

I SPEAK

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EDUCATION · ADVOCACY · KNOWLEDGE

A Self-Advocacy Newsletter Brought to You by Self-Advocates and SCDD San Diego Imperial

WINTER 2021-22

John Brouwer Cooks!

by Zach Hill

John Brouwer is taking Cooking Prep class through SCDD's San Diego Imperial Office and United Cerebral Palsy (UCP).

John found out about Cooking Prep from his Regional Center coordinator who also told him about Disaster Preparedness classes offered by SCDD and the American Red Cross.



What John really likes about Cooking Prep is that he has made new friends.

John likes to be creative in the kitchen and to try new things. He has made seasoning blends with his mom. They add it to their food to make it taste good. His favorite creation was coconut soup which used Thai spices instead of peanut butter.

John hosted parties where he and his friends learned to make new foods, like pizza. The toppings on the pizza were pepperoni, mushrooms, olives, cheese, onions, and marinara sauce. Now he is learning to use the air fryer where he reheated pizza and egg rolls and made corn on the cob.

John made instant soup when he took a trip with his sister. Making the soup saved time because they did not have to wait for food at a restaurant.

Besides making food for himself, John uses his cooking skills when he volunteers with Community Interface Services to make salad for people who are homeless.

Finally, John wants to share a cooking safety tip: Curl your fingers when using a knife so you don't cut yourself by mistake.



Returning to On-Campus Learning During the Pandemic

by Peter Salgado

My name is Peter Salgado. I am currently attending Imperial Valley College (IVC) and am studying math. I hope to transfer to a four-year university.

Learning online is very different from learning in person because you do not have as much interaction with teachers or other students as you would in a classroom. It is limiting when you only get to interact while you do group projects or when allowed by the instructor. Also, it is more difficult to ask questions online than it is when you are in a class on campus.

When attending school on Zoom, there can be many distractions--like family members interrupting and dogs barking. It is hard to find a quiet place to attend.

I got to experience what it is like returning to school on campus. First you go to the IVC website and answer a few questions about your vaccination. Once approved, you get a campus pass to show the security officer. When you come to campus, the security officer checks your pass and your temperature. If your temperature is normal you can stay on campus.

Disabled Students Program and Services (DSPS) is now in its new building. The building now allows more room for working and studying. It is beautiful, big, and comfortable.

Because of COVID-19, it looks a lot different in the classrooms. There is a capacity limit of 15 students, the desks are 6 feet apart, you have to social distance from others. You must wear your mask at all times inside the classrooms and computer labs. There are hand sanitizer dispensers in each classroom and wipes are available to wipe down your desk and chair.

The cafeteria is closed due to remodeling, so pre-made lunches are available to purchase Monday through Thursday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, there are food trucks parked behind the cafeteria that sell food like shrimp cocktails and tacos. Security staff check regularly to ensure everything is sanitized and that everybody is social distancing.

Overall, Imperial Valley College follows all protocols and CDC guidelines to ensure everyone stays safe while on campus. I feel safe returning to campus and following these rules.

For current guidance regarding COVID-19, check the following national and local government websites: [Centers for Disease Control](#), [State of California](#), [San Diego County](#), [Imperial County](#)

GiGi's Playhouse

by Clark Gurley

My name is Clark Gurley. I am the ambassador for GiGi's Playhouse. GiGi's Playhouse is a nonprofit educational and social program. Our vision is to see a world where individuals with Down Syndrome are accepted and embraced in their lives. In my role as ambassador, I tell people about the programs and classes that are offered and about how great GiGi's is. Being an ambassador for GiGi's makes me feel powerful!

I started going to GiGi's Playhouse in the middle of 2018 after I heard about them on KUSI TV News. GiGi's has expanded my life. Because of Gigi's, I have met new people in the Pacific Beach community who have Down Syndrome.

Do you know that most people with Down Syndrome have heart conditions? GiGi's cares about our health and safety and about protecting the community. One way they show it is by having everyone follow rules that protect us against COVID--like masking and social distancing.

Gigi's has programs for toddlers, teens, and adults. GiGi's is a place to go when you are feeling down. The events they hold are awesome. There are luncheons, pancake breakfasts, and parties. In the past we had a 1980s themed party. This year, we had an in-person Halloween Block Party since we did not have one in 2020 due to COVID.

I met the mayor of San Diego, Todd Gloria, at the Halloween Block Party. Besides talking about GiGi's, I told him about United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) program, and People First. It would be awesome for him to join People First! Between GiGi's and UCP we will rise up.

So, come on by to GiGi's Playhouse and bring your family. We always have a good time!

[Visit GiGi's Playhouse online.](#)



Above: Clark Gurley meets San Diego Mayor, Todd Gloria, at GiGi's Halloween Block Party





Escape from Quarantine - Image by Alejandra Tenorio
"Being stuck in the house was not fun. The minute they let us loose, I took the Coaster train (Commuter Rail Service) and rode it to the end of the line where I took this photo of Oceanside beach."



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Still Here: Alive and Writing!

by Alejandra Tenorio

It has been an adventure of a lifetime that started at the beginning of 2020; a virus took over our planet. It is still going on! But I am still here, and so is my family.

For the past two years, I went to classes online. This September, I went back to school in person three days a week. I just love to be able to see my friends and teachers. It is so refreshing to go out to places and be "normal." Also, I love the six feet distance rule that keeps you away from people you do not want to see.

Besides being busy with school, I am on two self-advocacy boards: **I SPEAK** newsletter and **San Diego People First (SDPF)**.

I went back to work at the end of February. I have worked for AMC Theaters for the past four years, but we were closed for most of the pandemic. I am glad we are open again.

One good thing about the pandemic is that I found out that I love to write.

It all started when my teacher asked me to write about what I love. For me, it is Halloween. So, in 2020, I wrote two books with the name **All You Need for Halloween 1** and **2**. I am working on a third book that will come out October 2022.

My books have thirteen photographs and thirteen stories or poems. They cost \$13 each. Can you see my theme here? You can purchase the books on Amazon.

Because of my books, I appeared on English and Spanish-language news.

I will be a speaker for the SDPF Conference in May. I will talk about how my teacher and I put my books up for sale on Amazon.

I can't quit my day job right now, but I am having fun writing my books.



San Diego People First Elections

by Cali Williams

On November 19, 2021, San Diego People First (SDPF) held officer elections for the 2022-24 term.

The election process started with nominations that were open to qualified self-advocates interested in running for office. Individuals could write and submit a speech and picture of themselves to Debbie Marshall of SCDD to get their name on the ballot.

Then came the big day—Election Day—where we voted and then announced the winners.

Election Day is special. This year, we met on Zoom. First, we viewed a PowerPoint presentation and candidates were announced. Each candidate gave a speech telling why they were interested in the job.

Before voting, we were told that being an officer comes with a lot of responsibility. As officers, we can make a huge difference by making our voices heard and showing the world how smart and how strong we are.

Voting was done by Zoom poll. Candidates who had the most votes for each office won.

Congratulations to all of the newly elected officers:

- ◆ Kim Rucker, President
- ◆ Zach Hill, Vice-President
- ◆ Cali Williams, Secretary
- ◆ Viri Salgado, Treasurer
- ◆ Paul Mansell, Sergeant-At-Arms

Join the I SPEAK Newsletter team.

Share your ideas and stories. Support self-advocates by contributing to the newsletter. To join the team, please contact Debbie Marshall at (619) 913-8232 or debbie.marshall@scdd.ca.gov

What Does Self-Advocacy Mean To Me?

by Paul Mansell

I want to take a moment and share what Self-Advocacy means to me. Before I do so, I'll briefly introduce why it is important.

Self-Advocacy is the civil rights movement for people with developmental disabilities. Its most famous accomplishment is the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990.

Self-Advocacy is a movement of people coming together with different:

- abilities
- values
- experiences

People with disabilities are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. We want to live with inclusion and accessibility and to be all we can be.

The purpose of self-advocacy is to voice our wants, needs, and hopes to others. These include family members, paid staff, health care professionals, and social workers. It also includes government and the media.

Now I'll share with you what Self-Advocacy means to me. It is the following:

- my full-time job
- my lifestyle
- my passion
- my personality
- my leadership
- my communication
- my social skills

I have developed valuable relationships through my Self-Advocacy journey.

I love to write newsletter articles for Self-Advocacy organizations because I get to understand and express myself.

Self-Advocacy frees me to be who I am. It has helped me to do my best and to take risks.

My Big Bear Holiday 2021

by Demra Henderson



This year I went to Big Bear with my roommate to celebrate the Holiday. We stayed in a cabin and saw lots of snow. It was fun. I want to go back.

My roommate's dogs also came. The big white dog, Bernie, and the little dog, Avery, loved the snow. But, it was too cold outside for me! I liked being by the heater.

On Christmas we had Christmas pudding. There was fire on it. It was good.

I had a lot of fun on my vacation.



Project **S.A.F.E.E.**

Self-Advocates For Emergency Education

Project S.A.F.E.E. is organized by self-advocates committed and responsible to create positive change in the world of emergency education. We build social awareness for individuals who have developmental disabilities and make a difference in our community.

Interested in keeping your community safe?

Join Our Meetings!

**1st & 2nd Friday
of every month
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
on Zoom**



Learn and participate!

- Promote safety awareness
- No experience necessary, but dedication required
- Commit to attend every meeting
- Show professionalism and good attitude
- Have a strong voice for leadership and education

For more information:

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debbie.marshall@scdd.ca.gov

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The SCDD San Diego Imperial & UCP San Diego invite you to a
Wednesday Morning Health & Wellness Rap Session

Conversations:

Quality of Life While Aging for Self-Advocates

What: For the next three months, the Health & Wellness Group will focus their meetings on topics that relate to aging.

Through activities and discussions participants will learn:

- What aging really means
- The health concerns of aging
- Ways to keep your brain healthy
- How to live an active life
- How to keep yourself safe
- How to plan for end-of-life issues

When: Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

Who can attend? Self-Advocates and their support staff or family.

Where: Zoom [MEETING REGISTRATION LINK](#)

Meeting ID: 937 0215 8975 Passcode: 123763

Questions? Call Debbie Marshall at (619) 913-8232
or email debbie.marshall@scdd.ca.gov

When Do You Need Your Mask in California?

Masks are Currently Required for **EVERYONE** in Indoor Public Places

Due to rising COVID-19 rates and hospitalizations, California currently requires **EVERYONE** to wear a mask in indoor public places (such as grocery stores and movie theaters) **regardless of vaccination status**.

Masks are also still required for public transit (airports, planes, trains, buses and stations) and health care settings.

Some Exemptions Apply

Children under age 2 and people with certain medical conditions are not required to wear a mask, and some exceptions apply in certain settings. Visit cdph.ca.gov to learn more.

Upgrade Your Mask

Choose a mask with **good fit** and **good filtration**.

A well-fitted mask has no gaps between the face and mask. Good filtration blocks virus particles from getting through the mask itself. N95 and KN95 masks are best. Also, double masking is an effective way to improve fit and filtration. A close-fitting cloth mask can be worn on top of a surgical/disposable mask to improve fit and filtration.

Read our [Q&A](#) & our [Get the Most Out of Masking](#).



Scan the QR code to see interactive links on this flyer

