



Media Contact: Jennifer Smith
(949) 267-0456
jennifer.smith@uci.edu

The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders *Establishes New Social Skills Development Program for Adolescents and Young Adults*

Program Supported by \$35,000 Grant from McBeth Foundation

SANTA ANA, Calif. – November 15, 2016 – Backed by a \$35,000 grant from the Orange County-based McBeth Foundation, The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders will be launching a new program designed to teach and support adolescents and young adults with autism or other neurodevelopmental disorders the social and communication skills aimed at independence while providing an opportunity to socialize with their peers.

The Adolescent & Young Adult Advantage Program targets an underserved age group in the autism community, ages 15-22, and offers specialized training to support them as they transition into college or first jobs.

“Many of the adolescents and young adults that come to The Center struggle with the daily social skills needed to navigate their community as they become more independent,” said Kelly McKinnon-Birmingham, behavior intervention director for The Center for Autism. “We wanted to create a program that increased confidence and self-efficacy to ensure they are as successful as possible when they head to college or enter the workplace.”

The 13-week program provides a realistic, yet structured environment for individuals to learn and practice social skills, including when and how to begin a conversation, how to meet and maintain friendships in the workplace, conflict management, politeness, and flexibility, among others. The program is designed to teach safe and healthy leisure skills, while also providing an opportunity to socialize with their peers.

“We are so appreciative of the support from the McBeth Foundation in helping us put a program in place for adolescents and young adults with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders that will allow them to thrive in



the future,” said Catherine Brock, M.A., executive director of The Center for Autism.

The McBeth Foundation has supported various projects at The Center for Autism in the past, including providing funds for their occupational therapy gym, which helps children achieve functional movement and improve sensory abilities to better interact with their environment.

For more information, please visit www.thecenter4autism.org.

About The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Founded in 2001 (originally as For OC Kids), The Center is home to a team of experts in the field of autism and neurodevelopmental disorders. Since its opening, The Center has been a leader in clinical services, research, education, and outreach, serving clients from birth through 22 years old.

In late 2012, a catalytic investment by the Thompson Family Foundation and the Children and Families Commission of Orange County provided \$14.8 million to expand The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

The Center was established to provide help and hope to children, adolescents, young adults and their families challenged by autism spectrum and other neurodevelopmental disorders through excellent clinical care, innovative research, quality education, and community engagement. For more information, please visit www.thecenter4autism.org.

##