



"Promotes full participation of people with disabilities."

Access to Independence Established 1976

APRIL 2016 NEWSLETTER



As we reflect back on 40 years of providing services to the disabled community in San Diego, Imperial Valley and, most recently, Oahu, Hawaii, we are grateful for the continued state and federal funding that we receive as a Center for Independent Living, county funding as a partner with San Diego County's Area on Aging and Aging and Independence Services and support from other entities such as the Community Service Association of SDUSD which provides much needed funding that directly helps our consumers.

We also want to thank a few of our recent corporate donors Sempra Energy, and Banner Bank for their faithful support in allowing us to fulfill our mission to help our consumers with their goals to live independently.

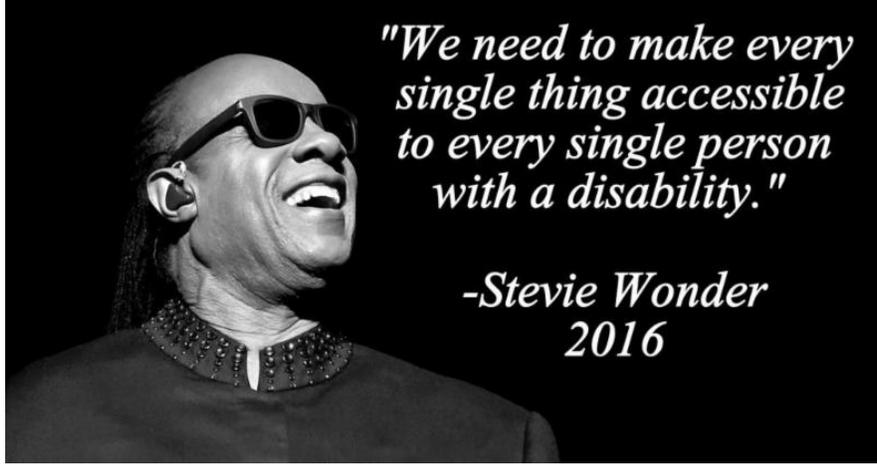
Our dedicated staff of Independent Living Service Coordinators could not provide the free services and financial support to our consumers without this mix of funding. Often, a small donation of \$25-50 will help a consumer overcome an obstacle to independence so if you have not donated to our program before, we hope you will take another look at the good work our staff performs every day.

Also, thank you to our Board of Directors who support our efforts and, in particular, it is with gratitude that we say farewell to Humberto "Beto" Gurmilan who is leaving the Board to pursue his own foundation efforts to serve the disabled community.

Happy Spring!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Louis Frick".

Louis Frick



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Access to Independence has been fortunate to have Humberto "Beto" Gurmilan serve on our Board of Directors since 2010 and prior to that as part of our special event host committee.

Beto is a sports anchor and reporter for XHAS Telemundo 33 in San Diego, a communications professor at San Diego City College, a published author of [From My Chair](#) an autobiography that recounts his road to recovery from a catastrophic injury to a successful life, and, most recently, producer of a documentary about his life called *Una Vez Más*.

As a person living with a disability, Beto understands the challenges our consumers can face in trying to live independently but he says on his blog "it doesn't take luck or magic to overcome adversity. It takes accountability, attitude, and action." The organization has benefited greatly from Beto's time, talent, and positive spirit; particularly in spearheading our most recent fundraising event, which was very successful.

We thank Beto for his 6 years of service to Access

to Independence consumers and wish him success with The Gurmilan Foundation, which will serve people with disabilities living in Tijuana.



One of our core services is individual and systems advocacy work. Individual advocacy is a component of many of our interactions with consumers as we help them access housing, transportation, employment, and benefit programs.

Systems Advocacy work is at the core of a Center for Independent Living where we work to change systems that affect many people with disabilities.

In the last few years, we have focused our systems change efforts more locally where we feel we can have the most impact and we encourage our consumers to participate in these efforts as well.

Recently, our consumers who participate in the San Diego Consumer Accessible Transportation (CAT) Committee, which has a mission of advising and educating consumers, transportation agencies, government entities, and other stakeholders regarding access to public transit for people with disabilities in San Diego County, met with Michael Perez and Michael Adams from the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Bus Operations. Mr. Perez and Mr. Adams are responsible for training bus drivers throughout the MTS fixed-route bus system and received direct feedback from our CAT consumer participants related to bus operations and training issues.

It was very positive and beneficial for all involved to have this dialogue.

We are proud of and support our consumers who participate in the CAT committees and commend them on their great advocacy work to improve transit access for people with disabilities in San Diego County!

Access to Independence Outreach Programs

The State of California recently provided additional Social Security Reimbursement (SSR) funding for Independent Living Center programs throughout California to enhance their ability to serve consumers. At Access to Independence, we are making good use of this one-time funding to seek much-needed training and exposure in a variety of different areas which we typically do not have the funding to pay for.



We are particularly focused on attending trainings, conferences and seeking consulting services to increase our assistive technology expertise because technology can make the world more accessible to our disabled consumers, particularly those who are older with low vision and blindness.

We are also seeking out opportunities for our new Youth Coordinators to increase their skills and build a solid program related to disabled youth who will be seeking employment and post-secondary education opportunities.

Our consumers will not only benefit from our team's increased skills, knowledge and awareness but they will also benefit directly from the assistive technology give or lend program we are building with this funding. This is an exciting opportunity to build a "lending library" so that consumers can try assistive technology devices before purchase and/or be the recipient of an already purchased device, such as a white cane, that will enable them to live more independently.

Hawaii Staff Advocacy



Our Hawaii staff have continued to be active in collaborating with other social service agencies and faith based organizations in addressing the homeless crisis on Oahu. The homeless population has grown in the last five years and people living with a disability are part of that group. Our staff has been focusing on networking, outreach to the homeless and disabled as well as becoming a hub for disability resource information. In addition, we continue to actively participate in disaster preparedness concerns for people with disabilities living in Hawaii.

SAVE THE DATE: OUR 3rd ANNUAL JOB FAIR

Employment Service Coordinator, Delmi Sanchez just completed her one year anniversary of employment with Access to Independence on March 25th and worked with the organization for a few months prior as a temporary. Delmi assists people with disabilities throughout San Diego and North Counties

referred by the California Department of Rehabilitation in employment preparation, placement, and retention. Delmi is proud to say, "As a job developer it is very rewarding when you have contributed and assisted consumers with employment needs and know that you are part of their success."



Delmi is currently coordinating our

3rd ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT JOB FAIR in San Diego,

which will be held on MAY 9, 2016

at the Ballard Center at 2375 Congress Street,

San Diego, CA

For information please contact

Delmi at dsanchez@a2isd.org / 619/293-3500, ext.#289

or Geny at gford@a2isd.org / 619/293-3500, ext. #108.

Many employers have committed to attend and
we can't wait for unemployed consumers
to meet with those employers for their next job opportunity!

Contribute to the Cause Today!

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