

Success Stories 2017

EnSueños y Los Angelitos Development Center

By Andy Dennison

On any given day, EnSueños y Los Angelitos Development Center (located at 1030 Salazar Road) serves about 30 adults in becoming as independent as they possibly can across all life environments. They are offered choices throughout the course of their day and are establishing valued social roles in the community that lead to happier lives.

During a day, adults head to the Taos Spa & Tennis Club to stay active and learn about leading healthier lifestyles through fitness and food choices, while another group researches on computers topics of interest. At the same time, early childhood specialists are out in the community working with children and their families on individualized goals.

“Our main goal is to assist people with intellectual developmental disabilities (I/DD) to live and enjoy life like everyone else,” said Executive Director Diane Romero. “Much of society views them as different, we need to treat them the same. They have the right to be as happy as possible, and we strive every day to make that happen.”

EnSueños, which serves infant to age 3 and adults 18 years and older, has been operating in Taos County for 44 years (formally Taos ARC). Both infant and adult participants attend the state-funded program seeking professional support that can make a lifetime of difference.

Early Childhood Services provide specialized early intervention services for children, infant through age 3 and their families. Services are provided in the home and community of the individual being served. EnSueños has six Developmental Specialist/Family Service Coordinators and certified physical, occupational, speech language, vision and hearing therapists that currently provide services for approximately 100 children throughout Taos County. Referrals come from community agencies, including pediatricians, childcare providers, home visiting programs, CYFD and parents that have concerns with their child’s development. Early Childhood Director Amber Ohlinger oversees the program.

Staff believes children learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people and settings. This idea supports their engagement with parents and family members from initial intake through



transition at age 3. The process begins at home, where a Family Service Coordinator gets familiar with the child and family, with their strengths and needs including what a typical day is like for the child.

“It takes time to understand a family and its unique situation, but it is critical in developing a strategy of therapy and activities for the client,” says Madalena Miera, DS II. “The family is the first teacher.”

Eligibility for the program is based on a child presenting with a developmental delay of 25 percent in one or more areas of development, such as walking or talking, or a variety of factors that would indicate a child is at risk for delay. A team of therapists conduct an in-home evaluation that supports the determination of eligibility and begins the framework for an Individual Family Service Plan.

The plan consists of unique goals and strategies that will ultimately support the family in meeting the specific needs of their child’s daily routines within the community, including the option for inclusive socialization at the Los Angelitos Playgroup. Playgroup is available to children ages 2-4, regardless of receiving services from EnSueños.

“My joy is working with the families and seeing change and progress as they learn to help their babies and themselves,” Miera said. “We work hard to create a bond with the family, because we are a constant in the child’s life, especially for

those in the state system.”

Adult Services focuses on supports for people with I/DD to live the life they prefer in the community of their choice, and to gain increased community involvement and independence.

Supports begin with an individual service plan, identifying what is important to the person as an on-going process. Planning is person-centered. The person with I/DD has choices and ownership of the planning process, this is reflected in the plan for supports. If the person is unable to speak, the team involved in designing the plan will observe preferences and consult with close friends, family, guardians, helpers, direct support personnel and advocates to guide decisions.

All persons have strengths and interests and are capable of growth and development at their own pace. Individuals with I/DD can live in and be part of the community in the same manner as any other person of like age and interests. Furthermore, all working age adults with DD are capable and should be afforded the opportunity to work with supports as needed. All planning must occur with the understanding that people with I/DD have the same basic legal, civil and human rights as other citizens and appropriate dignity of risk should be incorporated into all plans.

Currently, there are six individuals receiving supports in their homes with 24-hour staff

supervision. Supports are given with everyday life tasks and household management skills. Individuals with I/DD are offered skill-building activities and developmental therapies that are specifically tailored to each individual to enhance life. Opportunities are provided to actively engage and participate in everything happening around them.

EnSueños means “In dreams.” For youth and adults, EnSueños y Los Angelitos Development Center is a place where dreams — whether big, small or in between — can be reached.

“We participate with people in achieving their dreams,” said Romero.



Please visit our updated website at www.ELADC.org and like us on Facebook.

EnSueños y Los Angelitos Development Center

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