

Consumer Spotlight

BECAUSE OUR CONSUMERS ARE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

NEWSLETTER ISSUE N° 1

Grassroots Day @ the Capitol 2012

By **MARIA FIGUEROA**

SCLARC Community Relations Specialist

For the first time in 6 years, SCLARC headed to the State Capitol to participate in the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) Grassroots Day. Each year ARCA sponsors Grassroots Day at the Capitol to allow regional center advocates from around the state to share their message with legislators and legislative policy staffers. For the past several years, SCLARC representatives have not been able to attend because of budget constraints. Instead, our staff members and consumer advocates have visited legislators in their local district offices as part of Grassroots Day. This year, SCLARC's Leadership Team felt our presence in the Capitol was imperative to have more of an impact.

The energy felt at the State Capitol during Grassroots Day 2012 was palpable. As we walked through the hallways, there was a total rush of excitement. SCLARC was able to set 10 appointments with our different legislators representing the various areas of our catchment. SCLARC's delegation consisted of Marsha Mitchell-Bray, Director of Community Services and Family Supports, Maria Figueroa, Community Relations Specialist, Desiree Boykin, SCLARC Consumer Advocate, Alan McDowell, Consumer Advisory Committee President, Karla Melgar, Mr. McDowell's SLS staffer, Michelle McBurnie who was their to support Ms. Boykin as well as Vendor Advisory Committee representative Susana Ruvalcaba.

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Karen & Eugene Washington

SCLARC Board & CAC Active Participants

☆ BY DESIRE BOYKIN SCLARC CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Eugene and Karen Washington have been members of the regional center for over 20 years. Currently, both hold a leadership role on the SCLARC Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) Board. Eugene is vice-president of CAC and Karen is its secretary. Karen is also a member of SCLARC's Board of Directors.

Every two months, in her role as a member of the SCLARC Board of Directors, Karen gives a report, along with the CAC President, regarding the progress of the CAC and the topics presented by guest speakers. Karen's most recent report dealt with the prevention and management of diabetes, being informed of health issues that may be related to one's age, and being aware of the benefits of Medicare and Medi-Cal. They value their participation in SCLARC and credit the organization for its assistance in their lives, particularly in helping them with important paperwork that they may not otherwise be able to manage on their own.

"SCLARC helps the developmentally and intellectually disabled become more independent," Eugene stated.

SCLARC provides them with aid in using the bus, transporting them to and from doctors' appointments, and safe and affordable housing. Both credit their service coordinator for making sure that their needs are always met. Eugene and Karen are proud to be part of a system that is very involved with the health, safety and welfare of those with special needs. They advocate not only for their rights, but others. In response to the recent cuts to the state budget and the impact on the regional center system, Eugene came up with this slogan: "It can happen to you." When asked about the significance of the slogan, Eugene said he wanted others to know anything can happen to anybody.

"I want the non-physically disabled and non-mentally disabled community to know that during birth, you never know what can happen. Your child could end up with cerebral palsy, autism, Down Syndrome, epilepsy, or an intellectual disability. Thinking about all of these conditions resulted in my coming up with this slogan," Eugene stated.

Eugene and Karen met at the Braille Institute in Los Angeles in 1993. The couple married a year later,

and it is a union in which both are happy. The happily married couple has found the secret to a long lasting relationship. "It is important to communicate, to laugh together, and not to go to bed angry," Karen stated.

Eugene added, "You have to know yourself before marriage and after stating 'I do,' you must put your partner's needs before your own."

When they are not doing their community work, the couple attends Greater Ebenezer Baptist Church where they sing in the choir. Eugene has some pulpit responsibilities. The twosome also enjoys traveling to museums and malls by way of the Metro transit system. This independence increases their mobility and joy for living.

Part of that joy is accomplishing their life goals. One goal for Eugene and Karen, as CAC officers, is to increase the membership of the CAC. They want more physically and mentally disabled adults to know about the wide range of services available to them through SCLARC. The Consumer Advisory Committee salutes Eugene and Karen Washington for their shining example of living life to the fullest.

Ana Casas

SCLARC Consumer & Long Time Advocate

★ BY DESIRE BOYKIN SCLARC CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Born with cerebral palsy, Ana Casas has been a long-time consumer of South Central Los Angeles Regional Center. Reflecting on her involvement with SCLARC, Ms. Casas notes that she is a consumer AND an advocate. She has helped other clients in their Fair Hearing Process which is offered to consumers and families if they feel they are not getting adequate services. "I always play to win, not to lose," Ms. Casas says.

She uses her own experiences, as she shares with clients, helping them to realize they must advocate for their needs. She urges them to find their strengths and use them in order to live a productive life. She also encourages them by reinforcing the fact that they can triumph over the adversities they face. Ana practices what she preaches. Diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago, Ms. Casas is winning this battle. Even with this adversity, Ms. Casas is remaining thankful.

But there are always challenges. Ms. Casas has lived in her home for over 40 years. For the last three years, she has been in a battle with the bank to keep her home. During one of her hospitalizations, the bank inadvertently sold her home. Eventually, Ms. Casas hopes this issue will be resolved in her favor. A resourceful person, she used the media—LA Opinion, Channel 34 and the Los Angeles Times—to launch a campaign to save her home as well as to voice her concerns regarding banks and homeownership. She began a Facebook campaign where she garnered 13,271 signatures—her goal is 15,000 signatures—from those who support her in her battle to keep her home.

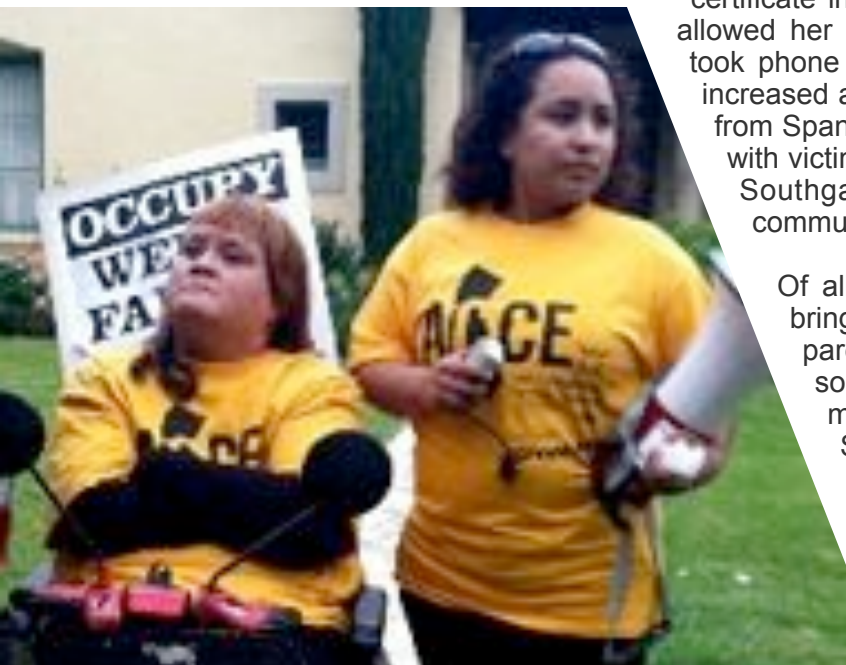
"I ALWAYS PLAY TO WIN, NOT TO LOSE!"

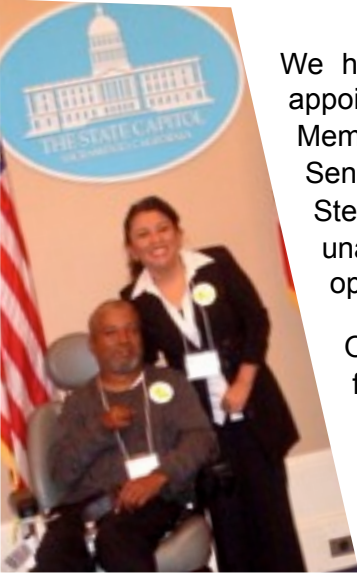
--ANA CASAS

Having always been a fighter, Ana attended Widney High School and later East Los Angeles Community College where she received a certificate in counseling for domestic violence. The certificate initially allowed her to volunteer at a domestic violence program where she took phone calls. Her assistance to persons who had been abused increased as she started going to the hospital to help with translating from Spanish to English for the hospital staff. In addition to her work with victims of domestic violence, Ana has also been a volunteer at Southgate Recreational Center where she gave tours to community members.

Of all the roles she enjoys, it is wearing her "mom" hat that brings Ana the most joy. She and her life partner are the parents of two children, a daughter who works at Target and a son who is a senior at Southgate High School. Proudly, this mother shared that her son will be a freshman at California State University, Long Beach this fall.

Ms. Casas is an active member of the SCLARC Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC). She enjoys working with consumers, as she encourages them to live their best life.





We had appointments with Senator Curren Price Jr., Senator Kevin De Leon, Assembly Member Mike Davis, Assembly Member Ricardo Lara, Speaker of the Assembly John A. Perez, Senator Alan Lowenthal, Senator Rod Wright, Assembly Member Holly Mitchell, Assembly Member Steven Bradford, and Assembly Member Isadore Hall, III. The majority of our legislators were unable to see us due to committee meetings going on in the Capitol, but we did have the opportunity to meet with key staffers who granted us several minutes of their time.

Our group represented all of SCLARC's stakeholder community, our 10,500 consumers and families, 1,000 providers, and 250 employees. Our primary goal as a delegation was to drive home the message that the regional center system cannot withstand any more cuts. Our system has absorbed \$1.2 billion dollars in cuts in the past 3 years. Our purpose was to draw attention to the fact that the current proposed budget for the next fiscal year contains an additional \$200 million. We made it clear that it is the belief of our Leadership Team and Board of Directors that these cuts could lead to health and safety issues for those we serve.

Stakeholders Making Their Voices Heard!



The SCLARC delegation was able to let our representatives know that we support the Governors proposal to sunset (sunset means it goes away) the 4.25% reduction to vendors and regional center operations budgets making it clear that we hope they would support the elimination of the reduction as well. We expressed our concerns with regard to the shortage of affordable housing, the cuts to generic resources on which our consumers rely and the strain regional center staff has had to endure because of hire freezes and higher caseloads.

Upon our arrival to the Capitol we met with ARCA's staff members Rick Rollins and Daniel Savino who briefed all regional center delegates on the dos and don'ts of the State Capitol protocol. All of our legislators and their staff members made us feel at home giving us plenty of time to share our stories.

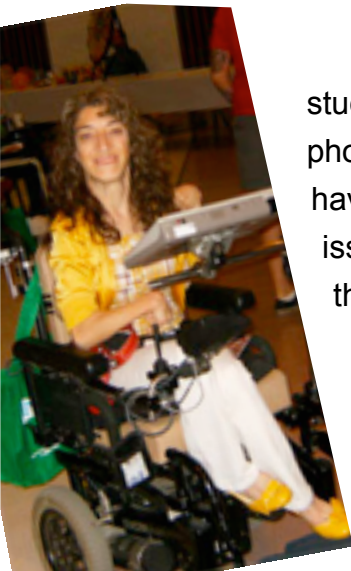
During our first appointment, our delegation had to be broken up into two groups as we had two meetings at the same time. One group met with Nancy Strohl from Assembly Members Holly Mitchell's office and the other group met with Assemblymember Stephen Bradford. When asked how much time we would have to meet, Ms. Strohl simply said, "I am here to hear you, you have all my full attention as long as you need it". Those words set the tone for the

rest of our day. We could not have been more pleased with our meetings.

We had the opportunity to share with Ms. Strohl, the issues that most concerned our consumers, one of those being, affordable healthcare on a Social Security check budget. Mr. Alan McDowell spoke from the heart when he asked Ms. Strohl, "could you please advocate for us, we need vision and wellness care because Medi-Cal does not cover it. How do people expect us to pay for vision and preventative care when we only have \$834.00 a month? We don't have the money." Ms. Strohl responded that she would bring this issue up with Assemblymember Mitchell as they felt the importance of this issue as well.

☆ 10
Legislative
Offices in 7
Hours ... Phew!

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Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload photos, post links and videos, and also learn more about the causes for which they have a passion. It is a perfect platform for educating the public about a myriad of issues which is just what SCLARC's Consumer Advisory Committee is doing with their CAC page on facebook.

The page has over 100 followers from all over the world. Daily, Consumer Advocate Desiree Boykin updates the page with stories affecting individuals who have been diagnosed with a developmental disability here in Los Angeles and across the country. Additionally, Ms. Boykin features SCLARC consumers on the page on a bi-weekly basis so that others can see that with the right supports in place, everyone can live vibrant productive lives.

The SCLARC CAC Makes a Difference!



By DOMONIQUE YOUNG
SCLARC CAC Member

SCLARC holds a Consumer Advisory Committee (C.A.C) meeting every month. The purpose of the CAC is to help consumers, staff and the community members become more aware of the issues that affect persons with developmental disabilities. The CAC members are comprised of SCLARC consumers and we identify topics that are important to us and invite speakers to our meetings to address these topics. The President of the CAC, currently Alan McDowell, then shares this information with the SCLARC Board of Directors at their bi-monthly meeting. Some of the topics include:

---☆ How to enroll in community college and receive financial aid

---☆ Independent living and how to find accessible housing for persons with disabilities

---☆ The public transportation system and services for persons with disabilities

---☆ How to make friends and access social/recreational activities.

There is also a statewide Consumer Advisory Committee which was created by the Director of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) in 1992. They felt it was important to give consumers a voice at DDS. The CAC gives DDS information about important issues that affect consumers in California and provides consumers information about things that DDS is doing. The CAC's vision "My Life-My Way." SCLARC's Consumer Advisory

Committee meetings are held as follows:

WHERE: SCLARC
650 West Adams Blvd., LA CA 90007.

WHEN:
The Consumer Advisory Committee meeting is held on the fourth Monday of each month. During the holiday season, the November/ December meetings may be held on the 3rd Monday of the month.

TIME:
4:00 P.M.-5:30 P.M.

For additional information, contact Desiree Boykin at (213) 743-3071.

Yes, You Can!

Diana Ugalde-Lara

☆ BY DESIREE BOYKIN SCLARC CONSUMER ADVOCATE

Since 1989, Diana Ugalde-Lara has been actively involved at SCLARC.

Convinced of SCLARC's significance in her life, Diana says, "Being a SCLARC consumer has given me peace of mind."

Wanting to be more than a SCLARC consumer, Diana now contributes her time and talents to the center that has given invaluable services to her life. In 2005, she became a volunteer and was recommended by her service coordinator to assist in the Family Resource Center (FRC). Initially, Diana filed and created flyers for the FRC's monthly trainings. Her impeccable work ethic was immediately recognized and she was given more responsibility.

She now assists with translating SCLARC materials from English to Spanish, and data entry providing parents with information. Her attention to detail made her the perfect candidate for USC's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Program. UCEDD develops and supports individuals with, or who are at-risk for, behavioral, developmental, and/or special health care needs. Diana became a participant in 2010 and is a reporter—disseminating information regarding USC UCEDD upcoming events to the community through e-mails.

"SCLARC keeps opening doors for me," Diana says of the opportunity to work with UCEDD.

In April 2011, Ms. Ugalde-Lara was selected to join the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC). She enjoys coming to our monthly meetings every 4th Monday. What she likes most about the group is that, "my opinions are listened to, and I'm making a difference."

Diana is a high school graduate and attended Cerritos College where she earned an Associate of Arts degree in Marketing. Most recently, she put her degree to work for SCLARC and the CAC by becoming an administrator for the South Central Los Angeles Regional Center Consumer Advisory Committee's social media page on Facebook. She also designed the logo for the group and is currently creating future outreach projects.

Committed to SCLARC, Diana thinks more and more about ways that the organization can help other consumers as it has helped her. So what future goals does she see as a CAC member?

"I would like to reach every parent—both for children and adults—and teach each one of them how to navigate through SCLARC's system," says Diana.

Diana has become a true advocate for consumers, parents and families. She does all that she can to serve exceptionally well, and does it by living up to her personal philosophy:

"Yes, you can – and you do all that you can!" says Diana.





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Assemblymember Bradford

During the same time, members of SCLARC's legislative delegation also met Assemblymember Bradford (pictured left) who allowed the group plenty of time to share information. Consumer Advocate Desiree Boykin was able to share the importance of legislation supporting individuals diagnosed with a developmental disability as they strive for higher education. Ms. Boykin told her story of how she attained her degree from Cal State Dominguez Hills and why she mentors other SCLARC consumers. Mr. Bradford was visibly impressed by her passion. After our first two meetings, our entire group reconvened and worked its way to Assemblymember Isadore Hall's office where we met with Legislative Aide Brian Duke. Although we were not able to speak directly with the member, Brian made us feel very at home in Assemblymember's private office.



Speaker John A. Perez

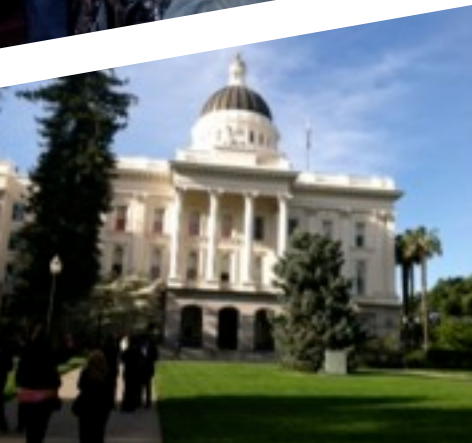
With a short lunch break, it was off to meet with the highest ranking officer in the Assembly--Speaker John A. Perez. Our group had the honor of sitting in one of the State Capitol's private rooms reserved for the use by the Speaker. Here, we had the opportunity to speak freely with the Special Assistant to the Speaker, Ms. Gail Gronert and Legislative Assistant Marcus McKinney (pictured left).



Senator Rod Wright

Rounding out the day's events, our delegation worked our way to the office of longtime SCLARC representative, Senator Rod Wright (pictured left). Senator Wright has a long history with SCLARC as he has participated in our Legislative Forums here at the agency and knows the issues of our stakeholders very well. Senator Rod Wright welcomed us into his office with open arms, we felt as if we were chatting with the Senator in his living room rather than the State Capitol. Senator Wright was also very forthcoming with the realities of the current state budget. He was straightforward and said that at this point, more cuts probably would be coming although he had no specifics. But he assured us that SCLARC's representatives are aware and sensitive to our issues and that it is their intent to work hard to protect those who are most vulnerable in the state.

Advocating and Representing



The last meeting of the day was with the office of Senator Alan Lowenthal. We met with Legislative Director Joshua Tooker who gave us his time and attention. Our delegation arrived at the State Capitol at 8:30 a.m. eager to start the day, prepared to run around the State Capitol building to get to the various offices, and ready to share our message with as many people as would hear us. We walked out of the State Capitol at 4 p.m. with smiles on our faces and a sense of accomplishment. We advocated and represented SCLARC and all those within the developmentally disabled community.



California's Protection & Advocacy System

Southern California Latino Disability Conference

*One Voice!
Strength through Advocacy*

**June 23, 2012
9am-4pm**

**701 South Mount Vernon Ave. San Bernardino, CA
RSVP 1-800-776-5746 Mary Rios**

- * No registration fee for this conference
- * Lunch will be provided to all registered participants
- * No child care will be provided * Scent free event * Space is limited
- *Pre-registration required

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