

# 2025 YEARBOOK

@NevadaPEP



Celebrating Excellence  
NEVADA  
**PEP**  
Strengthening Families *with*  
Education • Empowerment • Encouragement  
**30**  
EST. 1995  
Years Supporting Families



Celebrating 30  
years of supporting  
Nevada families!



Celebrating a collection of stories honoring those who make a difference for children and their families.



Thank you for joining Nevada PEP as we celebrate 30 years of helping families across the state of Nevada!

Since 1995 we have been to Educating, Empowering, and Encouraging our families.

Thank you for your support!

## Contact Nevada PEP

### Nevada PEP Central Office

7211 W. Charleston Blvd.

Las Vegas, Nevada 89117

Phone: 702-388-8899

Fax: 702-388-2966

### Nevada PEP Satellite Office

4600 Kietzke Lane, Ste. I-202

Reno, Nevada 89502

Phone: 775-448-9950

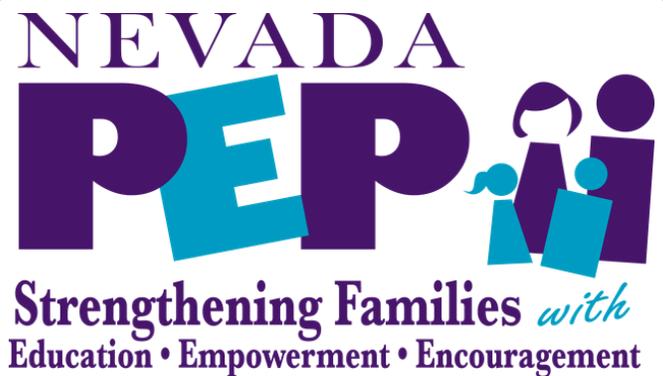
Fax: 775-448-9603

### Statewide

Email: [pepinfo@nvpep.org](mailto:pepinfo@nvpep.org)

Statewide: 800-216-5188

[www.nvpep.org](http://www.nvpep.org)



# Governing Board



**Bryce Loveland**  
Board Chair



**Kelly Wooldridge**  
Vice Chair



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Secretary



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**Kate Lowenhar-Fisher**  
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**Alex Cherup**  
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**Erin McQueen**  
Member

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## Our Mission

To increase the opportunities for home, community and school success for children with disabilities, including those who are at risk or who have behavioral health challenges, their families and their service providers, through education, encouragement and empowerment activities.

## What is Nevada PEP?

PEP is Nevada's Parent Training and Information Center for families who have children with disabilities and the professionals who support them. Nevada PEP believes that the family is the fundamental unit in society. Our philosophy is that children with disabilities, without regard for the nature and severity of the disability, have inherent value, that all life has purpose, that communities benefit from providing appropriate interventions and that individuals with disabilities make valuable contributions to society.



## What Services Does PEP Offer?

- Information and Referral
- Individual Assistance
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Statewide Lending Library
- Training Workshops
- Family Support Services
- Conflict Resolution Support
- On-Demand Trainings
- Monthly Newsletters



## Who Should Call?

- Parents of children with disabilities
- Parents of children with mental health needs
- Parents needing encouragement and support from other parents
- Family members, friends and persons with disabilities
- Professionals in the medical, educational, and human service fields
- Community Leaders who make decisions about programs of support for children with disabilities and their families

## Guiding Principles

**We believe that children, youth, and young adults have a right to access appropriate intervention as well as participate in all opportunities accompanied with membership in their own community.**

**We believe that children, youth, and young adults reach their full potential when families and professionals build a partnership based on trust and respect.**

**We believe that children, youth, and young adults and their families deserve the opportunity to live, learn, and participate fully in their communities.**

**We believe that the family is the child's first and best teacher; that professionals must be sought after as experts in their fields to enhance the family.**

**We believe that the family's strengths, needs and cultures must be respected to meet the true needs of the family.**

**We believe that Information, support and training enrich and empower families and professionals.**

**We believe that every person has an unrealized potential for growth, and that services should be designed to maximize that potential.**

**We believe in acknowledging and embracing all cultures in our communities.**

**We believe that it is crucial that families participate in policy-making decisions at the local, state, and national level to guide the development of meaningful services that are family driven.**



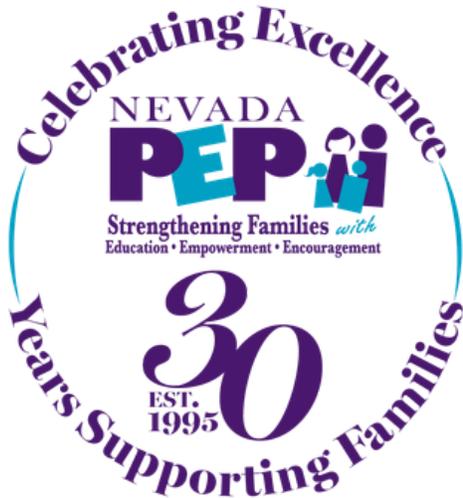
## Fundamental Goals

**ONE: Nevada PEP will be a long-term reliable statewide resource to families and the individuals who support them by providing information, support, and training programs to empower them to better advocate for the needs of their children, youth, and young adults.**

**TWO: Nevada PEP will assist families and the individuals who support them to better understand the nature and needs of the disabilities. Youth and young adults will understand their strengths and needs and how to advocate themselves.**

**THREE: Nevada PEP will conduct community outreach and public awareness activities to families, professionals, organizations that directly or indirectly work with children with disabilities and their families; to raise awareness of available support, link families with other families in similar circumstances, encourage community acceptance and enhance the family centered community based service delivery.**

# A Legacy of Change: 30 Years Strong



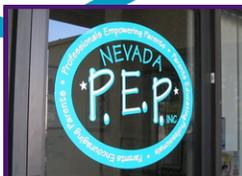
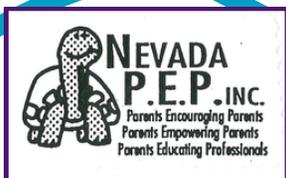
For more than thirty years, Nevada PEP has been changing lives throughout Nevada. Our story began around a kitchen table, where a small group of parents imagined a future filled with possibility—one where their children could grow, thrive, and experience every opportunity available to them. Turning that vision into reality took dedication, resilience, and a belief that families could make a difference. From that belief, Nevada PEP was born.

Three decades later, that dream has been transformed into a statewide nonprofit that continues to change lives every day. What began as a small family-driven effort has evolved into a legacy of education, empowerment, and encouragement that has supported thousands of families across Nevada.

Nevada PEP is more than an organization—it is a community built on compassion and understanding. For 30 years, we have stood beside families as they navigate the challenges of raising children with disabilities. Our staff bring their own lived experience; they understand the emotional and practical struggles families face. Many are parents who have walked similar paths. Families have told us, “Nevada PEP is like a warm hug in a cold world,” a sentiment that reflects the heart of our mission.

Today, Nevada PEP proudly serves families and service providers statewide, supporting children from birth through age 26 with a broad range of special needs. Our free workshops, training opportunities, and resources provide families with the knowledge and support they need to advocate successfully and help their children thrive.

## Our Logo Through the Years



# 30th Anniversary Team Building Retreat



# Letter from the Executive Director of Nevada PEP

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate Nevada PEP's 30th Anniversary, I reflect on the thousands of children, youth, and families we have supported over the years. This milestone is not just a marker of time—it represents three decades of education, empowerment, and community building. Nevada PEP was founded on the vision that every child deserves to be understood, supported, and given the opportunity to reach their full potential—and it continues to guide us as we look toward a future where every child and family has the tools and support to thrive.



On behalf of Nevada PEP and the families we serve, it is a true privilege to honor the 2025 Hand in Hand, Together We Can honorees – extraordinary individuals whose acts of kindness and dedication continue to light the way toward a more inclusive and caring community.

This program celebrates Nevadans who make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families. It provides families with a platform to acknowledge those whose kindness has left a lasting impact.

The stories in this yearbook reflect the heart of what it means to be a community—connection, safety, belonging, and mutual care. As Morgan Freeman said, “How do we change the world? One random act of kindness at a time.” This spirit of kindness and unity shines through each story shared.

We sincerely thank the families who shared their experiences and the sponsors whose generous support makes this program possible. Together, we are making a difference.

Join us in celebrating these honorees by sharing their stories, supporting our mission, and helping build communities where family feels supported and every child feels valued.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Taycher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Taycher

Executive Director

# Letter from the Chairperson of Nevada PEP's Governing Board

Welcome to the 2025 Hand in Hand, Together We Can Yearbook,

The Hand in Hand, Together We Can program began in 2002 with a heartfelt mission: to recognize and honor individuals who have made a lasting impact in the lives of children with special needs. For more than twenty-three years, this program has celebrated the parents, educators, caregivers, and community members who go above and beyond to support and empower children to reach their full potential.



It has been a privilege to witness the dedication, compassion, and commitment of those who make a difference where it matters most—in the heart of a child's life. Nevada PEP is proud to continue this meaningful tradition of recognizing excellence and kindness within our communities.

This July, we also celebrated a significant milestone—30 years of unwavering service to families across Nevada. Since 1995, Nevada PEP has been walking hand in hand with families across Nevada helping parents find resources, navigate challenges and the complexity of special education, and most importantly helping them to be their child's best advocate.

Reflecting on three decades of service, we are reminded that our accomplishments are made possible by the dedication of our staff, families, educators, and community partners who share our commitment to every child's success. Together, we promote understanding, collaboration, and respect— that every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to learn and be successful.

This anniversary is more than a number—it represents thousands of lives touched, voices uplifted, and futures made brighter. We extend our sincere gratitude to all who have supported our mission and share in our vision of education, empowerment and encouragement.

Here's to 30 years of making a difference—and to many more ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryce Loveland". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bryce Loveland  
Nevada PEP Governing Board Chair



Strengthening Families *with*  
Education • Empowerment • Encouragement

# Annual Report 2025

21,584 Individuals Served

3,400 Training Participants



“Nevada PEP has been a life saver for my family.”  
- Parent

# Community Trainings

Nevada PEP offers training opportunities for parents, students, and professionals throughout Nevada. Core training topics include Understanding ADHD, IEP Clinics, Positive Behavioral Interventions, Bullying Prevention, and Literacy workshops. In collaboration with our community partners, we provide trainings to educate the community and to reach more families who have children with disabilities. The information offered in the trainings helps families learn about best practices and how to advocate for services for their children. Trainings are presented in both English and Spanish, and include both live and On-Demand trainings.



“I often refer families to Nevada PEP who need assistance with their school age children. Thank you for the work you do in our communities. It makes a huge difference for the families you serve!”  
- Provider



Were you able to understand the information you received from Nevada PEP?

Yes  
98%

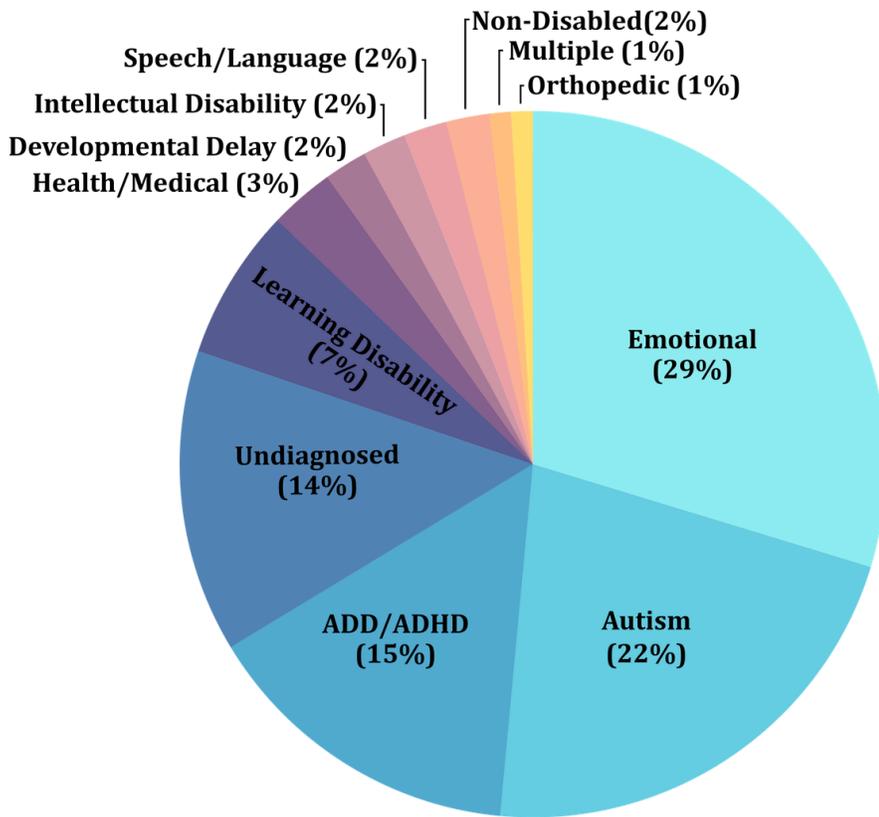
Are you prepared to use the information you received from Nevada PEP?

Yes  
98%

Would you recommend Nevada PEP to others?

Yes  
100%

# Disabilities of All Children Served



## Volunteer Contributions

Volunteering with Nevada PEP is more than just lending a hand—it's about making a real difference in the lives of families and children across Nevada. Our volunteers bring energy, compassion, and dedication, helping to support programs, events, and resources that empower parents and strengthen communities.

Whether assisting with delivering educational materials, or sharing messages of kindness through campaigns like "I Care, We Care," every hour of service helps families navigate the challenges of raising children with disabilities. Volunteers play a crucial role in spreading hope, building connections, and ensuring that every family feels supported and valued.

At Nevada PEP, we know that giving your time is one of the most meaningful ways to make an impact. From community members to the parents that we help, our volunteers are at the heart of our mission. By joining us, you're not only helping others—you're joining a community of people committed to kindness, understanding, and positive change.

677 Volunteer Hours



# Support Services for Individuals

Nevada PEP provides support services by first providing Information & Referral Services and helping parents find their way through the maze of services. Another important support service is Individual Assistance, which targets the specific needs of the individual or family. If a family requires additional support, Nevada PEP attends Education, Wraparound, or Child & Family Team meetings.



Education Meetings	989
Wraparound/CFT/PCP meetings	258
Dispute Resolution	14
Individual Assistance Contacts	31,229
New Families Requesting Support	2,390
New Individuals Contacting PEP	3,506

“I was so confused and didn’t know what to do. Nevada PEP was there to listen to me, giving me encouragement and providing me with my options. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”  
- Parent

## Agree

93%

After receiving support from Nevada PEP, you feel confident in your ability to work with your child’s school or service providers.

98%

The information Nevada PEP provided was useful.

98%

The information Nevada PEP provided helped you learn more about how to meet your child’s needs.

98%

The information or support you received from Nevada PEP met your needs.

# Community Outreach & Public Awareness

Nevada PEP provides outreach presentations for service providers, professional organizations and parent groups throughout Nevada. By educating community members, Nevada PEP continually enhances understanding of the needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Top 10 Reasons People Contact Nevada PEP



Top 10 Reasons Families Seek Individual Assistance to Help Their Child



170

Number of public forums, information fairs, & community outreach events

312

Number of meetings attended to enhance the support systems for children and families

51

Number of committees to which Nevada PEP representatives provided the parent perspective

21,584

Individuals Served

103,495

Number of yearly website visits

534,461

Number of E-Newsletters sent

## Nevada PEP Social Media Followers

4,415

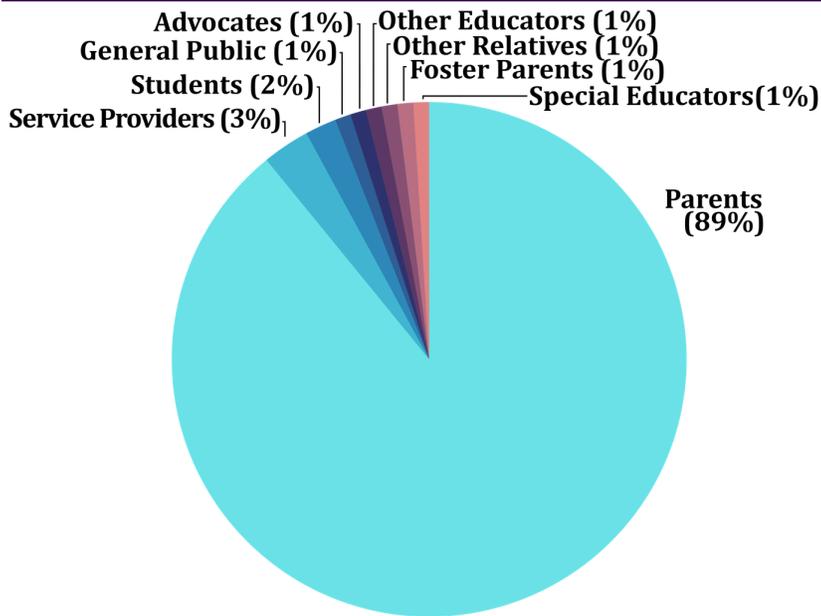
2,284

5,374

1,733

# Demographics

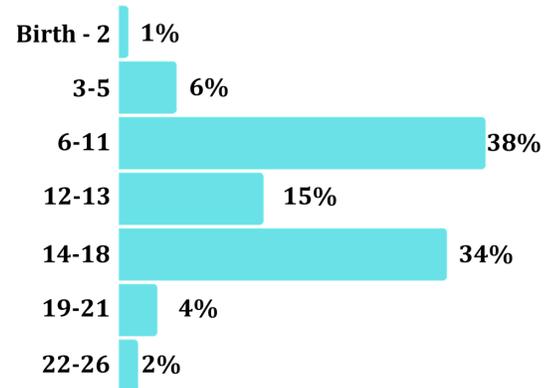
## Consumer Relationships



## Genders of Children Helped

Male	63%
Female	36%
Undisclosed	1%

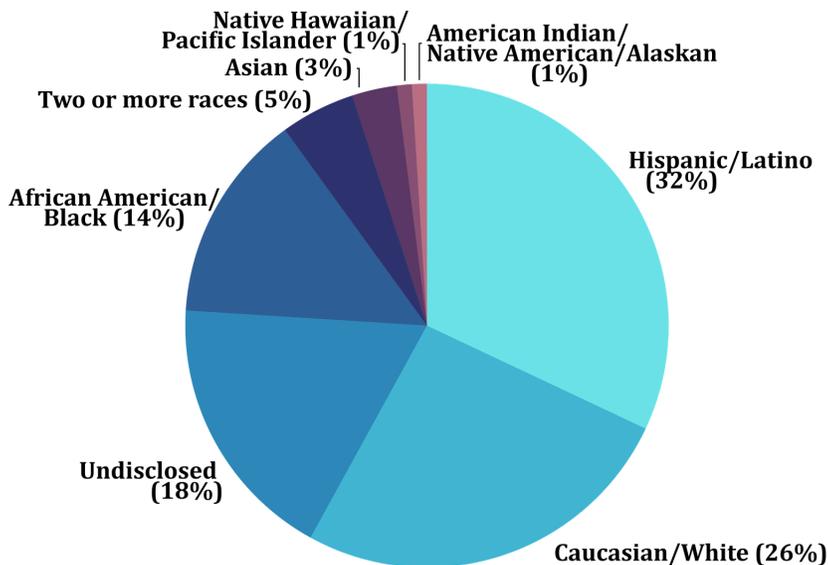
## Ages of Children Helped



“I feel so relieved to be talking to someone who understands how I feel.”

- Parent

## Ethnicities of People Contacting PEP



# Funding and Expenditures

Nevada PEP has formed strong relationships throughout the community with corporations, professional organizations, and individuals. It is only through the ongoing support of our community partners that we continue to grow. Our greatest need is for corporate sponsors. In giving to Nevada PEP, you will be rewarded with a lifetime of achievement and partnership.

## Our Financials

**Income: 2,078,324**

**Travel and Mileage: 24,584**

**Conferences, Meetings & Trainings: 19,593**

**Supplies, Postage & Shipping: 18,688**

**Printing & Publications: 50,026**

**Operational: 34,016**

**Expenditures: 1,937,324**

**Professional Services: 62,388**

**Family Resources & Activities: 20,076**

**Building & Space: 147,819**

**Personnel: 1,560,134**

“Nevada PEP truly stands out as an incredible resource and support. It reminds me that I am not alone. PEP’s support and guidance have genuinely made a difference.”

- Parent



## Major Funders

Nevada Department of Education	U.S. Department of Education
Nevada Department of Health and Human Services	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Nevada Division of Child and Family Services	U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration

## Individual Donors

Alex Cherup	Jacqueline Seitz	Kendra Wastun	Ruben Escalante
Arnette Wolf	Janelle Kraft-Pearce	Kenneth Taycher	Shauna Earl
Brandon Johnson	Janet de Armond	Lee Stefin	Stacie Sasso
Brenna Hardtner	Jeff Carneal	Magdalena Ruiz	Stephanie Vrsnik
Carley Murray	Jessica Molesworth	Mary Lichty	Svitlana "Lana" Bandurko
Daniel Clark	Jose Camarena	Melissa Sanofsky	Teresa Loveland
Erin McQueen	Karen Chandler	Nancy Kuhles	Teresa Sanofsky
Erika and Bryce Loveland	Karen Reese	Natalie Filipic	Timothy Taycher
George & Aileen West	Karen Taycher	Nicole Bungum	Thomas Taycher
Gina Venglass	Karissa Bagley	Nicole Rose	Todd Becker
Ginnilyn Saliby	Kate Lowenhar-Fisher	Retta Dermody	William Pick
Gwen Scott	Kathryn McKay	Rita and Roger Varney	Zachary Laskey
Helen Goodale	Kelly Wolske	Robin Kincaid	
Isabella Jaramillo	Kelly Wooldridge		

## Community Partners

Abbott's Custom Printing	Land Rover Henderson	SilverSummit Healthplan
Aloha Pacific Federal Credit Union	Las Vegas Aviators	Smart & Final Charitable Foundation
Art Classes for Kids	Las Vegas Desert Dogs	Smashburger
Atlantis Casino Resort Spa	Las Vegas Lights FC	Smith's Community Rewards Program
Black Bear Diner	Las Vegas Motor Speedway	Smith's Food and Drug
Bobby and Sandra Ellis Charitable Fund	NASCAR Cup Series	South 40-Reno
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck	Magellan Health	Spring Mountain Treatment Center
CareSource	Magic Carpet Golf	Springs Preserve
Carson Hot Springs Resort	Meepleville Board Game Cafe	Sprouts Farmers Market
Center for Applied Research Solutions	Memorabilia Experts	Starbucks Coffee Company
Chipotle Mexican Grill	Molina Healthcare	Target
Clark County Children's Mental Health Consortium	Need2Speed	Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum
Coconut Bowl at Wild Island	Nevada CASA Association	Texas Roadhouse
Costco	Nevada Community Foundation	The Cheesecake Factory
Diversified Restaurant Group	Nevada Museum of Art	The Home Depot
Dutch Bros	Network for Good	The Lovaas Center
Eagle Quest	Nevada State Bank	The Orleans Hotel and Casino
El Pollo Loco	Ninja Kidz Action Park	The Mob Museum
Findlay Volkswagen Henderson	NV Energy Foundation	Treasure Island Hotel and Casino
Firehouse Subs	Olive Garden	UA Local 525 Plumbers, Pipefitters, Welders & HVAC
Fleischmann Planetarium	P.F. Chang's	United Way of Southern Nevada
Fly High Trampoline Park	Police Managers & Supervisors Association (PMSA)	Vegas Golden Knights
Fogo de Chão Brazilian Steakhouse	Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers	Washoe County Children's Mental Health Consortium
Fox 5 Las Vegas	Reno Rodeo	Washoe County Sheriff Deputies Association
Freed's Bakery	Rural Nevada Children's Mental Health Consortium	Wilbur D. May Center
Grand Sierra Resort	Sahara Las Vegas	
Hanratty Law Group	Sassafras Eclectic Food Joint	
Health Plan of Nevada	School of Rock	
Healthy Kids Gym	Shake Shack	
Jiffy Lube		

Thank you to our Anonymous Donors. We are truly grateful for your continued support.

# Leadership



**Natalie Filipic is the mother of two and grandmother of six. As the Director of Operations, Natalie is generally responsible for the business and information management of Nevada PEP, ensuring the smooth operation of the organization's infrastructure. Natalie enjoys the day to day routine of office management, knowing that what she does makes a difference in the lives of others.**

**Carley Murray is the Statewide Family Network Director for Nevada PEP. The Statewide Family Network is a strong network of families, parent groups, professionals, community organizations, agencies and policymakers who are dedicated to empowering families and strengthening their ability to participate in mental health care reform and improving outcomes for children and youth with behavioral health care needs. She is also the proud mother of two teens with disabilities. She believes that every person has the potential to reach their dreams and that through her work at Nevada PEP she can help families use the services available to them to realize this potential.**



**Robin Kincaid is the Director of Educational Services. Robin has over twenty years of experience educating parents and professionals on special education law, advocacy, best practice, parent/professional collaboration, and positive behavior supports. Other responsibilities include outreach activities and individual assistance to families. Robin has served on the Interagency Coordinating Council for the past fifteen years, representing the parent perspective in early intervention services. As co-chair for the Families First Statewide Conference in 2007, Robin provided leadership and coordination for the conference program.**

**Magdalena Ruiz, a bilingual Family Peer Support Services Director and proud mother of three, draws strength from her journey advocating for her two sons with disabilities. Once overwhelmed by the complexities of navigating educational and support systems, she gained the confidence and skills needed to succeed. Now, she uses her experience to empower other families. Magdalena provides parents with practical tools, including understanding their rights, navigating school systems, and accessing resources. She inspires families to build strong support networks, overcome challenges, and advocate effectively for their children's needs and success.**



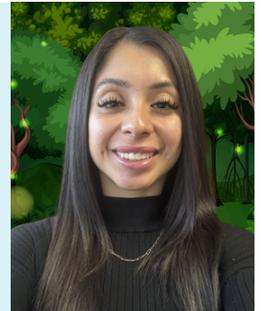
**Stephanie Vrsnik is the Community Development Director. She is the proud mother of two adult children and a grandmother of an amazing fifteen and a half year-old grandson. Having a son with a disability brought her to Nevada PEP over twenty years ago. Her passion and expertise are focused on raising public awareness and community support for Nevada PEP. "It is vital that the community supports our children to be successful contributing members of our community." Stephanie is a member of the Community Advisory Committee and attends American Fundraising Professionals events. She oversees annual events that recognize Children's Mental Health and Bullying Prevention. Building a stronger community for all is her primary goal.**

# Professional Staff



Ashby is the Youth Mentor for Youth MOVE Nevada. As a college student studying communications, she is passionate about having a career that helps people. Ashby loves to play sports, spend time with family, do crafts, and listen to music! She is an avid mental health advocate and enjoys working with youth to break the stigma surrounding mental health.

Amanda is the Program Support Specialist for Nevada PEP. She makes sure everyone and everything in our Reno office is running smoothly and ensures that everyone on the team feels supported! Amanda is a proud boy mom of one and is passionate about breaking generational curses and stigma around mental health both for youth and adults in her community and loves educating and connecting families to helpful resources.



Brenna is the Team Facilitator for Youth MOVE Nevada. A devoted mother to a beautiful baby girl, she enjoys spending quality time with her family and likes watching movies in her free time. Brenna is deeply passionate about empowering youth to advocate for themselves and is dedicated to breaking the stigma surrounding mental health.

Britt is a Family Specialist in the Satellite office. She is the proud mom of a silly and outgoing 13-year-old son with Autism, ADHD, and Sensory Processing Disorder. She enjoys connecting with families, sharing information & resources, and encouraging families to be the best advocate they can be for their children. Britt's family has lived in the Reno area for over a decade, which makes her passionate about her local community. Britt enjoys helping families and making a positive difference in their lives.



Daniel is the Special Projects Facilitator. He manages the website and participates in the planning and execution of various special projects and events for PEP. One of his favorite things to do is design logos and flyers whenever he gets the chance. He was drawn to PEP because he was seeking an opportunity to use his creative skills to help people in the community. Having seen the wonderful work that PEP does for families, it seemed like a perfect fit.

# Professional Staff



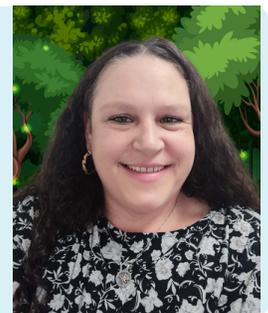
Diane is fulfilling her lifelong dream of helping families through Nevada PEP. She moved to Las Vegas in 1986 for a better opportunity for herself and family. After seeking help for her own two boys, she began volunteering to give something back. She served as the intake specialist for many years and is the Community Education Specialist. She remains passionate about helping families at PEP and after more than 18 years of service, dreams of one day staging a huge fundraiser and helping children with disabilities through her musical talent.

Joanna is a family specialist. She has two daughters who are her pride and joy and the main reason she came to Nevada PEP. Before she found PEP, she struggled to get services and help for her children. One of the reasons she came to PEP was to learn more about advocacy. Joanna liked that PEP helps families get services within their community and makes a difference in collaboration with schools and agencies. Her passion is to educate and help families understand they have options. She hopes to teach families to have higher expectations and know what services they could receive to be successful in school and in their communities.



Jocelyn is a Family Peer Support Specialist. She is a single mom of 3. Through her experiences, she learned the importance of advocacy. She realized that while policy change is important, what many families truly need is knowledge. Knowing that their voice matters, and how to use it. She has made it her mission to use her lived experience to help others. Because when one person is empowered, it can change everything!

Jonella is the Information and Training Specialist. Born and raised in Reno, Nevada. I am a mother of 2 raising my 3 grandchildren, working my dream job at Nevada PEP. My happy place is when my whole family is together for no reason. I enjoy watching movies and refurbishing wood furniture.



Kathryn McKay is the Community Outreach Manager. She is married and is a proud mom of three amazing adult kids. She started her journey with Nevada PEP as a volunteer, and quickly fell in love with the organization and the amazing work that PEP does for families and their children. Kathryn is passionate about helping others and is excited to be working at Nevada PEP helping families like hers.

# Professional Staff



**Kenneth is a Special Project Mentor at Nevada PEP. He enjoys being a part of the PEP team and PEP's commitment to helping people with disabilities and their families. He is truly passionate about helping young adults to be a part of their community. Kenny has been involved in the Challenger baseball program as a coach for the last seventeen years. Kenny's goal is to Educate, Empower, and Encourage people to be their best advocate.**

**Kim is the Social Media Marketing Specialist. She was born and raised in Las Vegas. She maintains the social media platforms and creates two monthly e-newsletters. With a background in graphic design and social media, she has combined her creative skills with designing special projects for Nevada PEP. She brings her unique talents to the organization, along with her desire to support individuals with disabilities.**



**Laurie, Family Peer Support Specialist, is a proud mother of two but an even prouder grandmother of three. Working to make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families has always been her passion. More so, after experiencing the challenges obtaining the services and supports for her own son. Nevada PEP has given her the opportunity to educate, encourage and empower families through advocacy, reminding them that they are not alone in their journey.**

**Lupe is the Administrative Account Specialist in the Central Office and a proud mother of an adult son with Autism. She has a genuine passion for supporting others and makes a meaningful difference in the families she serves. In her free time, Lupe enjoys hiking and spending quality time with her son and her fur babies. After many years of volunteering, she joined Nevada PEP to continue her commitment to helping families in need.**



**Nicole is Nevada PEP's Family Services Manager. She is the proud mother of four children who have disabilities, including Autism and ADHD. What she loves most about working at Nevada PEP is being part of an organization that provides services and resources to families just like hers.**

# Professional Staff



Shauna is the Secondary Success Specialist here at NV PEP. Shauna is raising a 20-year-old young man on the Autism Spectrum transitioning into adulthood. Excited to provide & share with families the education she received from NV PEP. She loves family vacations and exploring the world.

Stephanie is a Secondary Success Specialist at Nevada PEP with two young adult children: a daughter with a rare genetic condition who is enjoying her "best schedule ever" during her fifth year of high school and a son who is about to launch on a new career path this spring with the assistance of Vocational Rehabilitation. Stephanie has a passion for helping parents understand their IEPs and navigate the IEP process.



Susana is a Family Specialist at Nevada PEP. She is the proud mother of three and has two wonderful grandchildren. Susana is proud to work in an organization that enhances opportunities for those with disabilities. Her passion is to educate, empower and encourage families to be the best advocates for their children.

Vania was born in the city of Chihuahua, Mexico. She graduated from university with a degree in graphic design. She lived in Denver, Colorado, for 20 years, and four years ago, her family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. She is the mother of three daughters, two of whom have learning disabilities and ADHD. She is passionate about helping people and understanding the rights of children, which was her primary motivation for joining Nevada PEP.



Zachary is an Administrative Specialist. He hails from Buffalo, New York originally, and dearly misses the pizza and Buffalo wings. He was drawn to Nevada PEP by the mission of helping families in our Nevada community and has loved connecting with the community and his colleagues on a daily basis.

Zelinna is the Office Manager in the Central Office. She's a mother to a beautiful little girl. Zelinna is studying to become an entrepreneur. Zelinna has a passion for helping others. She also loves to travel and hike in her free time. What brought her to Nevada PEP was all the amazing work that PEP does for families and their children. Zelinna enjoys being a part of the PEP family.



# Youth MOVE Nevada



445



806



312

Follow us @YouthMOVEnv

## Podcast Update!

Our new Voices for Change series released 18 episodes on youth-driven topics, resulting in a 255% increase in listeners and a 40% growth in followers.



Use the QR code to hear all episodes!



Youth MOVE Team Brenna and Ashby

Youth MOVE Nevada is a youth-led program focused on empowering young people to engage with youth-serving systems. We believe youth are experts in their own lives, and their experiences can shape better services. We help youth build on their strengths, develop skills to speak up for themselves, and reduce stigma around mental health and disabilities.

This year, our reach grew significantly. Our #MindMatters2025 Mental Health Awareness Month campaign featured 42 youth and reached 30,081 users, and our Suicide Awareness Month collaboration with Youth MOVE National reached 204,547 users.

We brought youth perspectives directly to decision makers by co-facilitating the Care Coordination Summit with Nevada Medicaid and hosting youth voice panels at the Washoe County Youth Mental Health Summit and the Clark County Family Wellness Summit.

We continue our statewide engagement through weekly meetings, trainings, social media, community events, and our podcast.



Youth MOVE at the 2025 Washoe Youth Mental Health Summit

Youth MOVE launched the “Kindness Looks Good on You” Bullying Prevention Month poster contest, awarding youth winners with prizes and professional poster printing supported by the NV Energy Foundation.



Poster contest winner

# Nevada PEP embarks on the Quest for Kindness!



**T**his October, Nevada PEP partnered with the National Bullying Prevention Center to celebrate National Bullying Prevention Month in our sixth annual “I Care, We Care” campaign!

Our Board Chair, Bryce Loveland, and Tony Sanchez from the NV Energy Foundation helped launch the quest on Fox 5, encouraging everyone to help build a culture of kindness. Local businesses joined the adventure with generous donations that made our weekly raffles a huge success!

Nevada PEP collected over 525 messages of kindness and hope from families, youth, and community members. The I Care, We Care Team proudly delivered more than 6,000 bullying prevention activity books, bookmarks, pencils, and resource materials to schools across Nevada. We’re deeply thankful for our amazing sponsors who supported schools statewide — your generosity truly makes a difference!

A special thank-you goes to the NV Energy Foundation, whose support allowed us to reach thousands of students with messages of kindness and hope. We also received support videos from our friends in Boulder City and North Las Vegas. Miss Nevada, Abigail Bachman, also joined the quest, helping to deliver activity books and spreading kindness throughout our communities.

The Governor’s proclamation of October as Bullying Prevention Month (along with proclamations from 13 mayors recognizing Unity Day) reminded us that together, we all stand against bullying.

Thank you for being part of this year’s Quest for Kindness. Together, we’re creating a brighter, more caring Nevada for all children.



Together we are sending a message: “The end of bullying begins with you!”

# I Care We Care Sponsors

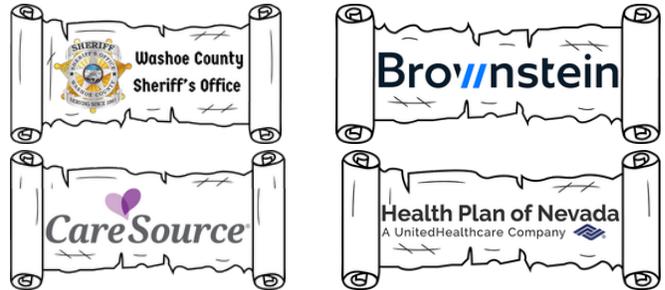
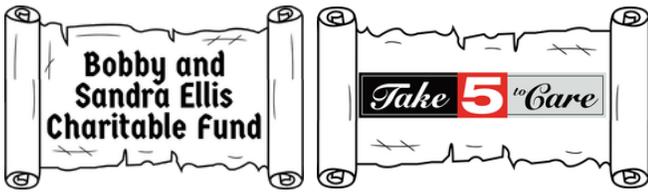


## Kindness Heroes



### Storybook Sponsors

### Round Table Sponsors



### Regal Unicorn Sponsors

### Playful Dragon Sponsors



# 2025 Proclamations

<p><b>Governor Joe Lombardo</b></p>	<p><b>Boulder City</b></p>	<p><b>Caliente</b></p>	<p><b>Carlin</b></p>	<p><b>Carson City</b></p>	<p><b>Elko</b></p>	<p><b>Fallon</b></p>
<p><b>Fernley</b></p>	<p><b>Henderson</b></p>	<p><b>Las Vegas</b></p>	<p><b>Mesquite</b></p>	<p><b>Reno</b></p>	<p><b>Sparks</b></p>	<p><b>Yerington</b></p>

25 Schools received bullying prevention materials

Over 525 messages of kindness collected

Over 6,000 bullying prevention materials delivered

## #SafeAllies

# #SAFE ALLIES

### Podcast Episodes

- Know Your Rights
- Parent Involvement in Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Bystander to Upstander
- Introduction

The #SafeAllies program is a collaboration of Nevada PEP and Youth MOVE Nevada that reaches children and youth with digital resources and youth designed activities. #SafeAllies offers training workshops on the laws and processes for reporting a bullying incident and navigating the education system. It also provides individual assistance and support groups for families focused on the importance of aftercare to develop positive strategies and safe allies.

Our State has several laws in place to address bullying of Nevada's students, yet more needs be done to educate the community around the signs of bullying. More needs to be done to educate children, youth and their families about their rights during the investigation process; and more needs to be done to support children and youth in mental health recovery from a bullying incident.



## Families SHARE



In keeping with our mission to increase opportunities for children with disabilities through education, encouragement, and empowerment activities, we created Families SHARE (Solutions for Hope and Resiliency Exchange). This interactive program provides tools for families and youth to reduce stress, stay hopeful, and build resilience.

- 🏠 Reduce Stress
- 🏠 Stay Hopeful
- 🏠 Share With Others
- 🏠 Build Resilience

Join the Families SHARE page on Facebook!



# Children's Mental Health Action Week

ACCEPT.

ADVOCATE.

ACT.

In recognition of Children's Mental Health Action Week, Nevada PEP, in partnership with Youth MOVE, created two age-appropriate activity books for children and youth. More than 8,000 activity books were disseminated to over 25 schools across Nevada, reaching students in diverse communities statewide. These activity books included engaging, developmentally appropriate activities designed to help children learn about mental health, build awareness, and strengthen social-emotional skills.

Our deepest appreciation to our high-level sponsors for their continued support of Children's Mental Health!



## Children's Mental Health Proclamations



Nevada Governor  
Joe Lombardo



Boulder City



Caliente



Carson City



Elko



Fallon



Fernley



Henderson



Lovelock



Las Vegas



Mesquite



Reno



Sparks



Wells



Winnemucca



West Wendover



Yerington

## PEP Talks



PEP Talks is a podcast where we discuss issues related to Nevada PEP's mission to increase the opportunities for home, community, and school success for children with disabilities. Featuring voices from our staff and guest interviews, this is a wonderful way to get information while on the go!

### Podcast Episodes

- Challenging Behavior
- Special Education Evaluations
- Milestones with Speed Bumps
- Back to School
- Parent Voice in the IEP
- Transition to Adulthood
- Improving Your Child's Reading
- Advocacy

# Support Letter

## Miss Nevada

Dear Nevada PEP Family,

It is truly an honor to be invited to share a message in the *Hand in Hand, Together We Can Appreciation Program* Yearbook. Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents has long been a cornerstone of support, advocacy, and empowerment for families across our state, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to stand alongside an organization that leads with compassion, education, and unwavering belief in every child's potential.

Through its commitment to uplifting families and amplifying the voices of children with disabilities, Nevada PEP continues to create meaningful change within our communities. Programs such as *Hand in Hand, Together We Can* serve as a powerful reminder that progress happens when we recognize those who give their time, heart, and energy to ensuring children are seen, supported, and celebrated for who they are.

I had the privilege of working alongside Nevada PEP during the *I Care, We Care – Join the Quest for Kindness* campaign, where kindness, inclusion, and community connection were at the forefront. Witnessing the impact of this initiative firsthand reaffirmed what makes Nevada PEP so special: a genuine dedication to empowering families and fostering environments where children feel safe, valued, and capable of thriving.

As an occupational therapist and as Miss Nevada 2025, my advocacy centers on advancing opportunities for the disability community and promoting dignity, belonging, and self-confidence for individuals of all abilities. Nevada PEP's mission aligns seamlessly with these values, and I am continually inspired by the organization's ability to bring people together in support of children and families navigating unique journeys.

Thank you to the dedicated staff, volunteers, supporters, and families who make Nevada PEP's work possible. Your commitment ensures that no family walks alone and that every child is given the opportunity to succeed. I am proud to support Nevada PEP and look forward to continuing this important work together.

With sincere gratitude and admiration,



Dr. Abigail Bachman, OTD  
Miss Nevada 2025



# Support Letter



Dear Friends,

I am honored to congratulate Nevada PEP on completing another year of advocacy in our communities. *2 Plus You Nevada* has twice now had the pleasure of welcoming Nevada PEP to share their mission on-air; each time, our team has been blown away by the amity, initiative, and strength exemplified by these everyday community leaders.

Particularly as our state grows, it is of the utmost importance that our youth—whether newcomers or native Nevadans—lead lives guided by compassion and hospitality. In spite of the challenges that come with caring for a special needs child, Nevada PEP helps ensure that families, educators, and communities have the tools they need to help these kids to not just survive, but thrive.

Across Nevada PEP's many exciting initiatives, one message shines through: the fact that young people's voices matter, regardless of the barriers they face. Volunteers with Nevada PEP continue to remind us all that it does not take extraordinary circumstances to be a leader or a helper—all it takes is reaching out a gentle hand. Regardless of physical or mental ability, mental health status, or cultural origin, togetherness, patience, and encouragement can propel us all to new heights.

I wish the youth and parents of Nevada PEP nothing but continued success in spreading kindness, empowerment, and accessibility. Many congratulations to this year's *Hand in Hand, Together We Can* honorees—may your kindness shine on, and may your impact be felt for years to come!

With love and gratitude,

Sophia Harrigan

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sh'.

Production Coordinator for *2 Plus You Nevada*



KTVN

# Hand in Hand Together We Can Stories!

**A collection of stories  
honoring those who make a  
difference for children and  
their families!**



The “Hand In Hand, Together We Can” appreciation program was designed to proudly recognize and honor special people who have made a positive difference in the lives of children with special needs. The program began in October 2002, when Hand In Hand forms were mailed to thousands of parents and professionals across the state. With each special story sent to us, Nevada PEP recognized the Hand in Hand recipient with a beautiful certificate and an original Hand in Hand lapel pin to display as a proud supporter of Nevada’s community of people with disabilities.

These inspiring and uplifting stories are celebrations of wonderful teachers, doctors, therapists, family members, and many others who have worked with children with disabilities who have gone above and beyond to make a positive difference in a child’s life. Touching and original, these stories have shown the true commitment that many people have for our children in Nevada.

At the end of each year the stories are recognized in our annual Hand in Hand, Together We Can yearbook. Each nominator and honoree receives a yearbook that includes their special story.

Nevada PEP is proud to be the only organization in the state to recognize and honor these very special Hand In Hand recipients and will continue to do so throughout the years to come.

Nevada PEP always welcomes new individuals or businesses to be a part of this amazing program by becoming a Hand in Hand Sponsor. For additional information contact Nevada PEP. Hand in Hand, Together We Can!



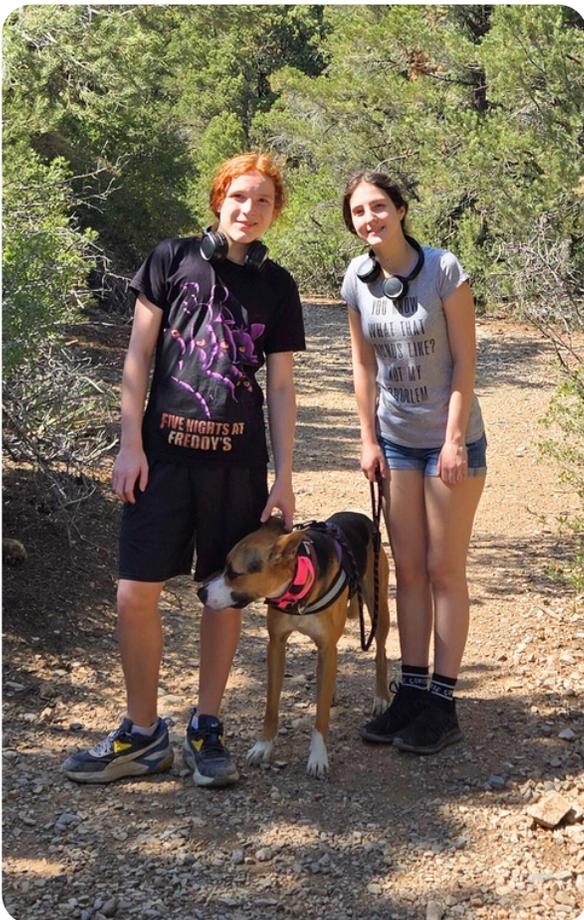
# Hand In Hand Stories

**Abbey Roman Zaragoza, LCSW**  
Therapist/Terapeuta

I'm a proud mom of a child with emotional health issues. We were referred for a therapist, and from the first moment we met her, I could feel her kindness and patience shining through. She has been such a support for my son, always guiding him with care and understanding. Her gentle nature and the way she listens have made a real difference in his life. I'm deeply grateful to her. Her smile brightens our days and lifts our spirits, reminding us how powerful compassion can be.

Soy una mamá orgullosa de un niño con problemas de salud emocional. Nos refirieron a un terapeuta y, desde el primer momento que la conocimos, pude sentir su amabilidad y paciencia brillando. Ha sido un gran apoyo para mi hijo, siempre guiándolo con cuidado y comprensión. Su naturaleza amable y la forma en que escucha han marcado una verdadera diferencia en su vida. Estoy profundamente agradecida con ella. Su sonrisa ilumina nuestros días y eleva nuestro ánimo, recordándonos cuán poderosa puede ser la compasión.

**Bertha Salinas**  
Mom/Madre



**Alyssa Plassman**  
Service Provider

Alyssa has worked with two of my children providing speech therapy. She is not only amazing with my children, but she has also shown me so much patience and compassion as their mom. She has made life so much easier for all of us. She has provided us with resources that help us with daily activities, excel with life skills and future goals. We cannot thank her enough. Thanks so much Alyssa. We will miss your monthly visits.

**May Xiong**  
Mom



# Hand In Hand Stories



**Amalia Perez**  
Concuña/Sister-in-law

Amalia es mi concuña. Desde que llegamos a este país, nos abrió las puertas de su corazón y siempre está cuando mi familia la necesita. Es muy importante para nosotros. Ella es una excelente amiga para mí y una tía presente con mi hija.

Amalia is my sister-in-law. Since we arrived in this country, she has opened her heart to us and is always there when my family needs her. She is very important to us. She is an excellent friend to me and a supportive aunt to my daughter.

**Diana Puga**  
Mom/Madre

**Amber Vargas**  
Teacher/Maestra

I am grateful to this teacher for her show of patience, dedication and the great effort which she has put into my daughter's education. Ms. Vargas is responsible for my daughter's significant progress. She enjoyed learning this year because of her teacher's excellent teaching skills. God Bless.

Agradezco a esta profesora su muestra de paciencia, dedicación y el gran esfuerzo que ha puesto en la educación de mi hija. La Sra. Vargas es responsable del progreso significativo de mi hija. Disfrutó aprendiendo este año debido a las excelentes habilidades de enseñanza de su maestra. Dios los bendiga.

**Vania Oronoz**  
Mom/Madre



# Hand In Hand Stories

**Dr. Amy Hitzeman**  
Physician

Dr. Amy Hitzeman deserves to be recognized for her kindness and understanding, her patience and sense of humor during appointments with my son. I usually get a bit anxious about attending medical appointments and I thank her for making our appointments as pleasant as possible. Dr. Hitzeman makes my son feel comfortable being himself, and everything is always just fine.

**Nicole Rose**  
Mom



**Arely Bazonis**  
School Clerk

Hola mi nombre es Vania y soy la orgullosa madre de una niña son ADHD, estoy muy agradecida con Arely y quiero destacar que absolutamente todo el tiempo que he ido a la escuela con una pregunta o preocupacion, ella siempre de muy buen humor y con una sonrisa en su cara me ayuda o me orienta, es muy agradable contar con una persona como ella en la escuela, muchas gracias por apoyarme y apoyar a mi hija! Nunca cambies!

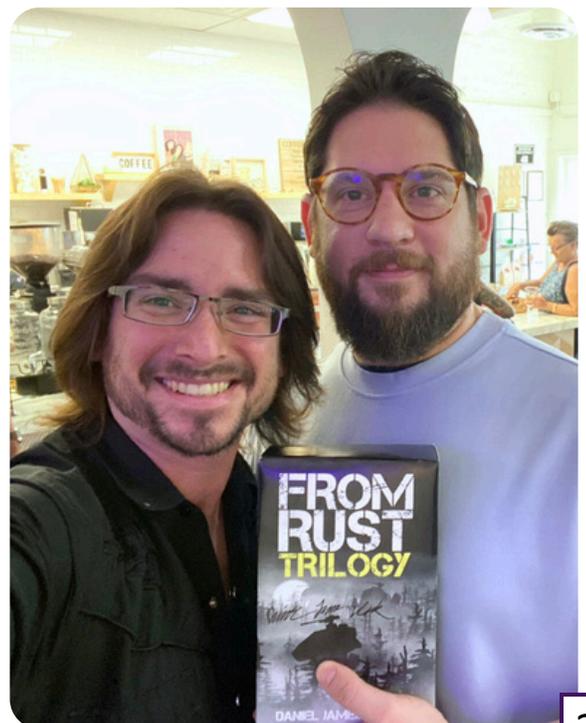
Hello, my name is Vania and I am the proud mother of a girl with ADHD. I am very grateful to Arely and I want to highlight that every single time I have gone to the school with a question or concern, she always helps or guides me with a great attitude and a smile on her face. It is very nice to have someone like her at the school. Thank you so much for supporting me and my daughter! Never change!

**Vania Oronoz**  
Madre/Mom

**Brenna Hardtner**  
Youth MOVE Facilitator

I am the Director of Challenger Little League of Southern Nevada, and I would like to nominate Brenna Hardtner for this Hand in Hand award. Brenna is the Youth MOVE Team Facilitator at Nevada PEP. She assisted our end of season Awards Ceremony by going beyond her regular duties and making balloon centerpieces for each table this year. She has assisted us in the past with serving pizza and slicing watermelon at our banquet. Brenna is very creative and hardworking. She knows the importance of volunteering and deserves this award.

**Tom Taycher**  
Challenger Little League Director



# Hand In Hand Stories



**Christopher Schlagheck**  
Teacher

Having a child in Special Education has many concerns and challenges. Mr. Schlagheck is a teacher that is truly an amazing educator that shows compassion and empathy towards his Special Ed. students. He takes the time to figure out what his students need and how to communicate with them for the best outcome and progress. Thinking outside the box to meet his students where they are and help them thrive. His patience and dedication are very much appreciated. CCSD is very fortunate to have him as an educator. His approach and teaching methods are commendable and appreciated.

I would like to extend my gratitude to him for being part of my daughter's big and small successes and progress. As she transitions to high school, we will always remember you as someone that has been very impactful on her journey. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.

**Linda Hua**  
Parent

**Ms. Claire Tredwell, Ph.D.**  
UNLV Preschool Program Director

I am so thankful to you, Ms. Claire, and your inclusive vision for the preschool. Giving persons with disabilities an opportunity to contribute their talents makes the world a better place. Your kindness and caring attitude toward families will never be forgotten. Thank you, Ms. Claire for giving me a chance to learn and be part of this special preschool staff. I will miss seeing the love that you show to each child that enters the preschool doors. Thank you for your dedication to this work and I wish you an enjoyable retirement.

**Kayla Kincaid**  
Teacher's Assistant



# Hand In Hand Stories

**Miss Crystal Buegeler**  
**Maestra/Teacher**

**Mi nombre es Maria Guadalupe Real, soy madre de una hermosa niña con ansiedad. Mi hija cuenta con un IEP en la escuela, estoy muy agradecida con Miss. Buegeler por ser una maestra tan compasiva y paciente con mi hija. Ella ha tenido la delicadeza de ayudarle hasta en actividades de la vida cotidiana, enseñarle a abrir su bote de leche, incluso se ha tomado el tiempo de cuando mi hija se siente frustrada al empezar un trabajo en la clase. La maestra la ayuda a hacer ejercicios de respiración, calmarse y volver a comenzar. Esto realmente habla mucho del gran corazón que tiene ella como maestra. Esta es una manera de expresar mi gran gratitud hacia ella, se merece esto y más.**

**My name is Maria Guadalupe Real, and I am the mother of a beautiful little girl with anxiety. My daughter has an IEP at school, and I am very grateful to Miss Buegeler for being such a compassionate and patient teacher with my daughter. She has been kind enough to help her even with daily life activities, teaching her how to open her milk carton, and she has even taken the time to help when my daughter feels frustrated starting a class assignment. The teacher helps her do breathing exercises, calm down, and start again. This really speaks to the great heart she has as a teacher. This is a way to express my deep gratitude towards her; she deserves this and more.**

**Maria Guadalupe Real**  
**Madre/Mom**

**Daniel Reece**  
**Registered Behavior Technician**

**Daniel is the most professional and attentive RBT I have worked with. He is incredibly patient and communicative with parents and families. His hard work does not go unnoticed.**

**Endya Brooks, BCBA**



# Hand In Hand Stories

Dezarae Hernandez  
Maestra/Teacher

Mi nombre es Gina Talero, soy la orgullosa madre de un hermoso niño con autismo. A pesar del poco tiempo compartido y que mi hijo estuvo en la escuela Variety School, le agradecemos su empatía con él, su buena actitud, su buen recibimiento con él y nosotros como familia, ya que veníamos de un largo y difícil proceso en su escuela anterior. En este poco tiempo siempre mantuvo una buena comunicación con nosotros y nos manifestó que deseaba que mi hijo estuviera en una mejor escuela que se adaptara a su discapacidad y siempre veló con su equipo por su seguridad. Realizó en corto tiempo con su equipo el estudio y trámites para agilizar el cambio de escuela adecuado para mi hijo. Destacamos en todo tiempo su interés, amabilidad y compromiso con mi hijo.



My name is Gina Talero, and I am the proud mother of a beautiful child with autism. Despite the short time we spent together while my child attended Variety School, we are grateful for your empathy towards him, your good attitude, and the warm welcome you gave both him and our family, as we were coming from a long and difficult process at his previous school. During this short time, you always maintained good communication with us and expressed that you wanted my child to be in a better school that would adapt to his disability, always ensuring his safety along with your team. In a short time, you and your team completed the evaluation and procedures needed to facilitate my child's appropriate school transfer. We highlight at all times your interest, kindness, and commitment to my child.

Gina Talero  
Madre/Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Endya Brooks**  
Service Provider

Endya touched our Family's Hearts when she advocated for our daughter's IEP meeting. The way she stood up for our child made us realize that there are people who care about children with special needs. She is not only the best BCBA, but she also really knows what is best for each child. We cannot thank her enough. She truly is an angel.

**May Xiong**  
Mom



**Erica Porter**  
Caregiver

Erica has been a valuable, supportive, and resourceful caregiver, mentor, and friend to my daughter on some very difficult days. Erica is able to connect with her week after week, making a connection that few can make. She's able to build confidence and conversation. When things get tough, she thinks of Erica often and that speaks volumes for Erica's character and relationship with my daughter. The connection she's built, and her resourceful activities are priceless. I'm so grateful.

**Raeann Tobin**  
Mom

**Gloria Ines Meza**  
Grandmother/Abuela

Me gustaría nominar a Gloria Inés Meza, la abuela materna de mi hijo, por su apoyo inquebrantable desde el primer día en el cuidado nutricional de mi hijo. Estoy realmente agradecido por su generosidad y amabilidad. Gracias desde el fondo de mi corazón, y que siempre seamos bendecidos con personas como tú.

I would like to nominate Gloria Ines Meza, my son's maternal grandmother, for her unwavering support from day one of my son's nutritional care. I am truly grateful for her generosity and kindness. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, and may we always be blessed with people like you.

**Jenny Paola Velandia Meza**  
Mom/Madre

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Itzia Aparicio**  
Therapist

We would like to nominate my daughter 's amazing Academic Therapist, Itzy! We are so grateful for her compassion, knowledge, expertise and experience working with children with Dyscalculia. She is a Certified Academic Language Therapist and Structured Literacy and Dyslexia Specialist. She approaches her work with our daughter in a uniquely compassionate and highly effective way. Emma has done years of intensive intervention tutoring with minor impact on reading and math. My daughter's life was changed for the better when we were referred to Itzy. She has grown to an incredible 4 grade levels in math in just 8 months and is now approaching grade level. Her dedication to working so hard together is incredibly inspiring! My daughter finally believes in her abilities to make meaningful progress in math now that she has the right person to teach her. The impact Itzy has made on her lifelong term, to help her learn, understand her learning difficulties and improve her self-confidence is remarkable. Additionally, Itzy is a powerful expert and advocate for the IEP process. She is helping to combat the overwhelming lack of knowledge about Dyscalculia in the educational space, to ensure IEP goals are appropriate for these learning difficulties. Itzy deserves all the recognition in the world for her meaningful work with my daughter and hundreds of children like her. Itzy has dedicated her life's work for over 20 years to being a teacher, advocate, and beacon of hope in what is commonly an incredibly challenging part of life for families of children with learning differences. Not only does she do the work with incredible efficiency, but she does it with so much heart and grace. We are so grateful for Itzy and her work with my daughter!!!

**Elizabeth Cloudman**  
Mom

**Jaime Martin**  
Service Provider

Jaime has provided my family with numerous agency recommendations. These resources have made a positive impact on my children. She has helped us emotionally and in so many other ways. We cannot thank her enough for all the love and care she has shown us. She is truly good at her job. I would like to recognize this amazing individual for all her help and support.

**May Xiong**  
Mom



# Hand In Hand Stories

**Jasmine Heim, RBT  
Service Provider**

Jasmine Heim has changed the lives of every client she has worked with. She is infinitely understanding, kind, and patient. She goes the extra mile to get to know her clients on a deeper level. Parents of clients that she has only subbed with temporarily request her because of her commitment to quality care. She is a one-of-a-kind RBT and anyone would be incredibly lucky to work with her.

**Endya Brooks, BCBA  
Service Provider**



**Jasmine White  
Daughter**

Jasmine is an awesome daughter, mother, aunt, and sister. She goes out of her way to make sure her daughter is well taken care of. She is always willing to help her nieces and nephews with everything. She is a hardworking mother. She continues to shine bright like a star since the loss of her younger sister. I am enormously proud of the woman Jasmine has become. She also likes to shop like her mother lol. Most of all, Jasmine is a caring and loving, sweet mother. Thank-you Jasmine for being the woman you are and have become.

**Stephanie Brown  
Mother**



**Jennifer Steele  
Assistant Principal**

I honestly do not know where to begin. You have made such a tremendous impact on my son's life and on mine. I get choked up just thinking of the many times I have called you for support. You have helped us with resources and items for the children and supported us through our struggles with all the changes life has brought our way. You have shown our family so much love and support since transferring to Somerset. Your passion for helping our son has been absolutely mind-blowing. We appreciate your help and your words of encouragement. We take this moment to express our deepest gratitude.

**Mary Trapp  
Mom**

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Jerrad Clancy**  
Summer Camp Counselor

We want to extend our sincere gratitude to Jerrad and his team for their hard work during summer camp. This was our first year at summer camp and our daughter had a blast. All of the camp counselors were so friendly, outgoing, energetic, and compassionate. Special needs parents can feel a little nervous during any new transition. We worry about our child being able to adapt and adjust in a short amount of time.

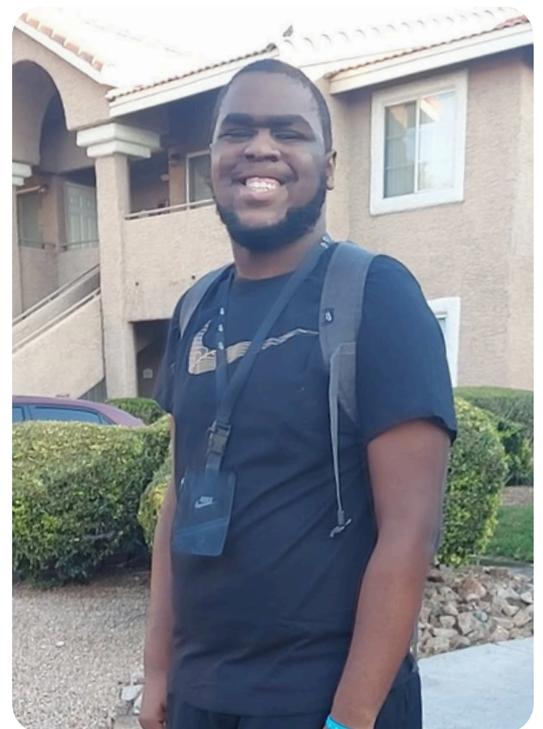
The hard work and effort put into the camp environment and daily activities definitely shows. Daily pick-ups were followed by happy, subtle stims on a quiet ride home and that's always a win. It reaffirms our faith in humanity to meet wonderful, heartwarming people who embrace our kids. The staff were amazing role models for junior camp volunteers as they followed by example. Thanks for making summer memories with our kids.

**Linda Hua**  
Mom

**Jordan Stevens**  
Teacher

Jordan is an amazing teacher. While searching for a new position she not only relocated several miles from home and her original school, but also changed grade levels so she could take her sister in 3rd grade, diagnosed with 3 anxiety disorders and fearful of entering the classroom while also grieving the loss of her father. Jordan stepped up to ensure her sister was safe. She went above and beyond to support her needs. So grateful for the love and care she showed. The new class was so accepting of both Jordan and her sister during their time together at the new school.

**Raeann Tobin**  
Mom



**Joshua Jacks**  
Teacher

This is the first year our son is excited to go to school. Mr. Jacks makes learning fun. His ability to include all the students and make them all part of the group has been the spark that makes a much-needed positive difference.

**Jen Burkett**  
Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Juan Guerrero**  
Grandfather/Abuelo

Me gustaría nominar a Juan Guerrero, el esposo de la abuela materna de mi hijo, quien, con el tiempo, se convirtió en una figura paterna para mi hijo. Mi hijo lo llama cariñosamente "papá". Desde el principio, Juanito siempre ha estado ahí para él, cuidándolo como un bebé prematuro, brindándole calor, vistiéndolo y alimentándolo, e incluso llevándolo a la escuela. Sin lugar a dudas, Juanito es el mejor amigo de mi hijo y nuestra fuente inquebrantable de apoyo para nuestra familia. Su generosidad, amor y respeto han dejado una impresión duradera tanto en mi hijo como en todos nosotros, grabada para siempre en nuestros corazones.

I'd like to nominate Juan Guerrero, the husband of my son's maternal grandmother, who, over time, became a father figure to my son. My son affectionately calls him "daddy." From the beginning, Juanito has always been there for him — taking care of him as a premature baby, providing warmth, dressing and feeding him, and even taking him to school. Without a doubt, Juanito is my son's best friend and our unwavering source of support for our family. His generosity, love, and respect have made a lasting impression on both my son and all of us, forever etched in our hearts.

Jenny Paola Velandia Meza  
Mom/Madre

**Karen Payan**  
Service Provider

Karen's care for not only her client but all of our kids is unmatched. She is attentive, sweet, and loving. She speaks to clients and families with such kindness and support. She is a rockstar!

Endya Brooks, BCBA  
Service Provider

**Kathryn McKay**  
Advocate

Kathryn has spent hours working with us during meetings. She has supported us and advised us of our rights. She does her work well and sympathizes with our situation. We would be at a great loss without Kathryn and Nevada PEP. We thank you Kathryn. You are a shining star.

May Xiong  
Mom

**Kristina Brooks**  
Teacher

I nominate my son's third grade teacher, Ms. Brooks. She gives all her students the love, understanding, and tools they need to succeed in school and in life. She always goes above and beyond for our son and all the other students. She makes sure they are getting the very best possible education. We appreciate her dedication and honor her with this award.

Esperanza Casillas  
Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Laura Velandia**  
Aunty/Tia

Me gustaría nominar a Laura Velandia. La tía Laura ha estado cerca de mi hijo durante toda su vida y ha apoyado su crianza. Ella aboga y protege diariamente por la felicidad de mi hijo a pesar de la adversidad en su vida. Quiero agradecerle por apoyar a mi hijo y a mi familia.

I would like to nominate Laura Velandia. Aunt Laura has been around my son throughout his life and has supported his upbringing. She advocates and protects daily for my son's happiness despite adversity in her life. I want to thank her for supporting my son and my family.

**Jenny Paola Velandia Meza**  
Mom/Madre



**Laurie Soriano**  
PEP Family Specialist

Laurie has been incredibly supportive from the very beginning and continues to be a true pillar for us. During my son's diagnosis and school journey, I often felt completely alone like no one wanted to listen or acknowledge that we needed help. But Laurie changed that. She gave us a voice in my son's schooling and advocated alongside us. She has connected me with resources, offered guidance, and most importantly been a caring and open ear when I needed it most. Her constant reassurance that I am not alone has meant everything to me. Laurie's kindness, compassion, and willingness to check in on us have made a world of difference. I am deeply grateful for her presence on our journey.

**Dominique Dial**  
Parent

**Dr. Lenette Reece**  
School Principal

My name is Vania Oronoz, and I am the proud mother of a beautiful girl with a learning disability and ADHD. Today I want to nominate Dr. Lenette Reece, the principal of the school my daughter attends. It is admirable when someone is so committed to their school. She is always participating in school activities, always looking for help for the children. I value her time and dedication to our children. This is a token of appreciation for a great human being who truly loves what she does. Thank you for always being there for our children and for us parents. Our world would be different if there were more people like you.

**Vania Oronoz**  
Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Lorna Navarro**  
Therapist/Terapeuta

**Hola mi nombre es Maria Guadalupe Real, soy la orgullosa madre de una niña con ansiedad, a traves de los años mi hija ha experimentado diferentes desafios tanto en casa como en la escuela, hemos buscado ayuda y afortunadamente llegamos a esta terapeuta, ella ha sido muy paciente con nuestra hija y con nosotros, nos pone mucha atencion, se toma el tiempo de escucharnos y nos da la confianza de platicarle todo, estamos muy agradecidos con ella, por que hemos visto mucha mejoria en nuestra hija, que beneficia a nuestra familia.**

**Hello, my name is Maria Guadalupe Real. I am the proud mother of a girl with anxiety. Over the years, my daughter has faced different challenges both at home and at school. We have sought help, and fortunately, we found this therapist. She has been very patient with our daughter and with us, pays us a lot of attention, takes the time to listen to us, and gives us the confidence to tell her everything. We are very grateful to her because we have seen a lot of improvement in our daughter, which benefits our family.**

**Maria Guadalupe Real**  
Mom/Madre

**Lupe Alvarado**  
Nevada PEP

**It is always good to see Lupe in the front office when I volunteer at Nevada PEP. We were just recently introduced, and she already knows me by my name. She is always very helpful. She walks me back to sign in for my morning projects after my long bus ride into PEP. I am very happy to recognize her for this award.**

**Juan Ramirez**  
Volunteer



**Mrs. Luz Singh**  
Special Education Teacher

**Mrs. Luz has been a vital person in my son's progress. From the first day she met him, she saw the potential he possesses. Not only is she a major advocate for all children, but she has also taken personal steps to improve her knowledge and understanding of children with special needs. While being a full-time teacher, she has obtained her master's degree, and also volunteers her time to multiple after-school activities, including Folklórico Yolotzin which my son has been an active dancer in. I've tried to nominate her with the school district, so she gets recognition. So, I would like to honor her in any way I can.**

**Erin Watson-Black**  
Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Maria Elena Garcia**  
**Great Grandmother/Gran Abuela**

**Hola me encantaria nominar a esta gran abuela, he tenido el gusto de conocer su historia y estoy muy orgullosa de ella, con mucho amor ha puesto todo su empeño en el cuidado y la educacion de su nieta que tiene autismo, he visto de cerca su gran paciencia, tiempo y dedicacion que ella pone en su dia a dia, su nieta la ama con todo su corazon, a pesar de las adversidades de la vida no se deja vencer, participa cada semana en los grupos de apoyo de Nevada PEP con el proposito de educarse y conocer los derechos de su nieta, para que ella viva una vida plena y feliz. Su corazon y su bondad la hacen una abuela unica. Bendiciones.**

**Hello, I would love to nominate this amazing grandmother. I have had the pleasure of learning about her story and I am very proud of her. With so much love, she has devoted all her effort to the care and education of her granddaughter who has autism. I have seen up close her great patience, time, and dedication that she puts into her daily life. Her granddaughter loves her with all her heart. Despite life's adversities, she does not let herself be defeated. She participates every week in Nevada PEP support groups with the purpose of educating herself and learning about her granddaughter's rights, so that she can live a full and happy life. Her heart and kindness make her a unique grandmother. Blessings.**

**Vania Oronoz**  
**Madre/Mom**

**Maria Jones**  
**Resource Teacher**

**Maria Jones marked our family's life in the most positive way. She goes above and beyond making sure that children's emotional and academic goals are met. I watched my child grow and saw how much she cared and I will never forget how much of an amazing human being she is!**

**Diana Chica**  
**Mom**

**Mater Academy**  
**School Staff**

**I would like to nominate Mater Academy because of the support they gave my daughter. When she started middle school, it was a very hard transition for her. They helped my daughter a lot and helped her do better in school. She has adapted very well, and her behavior has gotten better since attending there. Each teacher/employee at the school has been a huge part of my daughter's development and growth.**

**Luz Juarez**  
**Mom**

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Dr. Matthew Parra**  
Doctor/Médico

Quiero expresar mi gran agradecimiento para este gran ser humano y doctor. Él siempre tiene un gesto amoroso para sus pacientes, este mundo debería de tener más doctores como él.

I want to express my huge gratitude for this amazing human being and doctor. He always has a loving gesture for his patients, and the world should have more doctors like him.

**Bertha Salinas**  
Madre/Mother

**Mrs. Nilson**  
Teacher

My daughter had a traumatic kindergarten experience filled with bullying, instability, and struggles with reading, writing, and recognizing letters, numbers, and colors. She hated school and was emotionally withdrawn. Then we found Mrs. Nilson—a dedicated teacher who has been a breath of fresh air. She works one-on-one with my daughter providing emotional and academic support, reteaching her foundational skills. Thanks to her, my daughter can now read, write sentences, and recognize letters, numbers, and sounds. More importantly, she loves school again and feels safe and confident. Mrs. Nilson treats every student with care, recognizing their struggles and taking extra time to guide them. She has not only helped my daughter academically but also socially and emotionally. She has truly changed our lives, and I wish more teachers had her love and compassion for both children and education.

**Amanda Stephens**  
Mom

**Michael Cordova**  
Caesars Palace

I am nominating Michael Cordova for Nevada PEP's prestigious Hand in Hand Award. Michael is employed at Caesars Palace banquets and conventions. He has generously donated linens for Challenger Little League end of season banquets for the past twenty years. Michael always asks that our thank-you plaque be addressed to either supervisor or director upon return of the linens. Michael needs to be personally recognized for his unselfishness and continued support of Challenger Little League baseball. Michael, on behalf of Challenger Little League: Please accept the recognition you so richly deserve.

**Tom Taycher**  
Director Challenger Little League

## Reaching for the Sky ABA Team

Reaching for the Sky ABA team has listened to my concerns about my child from the very beginning. They helped me realize that there truly is light at the end of the tunnel. My son has overcome and mastered so many challenging behaviors with their guidance. The growth I've witnessed from then to now is incredible. They've given my son real tools to navigate everyday life, and I can finally see him developing into the amazing young boy he truly is. I am deeply grateful to have found such a supportive establishment during a time when my son and I felt so alone in the process. Thank you for believing in him and in us.

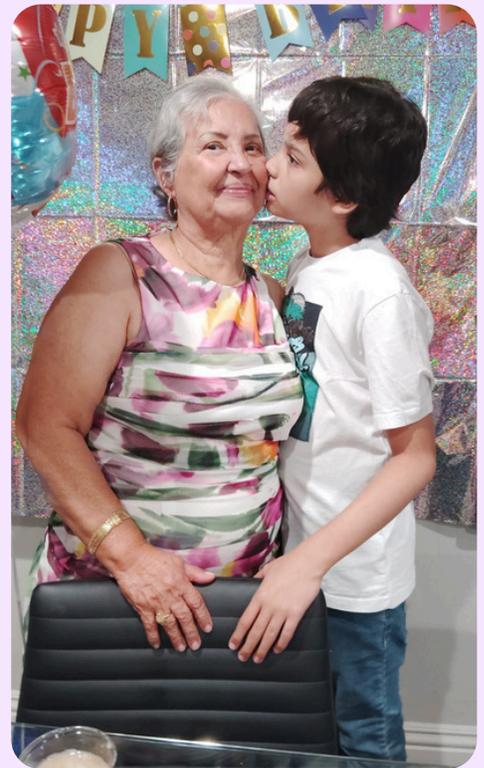
**Dominique & Rory Dial**  
Parents

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Rosa Oates**

**Tía Abuela/Great Aunt**

**Mi nombre es Gina Talero, soy la orgullosa madre de un hermoso niño con autismo. Quiero nominar a la tía abuela de mi hijo y tía paterna mía. Desde que llegamos a Las Vegas en septiembre de 2024, ha sido un apoyo fundamental para mi hijo y para nosotros, sus padres, con su amor, paciencia y dedicación. Siempre muy pendiente de él y nos ha acompañado a diferentes citas médicas de Pediatría infantil y Medicina General para mi hijo, siempre con su valioso aporte, busca su disponibilidad de tiempo y nos ayuda para trasladarnos en su vehículo, llegando puntualmente a las citas asignadas. También ha estado dispuesta a llevar o a recoger a mi hijo de su escuela anterior cuando nos llamaban a buscarlo. Nuestra tía Rosa, como educadora, siempre ha velado porque mi hijo cuente con sus elementos escolares y juguetes para trabajar en casa y que sean de gran ayuda didáctica para él; investiga y siempre nos da buenos consejos y recomendaciones. Es amorosa, consentidora y muy familiar. La amamos un montón.**



**My name is Gina Talero, I am the mother of a beautiful child with autism. I want to nominate the great-aunt of my son, who is also my paternal aunt. Since we arrived in Las Vegas in September 2024, she has been a fundamental support for my son and for us, his parents, with her love, patience, and dedication. She is always very attentive to him and has accompanied us to various pediatric and general medicine appointments for my son, always making valuable contributions, checking her availability, and helping us get there in her vehicle, arriving on time for scheduled appointments. She has also been willing to pick up or drop off my son at his previous school, whenever we were called to get him. Our Aunt Rosa, as an educator, has always ensured that my son has his school supplies and toys to work with at home and that they are very helpful educationally for him. She researches and always gives us good advice and recommendations. She is loving, indulgent, and very familiar. We love her a lot.**

**Gina Talero  
Madre/Mom**

**Scott DeSelle**

**Health Care Provider**

**We have known Scott for 14 years. He has always been there for my son and our family. Scott was there for us day and night and anytime I needed him for help. My family has been in crisis many times, and he has never turned his back on our family. Scott is a one in a million type of person that rarely comes along in this world.**

**Danette Reyes  
Mom**



# Hand In Hand Stories

**Shawna Clark**  
Teacher

Ms. Clark is so patient with our son. He has a severe disability and can get quite physical at times. She says she enjoys his hugs even though he squeezes pretty tight. She adapted her classroom to accommodate our son and capitalize on his abilities. She compliments his smile and tells us how happy he is (when he is not hungry). She seems to genuinely love him endlessly. She is an amazing teacher and deserves all the praise in the world for how much she loves all the children she teaches.

**Mirah Robles**  
Mom

**Sofia Talero**  
Sister/Hermana

Me gustaría nominar a Sofía Talero, la hermana mayor de mi hijo. Sofía ha sido una fuente constante de cuidado, alegría y amor incondicional para él. Estoy profundamente agradecido por su continuo apoyo, paciencia y afecto. Sofía, gracias por tu inquebrantable amor y dedicación.

I would like to nominate Sofia Talero, my son's older sister. Sofia has been a constant source of care, joy, and unconditional love for him. I am deeply grateful for her ongoing support, patience, and affection. Sofia, thank you for your unwavering love and dedication.

**Jenny Paola Velandia Meza**  
Madre/Mom



## Hand In Hand Stories

**Susana DeNeef**  
**Family Peer Support Specialist**

I wanted to take a moment to sincerely thank you for all your support during the IEP process for my son. Your dedication truly made a difference. You not only helped me navigate the details and provided invaluable advice, but you also made sure I felt supported and informed every step of the way. Even at the last minute, when someone else had to cancel, you stepped in without hesitation and ensured everything ran smoothly. We truly need more people like you to support mothers like us who are navigating the challenges of the IEP process. Your kindness and commitment have made a lasting impact, and I wanted to make sure you knew just how much it means to me. With heartfelt gratitude,

**Meseret Asefa**  
**Mother**



**Theresa Simpson**  
**Teacher**

Theresa is my daughter's special education teacher, and she is amazing with kids. She goes above and beyond for all the kids. She has so much empathy and is awesome with my daughter. We love her and my daughter has improved a lot. I wish there were more teachers like her.

**Eunice Castro**  
**Mom**

**Mrs. Trimble**  
**Teacher**

Mrs. Trimble is a Pre-K teacher at Esther Bennett Elementary School. Mrs. Trimble for the past 30 years has helped children with disabilities overcome challenges with the most unique and kindest heart. She has patience and thinks of her little students all hours of the day, thinking of ways to help and make the children smile while learning. Mrs. Trimble is the most amazing teacher my family has been blessed with. Thank you, Mrs. Trimble, for giving my children the foundation to be successful.

**JoNella Nicholson**  
**Mom**

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Ty-Renai Davis**  
Social Worker

Ty-Renai Davis is a young professional social worker in Las Vegas, Nevada. She currently works with youth in mental health crisis and continuation at Seven Hills Hospital and Amplus Academy High School campus. She teaches social emotional classes, creates programs to encourage a positive school environment, and she coaches basketball. She also provides counseling to students. She continues to be a constant source of encouragement to all students who stop by her office and her positive intervention has been nothing short of lifesaving for some. Personally, she has accomplished so much, fostering a total of six children over the past three years, most of which were born with significant disabilities. She is a standout individual whom we appreciate.

**Yunita Walker Ross**  
Mom

**Vania Oronoz**  
Family Peer Support Specialist

Mi nombre es María Guadalupe Real y deseo nominar a mi especialista de la familia en Nevada PEP. Toda mi familia y yo estamos profundamente agradecidos con ella. Gracias a su dedicación logramos obtener un IEP en la escuela. A pesar de nuestras múltiples solicitudes, la escuela nunca nos había brindado ayuda; sin embargo, desde que ella comenzó a guiarnos y a apoyarnos en el proceso, comprendimos cuáles eran las opciones disponibles para nuestra hija y para nosotros. Ahora nuestra hija cuenta con un IEP y estamos viendo un gran progreso. Nos sentimos muy felices. Ella ha sido una luz en nuestro camino; no cabe duda de que Dios pone a las personas correctas en nuestra vida. Gracias a Nevada PEP y a nuestra especialista de la familia por todo el apoyo recibido.

My name is Maria Guadalupe Real and I wish to nominate my Family Specialist at Nevada PEP. My whole family and I are deeply grateful to her. Thanks to their dedication, we were able to get an IEP at school. Despite our many requests, the school had never given us any help. However, since she began to guide and support us through the process, we understood what options were available to our daughter and us. Now our daughter has an IEP and we're seeing a lot of progress. We feel very happy. She has been a light in our path; there is no doubt that God puts the right people in our lives. Thank you to Nevada PEP and our Family Specialist for all the support received.



**Maria Guadalupe Real**  
Madre/Mom

# Hand In Hand Stories

**Zachary Laskey**  
Administrative Specialist

I would like to nominate Zachary Laskey for this Hand in Hand award. Zach goes beyond the scope of his assigned duties at Nevada PEP to assist with the Challenger Little league Baseball season. He was responsible for ensuring that registrants were handled with care and competency. He logged in each form whether returned to the office in person or if it was received by mail. He took special care to be sure forms were completed accurately and legibly and all team members tracked by senior and minor divisions male and female. He contacted the Task Force for guidance and help with questions. We thank him for being the first step in a successful season and honor him with this award.

**Tom Taycher**  
Director, Challenger Little League



**Zelinna Palma**  
Nevada PEP

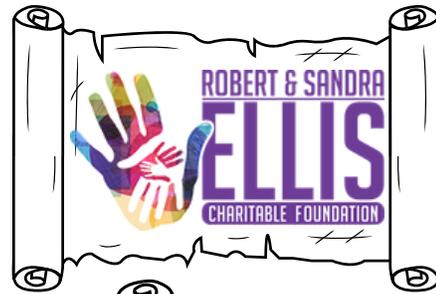
I am a Volunteer at Nevada PEP. I like to come into the office for projects two times each week. I have enjoyed volunteering at PEP for many years. Zelinna is the office manager. She is a smart and friendly person. She is always busy with many duties. She still takes time to greet me with a smile and ask about my day. She deserves this award.

**Juan Ramirez**  
Volunteer



# Hand In Hand Appreciation Program Sponsors

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## Gold Sponsors



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Our deepest gratitude to our Hand in Hand Sponsors, we are truly grateful for their continued support. Hand in Hand, Together We Can!

# Annual Sponsorship

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Show your support for the remarkable people across the state who make the lives of children with special needs better by becoming a sponsor of the Hand in Hand Appreciation Program. Help us to recognize, honor, and publicly applaud those who partner with parents and make a difference for these special children.



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### Gold Sponsorship

Sponsors who donate \$1,000 to \$3,000 are our Gold Sponsors. If you become a Gold Sponsor, you will receive a special Hand in Hand Sponsor Recognition Certificate, business-card size recognition in the annual Hand in Hand Yearbook, a copy of our Hand in Hand Yearbook, our quarterly PEP Post newsletter, recognition on the Nevada PEP website, a unique lapel pin, and a very special Hand in Hand Sponsorship Plaque!



### Silver Sponsorship

Sponsors who donate \$100 to \$1,000 are our Silver Sponsors. If you become a Silver Sponsor, you will receive a special Hand in Hand Sponsor Recognition Certificate, a unique lapel pin, recognition in our annual Hand in Hand Yearbook, a copy of our Hand in Hand Yearbook, receive our quarterly PEP Post newsletter, and recognition on the Nevada PEP website!



