



# THE SDRC REPORT

To serve and empower persons with developmental disabilities and their families to achieve their goals with community partners.

## Jay's Program Celebrates 5 Years of Empowering Individuals with Disabilities

Provided by [GlobeNewswire](#)

Jay's Program celebrated its five-year anniversary on October 28, 2024, during National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This unique employment initiative offers six-month, part-time paid internships with the County of San Diego, in partnership with PRIDE Industries, San Diego Regional Center, and GT Independence. Jay's Program internships enable people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to enhance their job skills and increase their employment opportunities.

"We know from nearly six decades of experience just how valuable a paid internship can be," said Jeff Dern, President and CEO of PRIDE Industries. "It not only helps the intern gain valuable skills, but it also demonstrates to the employer how capable the potential employee is. So, we were thrilled to team up with San Diego County to support Jay's Program."

Throughout the program, participants engage with County mentors to discuss career goals and tailor their program courses accordingly.

[Continued on page 5](#)

November 2024

### STAY INFORMED

Brenda Bello Vasquez in the Spotlight	2
Brenda continued, Lulu	3
Sara Thorpe in the Spotlight	4
Jay's Program continued	5
Mission Moments - Victoria and Stephanie	6
Nacho Fundraiser	7
Mission Moment - Jennifer	8
Mission Moment - Viri	9
A Spooky Festival	10-15
Birthdays	16
Anniversaries, Native American Heritage Month	17
LEAP	18
November Events	19

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT



## Meet Brenda Bello-Vazquez, Cultural Specialist



### How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?

I've been at SDRC for over four years. I started off as a Service Coordinator for Unit 33, working with TAY and Adults. After my first year, I transitioned to my current position as the Cultural Specialist. I'm responsible for implementing SDRC's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility projects to ensure that services and supports are culturally relevant and responsive for our clients and families.

### Why did you get into this business?

My first job ever was as a direct support staff for a day program. I grew to love the clients and this community as a whole. I saw firsthand the struggles that our non-white, non-English-speaking clients had in participating in their programs, and I wanted to do more to address some of these barriers. Our clients are one of the most disenfranchised populations that have not been fully accepted or integrated into our society. I'm passionate about social justice, so this position seemed like a great opportunity to begin to undo that stigma.

### Tell us about one of your best days at work

The most recent was at the PUENTE's IEP Event. My team was told how difficult it is to engage families in Imperial Valley and get them to attend events, particularly in August due to the heat.

We had 18 families show up. Families... not people. Each brought at least one more person, making a total of 64+ participants. This was one of the most successful events I've ever hosted and the families were extremely thankful to finally be connected to someone who can help them better understand IEP's. Shout out to the PUENTE team, I am truly grateful to work with our Promotoras!

### Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?

I was born and raised in Escondido, the 7-6-0! I grew up with two older brothers, two older sisters, and two younger brothers. I'm also an auntie and have two nephews!

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like arts and crafts, so you will often catch me trying out a new hobby, like making jewelry, diamond paintings, or coloring. I spend a good portion of my time loving on my dog, Maya. I enjoy binge-watching shows, reading, learning new things, and baseball, so you can catch me at Petco Park or at my nephew's Little League games.

### What is one of your greatest accomplishments?

Getting my bachelor's in Comparative Ethnic Studies. I'm proud of myself for choosing to study what I'm passionate about instead of your typical degree/career with straightforward career options.

### What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?

Resilience. Resilience is the ability to respond adaptively to challenges. It helps the team maintain the emotional strength they need to commit to a shared goal, and the courage to move forward and overcome setbacks. Resilience won't make problems go away, but resilience can help you see past them, find a new path, find ways to enjoy life and better handle stress.

### Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why?

I want to go to Oaxaca or Colorado. I've traveled a lot all over Mexico but I have yet to go to Oaxaca which has a rich history and strong presence from Indigenous communities. For Colorado,

*(Continued)*



## Brenda Bello Vazquez *(Continued)*

I want to visit Coors Field and go to a Rockies v. Padres game! At some point I'll visit all the ball parks!

### What is the best advice you ever received?

"Rest is a human right, not something to be earned. Exercise your rights." While it started out as advice, it has transformed into a way of being. Some of us are constantly on the go or in survival mode, we have to make time to just be. It's a great reminder to myself to slow down and be mindful of where I am giving my energy.

### What do you value in a person most of all?

Accountability. I value people who say they will do something and follow through. It shows integrity and reliability.

### What is your favorite quote?

"En nuestra voz irá la voz de los más, de los que nada tienen, de los condenados al silencio y la ignorancia, de los arrojados de su tierra y su historia por la soberanía de los poderosos... Iremos a exigir lo que es derecho y razón de las gentes todas: libertad, justicia, democracia, para todos todo, nada para nosotros" *(Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General del EZLN, 16 de febrero de 1994).*

**English:** "In our voice will be the voice of all, of those who have nothing, of those condemned to silence and ignorance, of those thrown out of their land and their history by the sovereignty of the powerful... We will demand what is right and reasonable of all people: freedom, justice, democracy, everything for everyone, nothing for us."

### Tell us one thing people would be surprised to know about you

I'm Mexican Indigenous, Nahua to be specific. My Dad spoke Nahuatl fluently and so do my uncles and aunts. A lot of our older relatives have passed and have taken the language with them, but I am proud to say it is still used by my family members.

I don't speak or understand the language, due to colonization, but the way I connect to my roots is by doing beadwork. I've made earrings, necklaces, wristbands, key chains and more. Beading is very healing for me and for Indigenous peoples. It's more than just a hobby or craft; it's medicine.

## The October Tributes

Congratulations to the recognized staff!



Ruby Reyes  
Lauren Coyle  
Jerome Spruille

## Recognize Someone Today!

Each tribute will be thrown into a monthly drawing for a chance to win an SDRC t-shirt and water bottle or a \$30 stipend! Winners will be announced via email.



## Meet Lulu

Lulu is a varsity cheerleader, fashion guru, and aspiring model and actress. Since being diagnosed with alopecia at a young age, Lulu always wore a hat. At age 17, she decided to ditch the hat and let her hair breathe. She is an inspiration to all of the women in her house, her mother shared. Lulu is beautiful inside and out, and she has some big dreams.

Here more of her story on our YouTube channel at [youtube.com/SDRegionalCenter](https://youtube.com/SDRegionalCenter)

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT



## Meet Sara Thorpe, Service Coordinator for Unit 46

**How long have you been employed at the regional center and what do you do?**

I started Nov 5th, 2018 so I will be starting my 6th year here at SDRC. I started in a children's unit and now it's been a year in an adult in home unit at the Main.

**Why did you get into this business?**

I have been supporting individuals with different abilities since I was 18. I started in the school setting for 13 years and I wanted to expand my horizons, so I went to school and applied here because I wanted to support and empower families in need.



**Tell us about one of your best days at work.**

There are a few days at work, but I must say one of the best days was when I was able to provide the support my client needed. He had been struggling for a while to access services that met his needs and after a year we came together as a team and brought solutions.

**Where were you born and raised and how many siblings are in your family?**

I was born in San Diego, but I was raised in Tecate Mexico. Moved back to San Diego 2003 (Junior year in HS). I have two sisters, one older and younger than me.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

On my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my daughters, going out to brunch, or going to the beach. I also enjoy watching 90-day fiancé.

**How many kids/grandkids do you have?**

I have 2 daughters Anisa (12) and Amina (7)

**Do you play or watch any sports?**

I don't play any sports, but I enjoy watching football. No specific team at this time.

**What do you value in a person most of all?** Honesty and commitment.



**What is one of your greatest accomplishments?**

One of my greatest accomplishments is that I got my master's degree during the pandemic and another of my greatest accomplishments is raising and providing for my daughters, while being able to support others.

**What is the most important characteristic of a good leader?**

To remain humble and never forget where you came from, and there is always something new to learn.

**Where do you hope to travel to in the next five years and why?**

I would like to travel to Jamaica or a nice beach town with clear water so I can relax.

**Who is the funniest person you know?**

Probably myself. I laugh a lot to make things better and can make a joke out of nothing.

**What is the best advice you ever received?**

This is anything but easy, but you are anything but weak.

**What is your favorite quote?**

"Just because it's taking time doesn't mean it's not happening" by anonymous.

**Tell us one thing people would be surprised to know about you?**

That I am fluent in Spanish.





Jay and Mark were invited to speak to congratulate the graduates and talk about the importance of Jay's Program.



Coursework is just the beginning. Program participants also work with PRIDE Industries' job coaches, who support participants during their internships with practical hands-on coaching, helping them develop the skills needed for success in entry-level civil service jobs. Group meetings, in which interns share their accomplishments and can solicit advice, are held twice a month, ensuring that participants maximize the benefits of the program.

Interns are not the only ones to benefit from Jay's Program. County departments that have participated in the program report that they have experienced many positive benefits and have expanded their perspective on inclusivity and belonging in the workplace.

For these reasons, Jay's Program has enjoyed remarkable success since its inception in 2019. In the 2019-2020 cohort, for example, 19 participants completed the program; three of these individuals secured temporary positions at Covid testing and vaccination sites during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the program was put on hold in 2020-2021 due to the pandemic. However, from 2022 to 2024, 27 participants successfully completed Jay's Program, and 12 were hired as permanent employees. Currently, eight individuals are actively participating in the program, and three graduated on October 25, 2024.

Jay's Program was originally inspired by Raymond G. Bariuan, affectionately known as "Jay." Jay has served as a County Board Office intern since 2019 and has provided vital support and assistance to various legislative teams in both the State Senate and the State Assembly. Currently, he supports County Board Supervisor Tara Lawson-Remer.

Looking ahead, Jay's Program has announced the selection of 10 interns for cohorts 11 and 12, commencing in January and April 2025, respectively. These interns will have the opportunity to gain practical work experience, acquire essential knowledge and skills, and explore entry-level job opportunities within the County of San Diego.



# SDRC MISSION MOMENTS



## Vitcoria Vargas you're awesome!

November 11, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express thanks for the San Diego Regional Center and Victoria Vargas within the Regional Center.

My two-and-a-half-year-old daughter Cora was diagnosed with Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Type 2 at eight months of age. Since the diagnosis she has spent numerous weeks in the hospital and had two brain surgeries. As a result of her second brain surgery, she lost the ability to move the left side of her body. Through intense inpatient physical therapy at the hospital and outpatient physical therapy coordinated by San Diego Regional Center and performed by Dr. Mendonça at NeuroFit Kids, Cora regained significant left hand and left-side torso function, and is continuously improving her left leg's abilities.

Without the San Diego Regional Center, Victoria Vargas, and Dr. Mendonça, Cora would be significantly hindered by her body and constrained when playing with her family and friends.

So, I just want to again express my heartfelt thanks for San Diego Regional Center and what they've enabled my daughter to accomplish.

Sincerely,  
Drew

## Bravo for Stephanie Alvarez!

October 4, 2024

Hello, my son Luke is under Stephanie Alvarez's care with the SDRC and I just wanted to give her a bravo. She has been wonderful and really works hard for her clients. We have had a very hard time with the transition into the Self-Determination program and she has helped him during challenging times. We very much appreciate the SDRC and Stephanie Alvarez, i believe she is with unit 47.

Thank you !!!

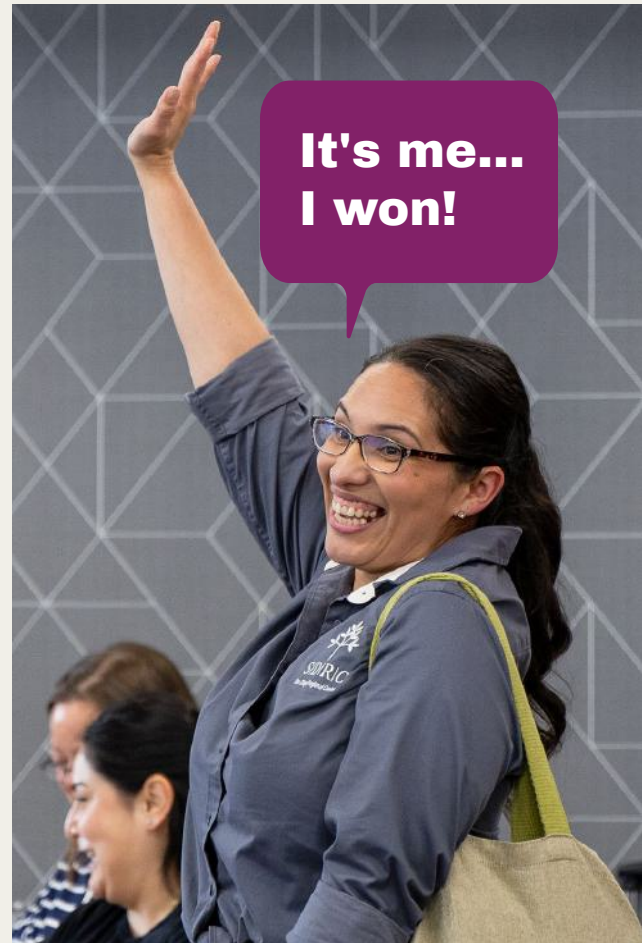




# Adopt-a-Family Nacho Fundraiser Was A Hit!



**Thanks to the committee!**





## Great job Jennifer Levine!

September 30, 2024



Hi Jennifer,

It's bittersweet to say we finally moved to Florida! It's a huge relief to be here with family and friends but I'll certainly miss all the autism resources that California had. I'll especially miss you and I wanted to thank you for all the help you've given to me and Shane. These last few years were really difficult and it meant a lot that you listened, cared, and worked to get Shane the best help possible. I hope you know what a big difference you make in kids' and parents' lives!

Thank you again for everything!  
Allyson



**"What if today, we were just grateful for everything?"**

— CHARLIE BROWN

**Enjoy a little Thanksgiving trivia from Parade**

[50 Thanksgiving Trivia Questions](#)

## **SHARE** **Your Holiday Spirit!**

The holiday season is almost here! Whether you're already decking the halls or waiting until December, we'd love to see your holiday spirit. Send us your holiday photos throughout the next few months to share on SDRC's social media pages.

Wearing holiday sweaters? 🧑‍🎄 Decorating your workspace with festive decor? ❄️ Taking a break with some cookies and cocoa? 🍪 Exchanging gifts? 📺 Enjoying some holiday fun and festivities with your office or unit? 🎄

**Snap a photo and upload it!**



Please upload your photos to SDRC Holiday Photos 2024, and don't forget to include your unit # or team, and names of staff pictured. *Keep in mind that we need the approval of everyone pictured in order to share!*

**THANK YOU** and happy (early) holidays!

## **SHARE** **A Mission Moment!**

Share a client success story from a family member or write a tribute and we'll publish it in the newsletter.

We want to spread the word.

**Send us your story and a photo to [communications@sdr.org](mailto:communications@sdr.org)**





# SDRC MISSION MOMENTS



Veri Salgado you're inspirational!

October 29, 2024

Dear Viri,

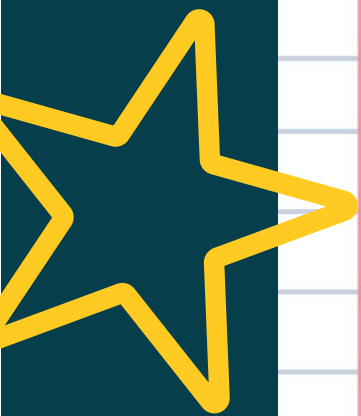
On behalf of the FERIA Partnership Conference Planning Committee, we would like to thank you for serving as our Keynote Speaker at the 10th Annual FERIA Partnership Conference; the keynote was inspirational, informative, impactful, and appreciated by all attendees. Your success story gave hope to the parents that with self-determination and faithful parental support, their child can reach his/her fullest potential.

In addition, your workshop presentation on “Supportive Decision-Making” was very well received by the conference participants who attended your workshop. We are also appreciative of your assistance in developing the 10th Annual FERIA Partnership as a planning committee member.

Again, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for your time, dedication, and knowledge-building support of our parents with special needs children.

The parents valued the information that they received and expressed their gratitude and appreciation for sharing your expertise, and knowledge. In addition, we are most appreciative of the SDRC for your sponsorship and in-kind contribution.

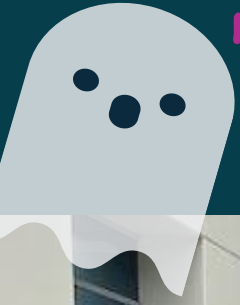
Warm Regards,  
Dr. Rebecca Sapien-Melchor  
José M. Melchor





# Spooky Festivities

Carmel Mnt Ranch



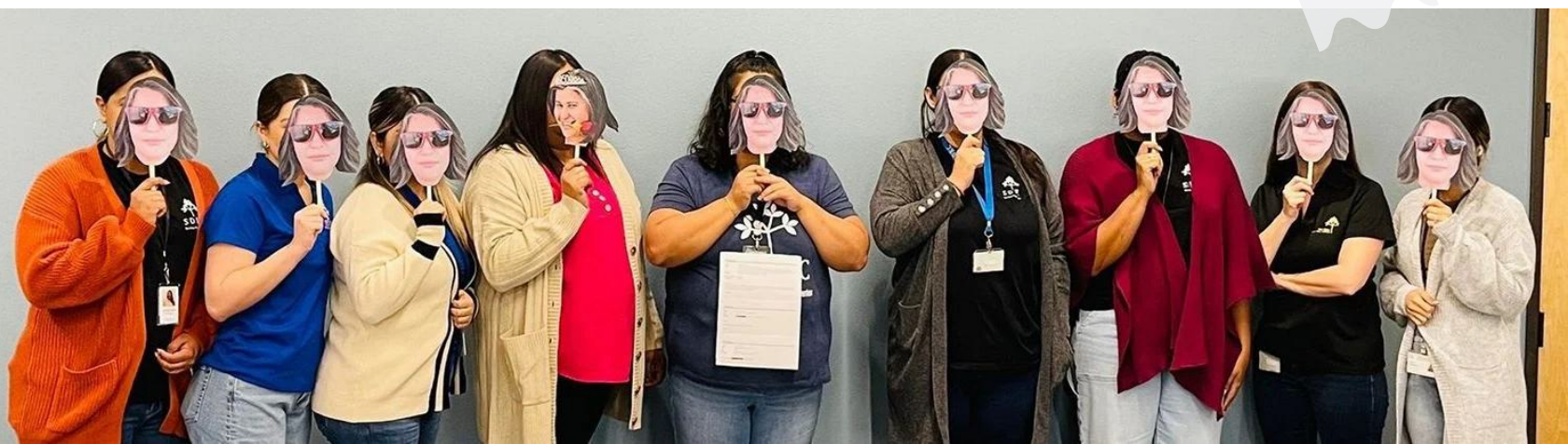




# Imperial Valley









# San Marcos & National City





# Spooky Fun at the Main



1st Place







## More Spooky Fun at the Main



**1st Place Door**







# HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

## November 1

Crystal Johnson

## November 2

Leslie Arce

Kristine Calalang

Daniel Ducote

Bridget Garrett

Eduardo Limon

Suzanne Luitel

Karen Melowitz

Donna Null

## November 3

Savanna Beecroft

Estela Siqueiros

## November 4

Astrid Brunet-Martinez

Genesi Morales

Angela Wash

## November 5

Natalie Grenier Bracken

Lauren Sugui

## November 6

Michal Crouse

Katie Dietrich

Fernanda Guerra

## November 7

Ian Ferguson

Sarah Franco

Mark Klaus

## November 8

Karely Mendez

Gloria B Ramirez

Jeanette Saucedo

## November 9

Jesus Atondo

Maria Chavez

Madison George

## November 11

Angela Margeson

Farrah Roc

## November 12

Francis Almario

Lorena Arambula

Amie Chambers

Deborah Hernandez

Valerie Monsalve

Dafne Morales Vazquez

## November 13

Maritza Arriaga

Jane Gonzales

Eric Mendoza

Joanna Navarrete

## November 14

Kamaria Allen

Jose Gonzalez

Staphany Lu

Melissa Melgar

## November 15

Karla Hernandez

Brandyce Park

## November 16

Michelle Barker

Kendra Garcia

Karla Sandres

Necol Shabazz

## November 17

Desiree Delgado

Lisa Johnson

Andree Van Der Merwe

## November 18

Kelsey Meleady

Alba Reyna

Daisy Valdez

## November 19

Alexandra Alcantara

Joanna Herrera

Cynthia Parkhill

Mirna Pelaez

## November 20

Jessica Means-Cruz

## November 21

Paige Lyle

Fernanda Rodriguez

## November 22

Andrea Hogan

Michael Lozano

## November 23

Samuel Bradshaw

## November 24

Brenna Balogh

Bernadette Boren

Daniel Favela

Matthew Walter

## November 25

Elizabeth Ibarra

Brent Tavernelli

## November 26

Lizzette De Anda

Laura Euyoqui

Gabriella Ohmstede

## November 27

Richele Helms

David Jaime

## November 28

Daniela Tolley

Johana Zavala

## November 29

Maribel Antonio

Rogelio Gonzalez

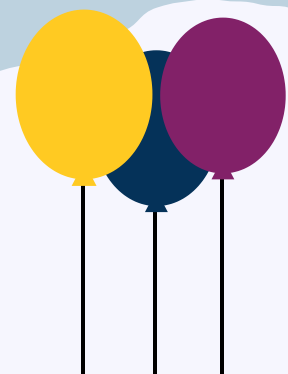
Kacie How

## November 30

Dalia Palomino

Victoria Ruiz

Gabriel Tecarro





# ANNIVERSARIES!



## 20+ Years

Christine Lux-Whiting  
Diana Perez  
Robert T. Edwards  
Barbara Casillas  
Sonia Griffin  
Lenka Pavlik  
George Deshazo  
Martha Cervantes  
Carolyn L. Crawford

## 10 Years

Tanya Andreotti  
James Jones

## 5 Years

Gina Berdugo  
Ruby Reyes  
Tania Gonzalez  
Rosalie Goulding

## 1 Year

Dohee Kim  
Vanessa Chen  
Sofia Palacios  
Mayra Sandoval  
Kiera Clubb  
Summer Medina  
Paula Arango  
Savannah Espinola  
Laura Euyoqui

## National Native American Heritage Month

November is **National Native American Heritage Month (NNAHM)** and is a time to celebrate and honor the cultures, traditions, and history of Native American/American Indian (NA/AI) and Alaska Natives'. Throughout our history, Native peoples' cultures, identities, and governments were not always seen as a part of this Nation but as a threat to it. In 1990 congress passed a joint resolution and signed into law that November will be recognized as NNAHM. Today, Native Americans are recognized as the original inhabitants of this land since time immemorial, for their essential contributions to society, and as being integral to the fabric of the United States.

As of 2021 there are 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States, 110 federally recognized tribes in California, and 18 federally recognized tribes in San Diego county. However, numerous others are still advocating for recognition. NNAHM gives us an opportunity to increase our knowledge of the unique challenges tribal communities face and better understand how historical trauma—such as colonization and genocide—has impacted Native peoples.



**LOOKING TO CELEBRATE NNAHM, REDEDICATE YOURSELF TO HONORING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND CONTINUE YOUR COMMITMENT TO JLB?**

Watch Indigenous films:  
Rez Ball streaming on Netflix  
Reservation Dogs on Hulu and Disney+  
Smoke Signals on Pluto TV  
[FREE workshops](#)  
[Attend an art show](#)  
[Check out Tribal Resources on the WIKI](#)



# LEAP is

Learning & Education for All Professionals

**LEAP** is a comprehensive and centralized system for training and to help you further your professional development. It offers a variety of training modules that tracks your progress.

The training modules offer both online and instructor-led classes.



## Don't Have a LEAP Account?

**New employees must register.** If you have recently changed your name please log in using your existing account and update the information on your profile to reflect the new name/email.

Create your **LEAP** account [HERE!](#)



## Earn A \$1,000 Bonus!

Please refer qualified applicants to posted SDRC positions and receive a \$1,000 bonus in appreciation. Applicants can be a member of your family, a neighbor, a friend, a former colleague, etc.

**Be sure they mention your name on their application!**

### Referral Bonus Program



## Mandatory Training

**All SDRC staff are required to complete the following online training** (new employees must complete within the first 30 to 90 days of employment).

**SDP 1: Staff Introduction to Self-Determination**  
Basic introduction to the Self-Determination Program.

**SDP 2: Staff Introduction to Individual Budgets in Self-Determination**  
Basic introduction to Self-Determination Individual Budgets.

**Harassment-Free Workplace –**  
Employee / Manager New staff must complete within 30 days of employment and every two years thereafter. Tenured staff must complete training every two years.

**Introduction to the Regional Center System –**  
Enroll HERE

**Privacy and Security Series - 7-Part Learning Path:** Enroll HERE

**Safety in the Workplace –** Enroll HERE

**Workplace Etiquette –** Enroll HERE

**SDRC Emergency Action and Fire Prevention Plan** – online and in-person: Enroll HERE

**Person-Centered Thinking –** available in person. Enrollment opportunities will be announced when it becomes available.

**Workplace Violence Prevention –** Enroll HERE

**Heat-Related Illness Prevention Training Presentation -** Download HERE





# Our Holiday Award Luncheon is Approaching!

Thursday, December 12

Join us at the Town and Country San Diego on December 12, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. for a festive celebration at the San Diego Regional Center Holiday Awards Luncheon! Reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, and cheer on your coworkers who will be recognized for their years of service. There will be photobooths, SDRC swag, and bring your dancing shoes!

 REGISTER

## How To Complete Your Timecard The Day Of The Holiday Awards Luncheon

### 5/40 schedule

Attending Luncheon - record your time as 8 hours of pay code Holiday

Not attending Luncheon - record your time as 4 hours of pay code Holiday and 4 hours of vacation or unpaid leave

### 9/80 schedule

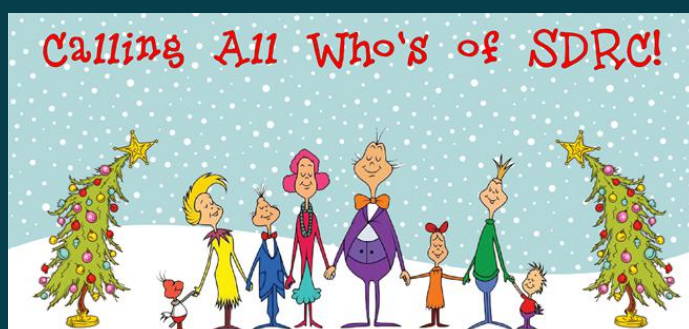
Attending Luncheon - record your time as 9 hours of pay code Holiday

Not attending Luncheon - record your time as 4.5 hours of pay code Holiday and 4.5 hours of vacation or unpaid leave

### 4/40 schedule

Attending Luncheon - record your time as 10 hours of pay code Holiday *(This is an exception for December 12 only)*

Not attending Luncheon - record your time as 5 hours of pay code Holiday and 5 hours of vacation or unpaid leave



*May you enjoy the holiday with friends and family!*



## November Events

### Multicultural Festival

Saturday, November 2, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm at EJE Acadamies Charter School 851 S. Johnson Ave. El Cajon 92020

### Deaf+ Resource Fair

Saturday, November 9, 3:00 - 5:30 pm at San Diego Regional Center 4355 Ruffin Rd. San Diego, 92123

### Resource Fair

Tuesday, November 12, 3:30 - 5:30 pm at Fairbanks Commons 15870 Camino San Bernardo, San Diego, 92127

### Ventanilla de Salud

Thursday, November 14, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm at Mexican Embassy Little Italy 1549 India St. San Diego, 92101

### Developmental Support Parent Night

Thursday, November 14, 5:00 - 7:00 pm at MAAC North Campus 956 Vale Terrace Dr, Vista, 92054

### Money Harvest Festival Community Resource Fair

Saturday, November 23  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
at Lincoln High School  
4777 Imperial Ave,  
San Diego, 92113



SDRC

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