

C A L I F

Communities Actively Living Independent & Free

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November 29th 2021

Dear CALIF Board, Staff, Partners, Co-Sponsors, Allies, Donors, Vendors, Consumers, Friends and Advocates:

After bowing our heads for thanksgiving and realizing that we still have most of our health, that most of us are not starving and that our food sources are still intact, that we can still engage in meaningful conversations and even debates, that we can earn our keep and can move about, that we still enjoy the company of families and friends, our hearts are motivated to give and to reciprocate the immense blessings received. In other words, we are ready to express and celebrate Christmas.

Whichever faith tradition we profess or not profess to belong to, because we are people of goodwill, a majority of us are still inspired to share the abundance of the season. At CALIF, we have lost some friends and dear volunteers too but our work continued as we kept moving forward, never closing our office but keeping a skeleton crew available and accessible to our consumers.

We made productive use of the thin consumer crowds by developing new programs like the partnership with Centene, Health Net and The Community of LA Recuperative Care (COLARC) Project for housing small groups of disabled patients frequenting the hospitals as their only source of recuperative care, food and housing. The hospitals when filled often discharged the patients on the streets to fend for themselves and the human tragedy kept screaming for a solution. Our pilot program is an experiment on providing that solution, six residents at a time living at the COLARC house where for six months, three non-profits work together with the patients to provide them their basic needs and living skills to prepare them for independent or interdependent life.

We also spearheaded the establishment of an Emerging Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) as a first step to one day establishing the LA County ADRC. That effort is moving ahead full speed even as we face the challenges of working out the kinks and the unknown.

And then, in the summer, the unforeseen happened—my sudden illness. I was in a coma and dead to the world for four days but my wonderful staff, headed by Program Director Keith Miller, Financial Officer Alma Ducusin and Administrative and Grants Assistant Gordon Blacknell immediately went on full gear to make sure that our newly hatched programs continued. We owe my wonderful staff immense appreciation for they made an effort to assure the integrity of our operations until I was able to come back to work. They were among the many reasons for my quick recovery.

There is a lot to be thankful for this year as we conclude 2021 with such fruitfulness:



The Flourishing Programs of the 7 Core Independent Living Services: Housing, Benefits Advocacy, Independent Living Skills Training, Assistive Technology, Systems Change Advocacy, Peer Counseling, Information & Referral.



The Community of LA Recuperative Care (COLARC) Project for the housing of disabled hospital patients newly discharged with nowhere to go.



The Olmstead Transition Housing program.



The Emerging ADRC of Central Los Angeles.



The CARES Project for Peer Counseling and Vaccination.



The Food Supplemental Program.



Youth Mentoring and Climate Change conferences.



CALIF-PASC Consumer telethons.

A lot has been accomplished in the seeming vacuum of the pandemic that proved that more disabled people could participate in the life of the community through social distancing, that resources could be shared, that people could be mobilized and that no one needs to be isolated. But we remember too, the people who were very much part of CALIF who we lost this year—**Choon Cho**, our deaf advocate, **Jackie Tatum**, who worked on Independent living, **Marilyn Golden** who fought hard against the silent killing of the disabled, **Maggie Belton**, whose issue was IHSS, Barry Atwood who fought for transportation and the removal of architectural barriers and our very own Board President **Engracia Figueroa** whose passion was to also reform the airline industry and their dismal record on breaking motorized wheelchairs and medical equipment. It is the work of these wonderful advocates that transformed and continue to transform the lives of many, adding efficiency and quality to their services. With her untimely death, Engracia became bigger than life on Twitter, Facebook and the media after the airlines broke her chair.

In their memory, we ask you to partner with us as we continue their legacy in this field of disability access, rights, issues and the pursuit of liberty and happiness.

In the spirit of the season, Merry Christmas and/or Happy Holidays! This is what the gift of disability brings us—the spirit of good cheer, no matter what the circumstances are!

Your ally and comrade,

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