



# Harbor Happenings

Cover: Participants have fun at our Grand Opening Event  
Photo Credit: Edgar Marroquin

**HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER**

**FALL 2025**

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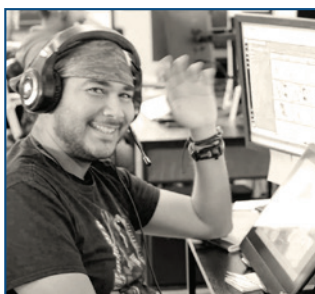
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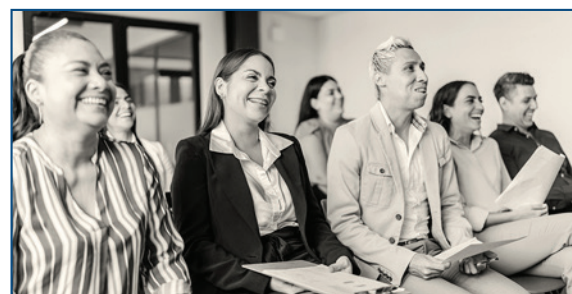
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## Our New Main Building: Doors Open, Welcome In!



We are excited to share some big news with our community! In June, Harbor Regional Center officially opened the doors to our new main building, conveniently located at: **21309 Hawthorne Blvd. Torrance, CA 90503**

Along with our new location, we also have a new main telephone number. You can now reach us at: **(310) 543-0100**

To celebrate this milestone, we hosted a **Grand Opening event** where families, community partners, and staff gathered to tour the new building, explore the Harbor Family Resource Center, and enjoy food, activities, and time together. It was a joyful occasion that highlighted the strength and connection of our community.

We encourage you to take a moment to update your records with our new address and phone number. We look forward to welcoming you into our new space as we continue our mission of serving and supporting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Our FRC Team at our  
Grand Opening







**NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER**  
**(310) 543-0100**



Edward Faves from Senator Ben Allen's Team hands Executive Director Patrick Ruppe a congratulatory certificate for grand opening!

## A New Way to Stay in the Loop, Text Messaging Opt-In for Upcoming Events!



Harbor is introducing a new way to keep our community informed and connected. We launched a text messaging platform designed to share important updates about upcoming training and events.

### **Don't miss out on our exciting training and events!**

Now, you can opt-in to receive exclusive updates, reminders, and special announcements directly to your phone. It's fast, easy, and a great way to stay connected with what's happening at Harbor.

### **Ready to get started?**

Text **WEBSITE** to **50809** to sign up today!

Participation is completely voluntary. Similar to subscribing to our newsletter, individuals can opt-in at any time. You'll also find information about keywords on our website, social media channels, and at community events.

For more details, visit [www.harborrc.org](http://www.harborrc.org). Standard message and data rates may apply, and participants can opt-out at any time by replying "STOP."

This new resource is part of Harbor's ongoing commitment to keeping families connected, informed, and engaged.

## We Value Your Feedback

### Survey Updates

Share Your  
Input Today!



Your voice matters. This spring, we sent out our annual Individual and Family Experience and Satisfaction Survey to everyone we serve. The survey focused on four key areas:

- Communication and Delivery of Information
- Customer Service
- Person-Centered Service Planning
- Diversity of Harbor's Provider Community

We received 912 responses, and we're excited to share that 87% of respondents rated their overall experience and satisfaction with Harbor as good, excellent, or out-

standing. A full report of the results will be available soon.

#### **Year-Round Surveys**

In addition to the annual survey, we offer several ways to share feedback throughout the year:

- **Person-Centered Service Planning Survey:** Our service coordinators continue to provide this survey immediately after each Individual Program Plan (IPP) meeting to ensure your plan reflects your goals and what matters most to you.
- **Customer Service Survey:** Available through staff email signatures, our website, and reception areas,

so you can share feedback after any interaction with Harbor staff.

- **Resource Development/ Services Needs Assessment Survey:** Let us know what services are most needed. Your input will help us develop innovative and person-centered programs.

Visit [harborrc.org/get-involved/share-your-input/](https://harborrc.org/get-involved/share-your-input/) to view survey results and find new opportunities to share your input!

Thank you for partnering with us to shape the future of Harbor Regional Center!

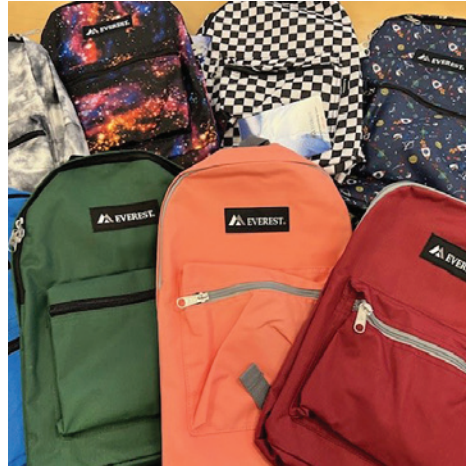


## Back to School with Harbor Regional Center!

By Thao Mailloux, Director of Strategic Communications & Engagement



Hector of 24 Hour Home Care



Jessica from Harbor FRC

The new school year is here, and at Harbor Regional Center, support for individuals with developmental disabilities occurs every step of the way, and that includes the all-important school years, from age 3 through 22!

Your service coordinator can help you navigate the educational system. From helping parents and caregivers prepare for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, discussing your child's needs, goals, and concerns, to connecting you with an Education Specialist or advocacy resources, they make sure you have the tools you need.

For students in transition programs (ages 18–22), service coordinators also can

help explore work experience programs that help students gain job skills and confidence in real-world work settings.

### Annual Backpack Giveaway

Our Harbor Family Resource Center's Backpack Giveaway was a huge success! Thanks to our generous community partners: Aveanna, Cambrian, 24 Hour Home Care, Right Choice In-Home Care/Inspira Behavior, David's Place, Ideal Transit, and Social Vocational Services in Torrance, we distributed nearly 400 backpacks to students. Over 80 individuals and families joined us on August 12th, for a fun-filled day to get ready for the new school year. A special thank you to the team at Social Vocational Services who helped pack backpacks ahead of the giveaway event!

### Special Shopping Day with The Rotary Club of South Bay Sunrise

On Saturday, August 9th, the Rotary Club of South Bay Sunrise made back-to-school shopping extra special. Thirteen families were welcomed at Kohl's in Torrance with coffee, donuts, and a private shopping experience before the store opened. Each family received a \$200 Kohl's gift card, and Rotary member, Pat Sandt generously covered any extra costs.

With the help of volunteers, including Harbor Service Coordinators, Parent Mentors, and Harbor Family Resource Center staff, families picked out brand-new clothes, shoes, jackets, and sweaters. Joy radiated from every face as families left



Students, their families, Rotary Sunrise, and Harbor staff are all smiles at Kohl's

with bags full of new outfits, ready for the year ahead.

We are so grateful to the Rotary Club of South Bay Sunrise, especially President, Yuko Saito and Community Service Chair, Pat Sandt, for making this event possible.

### **Wishing Everyone a Great Year Ahead**

From backpacks to new school clothes to IEP support, Harbor Regional Center is here to walk alongside families through every step of the school journey. We wish all of our students a successful and inspiring 2025–2026 school year filled with learning, growth, and new opportunities!



Christina of SVS helps get backpacks ready!



## Bridging Access with Harbor's Community Outreach Specialist By Edgar Marroquin



Community Outreach Specialist Edgar Marroquin and Family Support Specialist Claudia Sandoval at an outreach event with Anaheim Ducks mascot, Wild Wing!

At Harbor Regional Center, the Community Outreach Specialist plays a vital role in helping people access the services and support they need. The main goal of this role is simple, but powerful: to make sure people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or the families who are supporting their loved ones, know what resources are available, understand how to access them, and feel supported along the way.

Previously serving as

an Enhanced Service Coordinator, in October 2022, Edgar Marroquin stepped into this important role to carry forward Harbor's commitment to the community by exploring new and innovative ways to connect individuals with little or no regional center funded services to the expansive information and resources that are available.

A native Angelino, Edgar grew up in the Pico-Union and Koreatown neighborhoods at the heart of Los

Angeles. Raised in a Spanish-speaking, single-parent household that avoided social service agencies due to concerns about immigration status, he understands firsthand about some challenges that many families may be facing. His personal experiences allow him to connect with families and their own experiences when navigating decisions about services for their loved ones.

The Community Outreach Specialist promotes and shares information about ser-





Edgar is all smiles sharing information and important resources in the community

vices available to individuals with developmental disabilities by:

- Building partnerships with schools, community organizations, and local groups
- Hosting workshops and events to share valuable information in multiple languages
- Attending various events and connecting directly with community members

Edgar has been instrumental in creating workshops with

partners like the Learning Rights Law Center, Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK), and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to provide knowledge on topics such as education, advocacy, and mental health, delivered in the languages that people use every day, such as Korean, Khmer, and Spanish. If you haven't been able to attend a training or workshop yet, we hope you can join us soon!

You may have met Edgar at an event hosted by school districts, junior colleges, city

organizations, churches, and awareness campaigns. You will find Edgar at many of Harbor's training and events as well, presenting information, sharing resources, or answering questions.

At the heart of this work, Edgar is excited to build a stronger, more inclusive community for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, carrying forward Harbor Regional Center's commitment to equity, access, and partnership.

## Open For Work: A Quick Guide to Job Seeking

By Tim'an Ford, Peer Advocate

One of the most challenging aspects of navigating the adult world is getting a job. From filling out a resume to catch the attention of job recruiters to preparing oneself for the official interview process, seeking employment can often feel like a daunting task. This can feel even more intimidating for people with developmental disabilities, who have historically been regarded by employers as difficult to work with or accommodate due to the hardships that come with their way of living. However, with society having a much better understanding of developmental disabilities, great progress is being made to help our community access job opportunities and a steady source of income beyond the support of a loved one or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Having said that, I hope this article will serve as a quick guide for those of you who are ready to enter the workforce.

First and foremost, you need to know your rights. The

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits the discrimination of people with disabilities and ensures they have equal opportunity in the workplace. In short, this piece of legislation dictates that you cannot be discriminated against for your disability and that your employer cannot ask for any specific information regarding your disability, like medical exam results. Most job applications will ask if you have a disability for the sake of figuring out accommodations, but you get to decide whether or not you feel comfortable disclosing that information during the application process. If you need accommodations, know what exact accommodations you'll need for the job and don't be afraid to discuss them with your employer during the interview process. Honesty and integrity are valuable qualities in the workplace, and communicating clearly with your potential boss in a professional manner will show just how capable you are.

In addition to knowing your rights and the accommodation you might need, it is highly recommended you do research into your potential employer. In the context of employment, see if the company or organization is an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE). If inclusive employment is a fundamental aspect of your employer's operations and the careers they offer, it's a good sign that you can apply for a position with a feasible chance you'll be hired. As with any job application process, your prospective employer will want to know your experience, strengths, and potential for growth. When drafting your resume and cover letter, make sure you promote yourself as a viable candidate by focusing on your best qualities and successes from previous jobs, school, or community contributions. If a position is looking for letters of recommendation, be sure to reach out to your supervisors and mentors from your past work or programs you've participated in, so they can help describe a





more comprehensive picture of your abilities.

Not everyone seeking employment will have an expansive resume or years of job experience to refer to when applying for a position. For people with physical and developmental disabilities, applying for your first job can often be a difficult task due to limited mobility and/or ac-

cess to transportation as well as a lack of knowledge of where to start. Thankfully, the Regional Center System and the larger network of employment support programs overseen by the Department of Developmental Services is here to help you break through the barrier. In speaking to your service coordinator, they can help you get your case connect-

ed to the Department of Rehabilitation in order to gain access to employment workshops, internships, and mentorship programs designed to help you get your first job. Thank you for taking the time to read this quick guide on how to navigate the workforce and prepare to apply for a new job. Good luck!

## Brainstorm Productions Awarded 2025 Nonprofit of the Year: Shaping Futures Through Creativity

By Laura Snyder

Brainstorm Productions, a subsidiary of the Center for Learning Unlimited (CLU), was recognized as the "2025 Nonprofit of the Year" by the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce on June 5, 2025. Every year, the Torrance Chamber of Commerce presents the Impact Awards Celebration. "This celebration acknowledges the extraordinary efforts of business and individuals," explains Donna Dupperon, the Chamber's President & CEO. In attendance to receive the accolade were Brainstorm Productions' Program Director, Ginny Erxleben, Program Coordinator, Sylvia Owens, and Executive

Producer, Bob Harper. Brainstorm was honored for their innovative program that equips neurodiverse adults with skills in digital arts, workplace readiness, and professional development, preparing them for careers in the Animation and Visual Arts industry.

CLU has been a proud member of the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce for over 20 years. As Brainstorm Productions was established under CLU, Program Coordinator Sylvia Owens has become an active participant in Chamber events over the past five years. Chamber representatives were present at the ribbon-cutting ceremony to support the opening of Brainstorm Productions Studio in April 2023. Dupperon remembers, "I had the extraordinary opportunity to have a guided tour of Brainstorm Productions. This tour provided me with a hands-on look as to the dedication and creativity that occurs at Brainstorm Productions. The efforts and the engagement

into the work being created was incredible."

In addition to this esteemed award, Brainstorm Productions' has been acknowledged for their groundbreaking work with empowering neurodiverse adults through digital arts and career development through certificates of recognition from several elected officials, including Congressman Ted W. Lieu (CA-36), California State Senator Ben Allen (CA-24), Los Angeles County Assessor Jeffrey Prang, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn (4th District).





Congratulations to Brainstorm Productions, the Center for Learning Unlimited, and the incredible team whose passion and innovation continue to empower neurodiverse adults. Here's to even more creativity, opportunity, and success in the years ahead!



Jeremy, Ginny, Silvia and Bob receiving the 2025 Nonprofit of the Year Award on behalf of Brainstorm Productions.

**For more information, please visit**  
**[www.brainstormproductions.org](http://www.brainstormproductions.org)**

## Fall HCBS Updates and Trainings

By Aimee Fabila, Brian Carrillo, and Kiara Martinez, HCBS Specialists



As fall approaches, Harbor is excited to share new opportunities for learning, connection, and growth within our community. We are especially proud to announce the return of our popular *HCBS and Your Rights* training series, presented in collaboration with ALO Consultation—this time with an inspiring new twist.

Our previous *HCBS and Your Rights* trainings reached more than 250 participants, empowering individuals with valuable knowledge about their rights and how to advocate for themselves. This fall, we're building on that success with two engaging sessions. The first session will feature the original *HCBS*

*and Your Rights* presentation (with breakfast and coffee provided). The second session, a *Vision Boarding Workshop*, will give participants the chance to create and take home their own vision boards—personal reminders to help clarify goals and stay motivated.

This new component grew out of feedback from past trainings, where many participants shared their personal hopes and goals. We wanted to offer something tangible to help people stay focused long after the training ends. Our hope is that everyone who attends leaves with not only new knowledge, but also a meaningful tool to support their journey.

Another recent highlight for Harbor was our *Community of Practice* training. In the past, these sessions often brought together only families or only service coordinators. This time, Harbor staff, service providers, families, and people receiving services gathered, all in the same room! Together, we engaged in open, honest discussions about our service delivery system, hearing directly from every stakeholder. These moments of shared learning and dialogue are truly invaluable, and we look forward to creating more spaces like this in the future.

At Harbor, our commitment remains strong, to educate, to empower, and to create opportunities for meaningful conversations that strengthen our community. We invite you to join us for our upcoming trainings and encourage you to share these opportunities with others who may benefit.

Together, through education and collaboration, we can continue strengthening our community and building a future rooted in inclusion, empowerment, and respect.



**Learn more! Sign up for a training on our events page at [www.harborrc.org/special-events-and-family-training](http://www.harborrc.org/special-events-and-family-training)**



## Upcoming Trainings

- **HCBS and Your Rights – Vision Boarding**

A hands-on, interactive training designed to help individuals better understand their rights and strengthen their self-advocacy skills. All participants, regardless of diagnosis or communication style, are welcome! Following the presentation, participants will create vision boards to visualize and track their personal goals.

- **Supported Decision-Making**

A training series that explores practical strategies to promote autonomy and choice. Learn how to support individuals in making their own decisions and leading their own lives.

- **Community Connecting**

This training focuses on creative strategies to support meaningful community engagement, aligning with HCBS Requirement #1: Access to Community. Together, we'll explore new possibilities for building stronger community ties.

- **Curious Conversations**

An inclusive discussion series where participants explore HCBS topics in a safe and open space. Each session highlights a different HCBS requirement, sparked by the Lanterman and Friends' HCBS Final Rule: The Animated Series. Participants will reflect on real-life examples, share perspectives, and collaborate in small groups.

- **Compassion at Work**

A training designed for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), focusing on mental health, self-care, and strategies for sustaining empathy. By practicing self-love and resilience, DSPs can continue providing the highest level of support to the individuals they serve.



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**Design:** Heather Lee, 7 Edge Creative