



County of Santa Cruz

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

701 OCEAN STREET, ROOM 30, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

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PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commission on Disabilities recognizes 2016 Local KUDOS Awardees

The Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities (SCCCD) is proud to honor and recognize the outstanding contributions of individuals and businesses that have gone above and beyond to expand access and improve services for persons with disabilities in Santa Cruz County.

This year, nine individuals, businesses and organizations were honored with “Kudos Awards” for positively impacting the lives of persons with disabilities.

This is the 10th year that the Kudos Awards have been handed out locally:

- Monarch Independent Living Services in Santa Cruz. for providing support services to adults with disabilities that allowed them to be independent.
- Mikki Witzig, Chair of Cabrillo College’s Adaptive Physical Education Department, for providing adapted physical education classes for students living with disabilities. Witzig’s classes serve as a community hub and safe place for socializing while teaching students how to care for their bodies and keep healthy.
- Teall Messer, local architect, for working tirelessly with the Commission to design plans for the transformation of Porter Memorial Library into a fully accessible library. Following guidelines to ensure that the library was ADA compliant, Messer contributed to every phase of the remodeling, including



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widening doorways, removing thresholds and redesigning the bathrooms. Messer's knowledge of ADA requirements and building codes were invaluable assets for the successful completion of the Porter Library renovations, permitting the library to be enjoyed by all.

- Porter Memorial Library, for being wheelchair accessible and for its commitment to providing equal access to library patrons. The library was also commended for its long-standing collaboration with the Commission and Board of Directors, and its ongoing support of Commission activities and events.
- Valerie Corral, founder of Wo/men Alliance for Medical Marijuana (WAMM), for her provision of medical marijuana and hospice care to those with chronic pain or terminal illnesses. Valerie was present at nearly all of the 250 deaths of terminally ill patients during the group's 25 years of existence as a non-profit.
- Mary Thuerwachter, former Commission on Disabilities Coordinator, for her 12 years of service on the Commission. Thuerwachter mentored many of the current commissioners, patiently guiding them through the legalities of becoming a commissioner. She is remembered for her knowledge and dedication to the overall advancement of people with disabilities in Santa Cruz County.
- Howie Schneider, former Commission on Disabilities member, for his unflagging dedication and service over the past two years. During his tenure as Commissioner, he advocated to maintain ParaCruz and its Accessible Service Coordinator position. His advocacy efforts were also instrumental in lobbying for the wheelchair accessible ramp as part of the Porter Memorial Library renovations.
- Jonathan Adler and Ned Valkenburgh, for their work with Shared Adventures. As part of Shared Adventures' Annual Day on the Beach program, Adler collaborated with city officials, lifeguards, commissioners and others to insure that those with mobility impairments had access to the ocean sports. Valkenburgh organized the volunteer carpenters from the 505 Carpenters Union and Santa Cruz Builders Union who constructed the wooden platforms allowing beach access by those in wheelchairs and the mobility impaired.

The Santa Cruz County Commission on Disabilities is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues concerning persons with disabilities. Their objective is to be the eyes, ears, voice, and conscience in assuring equal access to persons with disabilities of



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Santa Cruz County and to advise the Board of Supervisors and serve persons with disabilities in our community. The Commission generally meets on the second Thursday of each month from 12:30 until 1:30 P.M. at the Regional Transportation Commission offices located at 1523 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 12th at 12:30 pm and members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend.

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