie Garcia	Saralynn
Brenna Balogh	Jeanna	Keenan
Kris Madrigal	Sardena	Tanya Hudson
Amy MacKenzie	Karina Adame	Veronica Garcia
Coraisma Moran	Karla Ornelas	

Adopt-a-Family Fundraiser

The Season of Sharing event on November 17th, 2024 at Stone Brewing Gardens raised over \$37,000, just under its goal of \$40,000. FDD launched the Season of Sharing program, a heartfelt initiative that significantly impacts the lives of those in need.

This program, which provides up to \$200 gift cards to qualified SDRC clients, is more than just a gift. It's a lifeline, helping families who might otherwise struggle to afford holiday celebrations.



This family received a \$100 Visa gift card thanks to SDRC staff donations and FDD sponsor donations. The two boys also each received Transformers toys – thanks to the generous donations from 24 Hour Home Care.





Meet Casedra Owens, Internal Auditor/Fiscal Monitor

About Casedra

How long have you been at the center?

I've been working at the center for three weeks. I am an Internal Auditor/Fiscal Monitor.

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

I was born in Louisiana and lived there briefly as a child but was mainly raised in sunny San Diego. I have two sisters.

Tell us about one of your best days at work

When we have celebrations and fun times like ugly sweater day and potlucks.

Who is the funniest person you know?

Eddie Murphy is the funniest. My favorite Eddie Murphy movies are Norbit and all the Nutty Professors.

How many kids and grandkids do you have?

I have two boys: Anthony who is 13 years old and De'Mari who is 2 years old.

Why did you get into this business?

I love numbers and making sure every policy is being followed out accurately. I love helping out individuals who need assistance. I grew up with a skin condition that I can not help and I had to love myself for who I am. I love helping those who cannot change their circumstance, like myself, but can make the best of what they have.

What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

Someone who can accept individuals by being themselves and reaching people where they are to help them to be better.



What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

My greatest accomplishment was receiving my Master's Degree in Accounting.

What is your favorite quote?

Treat others how you want to be treated.

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

Dominican Republic and Jamaica because they are great places to vacation.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Be the best version of yourself and love yourself or nobody will.

What do you value in a person most of all?

Honesty and sincerity.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to go to church and fun gatherings with family.

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

I can make chicken fettuccini very well.

Cover story *continued*

The first use of the California State Capitol occurred during a holiday celebration in December of 1869. The holiday tree lighting ceremony began in 1931 with Governor James Rolph. He rearranged his main office located at that time in the west wing of the Capitol to accommodate a large, decorated tree central to a gift exchange among staff. This informal tradition continued with the next 6 governors. In 1951, the Governor's office moved to the East Annex as did the holiday tree lighting ceremony.



Pictured here are **Governor Newsom**, **Elmo Dill**, an individual served by SDRC who also serves on the board, **Kate Kinnamont**, and **Michael Huffman**. Elmo assisted in decorating SDRC's Christmas Tree at the State Capitol Rotunda for the annual Christmas Tree Lighting event.

Individuals served by SDRC made the decorations for the tree. Elmo was very excited to meet Governor Newsom and shake his hand. He said, "I watch you on Channel 8, and I never thought I would get to meet you in person."

Hand-Crafted Ornaments and Tradition of Tree Lighters & DDS

In 1983, California Governor Deukmejian, the Department of General Services, and the Department of Developmental Services updated the ceremony with a large tree placed on the west steps and decorated the tree with ornaments hand made by children and adults with developmental disabilities. At this time, Governor Deukmejian started the tradition of inviting a child with developmental disabilities who receives services from one of California's 21 nonprofit regional centers, to hang an ornament on the Capitol tree and "hit the switch" to light the tree and help kick off the holiday season for all Californians.

Creating ornaments for the tree is a project that is enjoyed by many individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the state. Each year, there are new themes, and people's creativity never ends!



Pictured here are Elmo Dill, Kate Kinnamont, and Michael Huffman.





2024 Holiday Luncheon

HIGHLIGHTS



2024 Holiday Luncheon HIGHLIGHTS



2024 Holiday Luncheon

HIGHLIGHTS



2024 Holiday Luncheon HIGHLIGHTS





Meet Rosalie Goulding, Rates Team Lead

About Rosalie

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

I have been working at The San Diego Regional Center for five years. I am the Rates Team Lead and I oversee the current processes of the rates team and rate changes, as well as develop new processes for rate projects, such as Rate Reform and Quality Incentive Payments. Before my current role, I was the Resource Coordinator for Early Start, Behavioral, Specialized Therapeutic, and Psychological Services. I started SDRC as an Early Start Service Coordinator.

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

I was born and raised in San Diego. I am the eldest of three. I have a younger sister and a younger brother.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Outside of work, I am a mom, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a cousin, and a friend. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I am one of few who love grocery shopping! I love spending time cooking, going to explore my city, shopping at the mall and Target, crocheting, getting lunch or watching a comedy show with my best friend, or just sitting on my balcony early in the morning drinking coffee.

How many kids and grandkids do you have?

I have a 6.5 year old son and a 3 year old daughter. I also have a 4 year old fur baby.

Why did you get into this business?

My entire life, I have been driven to help others. Working at SDRC has allowed me to apply my Masters Degree in Child Development to my passion in helping and being a voice for others. I know that what I do every day at work makes a positive impact of other peoples' lives.



What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

When I interviewed for my Master's Degree program at SDSU, I was in early labor. Although I was in pain, I was determined to complete my interview. I ended up getting into the Master's program and graduated with a 4.0 gpa, while working full time and being a new mom.

What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

The word leader has the most important definition within the word itself. A leader LEADS their team to success and LEADS them to overcome challenges. A good leader, is someone who is always offering their assistance to help, follows up on requests or questions, is truthful and honest, and wants to see their members succeed.

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

I just travelled to Italy, which was a dream come true. Next, I would like to explore more of Europe, possibly going to England or Switzerland. We also have a family trip planned to go to Alaska, which is a place my dad has always wanted to go to.

Do you play or watch any sports?

My brother and I are determined to bring Cornhole to the Olympics.



A MISSION MOMMENT

Way to go Karen Melowitz,
Elliot Walker and team!

Maricela had been living in an ICF/DD-H residential setting and her health was changing. It was determined that she would need to have a G-tube for all nutrition needs over a year ago. Initially, insurance challenges complicated the situation and Maricela was accepted into a charity program at UCSD. This was difficult as funding approval needed to occur for each test and procedure.

Along the way, Rosa Garcia and Dr. Barea provided assistance with medical consent and their expertise, as did many staff at Mtn. Shadows. It was discovered months into the process that internal anatomical issues prevented Maricela from obtaining a G-tube in the usual outpatient setting, and surgery would need to occur for PEG placement. In January, fortunately, Maricela became eligible for Medi-Cal insurance which eased the process somewhat. During this time, Maricela's health continued to change and she had a tracheostomy to facilitate breathing. This forced her to leave Mtn. Shadows as her level of care changed. Finally, Maricela's G-tube surgery was scheduled in June, and 2 days prior, I learned that her insurance was being flagged as inactive, which affected her current hospitalization at Kindred Hospital and her surgery at UCSD. With assistance from Medi-Cal Access, Elliot Walker, Lupe Bryson from Mtn. Shadows, and a last minute signature from Maricela, her insurance was reinstated, and PEG surgery occurred 6/27/24. At this time she is doing well and will be returning to Kindred Hospital very soon until a different type of residential setting is located.

The saying "it takes a village" could not be more true. There have been sleepless nights worrying about Maricela and her health as she faced so many medical problems. It was wonderful to see the team come together last week and work so hard to ensure that Maricela could have the surgery she needed.



January Tributes

Congratulations to our
December drawing winners:

Sharlene Diaz
Frances Guzman
Katie Sorensen



RECOGNIZE SOMEONE TODAY!

Each tribute will be thrown into a monthly drawing for a chance to win an SDRC t-shirt and water bottle or a \$30 stipend! We'll draw 10% of each month's entries. Winners will be announced via email.

Congratulations to
November's Winners:

Liliana Calderon
Alma Gonzalez
Christo Rose
Crystal Johnson
Debbie Johnson
Sarah Gere



Learn from yesterday,
live for today, and
hope for tomorrow.

- Albert Einstein





Meet Clorinda Merino, Director of Equity

About Clorinda

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

I started on December 9th and I am the Director of Equity.

Why did you get into this business?

I got into this business because I have a passion for serving and helping others in need. That was something I learned in my family of origin.

Tell us about one of your best days at work.

Best day at work that I can remember, although there are many, has been when I am able to share the best of me on a professional and personal level and I am able to connect with others in a profound way, whether it is in a training, therapy, or colleague exchange.

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

I was born and raised in Tijuana, Mexico, and have eight siblings.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy traveling and enjoy fellowship time with my friends.



How many kids/grandkids do you have?

I have two young adult children and the cutest dog!

Do you play or watch any sports?

I don't play any sports, but I am a big fan of the STEELERS!

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

Raising two children who are responsible, caring human beings.

What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

I believe one of the most important characteristics of a good leader in this new work environment are embracing and leading change and being relational.

What do you value in a person most of all?

Being Genuine and Loyal.



Outside the Lens' Media Makers Winter Showcase

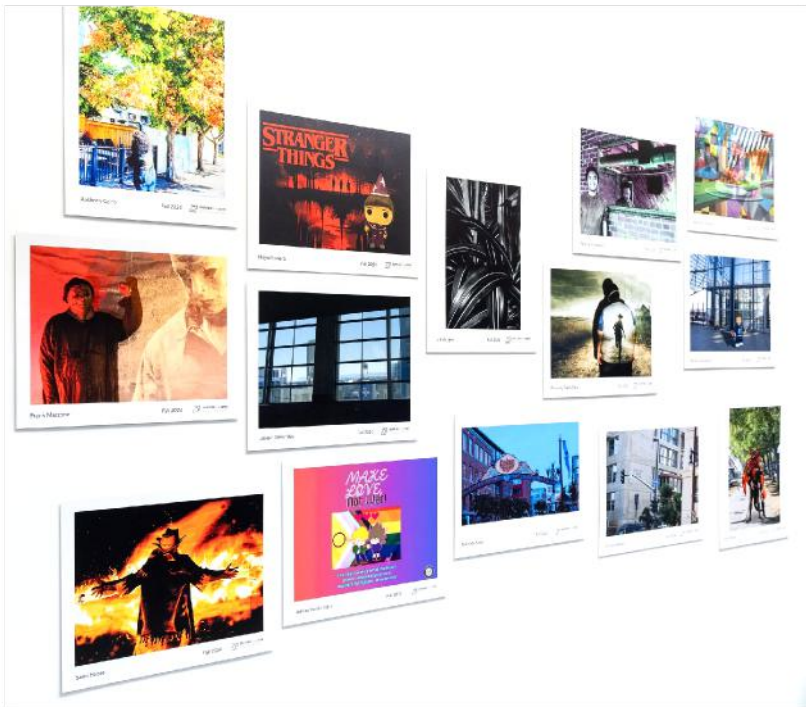


Empowering individuals to pursue their passions can transform their lives.

Services like the Self-Determination Program (SDP) provides resources and support for individuals to pursue their passions and build meaningful skills. Through SDP, participants can gain the independence and tools needed to turn their ideas into reality.

Just like at Outside The Lens' recent Media Makers Winter Showcase, where participants had the opportunity to share their films, animations, and music videos with the community, SDP helps individuals build confidence, enhance their abilities, and connect with others through their creative work.

We're inspired by all the incredible media makers and can't wait to see what they create next!



Another festive success, this time at our Imperial Valley Holiday Craft Fair!

We're already counting down to next year's event! Until then, we encourage you to continue supporting local businesses, especially owned by those with disabilities. By shopping, you're not only supporting a small business, but it's also an incredibly powerful way to promote inclusivity. Individuals are able to showcase their talents, gain independence, and grow their entrepreneurial dreams. Investing in a community that thrives on empowerment and the celebration of the disability community is what we're all working towards!





As we welcome 2025, we're filled with much excitement for the year ahead. This enchanting illustration, Shellabration, by the talented artist and SDRC client, Santiago, reminds us to reach for the stars and dream big as we enter into the new year. See more of Santiago's work on his website at [Santiago López Studio](https://santiagolopezstudio.com).

Meet Rosalie Goulding

Continued from page 9

What is the best advice you ever received?

Don't tell everyone about your accomplishments and dreams. Not everyone will be happy for you.

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

A lot of people are surprised to know how I have suffered from anxiety since I was very young. I hope to be a support for those who struggle with anxiety as well.

Tell us about one of your best days at work

In 2023, I vendored Acorns to Oak Trees, the first tribal organization to be vendored by any Regional Center in California. When speaking to Season Goodpasture (the CEO/Founder) over the phone one day, she referred to me as their "Guardian Angel" and expressed immense joy and appreciation for me. Those words meant everything to me.



Meet Lisa Graves Courtines, Marketing and Events Coordinator

About Lisa

How long have you been at the center?

I joined the center on December 9, 2024, as the new Marketing and Events Coordinator in the marketing department, working under Pamela Starmack. My responsibilities include designing the monthly newsletter, managing inventory for printed marketing materials, managing the communications email account and sourcing giveaways for special events. As I settle into the role, I'm sure I'll take on additional tasks as needed.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love spending time with my friends and family, whether we're hiking, going on day trips, or just relaxing at home together. My family includes my husband, daughter, dog, and cat. I'm also a big fan of movies, musicals, concerts, and I especially enjoy visiting a hidden gem of a jazz club called "The Jazz Lounge" in the college area. There's nothing like experiencing live art.

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

I was born in Massachusetts, raised there and in the outskirts of Philadelphia through high school. I had one older brother who tragically passed away in 2022.

Why did you get into this business?

Throughout my career, I've worked in revenue-generating companies, but at this point in my life, I feel a deep desire to make a more meaningful impact. While I had been exploring opportunities at other non-profits, the SDRC stood out as the place I wanted to be. I'm truly excited to be here. As a mom, I'm especially passionate about helping families access the services their children need to succeed.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Treat yourself like your best friend.



How many kids and grandkids do you have?

I have one daughter, Aveline, who is ten and the love of my life. She is full of love, kindness and joy.

What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

I am proud of raising this amazing daughter of ours.

What is your favorite quote?

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." - Helen Keller

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

This summer we are heading to Yellowstone for the first time. I'm excited to go with my family and see all of the animals that inhabit it and check out all of the cool geological features in the park. I've also been itching to get back to Europe and check out Vienna, Austria, and Budapest. Also, we have not been to Hawaii yet since moving to the west coast nine years ago.

What do you value in a person most of all?

A kind heart, followed closely with a great sense of humor.

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

I am a certified Reiki practitioner.



GIVING BACK THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Unit 30 Holiday Lunch

“Unit 30 celebrated the holidays with a luncheon at Cocina De Barrio. This year, we decided to change up our usual gift exchange by giving back to our community.

Ashlee Barnes discovered **The Harvey Family Foundation**, a local organization that supports the youth of Southeast San Diego. The foundation is well-known for empowering young people through enrichment, education, and fostering a sense of community.

Unit 30 proudly donated over fifteen gifts to The Harvey Family Foundation's Toy Drive, which was held at the Jackie Robinson YMCA. The team felt privileged to have the opportunity to collaborate with such a meaningful community initiative this holiday season. “



★ Harvey Family Foundation Toy Drive ★





LEAP is

Learning & Education for All Professionals

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.

Benefits of Online Training:

- Convenient
- Time Efficient
- Self-Paced
- Competency-Based
- Current Topics
- Topics that apply to your career path
- Reporting tools for managers
- Progress and accountability

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!](#)

Mandatory Cultural Humility Training resumes in January 2025

New dates are now available if you still need to complete the mandatory Cultural Humility training, Justice, Liberty and Belonging. Please register in [LEAP](#) for the location and date you prefer. Training is conducted in person over two 3 ½ hour sessions.



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

Employee / Manager 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

Available online: [Enroll HERE](#)



Privacy and Security Series

Online 7-Part Learning Path: [Enroll HERE](#)



Safety in the Workplace

Available online: [Enroll HERE](#)



Workplace Etiquette

[Enroll HERE](#)



SDRC Emergency Action and Fire Prevention Plan

Available online and in-person: [Enroll HERE](#)



Person-Centered Thinking

Available in person. Enrollment opportunities will be announced when it becomes available.



Workplace Violence Prevention

Available online: [Enroll HERE](#)



Heat-Related Illness Prevention Training Presentation

[Download HERE](#)



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

January 1

Jordan Meek
Madalynne Murray
Nancy Olivas

Nicole Goetz

January 2

Hannah Erlandson
Mariana Plata
Matthew Smith
Valeria Martin Del Campo

January 3

Emma Hild
Laura Gonzalez
Megan Daniels

January 4

Bibian Rendon
David Trevino

January 5

Lariah Otey

January 6

Adriana Rivas
Anh-Tu Pham
Brandi Johnson

Reyna Soto

January 7

Anabel Ruiz
Antonio Leon

January 8

Denise Santana
Valeria Gonzalez

January 9

Jennifer Tarantino

January 10

Julissa Villavicencio
Leonardo Ramirez

January 11

Amy Contreras
Angie Pena
Elaina Ramirez
Miguel Larios

January 11

Monique Mc Intosh
Shanelle Palop

January 12

Cristina Chavez
Cynthia Lugo
Ernest Robrecht

Jason Karanas

January 14

Nora Pozos

January 15

Tamara Crittenden

January 16

Brian Howley
Claudia Lopez
Courtney Evenskaas
Diana Sanchez

Finminasata Sompasong

January 17

Tanya Andreotti

January 18

Sharlene Diaz

January 19

Carol A. Martin
Cornell Montgomery-
Richardson

Loni Marcus

Luis Prado

Sofia Palacios

January 20

Patricia Cerda
Vanessa Chen

January 21

Daniel Fletes-Lopez
Liliana Rodriguez
Rosa Luna

Savanah Esteban

January 22

Alicia Trujillo
Christine Macho

January 22

Lydia Ruiz
Tara Ramiez

January 23

Mireya Chavez
Roselynn Harris
Yesenia Valenzuela

January 24

Alexis Bermudes
Christina Longoria
Gaye Harris
Joshua Mendiola

Kara Corona

Katie Kelley

Rene Pena

Timothy Edgington

January 25

Sarah Low

January 26

Daniel Soza

January 27

Jorge Malone

January 28

Amy Mackenzie
Barbara Parra
Nyamal Wal

January 29

Alma Trejo
Havyne Cooper
Mayra Sandoval

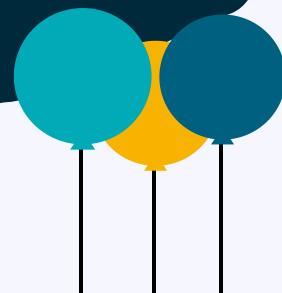
Queen Cosios

January 30

June Saito
Soleil Olsen-Corona

January 31

Briana Perez



ANNIVERSARIES



20+ Years

Christine Lux-Whiting
Diana Perez
Robert T. Edwards
Barbara Casillas
Sonia Griffin
Lenka Pavlik
George Deshazo
Martha Cervantes
Carolyn L. Crawford

10 Years

Tanya Andreotti
James Jones

5 Years

Gina Berdugo
Ruby Reyes
Tania Gonzalez
Rosalie Goulding

1 Year

Dohee Kim
Vanessa Chen
Sofia Palacios
Mayra Sandoval
Kiera Clubb
Summer Medina
Paula Arango
Savannah Espinola
Laura Euyoqui



SDRC Holiday Schedule 2025

Wednesday, January 1 - New Year's Day
Monday, January 20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Monday, February 17 - Presidents' Day
Monday, May 26 - Memorial Day
Friday, July 4 - Independence Day
Monday, September 1 - Labor Day
Tuesday, November 11 - Veterans Day
Thursday, November 27 - Thanksgiving Day
Friday, November 28 - Agency Day
Wednesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve
Thursday, December 25 - Christmas Day

A total of twelve (12) holidays per calendar year includes one (1) employee-selected elective holiday.



January Events

Social Recreation Outreach Open House

Tuesday, January 14, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Location: SDRC Kearny Mesa Main Office Board Room

San Diego MLK Festival

Sunday, January 19, 2025
Location: Waterfront Park, 1600 Pacific Highway

SDRC's Annual Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 21, 11:00 AM
Location: Town and Country Resort

San Diego Tet Festival

Friday, January 31-Sunday, February 2, 2025
Location: Preble Field-NTC Park-Liberty Station

NEWSLETTER
CONTENT SUBMISSIONS



CONTACT US

