



# HOPE Housing Matters

*Home Ownership for Personal Empowerment*

## HRC Executive Director Patrick Ruppe Champions Housing for People with I/DD

**C**reating affordable homes is at the heart of HOPE, yet challenges to financing, acquiring, and renovating even a single unit of housing is at times daunting. This vital work is only possible because we partner with so many great mission-aligned agencies and leaders who help propel us forward. Recently, HOPE interviewed one such leader, Patrick Ruppe, the new Executive Director at the Harbor Regional Center (HRC). During this discussion, we had a chance to learn about his extensive experience empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and why housing is so critical to this work.

Since 1973, Harbor Regional Center has served clients with I/DD across the southeast portion of Los Angeles County. In fact, HOPE, Inc. was established in 1994 by HRC in partnership with a group of concerned South Bay parents and friends. HOPE and Harbor Regional Center are a legacy partnership with a rich history of serving the community together for more than 25 years. As the Executive Director, Patrick continues this legacy by managing a team of 362 people committed to providing support, information, and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Before joining HRC, Patrick served people with I/DD in Orange County for 22 years. He began his career working with school-aged children as an interventionist with an applied behavior analysis service provider. During this time, Patrick helped develop behavioral-based preschool programs for children on the Autism Spectrum. Later, he



*HRC Executive Director Patrick Ruppe sits for an interview with HOPE.*

joined the Regional Center of Orange County, where he held many roles, including service coordinator, middle and senior management, and finally, as Associate Executive Director.

He became aware of his passion for helping people with developmental disabilities during his first job in the industry. "I remember working with a child who had severe autism. I spent three days a week, two hours a day with him. My original goal was to get him to count to five. But after a year together, he was able to count to 10,000! He was an inspiration to me. That is when I knew I had found my career."

Patrick joined Harbor Regional Center in 2019 as the Director of Adult Services. In this capacity, he was responsible for managing all aspects of service coordination for HRC clients over age 22. A year later, he accepted the role of Executive Director amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis immediately forced him to address clients' anticipated needs during the most significant public health emergency of our lifetime. Sadly, research shows the virus has a disproportionately negative effect on people with I/DD.

One step Patrick took was to partner with HOPE in providing emergency housing units for HRC clients impacted by the pandemic. HOPE was able to move resources to support this request. We set aside newly acquired and vacant units to provide alternative housing for HRC clients to shelter in place, quarantine, or recover from COVID-19. This outstanding accomplishment is possible thanks to the powerful mission that HOPE and Harbor Regional Center share, a commitment to creating safe, stable, and affordable homes for those we serve. Together we value providing homes that are the most inclusive within the community and the least restrictive option to leading full and active lives, even



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during challenging times.

Beyond this immediate step, Patrick explains how Harbor Regional Center and HOPE plan to address the housing needs of clients during the current public health crisis, "It has to be the whole nine yards," he admits. "We have to find resources both on the housing side and on the service provider side, especially with COVID right now, because the people who have been providing services for 30 years are now at heightened risk, and this is limiting the resources available to the I/DD community. Regarding addressing long-term housing needs, if I wait even a couple of years to develop resources, there might be fifty more people who are at risk of experiencing homelessness."

Patrick believes there has never been a more crucial time to create affordable housing for people served by the Regional Center system, as the cost of living in Southern California becomes increasingly expensive. In the coming years, he

plans to expand the number of service providers and housing options available for HRC clients. He looks to HOPE to discover and assess what should be done next, including adding additional projects to the pipelines. HOPE knows where to look for external resources that expand the number of housing units available for HRC clients as they age. We continue to network with local governments, foundations, donors, and housing organizations to identify new and innovative funding opportunities and collaborations.

Patrick says, "I am excited about HOPE's projects and our continued partnership producing homes to meet our clients' diverse needs. We have the same goal, which is to expand resources to individuals, allowing them to lead their best lives."

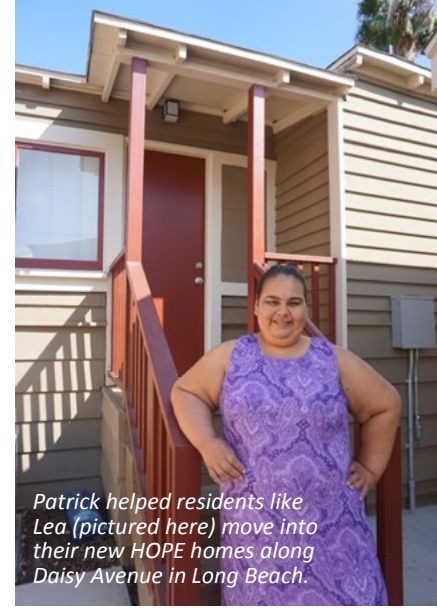
He knows how important it is for Harbor Regional Center to continue to develop new housing resources for those they serve.

He is also aware of the importance of encouraging families who may be hesitant to support their child's desire to

grow their independence or move into affordable housing. It was the case with a young man Patrick worked with during his time at the Regional Center of Orange County. This client was 27-years old and living with his parents. However, he had dreams to go to college, work, and live with greater self-reliance. Patrick's team came together and found a subsidized home close to the local community college where he could attend classes and start working at the local mall.

Patrick patiently encouraged this young man's parents to consider his goals and independence, "It takes a supportive team to help facilitate this conversation. Parents have had to fight to protect their children for their entire lives, from childhood through their teenage years. Although this client's mom was initially worried, the client stood up for himself and advocated for his needs. I saw the desire from this individual to live a more fulfilling life. Without housing, he would not have had that chance to flourish in this way. It was not just a home, but a chance for him to learn to make decisions on his own."

Patrick's role now is to ensure that supported living providers and housing agencies have the tools and resources needed to



Patrick helped residents like Lea (pictured here) move into their new HOPE homes along Daisy Avenue in Long Beach.

create positive housing outcomes for Regional Center clients. When asked what the word "home" means to him, Patrick responds that "a home is a place where you can be yourself. It's your safe spot where you can develop who you are to your fullest potential." He wants to foster the perspective that housing is not just a physical place but a home. "My team, along with HOPE, is always thinking about housing resources and how they can help clients meet their goals," he says. "That is what makes me most proud. My predecessor did a great job. I want to continue to encourage that, so we can deliver more housing opportunities for those we serve."

"It was not just a home, but a chance for him to learn to make decisions on his own."

-Patrick Ruppe

## Julio Gains Independence and Confidence to Succeed Thanks to HOPE's Supportive Housing Model

### Resident Profile

"A home is a place where I can be myself," Julio says as he sits back comfortably on his grey sofa in the living room of his new HOPE home in Long Beach. He looks content and proud to share his story, reflecting on his past experiences as he faces the light shining through the living room window. Dressed in a red polo shirt and sandals, Julio relaxes against the pillows of his couch. Today he is surrounded by his service coordinator and supported living services staff member. They fondly listen as he shares his journey towards independence.

He starts by describing how much he enjoys the simple pleasure of being able to walk around his home. He proceeds to give his guests a tour of his apartment while his mother and girlfriend are chatting outside his front door next to a lush avocado tree in his shared yard. Inside, Julio tells his guests, "I love everything

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New HOPE resident Julio proudly gives a tour of his home.



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about my new home," as he shows off his bedroom, kitchen, and living room. Every room is neat and organized.

During his tour, he pauses in the kitchen to tell his visitors how much he enjoys cooking delicious meals to share with his girlfriend, "It has given me a lot of confidence in myself and the things I can do." He describes how her favorite dishes are what he loves to make the most, including a special Italian cannoli dessert from a secret family recipe.

What visitors might not know upon first meeting Julio is that he is legally blind. Due to past medical needs, he found himself living full-time in a skilled nursing facility. He reflects on his previous living situation where he felt confined and restricted, "I came from a nursing facility where I couldn't do anything. I couldn't even walk around; I couldn't move. I had to stay in bed all the time."

According to research by The Americans with Disabilities Act Participation Action Research Consortium (ADA-PARC), 1.08% of people with disabilities ages 18-64 are still residing in nursing homes in California. That is approximately 23,893 people who may need access to stable, affordable housing where they can live more independently. HOPE owns 98 properties with the capacity to house 358 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. To address the increasing housing needs of people with I/DD, HOPE has set a new goal of creating homes for 250 additional people between 2019 and 2025.

Last year when Julio realized he no longer needed around-the-clock medical care, he communicated his desire to live independently in his own home. At the time, Julio was asked about his dreams and ambitions. He responded, "My biggest dream for the future is to prosper and succeed in my own home." At the time his service coordinator realized that HOPE's Supportive Housing model would work well for Julio as an option for moving from the nursing facility and transitioning to living on his own.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities desire independence, choice, and dignity in where and with whom they live. According to The ARC, more than 61% of people with I/DD desire to live independently in their own home or apartment. In Julio's case, HOPE was excited to partner with Harbor Regional Center to create a supported, affordable housing opportunity for him in Long Beach. This supportive housing would provide him with a private unit with services on site to assist with daily living activities as needed.

As an outgrowth of the Regional Center system, HOPE provides and maintains housing for their clients with developmental disabilities who receive assistance from either supported living or licensed service providers. Research suggests that people with I/DD residing in their own homes have some of the highest quality of life outcomes, regardless of the complexity of support needed (Friendman, 2019).

Sandra Gomez, Service Coordinator with Harbor Regional Center, says that ever since Julio moved into his new home, he has gained back his sense of humor. As his familiarity with his new home grew and the memories from his previous location faded away, Sandra would hear his joyful voice whenever she would call him. Now when she visits him, he always has the biggest smile. "He is always cracking jokes," Sandra says. "His sense of humor is something that defines him, so that is something he has gotten back."

It is evident to those who know Julio that he has increased his confidence and self-reliance since moving into his HOPE home. "My favorite thing about living independently is I can move around freely, and I do not have to worry about anything else because it is just me. I can walk around any time that I want."

As Julio closes out the conversation, he recalls his favorite memory in his new home. That most cherished memory was the first moment when he arrived on move-in day. Up until that point, he hadn't allowed himself to accept that he was finally going to have an independent place to call home. "Then the first day I got here," he says, "when everybody left, I broke down in tears. I realized that anything is possible. Hopes and dreams are all possible. You just have to want them. You have to reach out for them."



## OPPORTUNITY DRAWING TICKETS

Support HOPE's 13th Annual Charity Golf Classic by entering our opportunity drawing to win one of the below vacations!

**\$20 per ticket • \$40 for 3 tickets  
\$60 for 5 tickets • \$100 for 10 tickets**

Purchase your tickets at [www.bit.ly/2OFMdBm](http://www.bit.ly/2OFMdBm)



## Pebble Beach Opportunity Drawing



SCAN ME

Win 2 nights for 2 in an ocean view room at the Spanish Inn. Includes a round of golf for 2 at the Links at Spanish Bay and another round of golf for 2 at Pebble Beach. (Valid for one year from award date)



## Hawaii Opportunity Drawing



SCAN ME

Win 7 Nights for 2 in Marriott's Kauai Beach Club at Kalapaki Beach. Includes a \$1,000 gift card. (Valid for July 16-July 23, 2021)



# Housing Matters

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**IN  
THIS  
ISSUE!**



**HRC Executive Director  
Patrick Ruppe Champions  
Housing for People with  
I/DD**

**Resident Profile: Julio  
Gains Independence  
and Confidence**

**PLUS**

**Opportunity  
Drawing Tickets  
to Pebble Beach  
and Hawaii**