

ACI Monthly Newsletter

NEWS YOU CAN COUNT ON



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

CONTENT

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Upcoming Events | 5/12. Mothers day |
| 2. Years of Service Recognition | |
| 3. Welcome: Darold Morris & Alyssia Duplessis | 5/17. P.J. Day |
| 4. Spotlight on: Debora Romero | 5/27. Memorial Day |
| 5. Changes Around ACI | |
| 6. Animal Print Day | |
| 7. Spring Fling Dance | |
| 8. Casino Day | |
| 9. The Arc on Budget Cuts | |
| 10. Crazy Hair Day | |
| 11. Consumers of the Month | |
| 12. Equity in the Workplace | |
| 13. Socials | |

Years of Service



Congratulations to Diane Hensel on her 22nd anniversary with Ability Counts!

Your commitment to make a positive difference in the lives of others and your dedication inspires us to make a positive impact. On behalf of all of us, thank you for your 22 years of service.

We appreciate you!

Welcome: Darold Morris & Alyssia Duplessi

Please welcome our new Community Employment Specialist, Darold Morris.

Darold has been in the IDD Field for over 10 years. He has worn many hats, serving as a DSP, Vocational Education Trainer, Case Manager, and Program Manager.

He is very passionate about this field and has served on committees that pushed the Rate Increase through the California Legislature.

He is an avid collector of Marvel and Star Wars memorabilia and also participate in Live Action Role Playing groups in California and Nevada.



Please welcome our new Job Developer, Alyssia Duplessis.

Alyssia joins Ability Counts with diverse experiences and a genuine love for making a difference. From managing nonprofit programs in K-12 education to navigating sales operations. She's always pursued the balance between efficiency and heartfelt connection.

Alyssia has degrees from Columbia College Missouri, including an AA in Art Studies and a B.A. in History and Legal Studies.

She enjoys the fulfillment in nonprofit work, drawn by its ability to ignite positive change in communities.

Beyond her professional endeavors, she enjoys learning new skills, road tripping, and spending time with her family and pets.



Spotlight on Debra Romero

My story begins June 2nd 1997 at Ability Counts. Initially, I started as a volunteer for two months, seeking to gain insight into learning more about disabled adults and children.

Being a parent to a daughter with disabilities, I faced challenges in understanding her needs.

Every day, I continue to learn and grow, finding fulfillment in working with individuals with disabilities.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this organization, where I can make a difference and contribute to the well-being of others.

My time at Ability Counts provided me with invaluable experience and knowledge.



CHANGES AROUND ACI

We have started the negotiation process with our existing Business Customers with the aim to sustain employment for our groups while aligning with business production needs and adhering to the minimum wage requirements for our Consumers. Our objective is to maintain a minimum of 75% of our existing contracts, but our ultimate goal is to retain every single one of them. Keep your fingers crossed for our negotiation team: Victor Jr., respective Case Manager or C.E. Specialist and myself.

Once the contracts are signed, Case Managers will organize meetings with Consumers and their circle of support to determine if there is a salary cap that they wish to follow. Additionally, to minimize any negative impact on their social security benefits, Consumers may chose to split their work schedules between SEP and CIT.

After the contracts are finalized and the schedules have been set, the key focus will be on both training the Consumers and meeting production needs of the Business Customer to ensure the longevity of our Contracts and keeping Consumers employed. Job Coaches play a crucial role in this process and we rely on their expertise to ensure the success of our Supported Employment Program.

- Sophia Jurisch, Executive Director

Animal Print Day



ACI Corona shows us that Animal print day is a fun way to connect to your favorite spirit animal. From leopard to snake skin, they show us their fierce fashion and creative ways to show their favorite patterns from the wild!

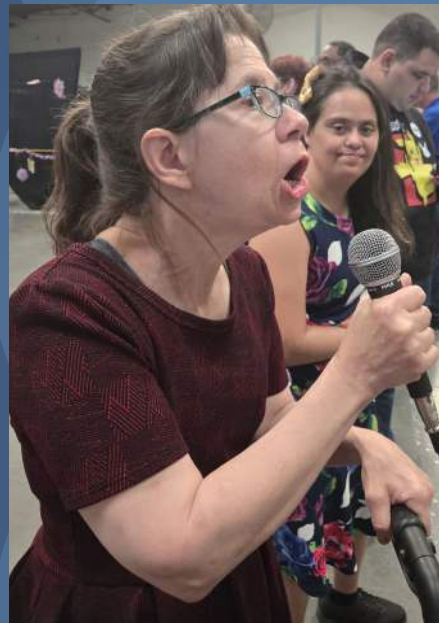


Spring Fling Dance



The first dance at the Riverside facility was a hit, drawing in over 50 Consumers and 8 Staff Volunteers, who made the event a success and paved the way for more to be held at this location in the future.

The Spring Fling dance was made unforgettable by the mouth-watering fried chicken, the delicious chocolate and vanilla cupcakes, the stunning hand made decorations.



The karaoke highlighted the impressive vocal abilities of our Consumers, and the energetic group dances got everyone on their feet. The excitement for the cha-cha slide was one of the favorites. It added to the enjoyment of the evening.

The carefully placed Spring flowers crafted by our CIT Consumers added color and liveliness to the event.

Huge thank you to our staff volunteers for their hard work and dedication in putting together an event that was not only enjoyable, but also ran smoothly and efficiently.

Thank you La Rae, Leonor, Samantha, Jasmine, Veronica, Carla, and Rosa.



Casino day

Consumers at ACI Corona take their chances at winning big during casino day. They all try their best to keep their best poker faces and think through each decision carefully.

During Casino Day consumers show off their money skills for the best outcome possible!



Alejandro holds his cash winnings showing off his big stacks!



Jackie holds her cards close to her chest not allowing anyone an easy win.

Melissa thinks long and hard about her moves so she can get the best possible outcome.

Good Luck!



The ARC on Budget Cuts

April 17, 2024 10:40 AM PT

“Last week, the [Los Angeles Times](#) Staff Writer Karen Garcia published an important investigative article showing how Governor Newsom's proposed \$1 billion in funding cuts to disability services will impact individuals with developmental disabilities, their families and the workforce.

The Department of Developmental Services pays private contractors (service providers) to provide residential and day programs, including work and training activities, on a per-person basis using a combination of state and federal funds. But lawmakers recognized in the mid-2010s that the rates — which have been frozen or cut during previous state budget crises — did not support an adequate supply of providers to meet the need for services, according to the [Legislative Analyst's Office](#).

Garcia interviewed Jordan Lindsey, Executive Director, The Arc of California for the story.

"When a family goes to a referred provider, they're often met with waiting lists of many months," said Lindsey. "Or, they're turned away entirely because the provider doesn't have enough staff to support the varying needs of new clients."

Staffing levels are low across the state because wages start between \$16 and \$20 an hour for a difficult, complex job, he added.

We encourage you to share with your networks, and/or write a letter to the editor to provide comments, and urging the Legislature to reject Governor Newsom's proposal to delay/cut \$1 billion in funding for disability services.” – The ARC of California

Crazy Hair Day

ACI expressing themselves during Crazy Hair Day!

It was a fun and lighthearted event celebrated by Consumers at both facilities. Consumers style their hair in imaginative and unconventional ways.

From vibrant colors to gravity-defying designs, Crazy Hair Day encouraged creativity and self-expression among our Consumers and staff. It was a day where Consumers let their hair down.

Consumers came showing off their creative looks and styles.



Consumers of the month



Mark Ramos always completes his assignments on time, he actively participates, and is a good role model.

Jasmine is a hard worker, supports her peers, and is always respectful of staff and peers.

Melissa always completes her assignments, listens to instructions, and is respectful and kind to others.

Sandra Bennett is very dedicated to her work and always doing her job to the best of her ability.

Equity in the Workplace

Equity in the workplace is essential of fostering an environment where every individual has equal opportunities for growth, advancement, and success, regardless of their background, identity, or characteristics. It focuses on treating everyone the same, and instead emphasizes fairness and impartiality in addressing the diverse needs and circumstances of employees. Achieving equity requires a commitment to identifying and dismantling systemic barriers. This includes implementing inclusive policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels.



Creating a truly equitable workplace requires effort and commitment from both leaders and employees. It involves fostering a culture of accountability where individuals are held responsible for their actions and behaviors. This may include providing training and education on topics such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and privilege, as well as implementing fair hiring and promotion practices and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for professional development. Ultimately, by prioritizing equity in the workplace, organizations can create environments where all employees can reach their full potential.



One of the benefits of equity in the workplace is its positive impact on employee morale, engagement, and productivity. When employees feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to be motivated to contribute their best work and collaborate effectively. This can lead to higher levels of innovation, creativity, and performance, as individuals from different backgrounds bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table..



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