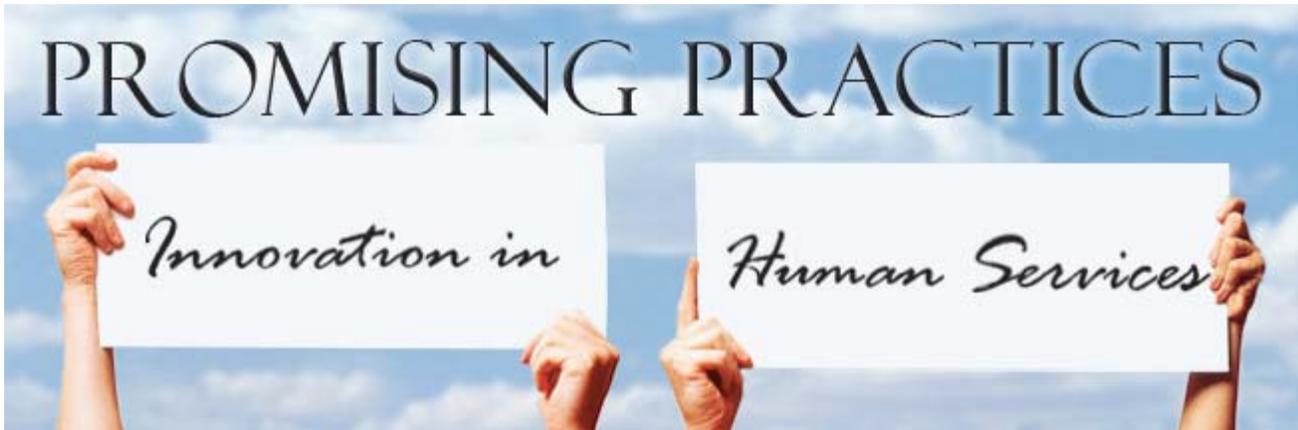


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Getting older doesn't mean getting slow

As consumers get older they seek new services to meet their needs and OPARC develops new programs

OPARC provides a wide range of services to more than 600 people with intellectual and physical disabilities. It provides educational programs, speech services, total care and health services, and integrated work programs. The services are designed to support individual choices by consumers regarding how and where they live, work, and socialize. The programs are located across the Inland Empire of Southern California in state-of-the-art buildings. Yet, even with all its existing services, OPARC still found a gap in its services. Approximately six years ago, staff members approached one of their consumers, Richard G., to discuss what he would like to do now that he was getting older. He made it very clear he wanted to continue attending the Montclair Adult Development Center to be socially active and participate in services that were meant to connect him to his community. Unfortunately, at the time, there was no senior component in the day program model approved by Inland Regional Center, OPARC's funding and referral source. Fortunately, senior managers at OPARC and Inland Regional Center realized that "the graying of America" extended to senior citizens with disabilities too, and a new program module was quickly initiated.

The goal of the new program was to keep seniors as active as they chose to be, with a combination of paid part-time work, community outings, and on-site activities. Person-centered services were developed, tapping into the creative energy of OPARC's dedicated case managers. Within three months, the program had a waiting list.

Senior centers operated by some local cities did not accept this new program easily or quickly. Several such centers initially made OPARC's

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News From CARF

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Do you remember a past article coming out that you'd like to forward on to a colleague? Did you just join Promising Practices and want to see issues we covered in the past? Well, now you can! Old issues of Promising Practices are now available online. Visit archived issues at www.carf.org/newsletter and follow links to past issues. Past issues are categorized by topic so you can easily find articles of interest.

Putting Out the Good Word: Some Information about the Promising Practices Series

group feel unwelcome. But staff persistence paid off, and soon the consumers were taking advantage of special art classes, games, movie days, and sometimes even free lunches in senior community centers. The only remaining barrier is that some activities designed for seniors take place too early in the morning or too late in the day for them to participate.

OPARC's seniors' program has demonstrated that the road doesn't end simply because people pass an arbitrary age milestone. Like all senior citizens, people with disabilities still want companionship, a variety of enjoyable activities to choose from, and assistance in taking advantage of opportunities despite moving at a slower pace. In fact, Richard is now happily filling his day with social activities.

As OPARC expands its programs and grows to meet the increasing demand for services in general, the seniors' program grows at a commensurate rate — or maybe even faster. Within a few years, all OPARC adult development programs will include senior components. Richard would be proud!

For further information about OPARC's Senior Strand Program, please contact Gaby Rios at (909) 920-5204 or Barbara Chavez at (909) 625-0213.

For more information please contact Reneé Bibby at rbibby@carf.org or (888) 281-6531.

We are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present. There is no particular order that we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and thereby achieve effective and positive results in each organization's community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals' quality expectations.

We hope you enjoy the series. We encourage you to contact the identified representative in the article to get more information about their services.

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