



Changing the way the world defines and views disability by making profound positive differences in people's lives every day.

Winter 2020

## Upcoming Events

**FEBRUARY 21-23, 2020**

### Abilities Expo

The event for the disability community!  
Los Angeles, CA

*Swing by booth #444 and join us in changing the way the world defines and views disabilities.*

**MARCH 14, 2020**

### Sip and Savor

Marconi Automotive Museum  
Tustin, CA

*Join us for an evening of delicious tastes, libations, laughs and entertainment as we come together to celebrate diversity and provide life-changing disability services.*

**APRIL 3-5, 2020**

### Easterseals Disability Film Challenge



*The entertainment industry's premiere disability inclusion competition.*

**APRIL 8, 2020**

### Game Night!

#### ESSC Night at the LA Clippers

Staples Center, Los Angeles, CA

For more information, please visit us online: [easterseals.com/southernca/get-involved/events/](https://easterseals.com/southernca/get-involved/events/)

## WorkFirst Supports Couple to Fulfill Dream of Jobs at the Happiest Place on Earth

**E**asterseals Southern California's WorkFirst service recently helped a young couple, Matthew and Vallee, fulfill their dream of jobs at Disneyland.



After years of trying, Matthew had all but given up on attaining his dream of a job at Disneyland. But then he was referred to Easterseals by the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to take advantage of Easterseals' one-on-one customized employment support services, known as WorkFirst. WorkFirst assists people with disabilities find and maintain paid work or start their own business in an area meaningful to them.

Matthew explained his goals to Heidi Teti, a Vocational Specialist with WorkFirst. Heidi worked with Matthew by helping him prepare to retake an employment test that he didn't initially pass on his own. She gave him tips for applying to jobs at Disneyland, helped update his resume and provided interview prep.

"Heidi gave me the confidence I needed to say, 'You do deserve this job at Disneyland for so many reasons,'" Matthew said.

Because of Heidi and WorkFirst, Matthew landed his dream, and is now handling security at Disneyland. He plans to continue with WorkFirst to go back to school and apply for other jobs at Disneyland as he grows in his career. He was also so impressed with WorkFirst that he referred his fiancé, Vallee, to work with them too. Going through a similar process, Heidi helped Vallee get a position as a cashier at the Red Rose Tavern in Fantasyland.

"Working at Disneyland has been a dream of mine since I was four," Vallee said. "WorkFirst helped me make my dream a reality." ♥



## Bright Beginnings

The campaign gives children in North San Diego County a positive start

Since 2014, Easterseals Child Development Centers (CDCs) have served children and families of the greatest need living in Encinitas, Leucadia and Solana Beach. Within these cities, there are approximately 1,500 families living below the poverty line with annual incomes less than \$25,000. The need for these services continues to grow and the waiting list now tops 100 children.

Developing early building blocks of learning lays the foundation for children's success in life and helps overcome an achievement gap that appears before children even start kindergarten. According to the Department of Health & Human Services, children experiencing financial instability, housing insecurity, and other social and economic challenges enter kindergarten typically 12 to 14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills.

Bright Beginnings will provide the San Diego community with a new, state-of-the-art Child Development Center that not only prepares children for the bright futures they deserve, but also provides the local community with solutions to challenges and the hope and promise of a positive tomorrow.

Please join us by generously supporting Bright Beginnings. In doing so you will transform the lives of the children and families we serve. For more information on how you can make a difference today—and for generations to come, contact our Development Office at 714-834-1111 ext. 5027.



## Easterseals Ambassador Educates LA County Sheriff's Office About Autism

Aaron Likens has no trouble speaking to crowds of people. In fact, at 36 years-old he's quite used to it, as he's been public speaking for almost a decade. But what began as a favor turned into a personal mission and an advocacy journey of a lifetime. Likens, who has autism, uses his insight to educate people and organizations, specifically law enforcement agencies, about what it means to be autistic and how to interact with a person who has autism. On Tuesday, December 3, Likens finished his 1,014th presentation, speaking as an autism ambassador for Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) at the LA County Sheriff's Office.

"One point I tried to get across is that one of the most important things about autism is if you've met one person with autism, you've only met one person. Autism affects us all differently," Likens explained. Likens shared this information with the LA County Sheriff, and all the captains, commanders and chiefs.

"I talked about some of the signs that someone might be on the spectrum, why someone on the spectrum may behave a certain way," Likens said. "I wanted to give the deputies a better understanding so if they encounter certain behavior, it may not be because the person is trying to be intentionally difficult, there might be something else going on."



From left: ESSC Community Engagement Manager Dan Quinn, LA County Sheriff Alex Villanueva and Aaron Likens.

One important message relayed to the officers by Likens is that one out of 59 people has autism, so it's not a matter of if an officer will encounter a person with autism, but when.

"I think I opened their eyes that this is something they do need training on and need to look into in the future," Likens said. ❤️

## ESSC's Coordinated Life Services Helps Homeless Single Mother

When ESSC Coordinated Life Services (CLS) began working with single mother Carmen and her family of 4 children, they were homeless. Two of her children, who are twins with autism, were not getting the support services they needed.

CLS Support Specialist Minerva Romero and the CLS team, who work with individuals with complex needs, to provide intense case management and coordination of services, helped the family secure stable housing, obtain the services they need and find appropriate health care providers.

CLS acted as the point of contact, streamlined communication across all entities and helped reduce the stress that was being put on Carmen. Through intense coordination of services, CLS was able to create a web of support around Carmen and her family.

"We also worked with the family to help get the kids rides to school and identify the right primary care physicians," Minerva explained. "Carmen was struggling with her previous doctors and she didn't feel they were connecting with the twins or understanding the needs of her children on the autism spectrum. We helped her get ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) for the twins. We also helped her create a crisis plan for if they got lost as the twins tended to wander."

Minerva worked with Carmen to help her feel more confident communicating with doctors, teachers and other service providers and advocating for her needs and those of her children. "She's come a long way from being homeless to being more established, and communicating well with vendors," Minerva explained. "She said to me, 'You've shown me how to communicate with others and use my words.' She was really excited."

Now Carmen and her family live in a two-bedroom detached apartment in San Gabriel that feels like a true home. "Carmen feels a lot better and tells me it feels good to have a home. She said, 'Now I can celebrate Christmas with my kids and think about having a party and decorating for the holidays. It's my home.' It makes me very happy to see how far they've come!" ♥



## 2019 EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN



ESSC rang in 2020 with cheers as our Empowerment Campaign wrapped up on December 31st! Donors from across the country, via mail and online, came together to support our mission, and the culmination of 100th year of service. The year-end campaign, which kicked off in mid-November and ran through the end of 2019, had record-breaking support in the number of donors who participated and in total giving. We are proud to announce that the Empowerment surpassed it's \$100,000 goal!



A very special gift of \$10,000 was also made through Pacific Western Bank, helping match giving made on Giving Tuesday!

**THANK YOU**  
to all our donors  
that empowered our  
communities  
in 2019



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# CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE DISABILITY



Sip & Savor

**• TICKETS \$75 •**

**Saturday, March 14, 2020**

6:30pm to 9:30pm

Marconi Automotive Museum  
1301 Industrial Drive, Tustin

**Valet parking | Cocktail attire | 21+**

**Purchase Your Tickets Now**

[Socal.easterseals.com/sipandsavor](http://Socal.easterseals.com/sipandsavor)

