**DISABLED RESOURCES CENTER, INC. (DRC)**

**40th ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER**

**“THE ROAD TO RUBY”**

**DINNER REPORT**

On the evening of Thursday, June 16, 2016, a crowd of over 150 gathered in the Harborview Ballroom of The Reef on the Water, Long Beach, to celebrate the 40th Annual Awards Dinner of the Disabled Resources Center, Inc. (DRC), “The Road to Ruby.” The proceeds from the event support DRC’s critical work as a nonresidential Independent Living Center (ILC). One of 28 such ILCs located throughout California, DRC serves people with all disabilities, and of all ages, in the southern part of Los Angeles County and parts of Orange County, by providing a wide range of free services, including benefits counseling, computer classes, employment services, peer support, and more.

Every year, DRC honors several outstanding individuals and businesses in the community whose efforts and examples support and further the Center’s core goal of independence for people with all disabilities. DRC’s Mission Statement resonates with that goal of independence: *“To empower people with disabilities to live independently in the community, to make their own decisions about their lives and to advocate on their own behalf.”*

At this year’s 40th Annual Awards Banquet, six awardees were recognized:

1. Supervisor Don Knabe, 4th District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, received a Special Lifetime Service Award, for his support of the Center and dedication to the cause of persons with disabilities.
2. Cathy Parsa received the Community Service Award for her work with the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)/Polytrauma Clinic at the Long Beach Veterans Hospital.
3. J. Cacilia Kim received the Civic Leadership Award. Ms. Kim, an attorney at law, works as a Special Counsel at the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center (ELC).
4. Cynde Soto received the Jerry Stein Independent Living Award for her long-time activism and dedication to the cause of the civil rights of persons with disabilities.
5. Westly Ward received the Andrew Swinton Volunteer of the Year Award. This award was named in memory of the late Andrew Swinton, the Center’s Peer Counseling/Stepping Stones to Employment (PC/SSE) Counselor.
6. Wendy Lewis received the Outstanding Military Veteran Scholarship for her over 8 years in the United States Navy, and as a current CSULB student, where she serves in student government and advocates for her fellow veterans.

Besides the awards, the event featured a sit-down dinner and a Silent Auction of themed gift baskets. The baskets were festively wrapped through the generous efforts of Mary Rodriguez, of Gift Baskets by Mary. Additionally, Opportunity Tickets were drawn for three Grand Prizes: Southwest Airlines, 4 one-way vouchers for travel within the Continental United States; Disneyland, 4 one-day Park Hopper Tickets; and a $500.00 Best Buy Gift Card.

Tim Lashlee, President of the DRC Board of Directors, served as this year’s Dinner Chair. Much of the evening’s program carried forward elements that have evolved into traditions at the Annual Awards Dinners. Blue Coral, a jazz ensemble, provided the music. Dave Sanfilippo, Director of Disabled Student Services at CSULB, served as the Master of Ceremonies, as he has done for many years.

The Invocation was composed and delivered by the Reverend Kit Wilke, following his long-established practice. Rev. Wilke, a longtime Board of Directors member, continues to recover from a traumatic brain injury. His ongoing interest and dedication to participation in the Annual Awards Dinner brought added meaning to his Invocation.

Additionally, Zaid Moges, a DRC Job Developer, presented DRC’s Mission Statement in American Sign Language (ASL). While she interpreted the Mission Statement, the assembled diners were invited to join her, and it also appeared on a large screen, through the services of a captioner, who provided real-time captioning throughout the evening’s program, for the benefit of persons with hearing loss.

Through the generosity of Warren Willard and Richard Archbold, of Hearing Now USA, who donated their services again this year, the Harborview Ballroom was equipped with looping technology for persons with hearing loss.

Dolores Nason, DRC’s Executive Director, introduced the members of the Center’s Board of Directors. Additionally, she introduced DRC’s 15 employees, as well as some of the agency’s 31 volunteers and 12 college interns.

Members of the Board of Directors in attendance at the Dinner included: Tim Lashlee, President; Gail Morrison, Vice-President; Shirley Hsiao, Treasurer; Henry Broadbent, Secretary; Zeke Alcala; Josephine Caron; Devin Corcoran, Member, who just ran a 100-mile race the week before, where all funds raised through the race went to DRC; Karla Gutierrez; Lisa Moore; and Katelyn Ramirez

One of the evening’s highlights involved the presentation of Certificates of Recognition to the awardees:

A letter from Senator Dianne Feinstein.

California Members of Congress Certificates of Recognition: Congress member Janice Hahn, 44th District; and Congress member Alan Lowenthal, 47th District, beautiful Certificates of Recognition for of the awardees, and a special, gold-framed Certificate of Recognition for Supervisor Knabe.

California Senate Members Certificates of Recognition: Ricardo Lara, 33rd District; Janet Nguyen, 34th District; and Isadore Hall, III, 35th District.

California Assembly Members Certificates of Recognition: Anthony Rendon, 63rd District; Mike Gipson, 64th District; and Patrick O’Donnell, 70th District

Long Beach Mayor and City Council Certificates of Recognition: Robert Garcia, Mayor; Lena Gonzalez, Councilmember, 1st District; Dr. Suja Lowenthal, Vice Mayor, Councilmember, 2nd District; Suzie Price, Councilmember, 3rd District; Daryl Supernaw, Councilman, 4th District; Stacy Mungo, Councilmember, 5th District; Dee Andrews, Councilmember, 6th District; Roberto Uranga, Councilmember, 7th District; Al Austin II, Councilmember, 8th District; and Rex Richardson, Councilmember, 9th District.

Seen at the Scene: Supervisor Don Knabe, 4th District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; Connie Sziebl, Field Deputy to Supervisor Don Knabe; German Castilla, District Staff Assistant to Congress member Janice Hahn, 44th District; Ali Sajjad Taj, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Artesia; and Roberto Uranga, Councilmember, Long Beach, 8th District

Donors having tables at the Dinner were: C.A.R.E. Evaluators, a Gold Level Sponsor, with Cynthia Bullock, their Chief Operations Officer (COO); Molina Healthcare, a Silver Level Sponsor; Supervisor Don Knabe, 4th District, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; Long Beach Transit, which provided the funds to print the Dinner Invitations, with Lee Burner, their Executive Director and Vice President of Service Delivery and Planning; Long Beach Yellow Cab, which provided the funds to print the Dinner Programs; Access Services, with their Executive Director, Shelly Verrinder; Global Paratransit, Inc., with their General Manager, Luis Garcia; Disabled Student Services, California State University, Long Beach, with their Director, David Sanfilippo, the Master of Ceremonies for the evening, with his beautiful wife, Laura Sanfilippo.

Honored attendees present included: Members of the HLAA and the AAUW; Tippers members, who filled the Silent Auction baskets; Dr. George Bell, Executive Director of Lutheran Social Services (LSS), and two staff members; Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living (SCRS-IL), represented by several staff members; Al Buck, former Jerry Stein Memorial Independent Living Award Winner, who contributed all of the sports memorabilia from his personal stash for the Silent Auction; Deaka McClain, Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee on Disabilities (CACoD), along with several CACoD Commissioners; Jan Swinton, mother of Andrew Swinton, along with Andrew’s aunt and uncle, Lianne and Ed Bennett; Delbert Wesley, DOR Counselor, and DRC’s liaison with the Long Beach DOR Office; Richard Burnett, METRO Cities Gateway Service Council; and Dolores Nason’s family: husband George, daughter Natalie, and daughters-in-law Lisa and Pam.

In her closing remarks, Dolores Nason summed up the evening: “We are ending our ‘Road to Ruby’ Celebration tonight, but thanks to all of your help, we are now on the ‘Road to Freedom’ for people with disabilities, and the ‘Road to Freedom’ starts here.”