



ADDPC Newsletter

Employment · Self Advocacy · Inclusion

The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council continues our profile series to help community members get to know the people who represent Arizonans with disabilities. Up this month is Vice-Chair J.J. Rico



J.J. Rico is first and foremost a father who loves his family, with whom he lives in Tucson. Second only to his family, he is the CEO of the Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL) and has been serving on the Council for eight years. J.J.'s favorite activities are camping or backpacking with his family and playing as much golf as possible. Some of his favorite places to camp or backpack are Fool Hollow State Park in Show Low and Saguaro National Park in Tucson. J.J.'s favorite golfer is Jordan Spieth, who has a sister with a developmental disability. J.J. enjoys golfing with his son, Diego, at least once a week. One of his best memories as a father is taking his son Joaquin to Philmont Scout Ranch, which has more than 214 square miles of rugged northern New Mexico wilderness, where individuals backpack for 12 days in the mountains of New Mexico, completely off the grid.

J.J.'s youngest son, Diego, has cerebral palsy, a developmental disability, and more recently has developed epilepsy. He and his wife are a good caregiver team, and they call themselves Team Diego, along with all the therapists and doctors that have shaped his life. A lot of folks ask him the question, "Did you get into disability law because of your son?" But J.J. reminds them he just passed his 21st anniversary at ACDL, while his son is only 15. He says he became a lawyer because he always was a talker and wanted to impact people's lives positively. For example, he wanted to fight the discrimination that

his Mexican grandparents endured. He thought law school was a good fit because it could give him a variety of options. He didn't necessarily have to be a lawyer – he could use his education in many different fields. However, because of Diego, it has become a personal passion, as well as a professional one, to make the world more accessible and much more inclusive for those who have disabilities.

He says there are a lot of barriers out there for people with developmental disabilities. According to J.J., an area that needs particular attention is competitive integrated employment, or CIE. Competitive integrated employment is work that is performed at the same rate of pay as others doing the same job and within the community alongside others without disabilities. “A lot of the state systems still put people with disabilities in a box suggesting that they can only fit in working certain types of jobs, as opposed to really looking at their goals and their strengths and maximizing those,” J.J. mentions.

J.J. was originally hired by ACDL as a result of the settlement of an employment case against Walmart that involved two young deaf individuals. His job was to monitor Walmart's compliance with the settlement agreement. J.J. was also involved in a case between Tucson Unified School District, and a custodian who believed he was discriminated against. The custodian was represented by ACDL, with J.J. as lead attorney, and the case ended in a successful jury trial. ACDL's client has since moved out of state and is doing well in a management position at a new school district – despite the fact TUSD made arguments that he was not qualified for the custodial position he held. In the *Goddard v. Harkins* lawsuit, J.J. advocated for appropriate accommodations to be made available for individuals with sensory disabilities to attend and enjoy movies at Harkins Theatres. The case went all the way to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, with that case ultimately reaching a settlement with Harkins that included captioning and audio descriptions at movie theaters statewide.

One of J.J.'s most memorable professional achievements was being an intern for Massachusetts Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy during law school in 1999. Senator Kennedy was a civil rights champion whose legislation created change in many different areas because of his willingness to reach across the aisle, working with other lawmakers regardless of party affiliation. J.J. has a picture of Sen. Kennedy in his office and his grandparents have the original. J.J. says, “It was an honor working for the Senator who played a significant role in the creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and was such an icon to my family.”

Why Employment is Important to Me: Video Narratives from Self-Advocates

Asim Dietrich, a supervising attorney for investigating, monitoring, and accountability at the Arizona Center for Disability Law (ACDL), talks about why employment is important to him.

Before joining the Arizona Center for Disability Law, Asim worked with Community Legal Services and was a Fellow at the William E Morris Institute for Justice. He was admitted to the State Bar of Arizona in 2010.

What he is most proud of is a case he worked on regarding the 911 system in Arizona: the case integrated the text-to-911 feature making 911 more accessible. For more information on the case go to [Enos v. Arizona](#).



ADDPC Grant Funding at Work:



Kathy Bashor, President, and Hayley Winterberg, Executive Director, Arizona Peer and Family Coalition

Arizona Peer and Family Coalition Self-Advocacy Leadership Training

The Arizona Peer and Family Coalition (APFC) is dedicated to extending statewide peer and family leadership into all aspects of Arizona's behavioral health care for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). The mission of the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition is to advocate for, connect, promote, and develop leadership by peers and family members throughout Arizona.

Individuals with I/DD are served along with their peers and family members. The coalition has a board of six concerned individuals who have worked in the field or have experience living with a disability.

Three years ago, this Self-Advocacy Leadership training was funded in part from a grant provided by ADDPC. The free trainings are for persons with I/DD that use and engage with the behavioral health system. Advocates within the programs include individuals with I/DD as well as family members and professionals. The goal of the program is to empower people with disabilities to have a voice in all aspects of their life.

With grant funding from ADDPC, 154 peers and family members were educated through the trainings over the 3 year grant contract period. In addition, 13 mentees and 5 mentors completed the Leadership Advocacy Mentorship Program. Attendees benefited from the training in many different areas and to help them practice their new skills, a peer-mentoring concept was added. Support was provided to practice how to share their story in a timely fashion, learn how to speak on a specific bill going through the Legislature and how to communicate with a case manager. One mentor received a scholarship to attend the 2022 Arizona Forum hosted by the Arizona Housing Coalition in partnership with the Arizona Department of Housing. This mentor was able to engage in conversations about the lack of affordable and accessible housing that has impacted her and her family who all deal with I/DD. She was able to provide lessons learned from attending this forum to others.

Evaluation data captured from attendees revealed that 100% of participants reported that they are better able to say what they want, say what services/supports they want, or say what is important to them. Sixty-six participants said after participating in this program, they reported increasing their advocacy because of this grant-funded project.

Courses available for participants in this program include:

Civic Leadership classes

The Arizona Peer and Family Coalition is dedicated to extending statewide peer and family leadership into all aspects of Arizona's behavioral health care. We invite peers, family members, and young adults to participate in our Civic Leadership Classes to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence, to be empowered to advocate for behavioral health rights, services, or needs.

Civic Leadership Development 2.0

This training takes advocacy efforts to another level to get involved with system change, allowing participants to advance their skills and practice what they learn. It provides a greater understanding of how committees work, the rules and basics of the committee, as well as an understanding of Robert's Rules of Order, often practiced by many committees in which graduates may become involved.

Civic Leadership: Advocating for Behavioral Health Rights, Services and Needs

This training is a condensed blend of the CLD and the CLD 2.0 classes. It addresses what civic leadership is, advances that have been made in Arizona community behavioral health care since 1982 (when AHCCCS was established), gaps and challenges that currently exist, and skills to become an effective advocate. Opportunities and resources to advocate for behavioral health rights, services, or needs are discussed.

Civic Leadership Development Mini Training

This training is a condensed blend of the CLD and the CLD 2.0 classes. With less time for participant interaction than the other classes, the focus is on how to advocate for behavioral health rights and services within the Arizona behavioral health system of care, learn what civic leadership is, identify resources and opportunities to become an advocate at local and state levels, and skills to do so. As with the other trainings, it includes the principles of care, individual rights, how the Arizona State Legislature works, how to advocate in person or virtually, empowering participant to, through advocacy, help improve the quality of care for behavioral health service recipients.

To learn more about the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition call [602-935-607](tel:602-935-607) email info@azpeerandfamily.org or visit their website at azpeerandfamily.org.

Native Center for Disabilities Addresses Multiple Needs for Arizona Tribal Communities



ABOUT THE NATIVE CENTER FOR DISABILITIES

The Native Center for Disabilities at the University of Arizona is an innovative new program to help Arizona Tribal partners improve the quality of life for their disability communities. The new Center, a program of UA's Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities, will provide on-site and virtual training, continuing education, workshops, community events, and other disability and culturally related services to help Tribal partners improve the quality of life for their disability communities.

A CULTURALLY BASED STRATEGY

Tribal communities across Arizona will have input in the development of the new center through a traditional community discussion format called Talking Circles. Talking Circles are used by many Native American communities throughout the United States and will help initiate an effective, culturally based strategy for community engagement and outreach efforts.

"Far too often the needs of our people with disabilities go unrecognized and as they grow opportunities become less and less, leaving them and their families feeling hopeless," says Mildred Manuel, deputy director of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Education Division and member of the Sonoran Center Community Advisory Council. "We are pleased to see the work being done by the University of Arizona Sonoran Center and look forward to being a part of this new opportunity for our Native American communities and our people with unique needs."

For more information go to:

<https://sonoranucedd.fcm.arizona.edu/nativecenter>

Family of Medically Complex Child Makes a Life-Changing Connection with Raising Special Kids



Kara and Jim Swierz's daughter, Zoey, was an easy baby to adore with her big blue eyes, her cherubic facial features, and blond hair that shone like the sun. It didn't take long, though, for Kara and Jim to recognize that her muscle tone was low and that she had limited head control and gross motor delays. By the age of 10 months, Zoey had been to several specialists. With every new test came additional clues into the root cause of Zoey's symptoms. Some information was insignificant and some was devastating and difficult to hear. Kara shared, "We are on a long curvy path to determine the cause of her global delays, short stature and hypotonia. We have a lot of support in the medical world but our adventure continues as we keep searching for a true diagnosis for Zoey."

While preparing to move back to Arizona from New Hampshire, where the family had moved shortly after Zoey's birth, Kara came across the Raising Special Kids website. She recalled her first conversation with Raising Special Kids: "I immediately connected with a gal who provided me with recommendations and resources to prepare for the impact that moving from out of state would have on my daughter. She has made a lasting impact on our family. I still call on her for guidance, to shed some tears, and above all, have a good laugh."

Once they arrived in Arizona, Kara quickly faced challenges with Zoey's out-of-state IEP and getting her approved for the Arizona Long Term Care System. She shared, "I was uneducated and quite overwhelmed." Throughout the entire process, Raising Special Kids was there for her. "I was given websites and books to research, seminars and webinars to attend, advice on how to organize documentation and the tools I needed to effectively advocate for my daughter. Raising Special Kids helped me find my voice."

Kara also talked about the positive support she received from Raising Special Kids when she has felt frustrated, desperate or isolated. "Raising Special Kids

support comes without judgment or criticism but instead, with a soft voice of encouragement and inspiration. Even when I have made mistakes, I am welcomed with grace and guidance.” She appreciates that the people who work at Raising Special Kids also have family members with disabilities, “They have their own unique perspective on challenging situations. Raising Special Kids can empathize and get it.” Raising Special Kids has helped Kara find humor at times of great sadness or frustration. “I think laughter is the greatest medicine and goes a long way to help me persevere.”

Persevere she has. Kara is now a Raising Special Kids Parent Leader mentoring other parents and participating on parent panels. “As a mom, I feel my voice is the greatest when I am advocating for Zoey. It is an honor I will never outgrow.”

Though she says it has been a tough year, Kara has found that moving to Arizona has been a blessing for the entire family. “We have come a long way and though the road has been long and not every day has it been paved with roses, I now know I have the strength, connections and resources to endure.”

To learn more about Raising Special Kids call 602-242-4366, email info@raisingspecialkids.org or visit their website at <https://raisingspecialkids.org/>



Supportive Housing Opportunity Available for Adults with Autism, Down Syndrome, and Other Neurodiverse Populations Who Are Not Currently Residents of First Place Phoenix

Many adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury and other neurodiverse abilities face unique challenges in daily living. That’s why it is critically important to design housing that nurtures a spirit of community, independence and interdependence within a supportive and caring environment. It is also why First Place® Phoenix is focused on providing the tools to help residents develop a lifestyle that’s meaningful, productive, connected and fulfilling.

Envisioned as a residential community development that aspires to catalyze international models, First Place® offers supportive housing and a residential transition program for individuals with autism and for other neurodiverse populations, as well as sites for education, training and creative inspiration.

The First Place Phoenix Transition Academy accepts individuals who meet the following criteria:

- Age 18 years or older and completion of high school or learning resource program.
- Diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- Completion of basic self-care needs, including:
 - Can dress and bathe themselves without physical prompting
 - Can complete personal hygiene tasks without physical prompting
 - Can feed themselves without physical prompting

-Has independent toilet skills and no nighttime enuresis

-Can take and manage medication with oversight

[Click here to join First Place Phoenix](#)



Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona

Partners in Leadership Training Now Accepting Applications for Class of 2023

Partners in Leadership is a FREE leadership training for self-advocates and parents of children with disabilities or special health care needs. The program is sponsored by Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona.

The Partners in Leadership program is designed to provide information, training, resources and skill building to self-advocates and the parents of children with disabilities or special health care needs so that they can become better advocates for themselves, their children, or for improving the systems of care that impact children and families. Participants will have an opportunity to meet and unite with others who have similar concerns to create a powerful voice on important issues. Participants learn how the legislative process works at the local, state and national levels. The goal of the training is to develop productive partnerships between people who need and use services and those in a position to make policy and law.

Deadline to apply is January 20th. Applications available online at www.pilotparents.org. For 2023 session dates and topics covered click here: [Partners in Leadership](#)



Interactive Plain Language Glossary

The National Center on State Courts [Interactive Plain Language Glossary](#) is a new tool to encourage plain language when talking about courts and legal issues. Use the glossary to identify legal terms to use when communicating with the public. Forms, brochures, and other materials that incorporate plain language are provided as examples.

For additional information on the Interactive Plain Language Glossary, visit <https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/access-to-justice/plain-language/glossary>



REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Are You Interested in Helping Shape Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation Program?

The Governor of Arizona's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is currently looking for new members who would like to have a role in shaping Arizona's VR program.

SRC Mission: Serving all citizens of Arizona, the mission of the Arizona Governor's State Rehabilitation Council is to advise, evaluate and partner with the public vocational rehabilitation program in support of improving access to employment and promoting a diverse workforce statewide.

What is Your Commitment?

- Attend full council Quarterly meetings as scheduled
- Attend Quarterly subcommittee meetings (or more often if needed)
- Must take the loyalty oath supporting the Constitution of the United States and the State of Arizona
- Complete a background check
- Make a 3-year commitment

Who Are We Looking For?

- Disability self-advocates
- Current or former VR clients
- Representatives from:
 - Business, Industry, and Labor
 - Parent Training and Information Centers
 - Community Rehabilitation Programs/RSA
 - Vendors
 - Employment-related State/County agencies
 - Various disability populations
 - Anyone looking to enhance the VR program

[Click here for SRC details](#)

Upcoming Events!

Monday Mindset Chat

Presented by the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Arizona



SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN ARIZONA

*Every Second
Monday
Noon-1 PM*



Join us for monthly chats focused on addressing the challenges and successes of implementing Employment First in Arizona.

This is an opportunity for YOU to bring your questions, comments, and concerns to an informal meeting with Sonoran Center professionals and practitioners.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Open to Supported Employment Professionals, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, DDD Support Coordinators, Educators, Providers, Job Coaches, and Job Developers.

[Click here to register for Monday Mindset Chats](#)

Service Provider Training: Addressing Sexual Violence in I/DD Communities

Presented by the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACESDV).

This free 4-hour training provides vital information on how to prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence in the I/DD communities. It will be offered in-person on January 18th and twice virtually, on March 21st and May 18th.

Presenters will discuss the dynamics and traumatic impact of sexual violence and how to recognize abuse, as well as explore strategies for a trauma-informed response.

This training is for disability service providers who serve the I/DD community and can be used for DCW continuing education.

[Click here to register for Sexual Violence in I/DD Communities](#)

1. When: Wednesday, January 18th

Time: 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Where: In-person at Ability360 5025 E. Washington St., Suite 200 Phoenix

2. When: Tuesday, March 21st

Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Where: Virtual

3. When: Thursday, May 18th

Time: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Where: Virtual



ACESDV Announces 2023 Annual Conference - February 1st & 2nd

The Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence is pleased to announce its 2023 Annual Conference, an in-person event taking place February 1st and 2nd in Phoenix. The mission of the conference is to provide participants with a variety of learning opportunities in uplifting prevention, honoring resiliency, and recognizing humanity so together we can work toward ending domestic and sexual violence by dismantling oppression and promoting equity among all people.

This conference will take place over the course of two days and will include in-person presentations, participatory workshops, and keynote speakers. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to network with multiple individuals from different organizations in order to develop connections and to build community support.

When: Wednesday, February 1st & Thursday, February 2nd

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:45 PM each day

Where: Desert Willow Conference Center, Phoenix

[Click here to register for the Annual Conference](#)

FULLY INCLUSIVE FOOTBALL & CHEER CAMP WITH SENSORY FRIENDLY ZONES

Super Fest is held as an event to showcase inclusion while providing an opportunity for youth with Developmental Disabilities to participate together with their peers

The graphic is a promotional banner for "2023 SUPER FEST ARIZONA Football & Cheer Camp". It features a "SUPER FEST" logo with a football icon and "The Matthew Foundation" text. The main title "2023 SUPER FEST ARIZONA Football & Cheer Camp" is in large, bold letters. To the right, it says "BIG GAME LVII WEEKEND" and "Expected appearances by NFL alumni, NFL cheerleaders, celebrities". A red banner across the middle says "ALL ABILITIES INVITED!!". Below this are icons for a calendar, clock, age group, location pin, and dollar sign, each with corresponding text: "Saturday Feb. 11, 2023", "10am - 1pm Check-in 9am", "8-22 yrs old (but open to any age)", "8755 N. 83rd Ave Pioneer Park Peoria, AZ", and "\$30/athlete (Early Bird) \$50 for 2/875 for 3 same family Scholarships available".

When: Saturday, February, 11th

Time: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Where: Pioneer Park, Peoria, AZ

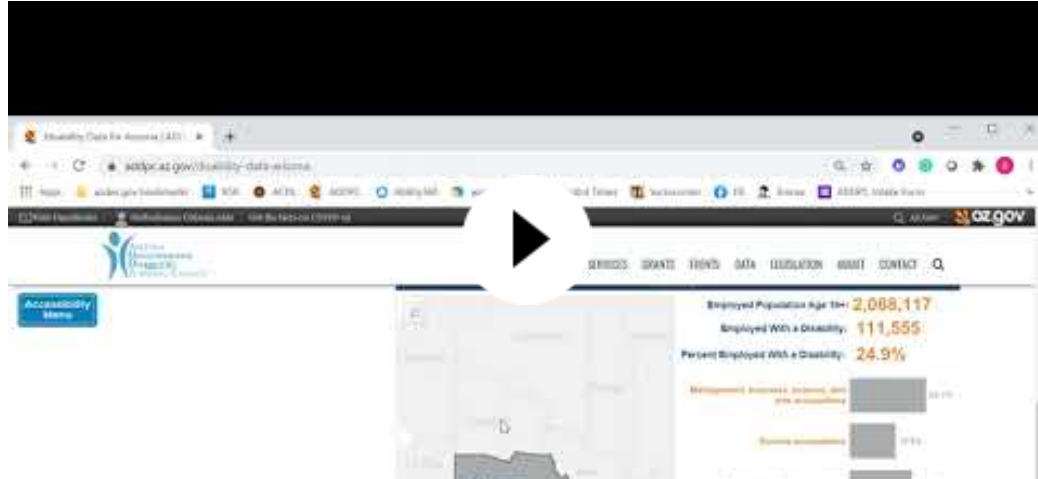
Price: \$30/athlete (Early Bird pricing); Scholarships available

[Click here for Super Fest registration](#)

Disability Data for Arizona

Watch our brief video on how to use the Disability Data Hub for Arizona:

Our data hub allows you to explore data on individuals with disabilities living in the state of Arizona. We believe free and easy access to data on individuals with disabilities is important to develop and support capacity building and systemic change. We update our data dashboards regularly, as governmental agencies make their public releases.



[Visit Disability Data Hub Here](#)

See ADDPC website for more events. [Click here.](#)



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