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# THE Hire News

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## Pacific Coast Community Services Earns CARF Accreditation!

BY RUTH COWAN

Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) strives to provide people with disabilities and veterans with the best possible services. For more than 25 years, PCCS has shown its commitment to its clients through the programs and services it provides. In 2023, this dedication resulted in PCCS receiving the CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) three-year accreditation.

“CARF accreditation is a review to determine if programs/services meet defined international standards of quality in health and human services,” according to the CARF International website. CARF accreditation testifies to the quality of services an organization provides. The three-year accreditation is the highest accreditation an agency can receive. In August 2023, PCCS received this distinction.

PCCS President and CEO Christopher Flynn and COO Lawrence Silva stated that the CARF accreditation review not only provided insight to PCCS on how to maintain the quality of its programs and services, but also on how to improve its systems and service delivery and the experience of staff and clients.

The accreditation process is no easy feat. It is more than just filling out an application. Several steps must be taken prior to the survey accreditation team assessing an organization from top to bottom. Keeping in line with CARF’s mission, the CARF survey accreditation team is comprised of industry peers who understand program services and organizational management. The survey is conducted to determine conformance with all standards. The survey accreditation team speaks with staff, clients, employers, and the State of California Department of



Rehabilitation counselors to ensure PCCS provides quality services, reports data in a timely manner, and meets clients’ needs.

The CARF accreditation is important to PCCS. It not only confirms that PCCS is meeting the needs of its clients but that it continues to do so. Each year, PCCS submits an annual conformance report to ensure they continue to meet CARF standards. This gives clients, vendors, and other organizations confidence in PCCS’s services.

PCCS is a growing organization that is expanding its services into southern California and Nevada in 2024. Both senior executives, Flynn and Silva, are excited about being able to serve clients in other geographic areas. By utilizing the recommendations from the CARF survey accreditation team, PCCS can maintain the highest standards when rolling out its new programs and services. ▪

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# Message from the Chief Operating Officer: Lawrence Silva



As Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) continues to develop strong workforce programs and services that benefit its participants, I am proud to be a part of the leadership team and work closely with staff members who are invested in our mission. Over the past three years, I have witnessed participants transition from our training programs into new careers and can vouch that job seekers have gained employment with the support of our solid employment team. Our partnerships with other organizations, such as HireAble, REAP Climate Center, Elegance of Berkeley, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and the Native American Health Center, strengthen our workforce development services and programs while creating more opportunities for our participants.

In 2024, I am excited to expand upon these relationships with our partner organizations. This year will bring new programming and services within the nature-based systems at the REAP Climate Center. The REAP Climate Center is doing incredible work with developing nature-based solutions to climate change and food/water insecurities. PCCS has relocated our food service and inventory control/logistics training to the REAP Climate Center, creating a state-of-the-art, hands-on training center with industry-standard facilities and equipment. The curricula are being developed for additional training

programs in nature-based systems. PCCS will also be the workforce partner of the Native American Health Center for internships at the REAP Climate Center and is now providing training in food service and inventory control/logistics for the San Leandro Unified School District.

PCCS continues to manage and develop work experience and internship placements in the Bay Area. We receive referrals from the California Department of Rehabilitation to link clients with art and music programs that we bring to senior living facilities, as well as our clerical support and administrative work experience. Working with Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) of Oakland, PCCS successfully placed 13 senior job seekers in paid employment last year and acts as a host agency.

The outlook for PCCS is bright. Our organization received an outstanding review from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in October 2023. We were awarded a three-year CARF accreditation. We plan to maintain this high level of compliance as we grow and serve more participants in the future. I look forward to being a part of PCCS as we build on our success and continue to provide opportunities for our participants. ■

**HIRE / ABLE**



**ELEGANCE  
BERKELEY**

**SENIOR COMMUNITY  
SERVICE EMPLOYMENT  
PROGRAM (SCSEP)**



# PCCS Client Success Story: Laurie Van Allen

BY RUTH COWAN

Today is a new day—another day of hope that my job hunt will prove fruitful. I scroll through job listings. I check my email to see if there is a response from one of the positions I have applied for, but there is nothing. The feeling of defeat begins to set in, and I begin to wonder if I will ever find employment. That is, until I am introduced to a woman who had once been in my same situation, Laurie Van Allen.

Laurie Van Allen was born with Retinitis Pigmentosa, and, like me, has been visually impaired since birth. Over the years, Van Allen's sight has gradually gotten worse; she currently has only a small amount of vision in her right eye. She also currently works full-time with the Social Security Administration. Although it wasn't easy for her to find this position, her determination and positive outlook led to her success.

At 16, Van Allen left her home in southern California to attend a school for the blind in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her independence was evident then when she decided not to return home after school. Instead, she chose to remain in the Bay Area.

Over the years, Van Allen has worked at many places, but her work always centered around helping others. Whether training to support those with brain injuries, or volunteering as a rape crisis counselor, Van Allen's dedication to others was present.

In 2022, Van Allen redirected her career goals, and became a client of Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS). As with many people searching for a job, she became frustrated with the process. That is, until PCCS



Chief Operating Officer Lawrence Silva suggested she apply to the IRS and Social Security Administration for their call center opportunities.

Van Allen now works for the Social Security Administration and loves her job. She states that she works alongside great people. She also says that her coworkers understand her needs as a person with visual impairment because they are also visually impaired, and this has made her training process a pleasant experience.

I am glad I had the opportunity to speak with Laurie Van Allen. Her positivity and uplifting demeanor were inspiring to me. Her determination and ultimate success gave me the hope I need to continue with my own job search. ■



# Navigating Job Search: New Year, New Strategies

BY OTTO DELEON

Jumping into 2024, we're confronted with the reality that the job market constantly changes, bringing new challenges and opportunities. Understanding and adapting to job market changes can help direct your job search and improve your chances of finding meaningful work. Here, we explore key strategies to find a job.

**Virtual Spaces** - *Challenge:* The virtual job search can be overwhelming, with numerous platforms and a vast array of information. *Opportunity:* To stand out, build a robust digital presence. Launch or update a LinkedIn profile, join online professional groups, and participate in virtual networking events. These steps can increase your visibility to potential employers from the comfort of home.

**Digital Literacy** - *Challenge:* Computers and electronic gadgets are all around. Interfacing with and using them are part of most people's daily activity. In the job market, more and more roles require computer skills and an ability to use digital communications, online applications, and electronic devices. *Opportunity:* Consider enrolling in courses and workshops to sharpen your electronic technology skills. Acquiring new computer and digital skills can help you stand out from other candidates and make your resume more attractive to potential employers, especially in a technology-driven job market. You might even discover you enjoy this work. Fields like digital marketing, online research, and programming are highly sought after.

**Global Competition** - *Challenge:* Growth of remote work, advances in technology, and other shifts in doing business continue to force changes in the job market, meaning that the talent pool has gone global. *Opportunity:* Approach any competitive job market with a strong personal brand. Highlight what makes you stand out and identify strengths that demonstrate an ability to work beyond where you live. This may include language skills, projects you have worked on, experience with national or global issues, and special teams you have led. These attributes can set you apart in any job market.

**Remote and Hybrid Roles** - *Challenge:* Employers seem to want workers back in traditional in-person work settings. Employees seem to want to work remotely or in a hybrid capacity. *Opportunity:* When applying for remote or hybrid roles, emphasize self-management skills, ability to work independently, and previous experience and success in remote settings, if applicable. Demonstrate your understanding of remote work tools, practices, and proven methods.

For those looking for work in 2024, remember that adaptability and flexibility are essential. Equipped with these valuable assets, job seekers are poised to turn challenges into opportunities and increase the chances of finding meaningful work in the new year. ■



## ADDITIONAL HELP

PCCS provides employment services to individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment. Clients are referred to PCCS by the Department of Rehabilitation. PCCS eligible clients are invited to weekly Job Club meetings for group coaching and support. The Job Club meets twice weekly and offers resources like resume-building workshops, mock interviews, and career counseling. Resources are tailored to help job seekers with their own unique circumstances. ■


  
 the virtual  
**jobclub**  
 for clients looking for work

COUNSELING, NETWORKING & SUPPORT  
 TO FIND YOUR DREAM JOB

JOIN OUR WEEKLY 1-HOUR SESSIONS TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL

Tuesdays & Wednesdays | 11am - 12pm

## Americans with Disabilities Act Part 1: An Overview

BY RUTH COWAN



People with disabilities often face predicaments daily. A person with low vision may not be able to read bus numbers, or a person in a wheelchair may not have ramp access to a public building. At one point, people with disabilities found themselves forced to navigate these situations with little help. Luckily, with the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), that era is over.

While many know about the ADA, they may not truly understand all it offers. So, what exactly is the ADA? In a nutshell, the ADA addresses the accessibility needs of those with a disability in the United States. Beginning in 1990, the ADA began as a way of combatting discrimination, but since then it has expanded into helping people with disabilities gain access to public spaces and workplace accommodations.

I am visually impaired and honestly didn't understand the positive impact the ADA could have on my life until I went to school and was able to take untimed tests and have access to large print. I thought the ADA's main benefit was preventing discrimination. I saw it more as a protection for those in wheelchairs.

Over the next several newsletters I will go over each of the five titles within the ADA. I will explore the ADA as a disabled person and provide insight into how the ADA protects people with disabilities in many areas of public life. I will give a better understanding of what is considered a disability, and I will discuss how the ADA ensures people with disabilities have the same benefits and rights as those without a disability. ■

## PCCS Forms New Partnership with REAP Climate Center

BY RUTH COWAN

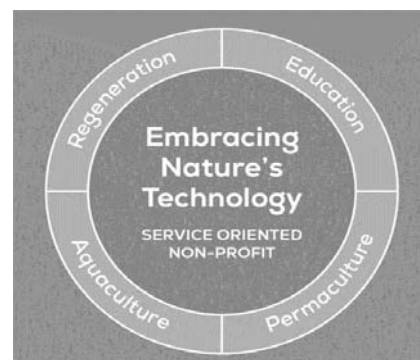
Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) clients have different career goals. Some want to work in an office, others would love to work with their hands. Because of this, PCCS offers different training programs. The latest of these, its partnership with REAP Climate Center (REAP), is designed to open the doors for clients who want to work in nature-based systems and find jobs that will continuously improve the environment.

REAP Climate Center is a non-profit organization that believes in the power of regenerative systems. Jonathan DeLong, REAP Climate Center's Director, has stated that their mission is to support scalable, nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change. REAP does this while also promoting the health and resilience of our planet's ecosystems.

The partnership between PCCS and REAP is a natural one. Lawrence Silva, Chief Operating Officer of PCCS, shares Jonathan DeLong's passion for regenerative systems and building employment opportunities within this field. Silva explained about the programs already in place through the partnership: inventory control/logistics and food service certification programs. REAP is also developing curricula for additional classes and programs, including regenerative systems, habitat restoration, urban farming, and agriculture.

What excites Silva about this partnership is the knowledge clients will receive through training and working at the REAP Climate Center. The programs PCCS offers at REAP will provide clients with certification and hands-on experience that can be transferred easily into the workplace.

"The future partnership between PCCS and REAP is bright," Silva stated, "because our clients benefit from a regenerative viewpoint, which is a growing movement in communities and corporations to make a difference in climate change. By working together, both organizations can accomplish their goals in social justice, workforce development, and nature-based processes." ■



# PCCS Call Center/Telephone Services Training Certificate Program

BY RUTH COWAN

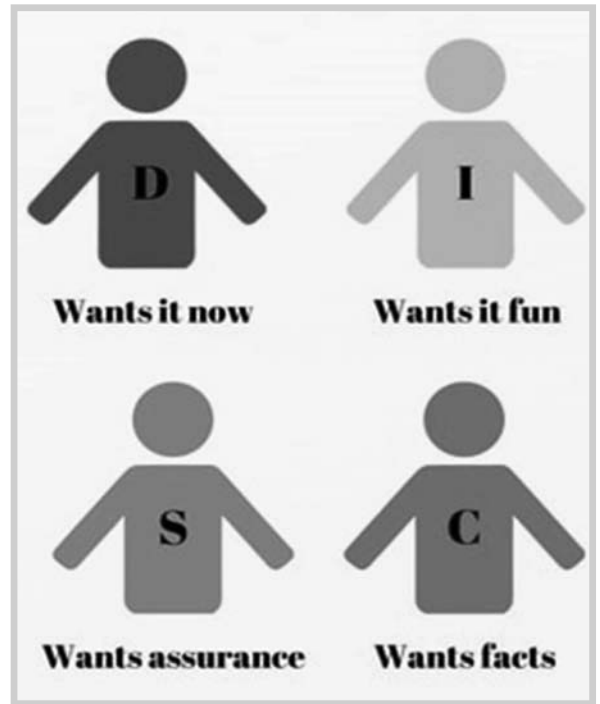
Pacific Coast Community Services (PCCS) prides itself on the training it offers its clients. The PCCS Call Center/Telephone Services Training course has been reinvented recently to emphasize a fun and interactive approach to learning while providing instruction on industry-standard skills and practices.

Instructor Frank Silva is a retired school principal who wants to make a difference in the lives of others. Silva has upgraded the curriculum and training methods of the course, utilizing his 35 years in education and his creativity to design modules that not only teach, but entertain PCCS clients. Silva’s course provides clients with everything they need to know to enter the call center/telephone services workforce: the vocabulary, technological systems, and interpersonal skills used in the customer service industry.

Silva shared that while effective communication is critical when dealing with customers in call centers and telephone services, the skills learned in this course can be applied to other careers. Some of the most important soft skills in any profession are communication and understanding personalities.

Silva helps his students to understand different personalities in this course by administering the DiSC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness) assessment. The DiSC assessment results tell students about their own behavioral style and

about the different behavioral styles. Students learn how to communicate and work with each personality type.



Silva is excited about teaching the Call Center/Telephone Services Training course. The labor market for employment in call centers and telephone services is strong. Graduates of the program look forward to becoming gainfully employed with government work or in the private sector. ■

A large graphic illustration for the PCCS training program. On the left, a call center agent wearing a headset points at a computer screen displaying a call log with numbers like 23, 42, 02:35, and 00:13. On the right, another agent is talking on a phone. A central pop-up window shows a profile picture and a phone number 987-123-4567. A dark banner at the bottom contains the text 'CALL CENTER/TELEPHONE SERVICES TRAINING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM' and 'Elevate Your Career'.