

# ALTA CONNECTIONS

The Quarterly Client, Service Provider, and Staff Update Newsletter



*Read about Aurora's experience at the open house/microenterprise fair on page 7*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*Executive Director Lori Banales*

As you may have noticed, this edition of the Alta Connections newsletter is delayed. This was an intentional delay to track the State Budget and Federal Reconciliation Bill, as well as to capture and share moments from the ACRC Open House on July 10th.

The State Budget was ultimately signed by the Governor following a highly unusual action introduced by the administration whereas the legislature was required to pass additional Trailer Bills on a short timeline or risk the provisions of Budget (Senate Bill 101) being repealed. The Bill was debated and passed out of the legislature, making it to the Governor's desk for signature within the required timeline and the State Budget was enacted. While the state continues to grapple with the still unknown impact of the federal reconciliation bill, also referred to as The Big Beautiful Bill, the California budget as it relates to the regional center system is better than most had anticipated. The regional center system has increased funding at a little over 3 billion dollars over last year, to account for client growth across the state over this next year. The following are highlights directly impacting regional centers:

### WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- MESSAGE FROM ED
- OUTREACH ACTIVITIES
- CLIENT ADVISORY COMM.
- MEETING OUR MISSION
- EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH
- OPEN HOUSE/ MICRO-ENTERPRISE FAIR
- CLINICAL CORNER
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- DSP COLLABORATIVE
- SPECIAL OLYMPICS
- BLUE ENVELOPE PROGRAM
- SAC CITY DISABILITY PRIDE
- SUPPORTED LIFE CONFERENCE

## ANNOUNCEMENT

ACRC IS HOSTING OUR NEXT QUARTERLY VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETINGS - AUGUST 6<sup>TH</sup>, 2025 - 11AM-12PM

Please note: ACRC quarterly community meeting is intended to share updates across the organization and to engage with our community. This is not a space for client specific issues. Those discussions are welcomed at the Planning Team level or in a one-on-one conversation. Thank you for understanding the need to preserve client confidentiality. For additional information visit <https://www.altaregional.org/calendar> to get the link. No registration required.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE - CONT.**

1. Ending Hold Harmless rate status for providers of service on 2/28/26.
2. Conditions set for providers to meet prior to being considered in the Quality Incentive Program (QIP):
  - a. Meet Home and Community-Based Service (HCBS) "New Rule for settings" requirements
  - b. Enroll in Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system (applies to specific service codes)
  - c. Meet annual audit requirements
3. Direct Service Professional (DSP) University continues to be funded
4. End to dedicated funding for regional centers to implement requirements for Implicit Bias training.
5. Trailer Bill Language related to sustainability for the Self Determination Program(SDP)
6. Not addressed in Developmental Services Budget, but indirectly related as clients and families utilize In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Medi-Cal:
  - a. Cap on overtime (OT) removed
  - b. Medi-Cal for Unsatisfactory Immigration Status (UIS), also referred to an "undocumented" immigrant status
    - i. Access to IHSS and Long-Term Care granted
    - ii. No dental
  - iii. Freezing enrollment to Medi-Cal by 12/31/25
  - iv. Should a person falloff Medi-Cal for not completing the recertification process, they are now provided with three months to correct to gain access back to Medi-Cal rather than the previous May revision proposal of being denied with no access back to coverage.
  - v. Monthly premium of \$30.00 per covered individual to begin July 1, 2027

ACRC is committed to serving our community. Our system will band together to ensure that the entitlement of the Lanterman Act remains at the center of our advocacy and serves as a source of support for our community. The state has weathered tough times in the past and these times are no different. As a system, we will stay strong and continue to meet the needs of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

In the previous newsletter, we highlighted the relocation of our Sacramento headquarters to the Natomas area of Sacramento. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, ACRC hosted an Open House to showcase our new office and to highlight the client microenterprise businesses and providers of service. There were games, a picture booth, informational tables, a client band, and lots of delicious food served in our impressive cafeteria space. It was a positive event with over 1500 visitors. I am so thankful to our staff for organizing and coordinating the day for our community. I have received many remarks from attendees about how special they felt as they moved through the space. For all who joined us on that very hot day in July, I thank you for coming and for those who could not visit on that day, we look forward to welcoming you in the future!



# ACRC COMMUNITY OUTREACH

ACRC is committed to participating in community events that provide resources, opportunities to connect with diverse cultures, and to commune with clients and families of the regional center. Check out photos from *some* of the events we have participated in from April through July 2025.

If you are interested in community events, please visit our website calendar at <https://www.altaregional.org/events-calendar>. If you are an event organizer and are interested in having ACRC participate in an outreach event, please contact Shamir Griffin, Cultural Diversity Specialist by email at [sgriffin@altaregional.org](mailto:sgriffin@altaregional.org).



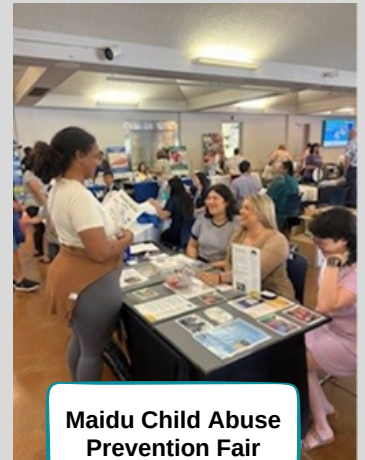
**Ukrainian Music Festival**



**Dia de Nino**



**Maidu Child Abuse Prevention Fair**



**Minority Health and Wellness Fair**



**Cultural and Wellness Fair**



**Guru Nank**



**Maidu Park Wellness Fair**



**Johr Jawani**



**Sacramento Pride**



**Afghan Support Ctr Comm. Resource Fair**



**Yolo Juneteenth**







## CLIENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE ON SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

The Client Advisory Committee (CAC) participated in the development of the Supported Decision-Making (SDM) training at ACRC. SDM is a process that allows adults with disabilities to make choices about their own lives with support from people they choose and is a less restrictive alternative to conservatorship. ACRC hosts virtual SDM trainings for clients and families on a quarterly basis.

Our next training is scheduled for August 26, 2025, and registration is required. The CAC encourages all clients and families who want to learn more about SDM to attend.

SDM is consistent with the Lanterman Act because it:

- Is voluntary, flexible, revocable, and free of cost
- Supports the least restrictive environment
- Protects personal liberty
- Fosters developmental potential
- Promotes an independent, productive, and normal life
- Protects the basic civil right to make personal life choices
- Recognizes that adults with developmental disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as those without

The CAC meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except for April, August & December) from 2 to 4 p.m.

To learn more about ACRC's Client Advisory Committee visit:  
<https://www.altaregional.org/client-advisory-committee-cac>



## MEETING OUR MISSION

At our board meetings we highlight those activities that we feel truly meet the mission of the regional center. In May, we welcomed Diego and Chris from Sierra College's Life Program who shared their stories of participating in their on-campus independent living skills program.



For more information or to enroll in the LIFE Program visit <https://www.sierracollege.edu/academics/life-program/>





## **JUNE 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

### **ESPERANZA ZUNIGA**

Esperanza Zuniga has been with ACRC for over 6 years. Two years ago she joined the Self-Determination Program (SDP) unit as Participant Choice Specialist. Prior to that, she was a Service Coordinator in both residential and mixed caseloads. In each position, Esperanza has made it a point to not only gather and create external and internal resources, but ensure her coworkers have access to those tools as well. Within the SDP Unit, Esperanza has earned the respect of her teammates and is often looked to for support and guidance.



Some of the feedback received from the units she supports is that she is "truly a rock star and a wonderful team player" and "I appreciate her kindness, warmth, and willingness to help in any way she can. I appreciate having the opportunity to work with her." Esperanza is recognized by both managers and peers for her professionalism and compassionate demeanor, which helps make SDP accessible and understandable for all. She identified concerns with a potential provider and ensured all appropriate internal parties were informed, so the concerns could be appropriately addressed for a successful outcome. She is essential part of the SDP unit and our agency. Congratulations, Esperanza! Well deserved!

## **MAY 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

### **FRANTISKA RAYFIELD**

We are pleased to announce that Frantiska Rayfield, Service Coordinator in the Intensive Case Management Unit has been selected as ACRC's Employee of the Month for May, 2025.

This recognition is a testament to Frantiska's exceptional dedication and performance in working with our clients, their families, community providers, the Department of Developmental Services and others. Frantiska takes on challenges with grace and compassion. In the toughest of situations, she is poised and consistent in her approach. Frantiska's passion for people is a benefit to her daily work. She is responsive to all she comes into contact with. Frantiska takes great pride in her work, and is a positive and professional representative of ACRC. Her ability to model behavior is an asset to not only her team members but also in representing ACRC. Frantiska is prepared for meetings, which translates to customized services and supports for the clients and families she serves. Her knowledge, enthusiasm and friendly attitude help those she is associated with feel welcome and appreciated by all who come in contact with her. Congratulations, Frantiska!





# ACRC HOSTS OPEN HOUSE, MICROENTERPRISE AND VENDOR FAIRS

On July 10, 2025, ACRC held an open house at our new Sacramento office. We are so thankful for the dozens of service providers and microenterprises that helped us celebrate our new space.





## AURORA'S BIG DAY AT THE OPEN HOUSE/MICROENTERPRISE FAIR

We were so pleased to receive the story of Aurora Estrella's experience selling crafts and artwork at her first microenterprise fair.



**9:00am - Aurora arrives at ACRC ready to set up her booth for the microenterprise fair.**



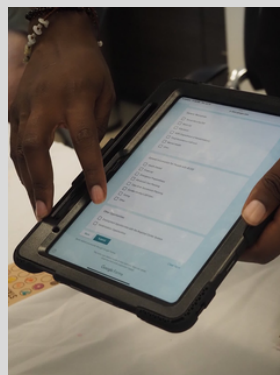
**9:35am - Aurora's table is set up and she's ready to sell her crafts.**



**12:30pm - Aurora's table only has three items left and she sold out by 1:15pm.**

Aurora had exactly \$300 in sales which will allow her to buy supplies to make future crafts. Aurora enjoyed people admiring her crafts, wanting to buy them and explaining how she made them. During the event Aurora connected with friends from programs she attended in the past and two previous service coordinators that stopped to catch up with her. Aurora sold 15 Diamond Dots, 19 Loom Potholders, 6 Diamond Dot greeting cards, and two ceramic painting projects. You can purchase Aurora's work by contacting her sister Jackie at [jackie325@aol.com](mailto:jackie325@aol.com), or text message to 916-203-5437

## SOMETHING NEW FOR THIS MICROENTERPRISE FAIR - GIFT CERTIFICATES



On July 10, 2025, Alta California Regional Center hosted an Open House - Microenterprise Fair featuring client run businesses. Alta welcomed hundreds of visitors to its new office location in the Natomas area. Those who attended were invited to participate in a survey to let us know if they would like more information on any topics or resources. As a thank you for completing the survey respondents were provided a gift certificate for a single purchase up to \$25.00 at any of the microenterprise booths hosted onsite. Alta was able to collect over 140 survey responses and as an added bonus over \$3000.00 in gift certificates were redeemed at 36 different client run businesses.



## CLINICAL CORNER EXPANDING EXPERTISE: EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS



Training for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) has historically lacked content on evidence-based practices (EBPs) for teaching skills and managing behavior. In fact, 70% of DSPs and administrators of licensed residential care homes report never receiving formal training in core EBPs such as prompting or visual supports.

Despite this gap, DSPs are relied upon to teach essential skills across developmental areas like communication, pre-vocational tasks, and self-care. They are also often expected to respond to challenging behaviors and ensure health and safety.

A recent article in Autism Spectrum News highlights efforts by Mary Rettinhouse, Alta California Regional Center's Autism Clinical Specialist, to address this need. In Tailored Professional Development for Licensed Care Staff to Support Community Living for Adults with Autism, Rettinhouse describes a pilot project that adapted a school-based training and coaching model for use with adult service providers. Over just five weeks, DSPs received targeted training and individualized coaching. The results were remarkable: 92% of individual goals for people supported were met or exceeded.

This initiative shows that when DSPs are equipped with effective, evidence-based tools, outcomes for adults with developmental disabilities can improve significantly. These findings are promising for the future of adult services and for the individuals who depend on them to pursue independence and achieve their goals in the community.

Link to article: [Tailored Professional Development for Licensed Care Staff to Support Community Living for Adults with Autism - Autism Spectrum News](#)

## ACRC STAFF PARTICIPATE IN MEDICAID RALLY

On May 22, 2025, ACRC employees joined hundreds of regional center clients and service provider staff from throughout the state to rally in support of preserving Medicaid funding.





# RIBBON CUTTING FOR THE HEIGHTS ON STOCKTON



ACRC was honored to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony for The Heights on Stockton. This partnership with Mercy Housing has 10 affordable housing units set aside for ACRC clients and their families. Executive Director Lori Banales spoke at the event and enjoyed meeting residents and learning about their housing journeys. ACRC service provider First STEP Housing Access Services was also acknowledged by Mercy Housing for their support for residents. You can learn more about ACRC's affordable housing development here:

<https://www.altaregional.org/post/multi-family-housing-development>



Watch DDS' Facebook Reel featuring Mindee's story.  
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1313794980086970>



## DSP COLLABORATIVE EXPANDS TO THE SEVEN LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL CENTERS

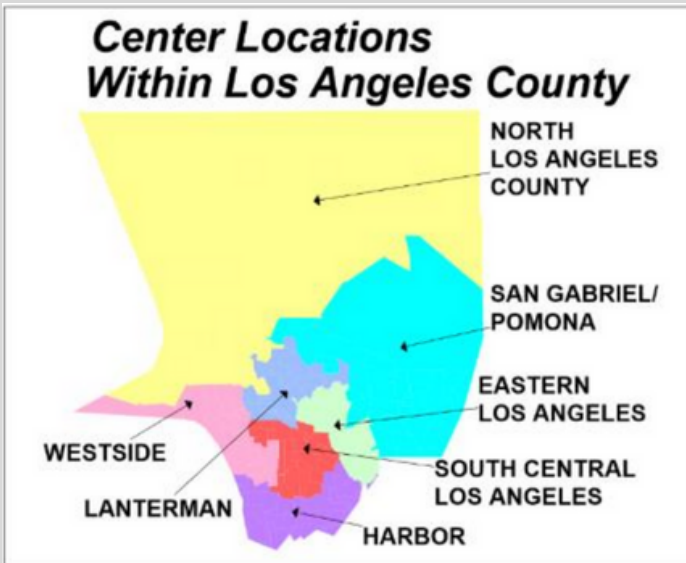


The DSP Collaborative, a pioneering initiative which started at Alta California Regional Center and Valley Mountain Regional Center has expanded to all seven regional centers in Los Angeles County. This expansion is a crucial step in addressing the ongoing workforce shortage that significantly impacts individuals with developmental disabilities and their access to quality care.

The demand for qualified DSPs far exceeds the current supply, leading to increased wait times for services, compromised quality of care, and significant strain on families and caregivers. The DSP Collaborative's expansion aims to continue to support regional center providers in hiring qualified staff. The DSP Collaborative will offer a job board for regional center service providers in Los Angeles County.

This project is funded by DDS HCBS grants (<https://www.dds.ca.gov/initiatives/cms-hcbs-regulations/hcbs-compliance-funding/>), supporting initiatives that promote community integration and person-centered care.

Visit the website today <https://dspcollaborative.org/>



## ACRC JOINS PLACER COUNTY TO IMPLEMENT BLUE ENVELOPE PROGRAM



The Blue Envelope Program is designed to promote inclusivity and serve as an enhanced communication awareness tool between law enforcement and community members diagnosed with a condition or disability such as autism spectrum disorder, dementia, anxiety, or other conditions that might require additional accommodations or awareness during a law enforcement interaction. If you are a Placer County resident you can learn more here: <https://www.placer.ca.gov/BlueEnvelope> or contact your service coordinator.





The last weekend in June was very special for 250+ ACRC clients and families that attended Special Olympics Northern California (SONC) Summer Games 30th anniversary celebration. Attendees were treated to an action packed Opening Ceremony that included inspirational messages from Gold Medal winners Kerri Walsh Jennings and Ruthie Bolton, a check presentation by State Treasurer Fiona Ma and ACRC's local Asm Stephanie Nguyen. The event also featured our very own ACRC client, Bradley Margetts as co-emcee with the talented "SONC Volunteer of Year" Kyla Grogan, KRON4.

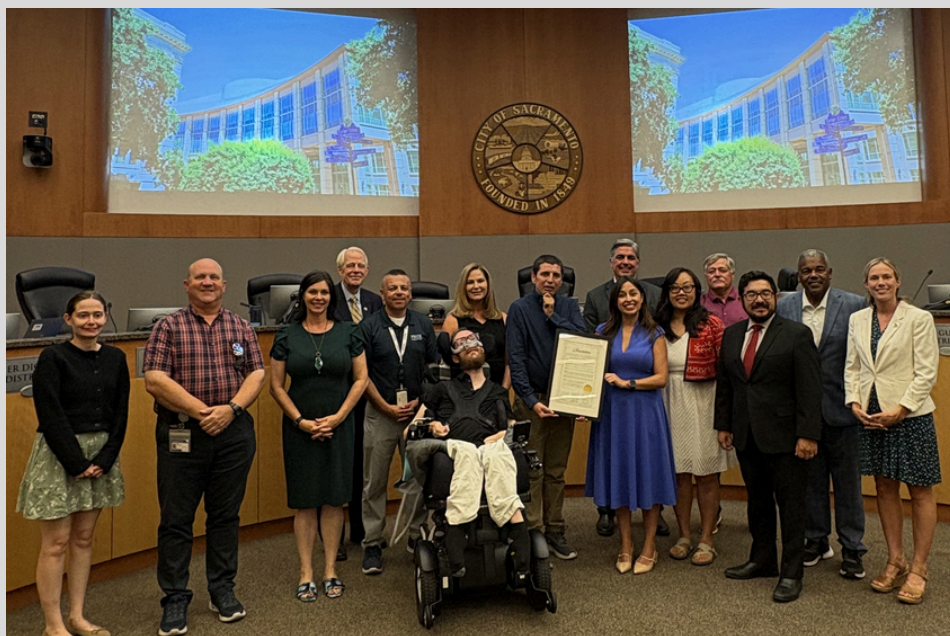
Over 900 Athletes from 38 counties competed in Bocce, Swimming, Tennis, and Track & Field events throughout the weekend.

ACRC Board Member's Amy Lampe, Kelly Pennington, and Client Bradley Margetts were spotted on the Bocce Courts going for Gold!

For more information visit SONC's website: <https://sonc.org/>



## ACRC JOINS SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL FOR DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH RESOLUTION



ACRC Executive Director Lori Banales joined community disability advocates and professionals for the presentation of the resolution celebrating Disability Pride Month celebrates the anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990. Community partners from United Cerebral Palsy and Resources from Independent Living also spoke at the council meeting.

# REGISTER NOW FOR THE UPCOMING SUPPORTED LIFE CONFERENCE - [HTTPS://WWW.SUPPORTEDLIFE.ORG/](https://www.supportedlife.org/)



*Supported Life Institute  
presents our:*

## 39th Annual Conference **SUPPORTED LIFE 2025**



## **Navigating Safe Passage through Changing Times**

*Empowering All People  
with Developmental Disabilities  
to be Fully Included in the Community*

**Oct. 9 – 10, 2025**

**Wyndham Sacramento Hotel  
Sacramento, Calif.**

**"A Place to Train Your Staff  
-- in an Inclusive Environment"**

## **Supported Life 2025 Navigating Safe Passage through Changing Times Keynote Speakers**



**Dr. Katie Pedgrift** - licensed clinical psychologist and creator of "Relationships Decoded" - has worked with people who have autism & other developmental differences in a variety of contexts incl. in-patient, out-patient, & forensic settings; schools; & diagnostic clinics. Dr. Pedgrift has authored numerous curricula designed to increase knowledge, self-protection, self-advocacy, & healthy relationships.

**Peter Leidy** ([www.peterleidy.com](http://www.peterleidy.com)) - support and inclusion consultant, speaker, teacher, and singer/songwriter - joins us from Madison, Wisconsin. He works with families and organizations throughout the US and abroad and frequently speaks at conferences, using meaningful Humor and Music. Peter, our most frequently invited Keynote Speaker, says his first invitation to keynote at a conference was for supported Life 2002 !



**Brandon Gruber** says: "Down Syndrome doesn't define me!" From a target of high school bullying to being voted homecoming king 3 years later - prompting his empathetic efforts to help the voiceless on campus - Brandon has been recognized by national groups for living an inclusive life, plus received prestigious Princess Diana Award for philanthropic efforts, to help under-resourced youth.

**Jayne Chase** of Florence, Alabama, mother of 6 children (now granny to 4). When her youngest son received the diagnosis of autism, she very reluctantly began educating herself ... as there were rough waters ahead ... smooth passage was not going to be easy ... she had no GPS! Speaking out for over 30 years, she shares what she's learned for creating welcoming, inclusive communities.

