



" Promotes full participation of people with disabilities."

Access to Independence Established 1976

OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER



Fall is here and we are looking forward to the holidays. However, this season reveals to us that our services are desperately needed by a growing demographic of people with disabilities.

To meet that need, in late August, Access to Independence Program Manager Amy Kalivas, and OIB Service Coordinator Raquel Vega and I attended the Independent Living Older Individuals who are Blind Summit. This was a statewide summit, organized by the California Department of Rehabilitation, that brought together many of the (CIL's) Centers for Independent Living throughout California as well as providers of the OIB programs in an effort to learn from one

another. We discussed how to improve our services and our organizations through various types of fundraising; including donor development, grant writing, and fee-for-service programs. As a CIL, we collaborate with our counterparts in order to be prepared to meet the increasing demands that we face. These challenges include the tsunami of aging baby boomers, many of whom are actively utilizing our services, while, at the other end of the age spectrum, we are now assisting younger individuals with disabilities to transition into adulthood.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR GENEROUS
DONATION
BANNER BANK**

As the need for our services increase, we have joined to not only work harder, but more importantly, we must continually find ways to work smarter together. I want to thank our Board of Directors for their on-going support in serving people with disabilities.

Without their efforts, our work would be much more difficult. Specifically, I want to thank



Kate Jackson of Banner Bank
for their generous donation of \$5,000.

I would also like to thank Joe Quagliata, from BBVA Bank. Our organization recently opened a "Compass for Your Cause" through BBVA. These accounts are assisting nonprofit organizations to generating revenue. As a nonprofit organization, an ongoing challenge for us is fundraising.

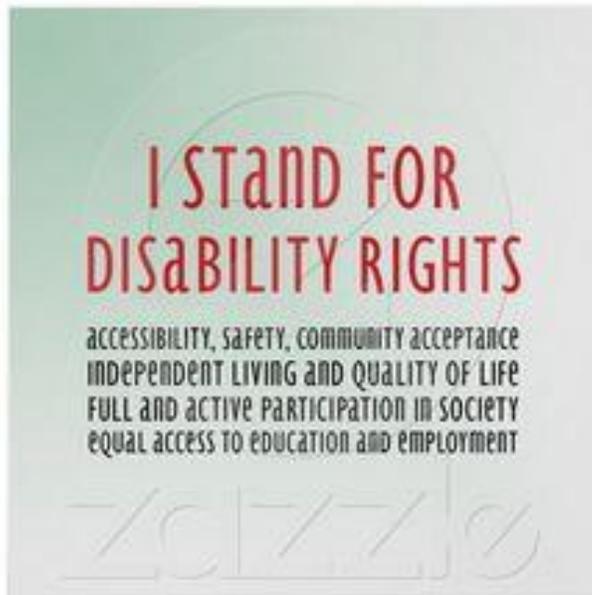
If you are interested in assisting us with this opportunity, please go to:
<https://www.bbvacompass.com/business/specialty-programs/fundraising/> If you open one of these accounts, Access to Independence will receive: \$50 for every new checking account opened; and .25% for every transaction a member makes with their BBVA Compass Visa Check Card.

As always, we are grateful this Holiday Season for the ability to have helped so many of our consumers live independently! The Board of Directors and the Access to Independence Staff want to thank all of you for your donations that have allowed us to expand our outreach to people with disabilities to live independently.

Wishing you a Happy Holiday!



Louis Frick , Executive Director



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CONSUMER SUCCESS STORY



Mr. Brandriff is an Access to Independence consumer with epilepsy referred to us by the Gary and Mary West senior center called Serving Seniors. While recuperating from a broken hip and rehabilitating in a skilled nursing facility, Mr. Brandriff received a letter from the Social Security Administration advising him that his SSI benefits would be greatly reduced to \$50 per month. This benefit decrease would result in the loss of his apartment and independence as he would not be able to pay rent while in rehab. Access to Independence Independent Living Services Coordinator, Valerie Arita, was able to successfully advocate on Mr. Brandriff's behalf with the Social Security Administration to reconsider this benefit decrease and sustain his prior benefit level.

Needless to say, Mr. Brandriff was relieved and grateful that he and Val were able to successfully negotiate such a positive outcome and have his benefits restored; allowing him to maintain his independence and home!

ADVOCACY NEWS



From July 25th through the 28th, our staff from Imperial Valley, San Diego, North County, and Hawaii flew to Washington, D.C. to attend the 2016 Annual Conference on Independent Living. The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) sponsors this annual event.

This year's agenda had an excellent Youth Track related to youth leadership, outreach, and movement building. Our staff attended several of these tracks

because, through the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Independent Living Centers must now provide core services to youth with disabilities. Other tracks of notable interest were those on housing, funding, and reporting.

Perhaps the highlight of the NCIL conference was the “March and Rally” that took place. Staff prepared by working on posters prepared the day before with chant themes that ranged from to “our homes, not nursing homes!”, “don’t roll back our rights!”, and “we’re here, we’re hot, we’ll give it all we got!” The march was about one mile from our hotel to Capitol Hill and included people from all across the nation, celebrating diversity, abilities, and inclusion. The march was inspirational and motivational for all of our staff.

We also had the opportunity to discuss issues with our congressional representatives. Some of the topics covered were the lack of accessible housing. We urged the U.S. Congress to increase funding for low-income housing projects that would provide opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently in their communities. Other issues discussed were related to transportation and rights-of-way that would allow for accessible and safe travel for people with disabilities. This was a time to urge Congress to remind the MCOs (Medicaid Managed Care Organizations) that they have responsibilities to inform people with disabilities that transportation is a covered benefit under State Medicaid plans and is an approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.

Overall, it was a huge learning, networking, and educational opportunity for our staff to attend and participate in this year’s NCIL conference!

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

On September 1st, members of Access to Independence Consumer Accessible Transportation (CAT) Committees and Access to Independence staff met with Julia Winkler Jacobson who works in Operations with Uber in Southern California. We met to discuss how Uber provides services to people with disabilities and ways that we can collaborate to improve those services. It was an informative meeting for all parties and is hopefully the beginning of a continued dialogue. Ride sharing is fast becoming an additional transportation option for people with disabilities but there are unique considerations for riders with disabilities that need to be addressed.



Staff Recognition

Andrea Christopher began working for Access to Independence in March of 2011 as an Administrator I but with her background in the medical field, interest in learning new things, and her passion to help people, Andrea really wanted to directly serve consumers and quickly realized that dream in 2012. She says, “my dreams came to light when in 2012, I was given the title of Independent Living Services Coordinator. I have always had a strong desire to work with our consumer’s on a one-to-one basis and support them to live independently.”

Andrea shared that, though this position has many challenges, she says, “giving people hope is priceless!”



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