



I SPEAK

· INDEPENDENCE · SUCCESS · POWER ·
· EDUCATION · ADVOCACY · KNOWLEDGE ·

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

Summer 2024 - Special Voting Issue

My Experience as a Registered Voter

by Cali R. Williams

When I decided to become a registered voter, I became motivated to learn more about voting. My parents helped me learn about the voting process. I wanted to be like everyone else and register to vote.

I talked with my family about my desire to vote. My parents agreed it was a good idea. We went to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) where I registered to vote.

After I registered, I waited for the elections to be announced on the news. A few weeks later, election flyers and other information came in the mail. I watched the news and talked with other people to help me decide who I wanted to vote for.

When I voted and turned in my ballot I received a sticker that stated, "I Voted". I felt proud of myself. It is my right to be able to vote and be included like everybody else.

Voting made me feel that my rights were respected and acknowledged.



My Voice Is Heard

by Alex Tenorio

I'm proud to say I'm a Mexican American woman.

I have been in this country for 41 years with my mom. We came from Guadalajara, Mexico when I was six months old.

At 19, I became a citizen of the United States of America. This took a long time because a lot of paperwork was needed. The same year I also received my passport. Having a passport gives me the opportunity to visit my family in Tijuana anytime I want to.

The other important thing I did was register to vote! I was so excited! When the time came to vote, I did. I was proud of myself because I accomplished something big.

My Voice Is Heard!

San Diego People First Conference 2024

by Natalie Jackson



Above: San Diego People First officers and members at the 30th Anniversary Conference. From left to right: Viri Salgado, Kim Rucker, Natalie Jackson, Taylor Wiesner, Paul Mansell, Nora Parker, Cali Williams, Zach Hill, and Bob Guthrie.

San Diego People First (SDPF) officers and members worked very hard to plan the 2024 San Diego People First Conference at the Marriott Hotel in Mission Valley.

The Conference was held on June 7th and 8th. It was filled with tons of fun activities. The first day had a dinner to celebrate our 30th Anniversary, a panel of past SDPF board members, a street fair, and a resource event. The second day, had a keynote presentation, a variety of workshops, and experience rooms.

To plan the Conference, SDPF members formed subcommittees that worked on different conference-related materials. For example, the Volunteer Subcommittee assigned volunteers to assist attendees find their workshop and experience rooms. All of the subcommittees worked hard to plan their part of the Conference so that it was a successful event.

I hope you enjoyed your stay at the 30th SDPF Self-Advocacy Conference. Bee The Change!

Memories of the 2024 SDPF Conference.



Above: Wesley Witherspoon, giving the Keynote Speech.



Above: San Diego Registrar of Voters representatives Su Nguyen and Donna Peralta with Self-Advocate and former RAC member Thomas Andrews in the Voter Experience Room.



Voting

by Peter Salgado

My first experience voting was when I turned 18, the legal age to vote. I was confused. I didn't know what to do because I felt I wasn't mature enough to understand who to vote for and what propositions were. But, with great support from my mom and dad they taught me what to do. I researched the propositions and candidates, and then I felt more confident about how to vote. Now I understand the voting process.

A Presidential election is held every four years. These elections usually happen when it is a leap year, a calendar year with an extra day in February.

I took a political science class on American Government and Politics. In this class they talked about the definitions for government, politics, and the Electoral College.

The term Electoral College does not appear in the U.S. Constitution. It refers to the process by which citizens of the United States elect the President.

Understanding the Electoral College process has given me a deeper appreciation for the complexity and significance of our voting system.

Voting is very important because I want a good candidate who can be a good leader and keep our country safe.



“

**VOTE AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS
ON IT BECAUSE IT DOES!**

JUSTIN DART JR

FATHER OF THE ADA AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AAPD)

Join the *I SPEAK* newsletter team. This is an opportunity for readers such as yourself to share your ideas and stories or support self-advocates to contribute to the newsletter. *If you would like to join the team, please contact Debbie Marshall at (619) 913-8232 or debbie.marshall@scdd.ca.gov*



Presidential Election 2024

by Sarah Wolfsheimer

Every four years, there is a United States Presidential Election. The next Presidential Election is Tuesday, November 5, 2024. In California, all active registered voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot.

Make sure your vote gets counted!

After you complete your ballot and sign your envelope, you can:

- **Mail it** through the U.S. Postal Service
- **Drop it off** at any Official Drop Box or Vote Center/Polling Place located around the County

If you would rather **vote in person** you can:

- **Vote early at the Registrar of Voters** office starting Monday, October 7th.
- **Vote early at a Vote Center** beginning on Saturday, October 26th.
- **Vote on Election Day**, Tuesday, November 5th at any Vote Center or the Registrar of Voter's office. These locations will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



If you vote in person, there will be a poll worker at check-in to make sure you are at the correct place. Ballots and private areas for people to vote are provided. You can use a **Ballot Marking Device** or BMD to mark your ballot. BMDs meet the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). These devices use a touchscreen to record your vote. After you cast your vote on the BMD it will be printed out so you can turn it in to a polling official.

Going to a voting center early in the day is ideal because it tends to get busy at the end of the day.

Finally you can authorize someone to return your ballot on your behalf. If you want to do that, fill out the authorization section found on the outside of your ballot envelope.

No matter how you vote, it's all about getting your voice heard!

Follow the links below for more information:

[See Your Voter Status and Whether You Are Registered to Vote](#)

[Register to Vote](#)

[Find Your Polling Place](#)

[Disability Vote California](#)

Tips for a Safer Summer

Protect Yourself from the COVID Wave! COVID is Year Round.

Many viruses (like COVID-19, flu, and RSV) are caused by tiny airborne germs that stay in the air when someone breathes, talks, sings, coughs or sneezes.

Following these 5 tips will help protect yourself, your family, and your community from getting sick:

1. **Stay home** if you are sick or have been in close contact with someone who is sick.
2. **Wear an N95, KN95 or KF94 mask.** Make sure to wear it correctly covering nose and mouth. Wear it in all indoor public settings and outside especially if it's crowded.
3. **Increase airflow and improve air quality** in indoor spaces by opening windows and/or using air purifiers. Outdoors is the best ventilation!
4. **Get tested for COVID-19** before and after traveling or gathering. PCR tests are more accurate than Rapid Antigen tests (Also known as At-Home Tests or RATs).
5. **Get vaccinated and stay current on recommended booster shots.**



Protect Yourself from Extreme Heat!

Summer heatwaves can be dangerous, especially for people with disabilities. Here are some tips for preventing heat-related illness:

Stay Cool.

Avoid being outside in the direct heat for a long time. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing, a hat, and sunscreen outdoors. Stay in air conditioned spaces as much as possible. If you don't have air conditioning at home, find a public place to get out of the heat such as [Cooling Centers in San Diego County](#) or [Cooling Centers in Imperial County](#).

Stay Hydrated.

Drink more water or juice throughout the day. Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol.

Look After Each Other.

During a heat wave, check on your friends and family and have someone do the same for you.

Know the Warning Signs of Heat-Related Illness and Be Ready to Help.

Symptoms can include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, feeling weak, headache, nausea, vomiting, tiredness, and dizziness.

For more information on extreme heat events and prevention visit:



Taking Advocacy to the Next Level

by Viri Salgado

On April 11th of this year, I had the opportunity to be part of an advocacy event called Legislative Day. On April 12th, I attended the Disability Voices United Advocacy Conference in Sacramento. This was my first time traveling to Sacramento which added to my excitement of meeting other wonderful self-advocates and leaders in person.

We were all there to advocate for the priorities of our community including issues that directly impact our lives and the lives of our loved ones. By coming together, we amplified our voices to ensure that our concerns were being heard by decision makers. I got to meet the people who make decisions about the laws that affect us.

Taking my advocacy to the next level has provided me with a unique opportunity to build relationships with legislators and educate their staff. Building these connections helps ensure that our representatives have a deeper understanding of the issues we face and the changes that we're looking for.

This advocacy event also served as a platform to raise awareness and promote systemic change by really shining a light on these issues. Being there together with other self-advocates had a powerful effect on the positive changes for our communities.

From the impactful legislative visits on Thursday to the engaging discussions and speaker panel at Friday's "Together We Will Be Heard" Conference, I was deeply moved by the dedication and passion shown by everyone involved.



Above: Viri Salgado in front of California's State Capitol building.

It was inspiring to see us come together to advocate for important issues in the systems affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It left me feeling confident and gave me the skills to speak up and advocate beyond that experience.

Our active engagement and willingness to share our voices and stories made the event a success. I'm grateful for the connections we made, the skills we honed, and the bonds we strengthened throughout this legislative visit.

Together, we're stronger and we make a bigger impact.

How Old is Old Enough to Vote?

by Sarah Wolfsheimer

According to the 26th Amendment of The American Constitution, one must be at least 18 years old to vote in the United States.

In high school, I remember helping a younger student with a homework assignment. The assignment was to think about whether 18 was a good age to be able to vote.

I think that 18 is a perfectly fine age to vote. The reason is because, at 18, you are either in high school or college. I also feel that 18-year-olds have somewhat of an understanding of the world, and some opinions on political topics are already developed. Not only that, but some high schools also offer some sort of government class to seniors in high school.

Some people under 18 are still trying to discover themselves. If you are still in the discovery process, you shouldn't be faced with creating an opinion on worldly issues.

I'm not saying that politics shouldn't be talked about with people who are not old enough to vote. I think it's very important to talk about politics and other worldly issues.

I think that 17 is a perfect age to be first introduced to politics. As a minor, they can ask questions and have conversations with trusted adults or family members about their opinions on important topics. If they do so, by the time they are 18, they can have a political opinion developed and can vote accordingly.

If you are 16, you can **pre-register to vote** so that your registration will become active when you turn 18 years old.



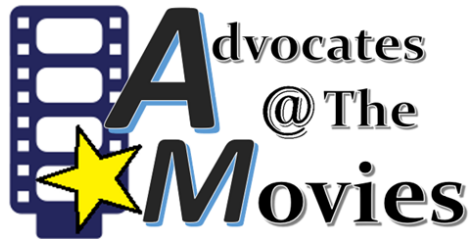
Above: Sarah Wolfsheimer

Voting FAQs Did You Know?

- ⇒ You don't have to vote on every contest on the ballot.
- ⇒ Even if you only vote for one person or on one issue, your ballot is counted.
- ⇒ It's OK to leave some contests blank, especially if you feel uncomfortable making a decision or don't know anything about the contest.
- ⇒ Voting is not a test. It is your right as a United States Citizen.

If you want to find out more about candidates or issues on the ballot check out **Vote411.org** brought to you by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

SCDD San Diego Imperial
& San Diego Regional Center present



What: Advocates at the Movies is an opportunity to get together with other self-advocates to watch movies about people with disabilities. After watching the movie, we will spend time talking about it.

When: Wednesdays 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Where: Zoom

Meeting ID: 937 0215 8975

Passcode: 1237

Why: Watching and talking about films that relate to various disabilities can help build your advocacy skills and increase your awareness and understanding of how a disability can impact your life.

Who: Self-advocates and support agencies.

For information contact:

Debbie.Marshall@scdd.ca.gov or

Viridiana.Salgado@sdrcc.org

Attention! A limited amount of COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test Kits are available at the San Diego Imperial Office of SCDD.

To get your free test kits please email sandiego@scdd.ca.gov



SCDD Supported Self-Advocate Zoom Meetings

2nd Monday of the Month

1:00 p.m.

SDPF Conference Planning

1st & 3rd Tuesday

11:00 a.m.

Healthy Living & Cooking Prep

Wednesday

4:00 p.m.

Advocates @ the Movies

4th Thursday of the Month

11:00 a.m.

I SPEAK Newsletter

3rd Friday of the Month

2:00 p.m.

San Diego People First (SDPF)

Zoom link for all meetings

bit.ly/421knkO

Meeting ID: 937 0215 8975

Passcode: 123763

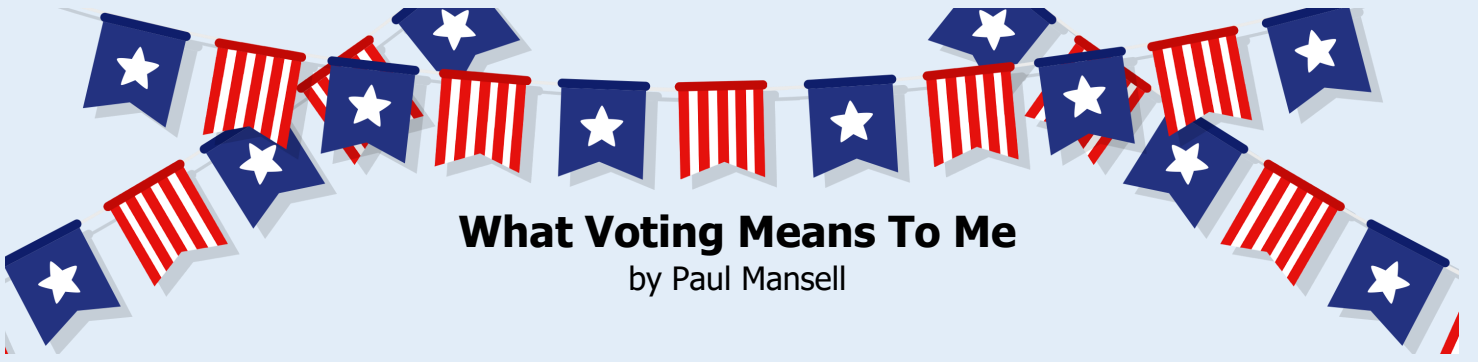
Additional trainings will be scheduled. Flyers will be sent out via email to let you know about them.

If meeting times or dates change, an email notification will be sent.

If you have questions or suggestions for future trainings or would like to be added to the email list, contact

Debbie.Marshall@scdd.ca.gov

or call (619) 913-8232



What Voting Means To Me

by Paul Mansell

I don't drive, so my rite of passage into manhood was getting a razor, an upgraded bike, and registering to vote. I express my power as a citizen when I vote, and I fulfill my civic responsibility as a citizen.

I have gone to Washington, D.C. and Sacramento. I have written to the President about essential issues that I am especially interested in. In particular, issues affecting people with disabilities.

Not all of us have the luxury to travel to our Nation's and State's Capitals. But, if you're over 18 and a citizen, you can still

make your voice heard by voting. And these days, you don't even have to leave your home to do it!

If you find the ballot confusing, you can always get help to understand it.

So, why not give it a try and vote this November?

The Hassle Free Voting Guide

Election Information for the 2024 Presidential Election



The Blue Envelope Program promotes better communication between San Diego County law enforcement and community members with a disability.

The Program allows an individual to easily display the Blue Envelope logo or present a Blue Envelope to law enforcement or other community service personnel.

Blue Envelope products may contain the individual's identification, contact information, medical information, communication preferences or documents such as vehicle registration and proof of insurance.

These products will allow a deputy or police officer who sees the Blue Envelope logo to know an individual has a condition or disability

requiring additional accommodations or assistance during a service call or emergency.

Visit the [Blue Envelope Program](#) for more information on how to participate.



your **VOTE**
is your **VOICE**

SCDD San Diego Imperial Office, San Diego Regional Center,
San Diego County Registrar of Voters, and Disability Rights California invite you to

Voter Summit 2024

What: We will cover the following topics:

- ✓ **The Importance of Voting**
- ✓ **Voting in 2024**
- ✓ **Voter Registration**
- ✓ **Know Your Voting Rights**
- ✓ **How to Prepare to Vote**
- ✓ **Voter Safety**

When: Monday, September 23rd, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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

Where: Ballard Center, 2375 Congress Street, San Diego.

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





Project S.A.F.E.E.

Self-Advocates For Emergency Education

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

Interested in keeping your community safe?

Join Our Meetings!

1st & 2nd Wednesday
of every month
1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.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:

Debbie Marshall at (619) 913-8232

debbie.marshall@scdd.ca.gov

Jennifer Lucas

jennifer.lucas@scdd.ca.gov



We Want Your Input and Suggestions!



San Diego Regional Center Client Advisory Committee (CAC)

Who Are We? The Client Advisory Committee provides advice, guidance, recommendations, and technical assistance to the SDRC Board of Directors which helps the Center carry out its mandated functions relative to persons with developmental disabilities.

Our Purpose – We Are Here To:

- Learn about issues affecting individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Educate the community and other people with disabilities about their rights and services.
- Promote independence.
- Respect individual choices.
- Learn how to become better leaders.

When: Second Tuesday of every month from 11:00 to 11:50 a.m.

Where: Zoom [MEETING REGISTRATION LINK](#)

Meeting ID: 861 5394 0094 Passcode: Lu3kMA

For more information:

Eric Rascon, Chair erik.rascon@sdrc.org

Robin Bello, Assistant Director of Client Services robin.bello@sdrc.org