

From the CEO's Desk: Carmen Ibarra



Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities face numerous challenges in their lives. If you are a supporter of Achievable's, you are already well aware of this. From education to transportation to health care, children and adults with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities have to struggle to have equitable access and experiences the rest of us often take for granted. Many of the accommodations that exist for our community members are only in place after hard fought battles to get legislation passed and create a larger awareness of the struggles they face.

The focus today, however, is the positive trends going on in public spaces for individuals with developmental disabilities. More and more we are seeing stores, companies and other corporate entities creating times and spaces where our community members can participate in the public sphere in ways that are comfortable for them. What do I mean?

One amusement park recently opened specifically designed to be friendly to individuals of different abilities. Morgan's Inspiration Island in San Antonio is a water park which offers waterproof wheelchairs to rent, no-cost tickets for children with special needs and a completely wheelchair accessible facility. Sesame Place in Pennsylvania has created an annual "Sesame Place Day for Children with Autism." On this day the park makes a slew of accommodations for individuals with autism and their families, including free admission, themed characters trained not to initiate interaction with children (so as not to scare them) and muted volume on everything throughout the park. On all other days Sesame Place offers rentable cabanas for families of children with special needs to take a break, and the ability to "virtually wait in line" to avoid that chaotic experience.

This awareness of creating less overwhelming environments for children and adults with developmental disabilities is crossing over to retail as well. Stores such as Target, J.C. Penney and the former Toys R' Us franchise all have had "sensory-friendly" shopping hours when music is turned off, lights are dimmed and foot traffic is lowered. In fact, Target has come out with an affordable, sensory-friendly line of clothes and home goods including items such as weighted blankets and one person indoor hideaway tents. Tommy Hilfiger has also created an "Adaptive" line of disability-friendly clothing that utilizes special fits and easier to access clothing (think Velcro instead of buttons and larger leg and neck openings) to make the items in the line easier for those with different abilities to manage.

While individuals with developmental disabilities still have a far way to go to gain complete equity in our society, it is good every now and then to take a step back and see some of the little ways the fight for awareness and inclusivity is unfolding. My hope is that these positive trends will also transcend to the medical community. Onward and upward!

**Please join The Achievable Foundation for their annual
*Achievers Gala***

Saturday, October 19, 2019 at 6 p.m.

**Honoring *Olivia Harrison and the Material World Foundation and
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology***

**Cocktail reception, dinner, raffle and silent auction. Cocktail Attire. To purchase tickets,
contact Josh Kamali at (424) 266-7483**

Achieving Dental Health Partner Spotlight: Special Needs Dental Associates Tim Lekavich, DDS and Wendy Surfas-Lekavich, MPA



Having been part of the planning committee for Achievable, the Lekavich's have been valued partners ever since the health center's inception.

Dr. Tim Lekavich provides special needs dental care, and has long been Achievable's go-to referral because of his dedication and reviews within the community. With a location near the health center, patients also get the benefit of being able to schedule health and dental appointments in one trip.

Wendy serves as Executive Director with a focus on the operational side of their practice, Dr. Lekavich has been serving patients with disabilities for 25+ years and views it as his privilege to be able to provide important care that sometimes goes overlooked in this population in a safe, timely manner. Many of his patients are extremely medically compromised and/or have a myriad of different chronic illnesses that makes it necessary to perform dental

procedures in a hospital setting for their safety. He is one of very few dentists in California who have hospital privileges—he typically works hospital cases three days a week—and is able to see patients in that setting when their situations require that venue.

“We've grown throughout the various hospitals...we've learned different ways to work with patients and hospital staff, so now the hospital staff bends over backwards to make our cases work, having seen that it does work,” he says.

Dr. Lekavich takes pride in the fact that he can help patients improve their quality of life both by providing critical care, and by teaching self-care skills that help patients carry on good habits and keep future issues at bay. It's not uncommon to see new patients who haven't had care in decades come in with preventable, major issues, that are in pain.

“Over the years we've seen many of our patients desensitized where the length of the dental case has decreased, and now it's ongoing maintenance, not such heavy work. Many are so scared at the first appointment, but once they are treated with compassion and care—‘If you feel uneasy, you can take a breath—you are in control,’ you can overcome ‘dental phobia’ from a previous bad experience.”

Dr. Lekavich is in a field where there is a big gap of providers compared to the need. So much so that he gets referrals from across the country, and people traveling after having moved, just to continue treatment with him.

“We appreciate and are hopeful that it takes all of us—families, facilities, caregivers—it takes working together because so often if one piece is missing, the case doesn't happen.”

He hopes that recent incentives, such as student loan relief to graduates whose practices are community-based, will soon help direct dentists to non-traditional populations.

Dr. Lekavich offers screening days for Achievable and Westside Regional patients with I/DD, and schedules new patients separately to give extra time and gain a clear understanding of process and comfort level. For more information, contact (424) 227-8589 or <https://specialneedsdentalassociates.com>.

THANK YOU to the Supporters Who Make a Difference

L.A. Care Health Plan	\$57,500	Southern California Hospital at Culver City	\$2,500
Cedars-Sinai	\$53,000	Mr. and Mrs. Bob Steiner	\$2,500
The Murray / Reese Foundation	\$15,000	Kaiser Permanente - West Los Angeles	\$1,500
The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation	\$7,500	Warren Breslow and Gail Buchalter	\$1,000
Kaiser Permanente Southern California	\$5,000	Mr. and Mrs. Kent Graham	\$1,000
SoCalGas	\$5,000	Dr. Pam Wiley	\$1,000
West Basin Municipal Water District	\$3,000	Lou and Melinda Spitz	\$1,000
Mayor Meghan Sahli-Wells	\$2,500		

Partner Spotlight: L.A. Goal

L.A. Goal is celebrating 50 years of building community and providing services of all types to support adults with I/DD in living their best life, whatever that may look like to each individual. L.A. Goal considers their ‘members’ all part of a family, and the entire organization operates on that premise.

In 1969, a group of parent advocates came together when their own children with I/DD were becoming of age and graduating. In a time before many programs or resources providing independent living support services existed, they founded L.A. Goal.

L.A. Goal has grown exponentially over the years, now providing comprehensive wraparound services including programming at its Culver City facility seven days a week and a ‘work force’ of about 100 (largely volunteers, including a very successful summer volunteer program for teens). L.A. Goal’s longtime executive director Petite Konstantin is a friend of Achievable, having served on its founding advisory council and continuing as a patient advisory committee member.

Each L.A. Goal member goes through annual goal setting, helping guide what they’d like to achieve in the year ahead and what can help them thrive.

“At the core, it’s about building confidence and self-worth—building people up about what they can and want to do, and then providing appropriate services to get them there,” says Development Director Rachel Hamburg.

Vocational and independent living skills are still very much a part of today’s equation—there is even a mock apartment to practice skills. In fact, L.A. Goal has a 58 percent employment rate, which is far higher than the national rate for adults with I/DD.



continued next page



The Achievable Foundation's mission is to provide high quality, integrated health care to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and other vulnerable populations.

5901 Green Valley Circle, Suite 405
Culver City, CA 90230-6953

Partner Spotlight: L.A. Goal *continued from page 3*

Just as important and popular are 'family meetings' around a large kitchen table, and programs surrounding art, music therapy, drama and cooking led by skilled volunteers in each genre, and designed to help develop skills around independence, self expression and self confidence.

L.A. Goal's biggest program is its art initiative run by professional artists, Inside Out Productions, which creates jobs by employing 28 L.A. Goal members as artists, in addition to offering art classes and training for another 30+ members in its fully accessible state of the art studio.

Community members are invited to view a selection of works at the coming annual art show and open house at L.A. Goal on October 13 from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Achievable patients can keep an eye out for new works of art from Inside Out Productions coming to the walls of the health center.

L.A. Goal has a maximum of 100 members at any one time in order to serve everyone personally, which means there is generally a waiting list for membership. Those interested in more information or volunteer positions can contact L.A. Goal at (310) 838-5274.