

“United Cerebral Palsy of San Diego County Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary”



In the past 50 years, many events have shaped our lives as individuals and members of our community. A quick scan of the memory banks would include a man on the moon, the Vietnam and Iraq wars, the 9/11 bombings and the introduction of personal computers and cell phones – just to name a few.

The same holds true for United Cerebral Palsy here in San Diego County where positive change and growth continue to shape a better future for persons with cerebral palsy and other disabilities.

In the 1940's parents looking for a better way of life for their disabled children, created the San Diego Cerebral Palsy Foundation. By the late 1950's, UCP was working across the U.S. to form a coalition of affiliates and in 1958, joined forces with the Foundation and with the linking of the 2 entities, the United Cerebral Palsy Association of San Diego County was formed.

From this new partnership sprang a solid and innovative agency that has continued to flourish through the years ...growing as San Diego has grown.

From its single location in Kearny Mesa through the 60's and 70's, UCP has grown through the 90's and into the 21st century to 3 locations and numerous community based programs.

Early program services such as a preschool and recreation have blossomed into a dynamic program service line-up that now includes assistive technology, a mobile toy and software lending library, an inclusive service learning program, education, employment training, individual and family support such as the “Respatiality” program and recreational opportunities like adaptive swim training.

On a daily basis, United Cerebral Palsy also works diligently in the areas of community inclusion and advocacy for people with disabilities and their families, as well as community education.

When asked about defining moments along the way, current UCP Board President, Jim O'Leary spoke of two key events, “The first was the passage of the Lanterman Act in the late 1960's where California citizens with disabilities were granted an entitlement to services and assistance. The second, of course, was the passage of the ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) on a federal level to assist with issues such as education and accessibility and a great deal more.” O'Leary added that “without those two important pieces of legislation, services for people with disabilities would look far different.”

Clearly UCP has continued to grow its services throughout the years because of the commitment of donors in our community. Whether it was a fund raising luncheon or dinner, a telephone campaign or a walk, or being a part of the national UCP Telethon throughout the 80's and 90's, community support has been strong. “Americans give time and money like no other country,” said UCP's Executive Director, David Carucci. “The San Diego community is no exception and has given its support to our efforts for many years and we are truly thankful.”

Also of great importance since the early 70's is the effort of the UCP Women's Committee (now the Beach and Country Guild) to raise a great deal of monetary support for local services. This caring and talented group of women has raised a great deal of money and awareness through its annual “Dia del Sol” fundraiser held each October.

While much has changed since 1958, many important things have stayed the same -- most important, a commitment to quality programs and helping our disabled friends and neighbors to live a “Life Without Limits.”

Asked to sum things up, O'Leary stated, “Our goal is to continue to progress and provide the latest cutting edge programs ... in short, to serve our community for many more years to come. For those of you who have been involved over the past 50 years, thank you, and for those of you who are just learning about United Cerebral Palsy, welcome.”