

***Fourth Annual
Afternoon Tea
Serves Up a
Delightful Surprise
Springtime Event
Raises \$8,000***



The theme for this table was, appropriately enough, "Sensory Garden." It was hosted by the SLDC Occupational Therapy Department and was just one of the many elegantly or humorously decorated tables at the Tea.

SLDC's Parent Association once again hosted a wonderfully successful afternoon fundraiser in May to the delight of the nearly 180 attendees. Like a fine family tradition, the afternoon tea has become an annual crowd pleaser—with a purpose. This year's event celebrated six SLDC employees who have been with the Center for 25 or more years. The honorees included Linda Bustamante, Gennice Darrah, Muff Elstran, Sandy Garcia, Jerry Lindquist and Kathy Lindquist.

Following the success of past years, the event was again catered by Shamrock and Thistle and the Sussex Teapot. The Sunset Strings returned for their third encore performance. And the

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***Aleen Agranowitz
Assumes New Role at Center
Dawn O'Connor
Named Chief Executive Officer***

On July 1, Speech and Language Development Center Co-Founder and CEO Aleen Agranowitz transitioned to a new position. In her new role as Co-founder and Chief Advancement Officer, Agranowitz will oversee long-range planning and funding at the Center. SLDC's Board named Chief Operations Officer and Principal Dawn O'Connor to succeed Agranowitz.

"At this time of my life, I want to focus on what I do best to help secure the future of the Center."

"With Co-founder Gladys Gleason, Aleen blazed a trail that changed how special education was approached in Southern California," said SLDC Board Chair Patricia Wright. "Many have heard this remarkable tale, but it is a story worth retelling. From modest beginnings, Aleen and Gladys transformed the Center through their vision and tireless work. Today, the *Orange County Business Journal* lists SLDC as the 12th largest nonprofit in Orange County."

Agranowitz said she approached the SLDC Board in fall 2007 with her desire to assume this new challenge—to go out and tell the Center's story to all who will listen.

"At this time of my life, I want to focus on what I do best to help secure the future of the Center," said Agranowitz.

It was a decision the Board supported. Members named longtime executive Dawn O'Connor the Center's new chief executive officer. O'Connor has been with SLDC since 1965.

"We are extremely fortunate to find, in Dawn O'Connor, an equally dedicated individual whose spirit mirrors our co-founders," said Wright. "The Center's future could not be in better hands."

"I'm honored to help add to the Center's legacy," said O'Connor. "We have a solid foundation thanks to the wonderful support of staff, volunteers, board, and our students and their families."

The news was announced to staff, volunteers, students and family in spring. The July 1 timing was selected to take into account SLDC's school and fiscal year-end.

Moving Forward by Building on the Past

Q&A with Aleen Agranowitz

Earlier this year, when Aleen Agranowitz announced that she was stepping down from her job as Chief Executive Officer—a role she had held for more than 50 years, there were many questions. Would she retire? Who would fill the role of CEO? What would she do as SLDC’s new Chief Advancement Officer? During the months that passed, these questions were answered.

In this interview, Agranowitz explains how careful planning, board support, and a dedicated SLDC team of employees, parents and volunteers have helped make one of the biggest transitions in SLDC history a smooth one.



Aleen Agranowitz

Q: Can you tell us about your new role as Chief Advancement Officer?

Agranowitz: I see my new role as one of helping to ensure SLDC for the next 50 years. We'll accomplish this goal through three avenues: fundraising, education and outreach. We have so much to offer. It's time we share it with a larger audience.

Q: Why now?

Agranowitz: CSHA's (California Speech-Language-Hearing Association) recent award to SLDC as "Program of the Year" was very special. Not only did it honor the accumulation of our work, it also reaffirmed that our peers feel we've been on the right track. While the transition was already in the planning stages, it reinforced to me that I was making the right choice, at the right time.

Q: What do you say when people ask, "Why not retire?"

Agranowitz: Why quit when I love my job as much today as I did when I first started in the 1040s? Like the poet Longfellow, I consider myself lucky to have found something I'm inspired to do.

I remember being in a meeting one day with several board members when one of our young students wanted to interrupt the meeting to visit with me. A staff member said, "You can't go in there. Aleen is very busy." The little boy answered, "Yes, I can because Aleen loves children best."

Q: Will you still be at SLDC?

Agranowitz: Of course! I need to keep a pulse on the organization. I will still attend meetings, still visit classrooms, and still see clients. At heart, you know, I need to know that I'm a still good therapist. Without that I'd lose my grounding. The difference is my new role frees me up to pursue ways to help advance the organization. Sometimes I was not able to pursue the things I wanted to do because of the things I had to do.

Q: What are you most looking forward to?

Agranowitz: In the past, when people asked me about SLDC, I'd say, "Spend a half day here on campus and you'll feel the excitement." As we all know, however, it's impossible for everyone to visit us. I feel my new role, in some small way, can bring the SLDC story to them. If I can help SLDC leave a footprint that can help others take heart again, I'll consider it a job well done.

"Like the poet Longfellow, I consider myself lucky to have found something I'm inspired to do."

From "A Psalm of Life"
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sand of time;*

*Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.*

*Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

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Afternoon Tea

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elegantly (or humorously) decorated tables were again a bit hit. Another highlight of the afternoon was when SLDC student Heather M. won the award for “Best Hat,” a design she had worked on all week and proudly wore for the entire day.



Student Heather M. shows off the contest-winning hat that she made herself for the Tea.

“Heather felt so very special at the tea,” said her mother, Linda. “Even though she had a difficult time keeping the heavy hat balanced on her head, she was so excited about the attention it was getting that I wouldn’t even think of asking her to take it off. What a special day!

“So many people contributed so much—from the raffle items to beautiful tables and the food,” continued Linda M. “Our family is so grateful to the many supporters of SLDC who contributed in so many ways to raise funds and awareness of this very special school that does so much to help students with unique needs.”

Table Winners

SLDC Teacher Lynette Herndon
Table Name: **Flower Power**

SLDC Teachers Erika Egbert & Melissa Leahy
Table Name: **Budget Crisis**

Former Parent PJ Piszkwicz
Table Name: **Rhapsody in Blue**

Former Parent Ginny Arlt
Table Name: **Misty Garden**

O'Connor Sets Course for the Next 50 Years

Longtime Employee Takes the Reigns



Dawn O'Connor

On July 1, Dawn O'Connor became SLDC's CEO, only the second chief executive in the organization's history. She assumed the post at the beginning of the new fiscal year, although as former chief operating officer and principal, O'Connor long has been involved in guiding SLDC. In this one-on-one, O'Connor revealed her vision for the future.

Q: How will your CEO role be different?

O'Connor: Although I won't be here until I'm in my 90s, Alen is such a tough act to follow; I don't see my role as a bridge or interim leader. We can ill afford to look the same in five years as we do today.

Q: What has changed?

O'Connor: Keeping the balance between our business and student commitments is increasingly becoming more difficult. Last year, the reimbursement increase from the Los Angeles Public School Districts was less than 3 percent. We received a 4 percent increase from the Orange County Public School Districts. This year, (2008-09) we don't expect to receive any increase.

You don't need to be a math wizard to realize that business as usual just won't make it.

Of course, we can try to do things better from a business standpoint. However, the question must always remain, “How will this (decision) impact our students?”

Q: How will you lead the organization?

O'Connor: The positive news is that these challenges provide opportunities to look at things in new ways. We have talented staff. We do good work. We have dedicated parents, volunteers and board members. We just need to maintain our entrepreneurial spirit during these tough times. Give staff the freedom to take risks. Then, reward them for their efforts.

We've had opportunities in the past that we've missed. Sometimes we hesitated. Sometimes it took too long for us to put the plan into action. But we shouldn't look at the past to try and explain where we are today. I believe that we should look at today and ask, “Where do we want to be tomorrow?”

Q: And for the future?

O'Connor: SLDC will always be the place that looks beyond the paper when it comes to our students. We'll continue to be the place that accepts a student because we feel we can make a difference. We'll continue to believe that each student adds, not subtracts, to the strength of our program. We will, however, need to create a firmer financial foundation to continue to make it happen. That's where I see my role. I need to help create the opportunities for everyone to succeed.

“We'll continue to be the place that accepts a student because we feel we can make a difference”

Grants Update

Nearly matching the success of the previous year, grant news continued its positive trend for the first six months of 2008. SLDC was awarded two grants totaling \$20,000 to help fund needed and often unreimbursed services.

The first grant award of the year came from Verizon. The company has been a funding partner for three years to improve classroom education and teaching resources. The grant will provide two portable SMART Board systems for use in classroom learning activities. These portable classroom assistants give SLDC education professionals another technological teaching tool to help teach special education students.

SLDC's most recent grant was announced in June. The Karl Kirchgessner Foundation awarded \$15,000 to support SLDC's Vision Laboratory. This grant will provide for staff time, and for some tools and equipment that are used in this service.

"Of our ancillary programs, the Vision Lab is rated the number one student benefit by the supervisory staff," said Development Director Ray Bell. "We're glad we've been able to continue to provide this service."



Beautiful and dapper—the 2008 Prom Queen and King, Tiffany B. and Adam W., pause to be acknowledged by the crowd at the Prom.

Save the Dates!

“The Real Deal” Hosts the Real Deal Elden and Terre Peterson to Host Wine Event

Elden and Terre Peterson's 23-acre La Cresta ranch, "The Real Deal," will be the site of for a very special wine event to benefit Speech and Language Development Center. The Real Deal charity event, to be held on Saturday, September 27, in the hills overlooking the Temecula Valley, will feature wines from the local wineries, dinner catered by the Blue Agave restaurant, a casino night, and a silent auction for hotel stays, vintage wine fleets and other wonderful donated items. The fee is \$75 per person and space is limited to the approximately 100 guests. Hotel discounts for the night also can be arranged.

"There's a phrase that inspires us, 'Live within your means, but love beyond your means,'" said Elden Peterson. "If you love children, as we do with the students at SLDC, you do what you can to help make a difference."

The Petersons want their event to be fun and casual. "Cowboy/surfer" was how Elden Peterson described the dress code for the evening.

"Come for the fun. Stay for the fine wine and great food and casino play," said Peterson.

Tickets, sponsorship and donor opportunities are still available. Contact Ray Bell or Nancy Egbert in SLDC's Development Department (714) 821-3620 or negbert@sldc.net.

30th Annual SLDC Benefit Golf Tournament Set for October 13

Speech and Language Development Center will once again hold its popular fall classic at the Alta Vista Country Club in Placentia. This year, the 30th anniversary of the perennial fall classic, promises to be especially fun. The tournament will be held on Monday, October 13, 2007. Sponsorship and foursome opportunities are still available. Entry: \$175 per person or \$700 per foursome. Contact Ray Bell or Nancy Egbert (714) 821-3620 (negbert@sldc.net) for information/reservations.

Speech and Language Development Center is proud to have been named
2008 Program of the Year



3rd Annual Coaster Run Draws 1,244 Runners

Southern California USATF 5K Road Championship Nets \$20,124

Elite 5k Results

Men

Christian Hesch—Morro Bay (15:05)
Daniel Rojas—Baldwin Park (15:08)
Eulogio Rodriguez—Whittier (15:14)
James Krawczyk—Westminster (15:21)
Albert Donawa—San Diego (15:26)
Rob Arsenault—Riverside (15:43)
Juan Valencia—Los Angeles (16:04)
Jeffrey Redfern—Los Angeles (16:44)
Miguel Magana—North Hollywood (16:54)
John Moss—Los Angeles (16:56)

Women

Midori Sperandeo—Laguna Niguel (17:26)
Tania Fischer—Santa Monica (17:40)
Grace Padilla—Los Angeles (17:58)
Cambria D'Amico—Redondo Beach (18:12)
Jennifer Overlock—Burbank (18:29)
Meredith Coulibaly—Los Angeles (18:52)
Veronica Wylie—Fullerton (19:31)
Kelsey Deforge—Redlands (19:52)
Lisa Davis—Los Angeles (19:58)
Lisa Cohen—Redlands (20:02)

More than 1,200 racers from throughout the U.S. competed in the 3rd Annual Coaster Run held Sunday, April 13, at Knott's Berry Farm. Drawn by the inaugural Southern California USA Track and Field 5K Road Championship, elite runners from as far away as Florida, Mississippi and New York traveled to Buena Park to race and help raise money for Speech and Language Development Center. The event, which also featured a 10K run, a 5K run/walk, and a 1K kids walk in Camp Snoopy, raised \$20,124 thanks to such generous sponsors as AGI. (For a complete list, please turn to donor page.)



Elite runners warm up for the start of their race.



Runners avail themselves of the post-race refreshments.

"This year, thanks to the elite race, we were able to expand beyond the boundaries of Southern California," said SLDC Board Member and race creator Jim Gonzales. "We had runners from eight different states.

"Thanks to our partnership with Knott's Berry Farm, the hard work of the volunteers, and the organizing efforts of Muff Elstran and Renegade Running, we're well on our way toward making the Coaster Run a destination running event," said Gonzales. "More importantly, the race provides us with an excellent opportunity to tell the SLDC story on a national stage."

The Coaster Run committee already is hard at work on next year's event. Knott's again will host the event, which will be held on March 15, 2009. The elite race is sure to draw more competitors from throughout the nation and race expo area will be expanded to include a wide variety of vendors.



Runners, volunteers, families and friends enjoyed the wide variety of vendors and exhibitors at the EXPO.



Chris Gautreau, president of AGI General Contractors, recently presented a donation check to SLDC that CAO Aleen Agranowitz was most happy to accept. Gautreau also shared his philosophy on giving: "When life shares good fortune, its value is increased by sharing that good with others."

To be placed on the Coaster Run mailing list or for information on any aspect of the event, please contact Muff Elstran 714-821-3620 x 224, melstran@sldc.net.

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Mildred Knott
Patricia and Dana Krueger
L. Guinevere Leung
Emily and Benjamin Levine
Ruth and Maynard Morvay
Eleanor and Alfred Mount
Henrietta Oder
Betty and Clayton Paynter
Cathe and Matt Petrasich
Nancy and Tim Robinson
Emerson Smith
Jean Stuesser
Janet and Gerald Thomas
Milica and Mirko Vukelic
Zora Vukelic

United Way

Liz and Jesse DeGeytere
Enterprise Rent-a-Car
Graydon Mallory
Patricia Tolliver



Dawn O'Connor, SLDC CEO, accepts a FIRST RIDE check from Michele Wischmeyer, Director of Marketing for Knott's Berry Farm. Knott's auctioned off the first rides on the Pony Express and donated the proceeds to SLDC. And, noted Wischmeyer, a number of generous donors donated their rides to be used by the students of SLDC- who declared the Pony Express a great success!

SLDC Parent David Duckworth Creates Tasty Fundraiser

Benefit Brunch Nets \$7,000 for SLDC

Now in its third year, SLDC Parent David Duckworth's charity brunch has raised nearly \$20,000 to support his daughter Delaney's school, Speech and Language Development Center. Combining their love for good food with their desire to help a worthy cause, Duckworth and his friend John Hulina created this successful benefit brunch with a silent auction at the Riviera Restaurant at the Fireside in Westminster. Restaurant owner Jimmy Yanez again underwrote the food costs so that 100 percent of the money raised could go to the school.

"I know all parents want to become more involved with SLDC—they may not just know how," said Duckworth. "This event shows that you can have fun *and* contribute to a worth cause."



Songwriter and music artist, Steven McClintock, hugs daughter Tessa, who also sang—showing she inherited the family poise and 'pipes'!

Donor List

Warrior Custom Golf:	A set of golf clubs and golf bag
Nylon Molding Corporation:	Angel club level tickets
Laguna Playhouse:	Tickets
Tootsies Shoe Store:	Gift certificate
Laguna Gourmet Foods:	Gift certificate
Pacific Theater Symphony:	Tickets
Neu-Image Rejuvenation Center:	3 treatments, 2 certificates
Diz-As-Is Restaurant:	Gift certificate
Harbour Surfboards:	Sweatshirt and mug

Founded in 1955, the Speech and Language Development Center (SLDC) is a non-profit corporation comprised of: a non-public school and therapy center serving the special needs of 340 children and young adults with language, learning, and behavior disabilities; and a school and residential program for 24 emotionally disturbed boys. SLDC is certified by the California State Department of Education and licensed by the Department of Social Services.

Address Correction

If you're receiving more than one copy of StairSteps, or if your address needs revising, please let us know!

Moving?

Please notify us of your new address so that we may stay in touch.

Co-Founders
Aleen Agranowitz, Ed.D., CCC-SP
Gladys Gleason, M.A., M.F.C.C.

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