



# IRL Newsletter

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## A Year In Review:



This was an exciting year as we welcomed Shawn Prokopec, our new Managing Director, who has taken IRL by storm. Shawn's career has been focused on serving children and families with 23 years in the social services arena, one-year teaching in a Non-Public School, and four years conducting research at UCLA. Shawn immediately embraced her new role and started brainstorming with the leadership team, as well as, getting to know everyone. She has supported the expansion of our Transition and Adult Services program, oversaw the development and launch of a new IRL website ([redesignlearning.org](http://redesignlearning.org)), built new community relationships, secured funding through multiple partnerships and grants, and was an integral part of the first annual Westmoreland Academy Gala.

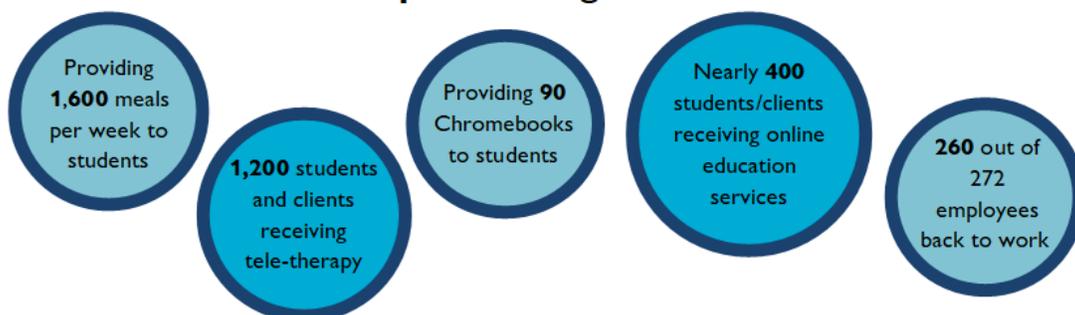
- IRL also has a new Development Associate, Gabriel Vazquez, who has a wealth of experience in the non-profit and fundraising arena, along with growing programs for children and adults of all abilities. Gabriel previously worked with the National Children's Center in Washington, D. C., as the Director of Community Outreach and Event Planning.
- In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, all of the IRL programs were able to quickly shift their services to an online, remote platform. Almansor Academy and Westmoreland Academy are working online to help our students continue to access the curriculum, as well as, receive much needed supplemental services. Mental Health continues to provide therapeutic services on a daily basis to 1,200 students and clients. Transition and Adult Services and Early Childhood Education are also providing learning opportunities through remote platforms to adults and our little ones.
- Please Note: The Westmoreland Gala will now be held in the Fall due to the Covid-19 virus. We are still accepting monetary donations, live and silent auction donations, as well as sponsorships.

**Our Mission:** To empower individuals of all abilities to take charge of their own learning and lives, making it possible for them to be competent, caring and contributing members of society; and to provide learning opportunities for families, professionals, and communities to support those efforts.

## Current News:

- We have added a [Stay Connected](#) section to our new website. Please go to our website, click on the link, and sign up to receive our newsletter and current information about IRL and everything we are accomplishing!
- We have added an Ask an Expert series to our Instagram page. Steven Thompson, Associate Director at Almansor Academy, is starting off the series with tips on homeschooling. Please join our Instagram page, find our Ask an Expert series, and watch the video! <https://www.instagram.com/redesignlearning/>

## Our Impact Through Covid-19



## Grants and Donations Received in 2019

- **5310 Grant** - \$345,600.00 to purchase five new buses
- **Green Foundation** - \$25,000 grant to create a Vocational Lab at Transition and Adult Services
- **Pasadena Community Foundation** - \$14,085 grant to create a Sensory Room at Westmoreland Academy
- **Westmoreland Gala** - \$8,000 raised for Sensory Playground and Enrichment Services Program
- **SoCal Edison** - \$5,000 grant for the Sensory Room and Virtual Reality equipment at Westmoreland Academy
- **Listen4Good** - \$5,000 honorarium
- **Boeing Global Engagement** - \$1,000 for technology at Westmoreland Academy
- **Matthew Hart** - \$1,000 donation
- **Terrance and Ellie Mason** - \$1,000 for technology at Westmoreland Academy (Matching Fund through Boeing)
- **Rotary Club of South Pasadena** - \$500 for annual Abilities Job Fair
- **Southern California Credit Union** - \$100 for annual Abilities Job Fair

**We want to thank all of our supporters who have donated money, goods, and/or their time to benefit our programs. Please contact [gvazquez@almansor.org](mailto:gvazquez@almansor.org) for donations.**



### Employee Success Story

Jerry Vazquez was referred to the Transition and Adult Services Supported Employment Program from the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center (ELARC) for employment services last July. The Supported Employment staff assisted opening up Jerry's case with The Department of Rehabilitation and began providing Employment Services for him. Transition and Adult Services is vendored through ELARC for a Paid Internship Program (PIP). This gives employers the

opportunity to work with our clients at no cost to them and allows our clients to gain work experience while still getting paid, which is funded through the Regional Center. Our hope is that after the 90-day paid internship, the employer will want to continue working with our clients and bring them on as permanent employees.

In December, Jerry was offered the opportunity to participate in a PIP with the TES maintenance department. During this time, he learned lots of skills such as performing basic janitorial tasks, time management, and communication skills. As the paid internship ended at the end of February, he made a strong impression working his first job ever. He was offered a permanent position with TES's maintenance team starting March 2020. Everyone at TAS is very excited for Jerry and this new opportunity at a community integrative employment site!



### A Message from our Founder, Nancy J. Lavelle Ph.D.

Over forty-five years ago, I stood at the reception-area counter in a church in Alhambra and welcomed four students to the Almansor Education Center, the first location of what would become the Institute for the Redesign of Learning. That first year, we grew to 24 students, including six students on the Autism Spectrum. Please visit our website and find our Founder's Stories at the bottom of the page for the full story.

**Connect with us!**



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**#WheresIRL**