

# THE CENTER FOR AUTISM & NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Volunteer Testimonial, March 2019

As an aspiring pediatric neurologist, Julia has committed her time as a volunteer to help children with autism grow socially and improve communication skills during their time at The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders.

As part of her volunteer activities, Julia enjoys the experience of interacting directly with kids from leading story time and crafts during therapy sessions to playing board games and sharing dances with children. She also has had the opportunity to shadow physicians and assist therapists during group projects.

“The experience has been amazing,” Julia said. “Every time I come in, I feel like my heart is full while I’m interacting with the kids. Talking with them and seeing how they trust me has been the most enriching experience.”

Such a valuable experience began nearly a year ago, when Julia desired to have face-to-face interaction with children with neurodevelopmental disorders in a nurturing environment. Through UC Irvine, she inquired about volunteering at The Center as she learned she would have the opportunity to work closely with children and gain a greater understanding of how to best help each individual child according to specific needs and learning style.

“Seeing how willing she is to learn and how fast she has been able to pick up on techniques has been a great accomplishment for her,” said Hazel Benavides Vickers, Behavior Intervention Division Lead at The Center. “She’s always taking the initiative to help lead and participate in activities for different age groups. Julia was adamant about being a volunteer here and she has since been committed to the entire process.”

Both the children and The Center staff continue to give inspiration every day in her pursuit of medicine, Julia said. It’s her hope that volunteering at The Center will lead her to make a significant impact on the advancement of pediatrics and pediatric neurology.

The hands-on experience is life changing, Julia said. Persons also wanting to contribute their time to The Center should have a willingness to jump in with any responsibility, from helping with groups to office tasks as all duties are important, she said. Volunteers should also have a high level of consistency as children need adults who are present.

“It’s the best place to volunteer,” Julia said. “I just feel very valued here.”

*To become a volunteer at The Center, please contact Hazel Vickers at 949-267-0459.*



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