

Annual Report 2014

Journey to Independence





Letter from the Executive Director

A Vision for 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

We have so much to be grateful for this last year: Our wonderful staff and the people we serve, our volunteers and families. Foundations and donors have been particularly generous this last year, funding numerous projects that make Project Independence shine. These projects enrich our programs, but have not addressed systemic issues that are a result of rate freezes that make adequate compensation for our staff and managers of particular urgency. We are confident we will see legislative relief. Our next year promises to be bold and bright. We are investing in our infrastructure so we can continue our journey for another half century. Our goals are:

- To be the best and most innovative service provider in Orange County for people with developmental disabilities and their families
- To live in an educated community that accepts and includes individuals with developmental disabilities
- To advocate full employment for all adults with developmental disabilities
- To have well trained and compensated staff that work for the best interests of the people they support

Please visit our website for news, volunteer opportunities, and more stories about how your help is changing lives. Thank you for your support.

Warm regards,



Debra Marsteller, Executive Director

2013/2014 Highlights

Employers

Special thanks to the 131 businesses in Orange County that provided jobs to 156 of our clients. 60% of our clients in our Supported Employment Program have had the same employer for 5 or more years, 40% of those have been at their job for 10 or more years.

The PI Video

We created a Project Independence Video at our 5th Annual Walk for Independence, celebrating our 37 year history of providing services in Orange County.

<http://tinyurl.com/n4o7uvv>

CARF Accreditation

Meeting the highest of standards, our Supported Employment program received a 3-year accreditation from CARF.



Leaving a Legacy


We partnered with the Orange County Community Foundation to establish a Legacy Giving option for our donors. Now you can help future clients enhance their independence by making a bequest.

Walkathon

This year's Walk for Independence & Health Fair, which took place on September 27th, was truly our fifth & finest. Over 200 of our supporters joined us for a beautiful day in the park and \$40,000 was raised!

Orange Slices

Our organization was featured on a local cable show called Orange Slices, which highlighted the success of our clients and Supported Employment program at Hyundai. <http://tinyurl.com/kfrelc9>







An Ever-Changing Journey

A New Season

As we all know there are seasons of life that revolve around age, geography, relationships, and other life changing circumstances. For Danny, a client of Project Independence for the past 35 years, he has gone through a few of his own.

Danny just transitioned into a new season of life: retirement. This is definitely a new experience for him, but the great thing about Danny is that he seems to take things in stride. You see Danny has been receiving services from us for the last 35 years; but these services have varied greatly.

When he first joined our program he was still pretty young and had a lot to learn about living on his own. He started out with a full contract of Independent Living classes that included everything that we had to offer. However, now he proudly admits that he can do many of those things without assistance. Today we mostly focus on helping him to pay his bills on time and budget his money so he can save for things that are important to him; like a trip to New Orleans which he has planned for May.

Danny also worked at Fairview Hospital for 30 years. During this time he received Supported Employment job coaching from Project Independence to help him learn new tasks, correct issues related to his grooming, and interact appropriately with his co-workers.



Danny has always been receptive to help, which has made all of the difference. ”

Program Manager,
Reggie Blanchard

Danny's Journey

Throughout the years he had a lot of job changes; from food service, to housekeeping, to laundry attendant, to dishwasher. He was very committed to his work and almost never missed a shift; he worked full-time for 3 decades. Danny even received an "Employee of the Month" award, which he was very proud of.

This past year has brought a lot of change for Danny as well. Danny's main source of support, his mother, passed away. They were very close and her void has left Danny feeling alone, with no family living close by. In December he retired from his job at Fairview. This can often be a challenging season of life for many people. However, Danny and his support circle at Project Independence, have a plan.

He will be joining our Harmony Program for seniors, which is part of our Community Day Services. Helping Danny through all stages of his life is important to us, which is why we offer programs that are flexible and tailored to the needs of the individuals we serve.

Program Manager, Reggie Blanchard, said "Danny has always been receptive to help, which has made all of the difference." Danny's outlook, commitment, and openness to change has contributed to his success. We are thankful for the opportunity to support him on his ever changing journey.





Jim's Journey

Journeys That Hit a

Stepping up to Meet the Challenge

For the last 10 years Jim has worked at the Petco in Orange doing janitorial work, and needed very little assistance from our Supported Employment Program. That all changed when a new manager took over the store, resulting in different expectations for Jim.

His job responsibilities shifted drastically and immediately. His job coach, Ann Nguyen said, "Jim is a man of routine." Therefore, you can imagine how hard this was for him.

We began providing 100% job coaching, which means that for every hour Jim works, a job coach is with him on-site. He had to learn all new tasks, so it was critical that Ann was there. She helped Jim learn how to assemble dog kennels, stock shelves, change filters, and answer phones. If he gets stuck on a task, Jim asks Ann for help instead of having to bother a co-worker or his manager.

Jim wants to acquire a wide range of skills so that he can remain a valuable employee. Real life is not static, which is why our services must be dynamic. We exist to help people like Jim face the challenges that come with independence.

Bump in the Road

From Dreams to Possibilities

If you met Domiano today you would be impressed by his calm demeanor and sweet spirit. This wasn't the case when he joined our Independent Living Program a year ago. Dealing with Autism and mental health issues made this transition challenging.

Domiano was not taking his medication regularly, so his mind would race continuously and he would pace back and forth just to stay calm. He was in danger of losing his Housing Voucher. Homeless people were staying at his apartment.

His Project Independence staff, Daniel Gomez, worked with his doctor to find the right dosage for his medication, and provided daily medication checks. Since then, his condition has completely stabilized. His thinking is clear and he is making healthier choices. This is important because he is an artist. Domiano said it best when he shared, "I have a crazy imagination...that I put on paper."

Daniel also helped him find a program where he can foster his talents; with classes such as woodworking, drama, carpentry, and drawing. His goals are to create his own comic book and find a job.

Domiano's Journey



Our Donors

Lifetime Major Gift Donors

(as of December 31st 2014)

Teresa Aartman

Alternative Office Solutions

Patricia Arthur

California Communications

Access Foundation

Marilyn Donovan

Michael & Rena Donovan

Federal Transit Administration

Ed Florreich

HBLA

Jerry & Lee Keating

Debra Marsteller

Pacific Life Foundation

The California Wellness

Foundation

Weingart Foundation

Kurt & Barbara Yeager

Major Gift Donors 2013-2014

(July 1st, 2013 - June 30th, 2014)

Teresa Aartman

Patricia Arthur

California Communications

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Jack Campbell

Martin & Suzanne Campbell

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Solomon Cohen

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Michael & Rena Donovan

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Club Independence

(July 1st -June 30th 2014)

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Debra Marsteller
John & Mary Alice Mc Kenna
Roberta Menn
OC Marathon LLC
Dolores Ohler
Jean Preish
David & Jean Schlesinger
Robert & Sheila Sechler

"I Will" Club

Robert & Carol Perkins
Robert Watson

In Memory Of



We want to take this opportunity to thank the friends and family of the Campbell's, who made gifts in memory of Jessica.

Matthew Murphy shared, "My fondest memories of Jessica are of the joy and excitement she felt as she gained freedom in her life. Project Independence helped make that joy, and that freedom, possible for her. It's hard to imagine a more fitting tribute to her than helping sustain Project Independence, and making a difference in the lives of their clients and their families."

We are truly honored that her memory lives on in our work.



A Journey to Being Heard

The Art of Communication

Blanca has been receiving support from our Community Day Program since 1998. Blanca has cerebral palsy, is in a wheelchair, and is considered non-verbal; which simply means that she is unable to express herself through spoken words. However, Blanca has a lot to say and with the help of her Project Independence staff, Jena Church, her voice is being heard.

One thing is crystal clear...they have an incredible connection. Watching Jena and Blanca interact is like watching an artist paint a picture, one small stroke at a time, until the beautiful image emerges. How is it possible that Jena understands Blanca's thoughts, needs, and desires? In part, because of what Jena shared with us, "I want to help people find a voice who haven't had one." Jena has struggled with feeling unheard at times in her own life, which has given her motivation to help people with disabilities with this same challenge.

Jena explained how she uses a variety of broad questions and narrows them down to specific ones, to discover what Blanca needs or wants. Blanca is able to answer yes or no questions with different movements of her tongue. Then answers more detailed questions by pointing with her eyes and using sounds to confirm her answers.

“ I want to help people find a voice who haven't had one.”

Program Specialist,
Jena Church

Blanca's Journey

With each detail added, the picture becomes clearer. With this method Jena can also do things like go shopping with Blanca without a list, or help her order exactly what she wants to eat at a restaurant.

Jena also helps Blanca use technology to reach the world around her. Recently Blanca visited a discount store and found that it was hard to get around in her wheelchair, due to large displays that blocked the walkways.

Thanks to our CCAF grant, Jena was able to help her use an iPad to write a review on Yelp, where she explained why these displays were obstacles for people with disabilities. When they visited the store again the displays had all been removed and the aisles were clear. Blanca's voice had been heard.

Through creative and innovative ways, Jena has been able to take Blanca's previously trapped thoughts and feelings and beautifully display them on the canvas for her. When asked if Jena has made a difference in her life, Blanca's whole face lit up and she made a loud and excited sound that was a resounding yes! Picture complete.



Financial Highlights

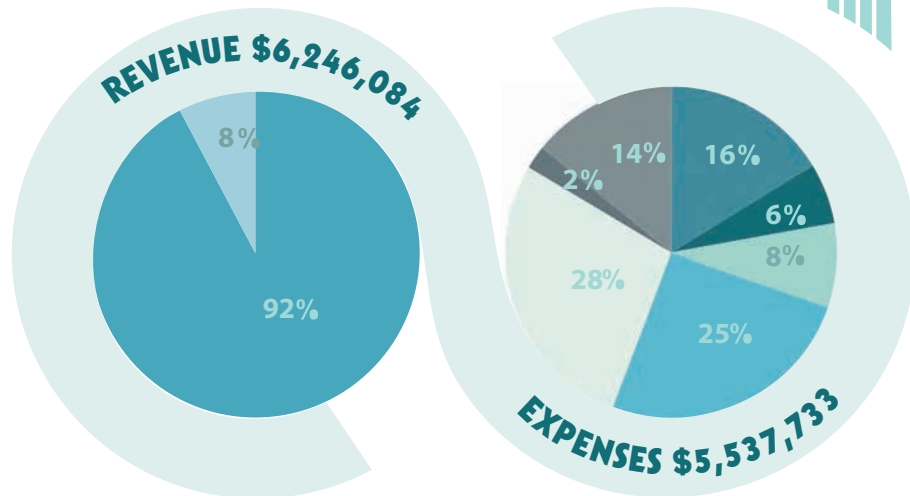
Fee-For-Service



Fundraising & Grants



Income & Expenses for Year Ending June 2014



Adult Development



Behavior Program



Independent Living



Supportive Employment



Supportive Living



WIPA



Fundraising & Administrative



**INCREASING
PAID EMPLOYMENT**
through Advocacy &
Job Development
Community Education

For every \$1 spent on our
Supported Employment Services

OUR CLIENTS EARNED

\$4 **WORKING**
IN REAL JOBS
in the community

\$1.3 million

was earned by people
receiving services from our

**Supported
Employment
Program**





Management Team

Executive Board

Dan Pittman, Chair
Harry Stahl, Vice Chair
Del Hart, Treasurer
Judy Cole, Secretary

Members At Large

John Catoe
Dana Halle
Linda Hull
Roberta Menn
Robert Spitzberg
Kurt Yeager

Management Staff

Debra Marsteller, Executive Director
Bob Watson, Associate Director
Tim Chervenak, Employment Services Director
Kristen Cook, Director of Human Resources
Kathy Grunwald, Controller
Bernard Uy, Accounting Clerk
Mike Voegele, Director of Independent Living Services
Myke Jones, Behavioral Specialist
Tracy Hall, Development Manager





Featured Grants

Federal Transit Administration

Project Independence was delighted to be the recipient of a grant that allowed us to purchase 4 brand new wheelchair accessible vans. Each month our staff spend hundreds of hours transporting their clients to and from job sites out in the community. These new vans have all of the amenities needed to make this a positive, hassle free, and safe experience for both staff and clients. They feature a lowered floor, bi-fold ramp, removable seats, and a tie-down belt system that secures wheelchairs for transit.

The old van which Maria drove for the last 6 years had over 120,000 miles on it and was in very bad shape. Maria's group, who received one of the new vans, shared that they have a "sense of pride" now when they drive around town.

Barbara Coyne, who participates in our senior program, said she literally danced when she saw the new vans for the first time. Receiving funds like this, which result in tangible and immediate impact, is a reminder of how important community support is to the greater good of all individuals.



We were awarded a \$175,000 grant from Weingart Foundation for core support. These funds will be used for strategic planning, staff training.



**PACIFIC LIFE
FOUNDATION**

A multi-year supporter of our Healthy Living Program, they awarded us a \$5,000 grant to help us expand upon this vital program.



We were supplied funds from the California Communications Access Foundation to purchase an additional 50 iPad Minis in order to provide augmented communication to the people we serve.

Upcoming Projects

OC Giving Day

Project Independence will be participating in the first ever OC Giving Day, a 30-hour online giving challenge for Orange County based non-profits. From April 21, 2015 at 6:00 AM-April 22, 2015 at noon our supporters will have an opportunity to give online at www.iheartoc.org. This online event will bring energy and momentum to our cause, and visibility to our organization.

OC Marathon

We have been chosen as an official charity partner for the OC Marathon for the 4th year in a row. Mark your calendars for May 3rd and join us as a runner, sponsor, or volunteer.

Walk for Independence

Mark your calendars for our annual walkathon and health fair on Saturday, September 26th, 2015!

Mission

INDEPENDENCE

Become an Agent of Independence

Join our
Mission
Independence
Monthly
Giving Club



www.proindependence.org

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Project **Independence**

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Costa Mesa, CA 92626

ENRICHING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES