

MODERN LUXURY



WITH

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CENTER FOR AUTISM AND NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS



Q: What is the mission of The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopment Disorders?

A: Our mission is 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 outreach. Basically, we provide treatments and programs that bring families, school districts, researchers and clinicians together to best help each child.

Q: How is The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders different from other centers?

A: We are truly unique because of our five public & private founding partners: University of California - Irvine, CHOC Children's, Chapman University, Children & Family Commission of Orange County, and the Thompson Family Foundation. They all came together in late 2012 to address the growing need in our community by creating this center.

These partnerships allow us to tap into the best resources in our community. We have top academic and clinical faculty, researchers, specialized pediatric care and educators through UC Irvine, CHOC Children's, and Chapman

University. These important relationships allow us to be the most responsive to our families' needs.

Q: What compelled you to enter this field?

A: Cathy: I started in the field more than 22 years ago as an undergraduate volunteer where I worked on research projects that included children diagnosed with autism, Down syndrome, and other developmental disorders. My heart was captured by the spirit of the kids and their parents. I sought out any opportunity to learn more—working as an in-home behavioral therapist, supervising an adult with autism spectrum disorder, and continual work on various research projects. There have been significant changes within the field over the course of my time, and yet there's so much more to learn and do. I am honored to work with this population and to do my part to help make a difference.

Joe: I chose the field of pediatric neurology because of the combination of my interest in child and brain development and the desire to help children and families deal with disorders of the nervous system. Over the past ten years there has been increasing knowledge of autism, but there is still a great gap between what we have learned and the quality of services provided to individual children. Working with families continues to be an educational and gratifying experience. It's such a privilege that families choose The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorder to help guide them through their journey.

Anna: I began working with children with special needs as a volunteer in high school. I absolutely loved working with the kids and seeing the gains they made over the course of each year. In college I worked as an in-home intervention provider for a young man with autism. The work was challenging, but also very rewarding and that experience really motivated me to learn more about autism spectrum disorders. It is a disorder we learn more about every day, but there is still such a great need for more clinical providers, educators, therapists, researchers, to address the growing needs of this population.

Q: How does your work at the center affect the Orange County community?

A: 1 in 68 people are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders each year in the U.S. That means that in Orange County with a population of 3.1 million, there are an estimated 45,000 people in our community—our neighbors, co-workers, family members—living with autism. At the Center, we are working to increase awareness and to help remove the misconceptions, stigmas, and fear that surround this diagnosis. Autism impacts not only the individual, but their

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family, schools, employment, and the community as a whole. Our work with training and education helps to make Orange County a more inclusive community, and an environment that supports individuals and families with autism.

Q: What kind of research is the center conducting?

A: Ongoing research studies at The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders focus on strategies for better health outcomes for children with ASD and other neurodevelopmental disorders, and the development of novel interventions. We are also looking at the connection between genetics, neurobiology and behavior through the Center for Autism Research & Translation. We know research holds the answers, which is why we have more than 50 affiliated researchers working to find them.

Q: What do you hope to achieve in the future with your work at the center?

A: Although we served over 2500 families last year, the need in the community is rising. We need even more providers. This is why we are putting in a tremendous effort to build capacity in our community through professional trainings. With more qualified professionals, more families could be helped. We are also dedicated to expanding our training and education program to include adult transitions, helping young adults successfully navigate their way out of childhood. Our goal is to provide information that can be used to create the best possible outcomes for individuals as they move into life as an adult.

Q: Anna, what made you choose to join The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders?

A: I have collaborated with The Center for the past three years and was drawn to the mission of the Center and the passion of its people and this community. The Center is doing so many wonderful things and I wanted to be a part of it. I was also excited about the opportunities for growth for The Center, as well as for myself. I'm so excited that I can be a part of the next phase in this journey and contribute to its success, and overall change in the community to help families.

Q: What does your new role entail?

A: As Education & Training Director, I oversee The Center's ongoing educational opportunities. In addition, I will expand our training to reach more professionals in an effort to increase capacity to help serve even more families. Autism can be overwhelming and sometimes people feel stuck. We want people to feel confident that the information and training they receive is accessible and useful.



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