

LEADING the WAY

WINTER 2023

 easterseals
Southern California

Supporting Life-Changing Services

**Celebrate Disability Pride
New Autism Advisory Board**

Happiest of Holidays



Message from our
Chief Advancement Officer
Nancy Weintraub

Fall is my absolute favorite time of year. The morning air is crisp, fall spices are everywhere (yes, I am a pumpkin spice enthusiast), and we begin planning for winter holiday family gatherings. This time of year is especially festive for me since the majority of my immediate family's birthdays are during this time.

It has also become a time synonymous with reflection and gratitude. While I am thankful for so many wonderful things in my life all year round, the festivities of this time bring home so much appreciation. I truly appreciate my family, my fellow colleagues, my friends and the experiences we have together and I appreciate all of you—our Easterseals community. These are words we often hear this time of year—grateful, thankful, appreciative—and they may seem contrite. We often find ourselves recycling sentiments each and every season in the absence of better ways to articulate what we are feeling.

How can I ever express in words the impact of your generosity and continued support of our participants throughout the year for our shared community and mission that touches the lives of over 18,000 individuals we serve annually? Some of the ways your impact has been instrumental this past year include the following:

- Witnessed the 50th Anniversary of Easterseals Camp
- Celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge
- Opened or renovated several locations, including those for Autism Services, Child Development Services and Adult Day Services
- Provided access to critical diagnostic services and technology hardware and connectivity devices to break down accessibility barriers of low-income and communities of color

Words are so powerful and yet so elusive, so I will just conclude with a humble THANK YOU!

I look forward to continuing to work together as we lead the way to full equity, inclusion and access for the disability community. I also want to wish you and your family a very happy and healthy holiday season.

Warmest regards,

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EMPOWERMENT

— Your Year-End Gift Empowered —

During the holiday season, we are always humbled by those in our community who value the importance of giving and creating meaningful impact in the lives of others. Your gift to Easterseals Southern California supports one of the largest disability service providers in California, providing thousands of people in our shared community with essential programs and services. As we grow to serve more people, your local dollars mean more than ever!



You are helping the world truly become a better place as we **lead the way to FULL equity, inclusion and access** for people with disabilities, their families and our communities. **Creating a world** where we are all **100% EMPOWERED AND 100% INCLUDED!**

Spread holiday cheer through the New Year

Begin a sustained gift and join the special allies that have pledged to help our communities thrive. Let us count the ways you can bridge the gap between intention and action, supporting initiatives that enrich education, advance health and expand employment—elevating our communities!

Choose to make a one-time gift or join our exclusive group of Thrive Alliance donors who spread their giving throughout the year by checking the “MAKE IT MONTHLY” box on the enclosed envelope or click on the “RECURRING” tab with your secure online donation at <https://eastersealssoutherncalifornia-bloom.kindful.com/>



Your sustained gift enables us to plan ahead and make long-term strategic advancements that help our participants and their families Thrive!



Thank you to everyone
who supported our 23rd Annual 3K/5K
STRIDES FOR DISABILITY!



October 21st was an amazing morning along the Southern California coastline at Marina Green Park in beautiful Long Beach, and we loved seeing so many of our sponsors, our associates and especially our amazing participants and their families! We had a fantastic turnout and raised over \$160,000 to support Disability Services here in Southern California!

Thank you to our dedicated sponsors for making this event possible!



Leading the Way to Full Equity, Inclusion and Access

Leading the Way, the name of our biannual magazine, is not just a catchy phrase, it is our mission! Easterseals is leading the way to full equity, inclusion and access through life-changing disability and community services. And, as an organization, we are backing up that mission with a broad reaching 10-year strategic plan that launched in early 2020 with a vision that by 2030, Southern California will be the most inclusive place for people with disabilities to live, learn, work and play.

We are fulfilling this strategic plan with four key strategies that guide us each and every day, providing us with the building blocks that ensure we are supporting our participants and our associates in a way that lives up to these important values. These key strategies include:

EXPAND high-quality, innovative services for people with disabilities and their families.

LEAD and improve the disability services field.

CHANGE the way people view disability.

THRIVE by providing best-in-class infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing organization.

Despite launching this important plan right before a global pandemic, significant progress has been made towards our goals. Some of the highlights include:

- Successfully incorporated virtual, telehealth and hybrid services within the organization to support participants during the pandemic
- Initiated a technology lending library
- Opened new locations for Autism Services, Child Development Services, Adult Day Services and Living Options

- Provided statewide training through a California funded *Disability Thrives* initiative
- Leaders presented at conferences and summits throughout the United States as well as globally
- Continue to collaborate with the entertainment industry on ensuring authentic portrayals and hiring of disabled talent, both in front of and behind the camera
- Actively working with sports and festival venues, making sure these spaces are accessible and inclusive for the disability community

As we get closer to the halfway point of this ambitious plan, we have identified three key focus areas that aim to position Easterseals for continued success. Those focus areas include encouraging service line innovation and sustainability, continuing to embrace the latest in technology advances to incorporate into our systems and advancing infrastructure support of our incredible associates. We plan on continuing to update our community on our Vision and Impact Plan progress in future issues of *Leading the Way* as your partnership is without a doubt key to our continued success!



CVS Pharmacy Hosts 3rd Annual *Be the Sunshine* Campaign

Also sponsors Angels fundraiser during Disability Pride Month

Easterseals Southern California has benefited greatly from more than 15 years of partnership with CVS Pharmacy. The company's longtime support of ESSC has included an annual golf tournament, Board leadership from CVS executives, employee engagement events and much more.

Summer 2023 was packed with amazing CVS activations that furthered our mission-driven work throughout Southern California. We kicked things off in July with a Disability Pride Month celebration at Angels Stadium that included a CVS ticket fundraiser and a lively tailgate under the "big A."

CVS



During the month of August:

- CVS supported our biggest ever in-store promotion with help from three of their partner brands. Banana Boat, smartwater and CELSIUS energy drink donated a portion of proceeds to ESSC during our "Be the Sunshine" campaign in hundreds of CVS locations throughout Southern California.
- CVS Beauty Consultants visited Easterseals Camp in celebration of its 50th Anniversary. Campers were pampered with hair and makeup styling by the beauty consultants, making sure they felt their best for their annual dance.
- CVS associates hosted a ticketed fundraiser to cheer on the San Diego Padres at Petco Park.

We are grateful for the steadfast dedication of CVS associates. They are truly helping Easterseals lead the way to full equity, inclusion and access for the disability community!



Unstoppable Dogs Visit Senior Day Center in Brea

This group of lively "Unstoppable Dogs," ambassadors from the animal rescue organization Dream Fetchers, visited our Senior Day Center in Brea on March 17.





This past July, Easterseals hosted several events and activities to honor Disability Pride Month.

The Disability Pride movement is an opportunity to honor the history, achievements, experiences and struggles of the disability community. It also celebrates self-love, advancing community empowerment and breaking down barriers in the way toward full equity, inclusion and access for disabled people.



Inclusion and Access in our Communities



◀ LAX, L.A. City Hall & The Magic Castle

LAX, Los Angeles City Hall and The Magic Castle were lit up in our signature Easterseals orange to celebrate Disability Pride Month.



◀ Celebrating Disability Pride

ESSC corporate partner, Curacao, highlighted disability pride for their customers by displaying English/Spanish postcards about ESSC services at store registers.

Additionally, ESSC's disability pride ads were featured in the LA Times, OC Register, San Diego Union Tribune, Ventura County Star, Riverside Press Enterprise and San Bernardino Sun. Ads were also on the cover of the LA, San Diego and OC Business Journals, and ESSC was featured on an online homepage takeover of CNN's Business section.



▲ Howard McBroom

ESSC staff member and advocate, Howard McBroom, shared his reflections on ESSC's intranet site about his experience with autism and about the importance of disability awareness and inclusion.



“This honor recognizes our shared commitment to strengthening diversity, equity, inclusion and access at ESSC and throughout Southern California,” said Dr. Beverlyn Mendez, ESSC’s Chief Operating Officer. “I’m proud of the work we’ve accomplished together and look forward to building on our momentum as we work toward our shared vision.”

Easterseals Southern California Named Among Top Companies for Embracing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Orange County Business Journal named Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) among Orange County’s top companies for embracing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). ESSC is being recognized for its continuous DEI efforts and achievements, including:

Our fully dedicated leadership team that’s focused on fostering a more inclusive workplace.

Our purposeful approach to recruiting, retaining and advancing employees with diverse backgrounds and perspective.

Our commitment to initiatives that demonstrate progress toward increasing DEI in the workplace.

Our efforts to organically weave DEI principles into our culture to encourage authenticity and celebrate diversity.

This recognition further demonstrates ESSC’s commitment to leading the way to full equity, inclusion and access through life-changing disability and community services.

T-Mobile Celebrates the Innovation and Dedication of ESSC’s Adult Day Services

Easterseals Southern California was honored by T-Mobile for Business for ‘Innovation in Customer Experience’ at their recent Unconventional Awards. This award celebrates the innovation and dedication of ESSC’s Adult Day Services team in building a Virtual Community platform for participants during the height of the pandemic.

This was made possible by T-Mobile donating iPads, which allowed us to connect with participants from the safety of their homes, and our wonderful staff who made the Virtual Community a reality.



Dee Prescott, Vice President of ESSC Adult Day Services, Nancy Weintraub, ESSC Chief Advancement Officer, and Mandy Speakman, Regional Director, Adult Day Services South, celebrate receiving the T-Mobile for Business for ‘Innovation in Customer Experience’ honor at the recent Unconventional Awards.

Efficient Use of Donor Dollars



We use donor dollars wisely with **88%** of our Income spent on **Programs & Services**.*



Donations are used **locally** to support services for people in our communities.



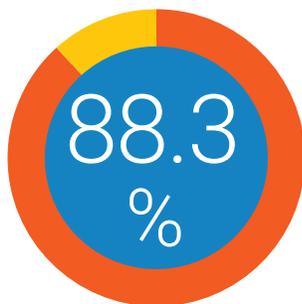
PROGRAMS and SERVICES
for adults and children



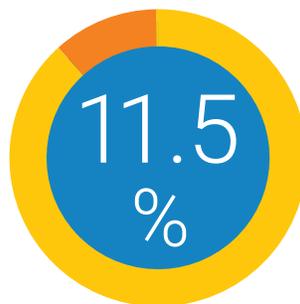
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
Services



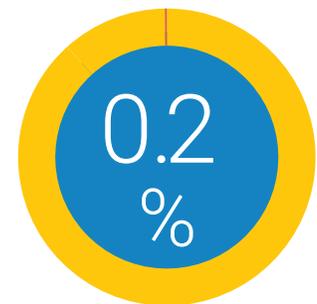
FUNDRAISING



\$313,581,085



\$40,830,762



\$705,589

Total Expenses = \$355,117,436

* FYE 12/31/22

Summer Finds Her Voice with Autism Services Early Intervention Support

Tiffany credits Easterseals Southern California for helping her eight-year-old daughter, Summer, find her voice. Six years ago, Tiffany never could have imagined her daughter would be where she is today.

After Summer was born, Tiffany noticed she was missing developmental milestones. There was also no communication, little to no eye contact and intense tantrums.

Summer was officially diagnosed with autism in March 2017, at almost two-years-old.

Tiffany took her to see a behavioral pediatrician who suggested intervention and therapy. The doctor also told Tiffany that her commitment to early intervention was crucial and may determine Summer's outcome.

That's how the family found ESSC, where Summer started speech, occupational, and Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy.

After consistent therapies, Summer started learning sign language in speech therapy and how to communicate through cards and pictures. After six months, she had learned 10-15 words.

"She was in the crib one day, and she was super upset," Tiffany said. "I couldn't figure out what was wrong, when she stood up and looked at me and she said 'eat.' I grabbed her bottle and started crying. I called my dad and said, 'We're there, we have



communication.' That was the first time my daughter ever talked to me and told me what was happening with her. And from there, it just progressed to new words every day, more eye contact, more engagement. It was like watching a fog lift."

Cheryl Liang, a speech-language pathologist at ESSC who worked with Summer from the start, said Summer is an entirely different person now from when she first met her.

"Sometimes, our structured activities would include flashcards where we worked on expanding her vocabulary," Cheryl said. "It began with her labeling objects and pictures and then moving on to labeling actions or verbs. From what I remember, her language just blossomed quickly from not speaking to a few words, to this wonderful language explosion."

Tiffany credits Summer's success to early intervention with ESSC.

"Easterseals tailors a program to you and your family, and they'll help you make goals. They're committed to services," Tiffany said. "Easterseals gave us a positive outcome. They are very, very dedicated to what they do. They gave us hope."





Easterseals Southern California Introduces New Autism Advisory Board

Members range from actors and influencers to behavior technicians and advocates. They advise on Autism Services and practices while helping expand ESSC's connection with the autistic community.

Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) is pleased to announce the creation of our Autism Therapy Services Advisory Board, launched in the spring of 2023.

The board is currently comprised of members Stephen Hinkle, Rahim Jiwani, Arman Khodaei, Yushen Lin, Kelly Londenberg, Brian Middleton, Tu Nguyen, Kaelynn Partlow, Eric Ramirez, and Nik Sanchez, who either have autism or advocate for autistic individuals. They range from actors and influencers to behavior technicians and passionate advocates. Each brings their unique perspective and experience to our growing Autism Therapy Services programs. "We are incredibly lucky to have these 10 members on our advisory board," said Dr. Paula Pompa-Craven, Chief Clinical Officer, Autism Services. "Their lived experience, knowledge and expertise has been invaluable to us, and we are very excited to continue forward with them as we stay on this journey of continued growth and commitment to our services."

The board was assembled to ensure that current Autism Therapy Services practices are consistent with the needs of the communities we serve and that community members have a place and a voice in the process.

The vision is to expand ESSC's connection with the autistic community to enable relevant, forward-looking conversations regarding the support services we offer.

Board activities may include: reviewing current programming, language and form use within the organization; consulting on training practices, projected initiatives or projects; and other topics of social validity or importance. The advisory board was developed through a nomination process, with a goal to ensure that the make-up of the Board represents the diversity of Southern California. The board members meet on a quarterly basis.





"We were both so happy to see each other."

ESSC's Peer-to-Peer Group Reunites Friends After 33 Years

The Peer-to-Peer (P2P) program was established in 2018 as a partnership between ESSC and the Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center. It's designed to help people who are living on their own or with families meet others and explore social opportunities based on common interests. Here's a story of a three-decade long friendship that came out of P2P!

It was December of 2022, and Pearl, a recent Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) 'Peer-to Peer' participant, was excited to be her first ESSC holiday party. As she stood there, wearing a Santa hat, looking around the room and admiring the festivities, she couldn't believe her eyes: there was Amy, a friend she had met 33 years prior and lost touch with all those years ago.

"I was standing in front of her for a couple of minutes, and she didn't recognize me because we hadn't seen each other in a long time, and I was wearing a Santa hat," Pearl said. "But I recognized her."

Pearl approached Amy, who had been involved in ESSC's Peer-to-Peer group for six years. The two had an exciting reunion full of chit-chat, building gingerbread homes and even some karaoke. "We were both so happy to see each other," Amy said.

Pearl and Amy originally met in 1990 when they volunteered through a city program, decorating floats at the New Year's Day Rose Parade. They became fast friends who loved going out together, talking on the phone and spending Sundays in church. Eventually, the two lost touch due to a falling out—until they reconnected thanks to ESSC's Peer-to-Peer program.





Small Actions Create **BIG** Changes

Would you like to be able to make a difference at Easterseals in a small, but meaningful way?

Join our valued **THRIVE ALLIANCE** monthly donors.

Here's a few great reasons to take into consideration:

- ▶ **Your monthly gift provides a steady flow of income that we can count on.** Donations are a huge component of the funding for many of our programs. When you give monthly, you ensure a stable foundation for Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) to comfortably seek out big-picture solutions for disability access and programs that otherwise would not have been possible. Monthly donors give way for longevity, allowing for our programs and services to truly flourish.
- ▶ **You will grow with us.** Whether it's a new music program for seniors, additions to a playground or making sure our facilities are in top shape, each month your generous gift will be utilized for the ESSC programs and services that need it the most.
- ▶ **It's easy & convenient.** By opting to make your gift monthly when donating to ESSC, you will not have to worry about anything as monthly gifts are automatically processed in a timely manner.
- ▶ **You can adjust your contribution at any time.** If you would like to decrease or increase your contribution at any time, you can do so by calling our Advancement office at 714-834-1111 ext. 1001. You can also cancel at any time and start back up the next month. The process is easy and convenient.
- ▶ **It's easy on your bank account.** Instead of donating a larger amount at a single time, you can set the amount as low as just \$7 a month. Signing up to contribute each month can keep you within your budget while also benefiting ESSC in a consistent manner.

Consider joining **THRIVE ALLIANCE** today and help us lead the way to full equity, inclusion and access through life-changing disability and community services. Check the 'Make it Monthly' box on the enclosed envelope or make a secure online gift at <http://social.easterseals.com/monthlygiving>. For more information, contact our Team at 714-653-5041.

**Can't give now?
Consider a gift to Easterseals
in your Will or Trust!**





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RETURN TO SENDER

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page shows a hand with white-painted nails holding a heart. The heart is composed of diagonal stripes in blue and orange, with a cluster of yellow dots above it. The background features large, overlapping circular shapes in yellow, blue, and orange.

This **GI**  **INGTUESDAY** ...
Support Disability Services
in **YOUR** Community

Save the Date
November 28, 2023