



advocacy



arca grassroots day 2013

education

empowerment

BY MARIA FIGUEROA

SCLARC Community Relations Specialist

On March 5th and 6th, South Central Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC) sent a delegation of representatives to the Association of Regional Center Agencies' annual



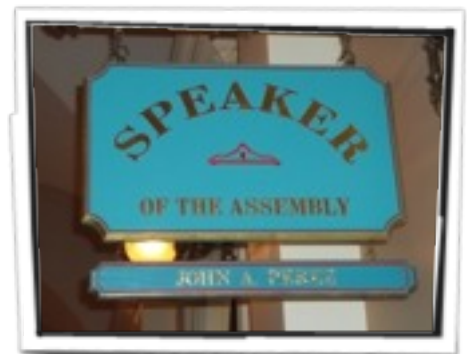
Grassroots Day 2013. Our delegation included new SCLARC Board Member Alfredo Farfan, Consumer Advisory Committee President Alan McDowell, Consumer Advocate Desiree Boykin, Ideal Services ILS Program Manager Karla Melgar, Service Provider Shawn Bailey, Supported Living Instructor Michelle McBurnie, Consumer Advocate Consultant Phyllis McClean, and Community Relations Specialist Maria Figueroa.

ARCAs Grassroots Day is dedicated to advocacy and allows regional center stakeholders to meet with legislators at the state capitol in order to express issues concerning those who receive as well as help implement services from the 21 regional centers across the state. One of ARCA's key issues this year was the sunseting of the 1.25% reduction to Regional Center Operations and Purchase of Service budgets. SCLARC's delegation stressed this point at each meeting. The delegates also

stressed the importance of restoring the Early Start Program to its pre-October 2009 state to ensure that all at-risk children receive a seamless provision of services at this vulnerable and developmental stage of their lives.

Currently, there are two Senate bills that ARCA supports which they wanted to make sure our legislators were aware. Senate Bill 579 authored by Senator Tom Berryhill addresses quality assurance and it would create a pilot project at Golden Gate, Tri-Counties, and San Diego Regional Centers to streamline licensing requirements while ensuring health and safety. The intent of this bill is to create a clearer regulatory framework for those who provide services to our consumers. Senate Bill 111, authored by Senator Jim Beall, would allow prospective voters with verified signature stamps to use them to register to vote online.

This particular legislation is essential for those individuals with physical limitations that can't go and vote in person. This bill would allow them to vote online instead of having to report to their local precinct on voting days as the Elections Code requires them to do now.



ABOVE: Consumer Advisory Committee President Alan McDowell

ARCA's Grassroots Day

A day of empowerment and an opportunity to voice the needs of the developmentally disabled community to the State of California's legislators.

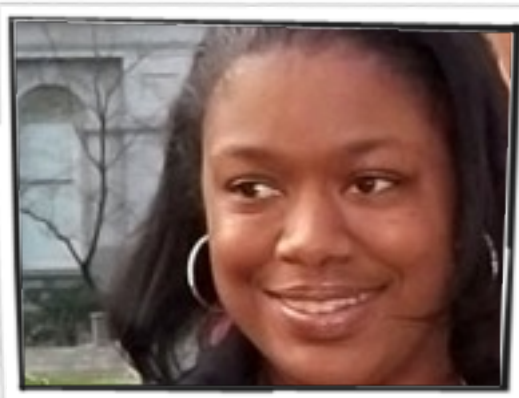


TOP PIC: SCLARC Grassroots Day delegation with Stephanie Burri, Legislative Director to the assembly member. SCLARC parent advocate Alfredo Farfan shared how instrumental receiving regional center services has been for his son who was diagnosed with Downs syndrome at birth. "If my son did not have regional center services, he would not be the bright and energetic 3-year-old that he is today," Farfan said.



MIDDLE PIC: SCLARC delegation members, Left to Right, Community Relations Specialist Maria Figueroa, and Independent Living Specialists Karla Melgar, and Michelle McBurnie.

BOTTOM PIC: SCLARC's Consumer Advocate, Desiree L. Boykin shines at the capitol.



At Reggie Jones-Sawyer's office, SCLARC'S delegation met with Stephanie Burri, Legislative Director to the assembly member. SCLARC parent advocate Alfredo Farfan shared how instrumental receiving regional center services has been for his son who was diagnosed with Downs syndrome at birth. "If my son did not have regional center services, he would not be the bright and energetic 3-year-old that he is today," Farfan said.

Consumer Advisory Committee President Alan McDowell focused on the need for more recreational activities for young adults and consumers with mobility issues who cannot easily leave their homes on the weekends. "Socialization is very important and SCLARC consumers should have the same socialization opportunities as everyone else," Alan told Burri.

Ms. Karla Melgar told SCLARC legislators about the wonderful community activities SCLARC consumers participate in at Ideal Program Services, Inc. Representatives were impressed to know that our consumers are an integral part of their community working with the local LAPD precinct removing graffiti throughout the Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw District as well as handing out food at the local food banks. Ideal Services day program attendees are also very involved in the Heal the Bay project.

SCLARC Community Relations Specialist Maria Figueroa spoke on the need for more generic resources within SCLARC's service area. She explained how cuts to social rec and other support programs over the last three years cause SCLARC's families to have to look for community resources that are just not there.

"Unfortunately, there is not a sufficient amount of programs to refer our parents and consumers to," Figueroa explained.

Before leaving, the advocates gave the exact number of how many consumers are being served by Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer, which happens to be 458. They wanted him to know just how many lives of our consumers and his constituents are impacted by legislation for which he advocates.

SCLARC Advocates for Its Consumers, Families, Vendors and Staff Members



SCLARC's delegation had the privilege to have a one-on-one meeting with Assembly Member Holly Mitchell who was very gracious with her time and attention. Most visits last 10 or 15 minutes and are with staffers, not the actual legislators. Assembly Member Mitchell, who has been a speaker at SCLARC's Town Hall in past years, is very concerned with our stakeholders issues. She met with SCLARC advocates for more than 30 minutes giving them ample time to express the issues facing not only our consumers and families, but also our vendors and regional center employees. Assembly Member Mitchell thanked the delegates for taking an active role in the community and stated it is the responsibility of every citizen to get involved and inform others about important causes.

At the office of newly appointed Assembly Member Anthony Rendon, SCLARC met with Chief of Staff Bill Wong, who was also well versed regarding regional center system issues. Mr. Wong highlighted issues surrounding the current budget and stated that although no other cuts are pending at the moment, Californians will truly not know what's in store for the next fiscal year until the Governor releases his May revise. He also encouraged the group to continue to advocate because "if you don't speak up, you won't be heard."

The delegation was pleasantly surprised at the office of Assembly Member Cristina Garcia, who is also newly appointed. They had the privilege of meeting with the member which gave them the

opportunity to educate her on the regional center system. Prior to her appointment, Assembly Member Garcia was a Math Teacher. She proved to be very interested in getting to know the challenges our center and others face so that she might help to provide services for her constituents.

She wants to learn more about the regional center system and is excited about visiting SCLARC soon. A tour of SCLARC and Service Provider programs is in the works in order to give Garcia as much information possible to help her advocate in Sacramento on our behalf.

Left Pic: SCLARC Delegation with Assembly Member Holly Mitchell. **Middle Pic:** Asia Canady of Senator Ron Calderon's office; SCLARC delegation **Right Pic:** SCLARC delegation with Assembly Member Cristina Garcia

SCLARC's final appointment of the day was with the Speaker of the Assembly John A. Perez, who is the highest ranking member of the State Assembly. This was also the only meeting that all eight (8) members of SCLARC's delegation had together all day. SCLARC meet with Eric J.C. Astacaan, who is the Special Assistant to the Speaker. Mr. Astaccan was very attentive to our group and was very interested in hearing from Mr. Al Farfan, our parent/board member as well as our consumers Desiree Boykin and Alan McDowell.



Top Left, SCLARC Delegation with Eric J.C. Astacann, Special Assistant to Speaker John A. Perez poses with SCLARC stakeholders during the recent Grassroots advocacy event sponsored by the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA).

The SCLARC delegation would like to thank our Board of Directors and Leadership Team for allowing the group to participate in such an amazing and empowering day of advocacy. Being in Sacramento demonstrated to all involved just how vital and important it is to voice the concerns of those we serve and assist. Legislators need to know the most pressing issues affecting our entire stakeholder community which is so vulnerable in almost every area--housing, employment, education, etc. Every opportunity to speak up and out was taken and thankfully the delegate found receptive faces across

the tables from their own. And after eight hours of nonstop presentations around the state capitol, the delegation was very happy to be on its way home so they can strategize for visits and meetings with legislative staffers throughout the various districts represented.

Dear SCLARC,

First of all, thank you for allowing me to take part in this wonderful opportunity to do something that can be a blessing to so many people. I never saw myself doing anything like this. But now that I have, I couldn't see myself not doing it. The trip was such a great experience. It was very humbling at times because I never thought I would be in such a position to speak on behalf of so many.

My son does not speak yet, but it felt so good to be his voice and a voice for all children [receiving services from] SCLARC. It was a privilege to be an advocate. I've learned that I must continue being a strong voice without hesitation because our children are counting on us.

Thank you for making this experience a great one.



Sincerely,

Alfredo Farfan
SCLARC Parent

