



# Ability Counts: Quarterly Newsletter





# Ability Counts Updated

## Mission Statement:

ABILITY COUNTS advocates and promotes a partnership with individuals with intellectual disabilities for the purpose of assisting them to gain access to quality vocational skills, vocational training, employment opportunities and community integration.

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## New in ACI : The newly appointed Executive Director

My name is Sophia Jurisch. I bring 24 years of experience working in this industry, having previously worked at Ability Counts for 16 years, and an additional 8 years as a compliance consultant.

I'm experienced in Job Coaching, Case Management documentation, CARF, DOL and DDS Compliance, Management and Finance.

I come to you now from University of California, Riverside with over 8 years of experience in Finance and Administration.

With Mo Gaji stepping down from the Executive Director position, I acknowledge that I have some big shoes to fill! Her outstanding leadership and dedication during her tenure as the director are commendable.

Under her guidance, Ability Counts has achieved great heights. Her commitment to excellence and unwavering support of ACI have been truly remarkable. I will do my best to continue in her footsteps while moving the organization forward.

As director, I rely on staff's support and collaboration so I can effectively perform my role. Your expertise, ideas, and feedback are essential for making informed decisions.

I encourage you to share your thoughts openly so that together, we can create an efficient process for Consumer success.

Sophia  
Executive Director - Ability  
Counts, Inc.





### **SPOTLIGHT on Amerisource Enclave**

Angela became part of the ACI family about ten years ago. “I really enjoy working with my Consumers. They make me smile all day and I especially love watching them grow, learn, and do new tasks independently.”

Angela and her team find great value in their work at Amerisource, feeling fulfilled by the positive impact they have on the company. Because of Angela, and the Managers at Amerisource, our Consumers have a thorough understanding of what it takes to complete their assigned tasks with little supervision. “My group does a lot and are great at what they do.

Together we accomplish everything, from our regular tasks to extra assignments.” Our Consumers can demonstrate housekeeping tasks in the warehouse, which involves emptying products from bins, picking up items, loading totes, detrashing, recycling cardboard and sweeping the aisles.

Consumers are also aware of Safety procedures and diligently practice established protocols. Consumers participate in the monthly meetings and drills conducted by Angela, as well as the annual safety meeting organized by Amerisource.

Angela's dedication is praiseworthy. Ability Counts would like to express a sincere THANK YOU to Angela for her commitment.

Furthermore, Amerisource has demonstrated exceptional commitment to inclusivity by interacting with our Consumers, engaging in humor and conversation, extending invitations for them to participate in company lunches and events which provides our consumers a platform for socialization and integration. Therefore, Ability Counts, Inc. extends their gratitude to AmeriSource for their ongoing support over the years.







## On The Field: Landscaping

While on the field this month, we had the privilege of interviewing one of our landscaping crews. It was inspiring to hear about how the program started with just two groups in 1980. The program has now expanded to 17 groups working across various campuses including Green Acres, and La Sierra University.

Our hardworking Consumers and Job Coaches drive out to these locations every day to ensure the campuses stay clean and beautiful. The Job Coaches play a critical role in teaching our consumers how to properly use the tools, ensuring they work safely and efficiently.

The collaboration between job coaches and consumers is truly remarkable, as they support and encourage each other to strive for excellence.



# Staff Spotlight: Brianna Cabana's Quick Thinking

On February 14th, a Consumer at the Corona building had a frightening experience.

He began to choke on a piece of apple, but fortunately received prompt medical attention from Briana Cabanas.

She knew the correct procedure to dislodge the object stuck in his throat.

Briana's quick thinking and her courageous attitude made all the difference in a critical situation, saving someone from harm.

She did an exceptional job in this situation and for that, we want to say thank you.







# Welcoming: Mark Case

Welcome our new Health and Safety Specialist, Mark Case, to the Ability Counts team.

With 20 years of experience in healthcare and 2 years as an EMT, along with 7 years as a Direct Service Professional overseeing adults with intellectual disabilities, Mark brings a wealth of knowledge and skills to our team

His problem-solving abilities, adaptability to new challenges, and excellent reputation make him a valuable addition. Mark's educational background in math and science will undoubtedly bring an added benefit to ACI.

We are thrilled to have Mark on board and excited to collaborate with him to ensure the well-being of our Consumers and staff.



# Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month, a celebration of women's invaluable contributions to society and culture.

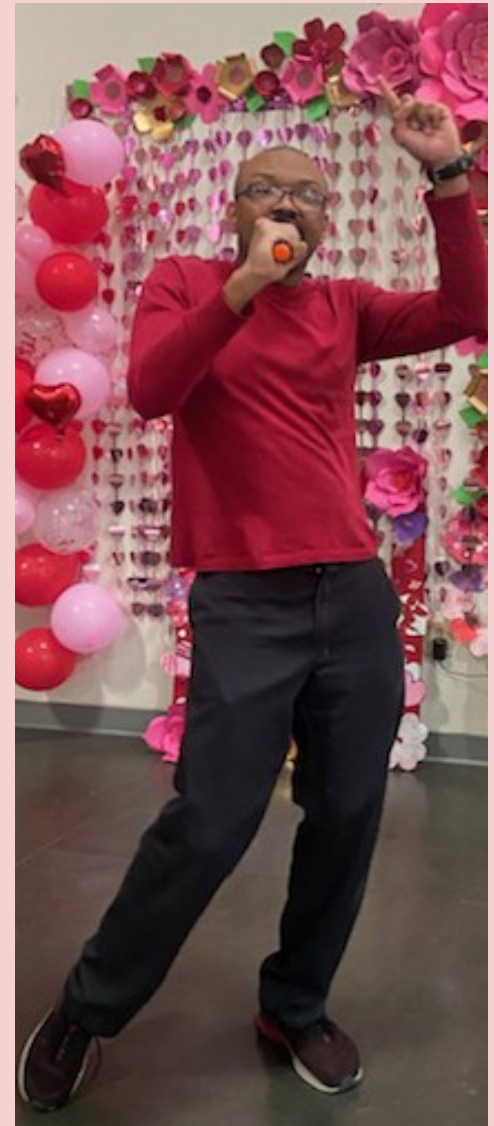
Today we acknowledge the challenges that women continue to face, but also to honor their strength and determination in overcoming them.

Let's applaud the remarkable devotion and commitment of ACI women, who form the majority of our workforce and strive to make every day count for our Consumers and Ability Counts family!





# Valentines day







# Kuehne+Nagel's Article on ACI groups

## Kuehne+Nagel's Contract Logistics' Ontario, California Site Embraces those with Special Needs

November 30, 2023

Every day at our Contract Logistics site in Ontario, California, a group of special needs individuals arrive onsite, at the ready to jump in and help as a key part of Kuehne+Nagel's workforce. In honor of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we celebrate and reflect on their contributions.

Looking back to 2019, the team had a simple but powerful idea -- invite those with special needs to join the team. To do so, the site began a partnership with a local non-profit called Ability Counts that provides vocational training and employment opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

The special needs team started off at first with tasks like cleaning, then expanded the activities such as sorting hangers. Now, five years later, the special needs team from Ability Counts disassembles decommissioned purses and bags, removing metal items from leather bags and purses, and recycling, on behalf of Kuehne+Nagel's high-end, luxury brand customer.

With this partnership, the Kuehne+Nagel team focuses on the abilities, rather than the disabilities, of the 12-15 special needs individuals that come to the site daily with support from an Ability Counts coach.

The site has seamlessly integrated them into the site's workforce, breaking down barriers and fostering diversity.

"The team from Ability Counts has become an integral part of our workforce and they are included in every aspect of the facility's activities," said Robert. Cesario, Kuehne+Nagel's Area Contract Logistics Manager. It doesn't matter how tough a day is; with the team from Ability Counts around, everyone feels like everything is going to be fine."

The Contract Logistics team leadership has been so inspired, they have begun an effort to expand the program by looking across its sites in North America to find local non-profit to partner with.

In a world where these concepts can be mere buzzwords, Kuehne+Nagel's Ontario site serves as a model, demonstrating a genuine commitment to embracing diversity and making it an integral part of their culture. The team realizes that the real value of the partnership with Ability Counts lies not just in the taking over of certain tasks, but in embracing the abilities of all -- making these special needs individuals from the local agency not just a workforce partner; they have become part of the Kuehne+Nagel family.

- Dina Pokedoff



## Heimlich Maneuver Rescue Team

On behalf of our Consumers and Ability Counts, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Jasmin Navarrete and Karla Meneces. They had a prompt response during a couple of choking incidents that occurred this quarter.

Their quick thinking and prompt action helped prevent the situation from escalating. Which likely saved the person's life. We need more staff like them who are knowledgeable and trained in handling choking incidents, which can occur frequently in our workplace.

Therefore, First Aid, CPR, and Heimlich maneuver training will be provided to all CIT/AC Instructors in the upcoming months as part of our commitment to ensuring they all have the necessary skills to respond effectively during emergency situations.

**THANK YOU  
JASMINE &  
KARLA**





# HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

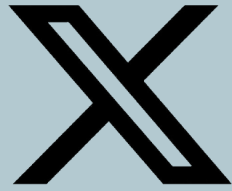


The Executive Director visited the CIT and AC programs on Friday, March 15th, joining in the festive atmosphere of St. Patrick's Day by wearing green and seamlessly integrating with the Consumers and Staff who were similarly dressed in green

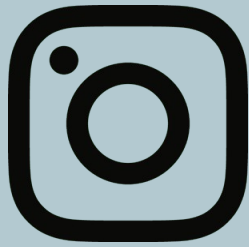
The Lucky Charms Leprechaun artwork was created by our very own talented Instructor, Isaac Taylor



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