

family



Winter/Spring 2022

# Noise!

Making a Difference Together  
for Children with special Needs



**TEEM  
G**

## A Group For The Groupless: Striking Back Against Social Isolation — *By Travis Nichols*

For many individuals, adolescence was a very formative time of their life. It was a time of self-discovery, a time of learning where, why and how you belonged in the world. This is doubly so for a teen with a disability who not only faces the daunting social jungle that is teenage society, but who also faces it with a feeling of being vastly more different than their more able-bodied peers. Unfortunately, children with disabilities are often relegated to the fringes of social circles due to the simple fact that kids tend to fear what they do not understand. As a result, social isolation runs rampant through the disabled adolescent community. Trust me; I've been there. Growing up as a person with a disability, I can personally attest to the sheer validity of this fact.

There is a solution to this problem, a creation of a place. A place where a child with a disability is able to meet others like themselves. A place where a child with a disability is able to be their entire, uninhibited, expressive self without the worry of the constraints of societal norms and expectations. Here at Family SOUP, we strive to provide such a place with the introduction of our new TEEM-G (Teen Empowerment, Entertainment and Motivational Group).

**STORY CONTINUED  
INSIDE...**



### ...COVER STORY CONTINUED:

Like so many before me, I grew up with a feeling and the notion that I was different from my sighted peers. In grade school, I was not able to participate in the conventional recess activities like dodgeball and tag. In high school, while other kids would put pen to paper, I would be sitting at my desk typing away on either a behemoth of a braille typewriter that seemed to make more noise than a stadium of excited football fans, or a braille computer that looked like it was ripped right out of the console of the USS Enterprise. There were questions...

lots of them, along with many a confused or curious stare. It was in this part of my life where my passion for working and helping my fellow peers within the disabled community was forged. And as I reached adulthood, it was slowly tempered in the countless horror stories of disabled people having to deal with indescribable and innumerable adverse situations of debilitating, crippling social discrimination and isolation. Even as an adult, I continue to encounter situations and hear stories of those that suffer the effects of social isolation within the disabled community. This is why TEEM-G was created.

With the implementation of Family SOUP's new TEEM-G, we seek to fill that crucial need of a safe, empowering and

encouraging social outlet for teens with a disability during this most impressionable period of their lives. This will be achieved through group activities and informative, connective discussions. We also hope to invite a guest speaker to at least one of the sessions, possibly from an agency that specializes in helping youth with disabilities with their transition from adolescence into adulthood. Social isolation is a formidable opponent. But with this group, we aim to try our hardest to



strike back against it. We aim to not only accept, but to actively uplift, empower, include and involve as well. We aim to show teens, and indeed kids of all ages that they are not alone. That just because you may have to navigate through life's maze of

complexities in a different, more circuitous way than your peers, you are not lesser. As a child I had a blind music teacher who would constantly tell his students, "We are blind, NOT BROKEN," he being a prime example of that mantra. I fervently believe that this is true for any and all types of disabilities. To those who read this who know someone with a disability, do not be afraid to tell them that they CAN. And to those who read this who themselves have a disability, visible or invisible, severe or mild, remember that you are not alone. And never forget, "DISABILITY NOT INABILITY!"



# President's Message

by Kimberly Butcher



The 2021 year has been challenging. I, like many, was hopeful that the effects of the Covid Pandemic would ease, and we would all return to easier times.

We are all feeling the emotional strain, and this strain is especially difficult on our children who are usually so carefree. The winter holidays are a great time to curl up with your children and enjoy a treasured holiday story. Children's story books provide a brief reprieve from the troubles of our daily living. Children love to explore the pages of books and discover things they may have missed the first five times they turned the pages.

The Family SOUP board would like to thank those that have already contributed to our Annual Campaign. As we celebrate 30 years of commitment to the Family SOUP mission, please consider reaching out to someone new that you know would feel thankful to contribute to the Family SOUP mission of empowering families of children with special needs. Our website, [www.familysoup.org](http://www.familysoup.org), is a great place to find information about the many programs we operate to support special needs children and their families.

One of my favorite Family SOUP programs is the Sibling Support Group. I believe

this outlet for children to connect with others, like themselves, is especially critical during the pandemic when special needs siblings may be feeling isolated, trapped, and perhaps fearful. Invite your friends and family to visit our website and learn about the programs we offer the local community. I am confident that they will be inspired, like so many other faithful supporters, to contribute to the annual campaign, building the dollars necessary to provide quality programming to families.

As our board expanded in the fall, with the addition of three new dynamic members, we are faced with a challenge identified in our strategic plan. This challenge is not unique to special needs teens, but to all teens in the Yuba/Sutter/Colusa area. What are we doing collectively as a community, to engage our teens in active, meaningful social activities outside of school? Our team at Family SOUP is looking specifically at how we can expand this engagement to include special needs teens and their families. If you have ideas or know of innovative ways to provide activities for this age group, please reach out to me through the Family SOUP office. I would love to hear your ideas. I am looking forward to tackling this challenge, especially with the help of additional board members with diverse backgrounds and skills. On behalf of all of us at Family SOUP, thank you for your support, especially your financial support, to continually move our mission forward. We couldn't do our work without the community. As we embark on another new year, 2022, may we all promote hope, peace, and love as a foundation for special needs children and their families.

With Gratitude,

**Kimberly Butcher**

*Family SOUP Board President*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kimberly A. Butcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# CALENDAR

## WINTER/SPRING 2022

To register or more information,  
please call Family SOUP at  
(530)751-1925.

### SUPPORT GROUPS

#### Scrapbooking Support Group

Monthly Support Meeting; 3rd  
Wednesday of every month  
January 19, February 16, March 16,  
April 20, May 18  
6:00-7:00 PM via ZOOM

Virtual support group for parents  
and caregivers of children with special  
needs. Free supplies are delivered to  
your home prior to the group.

Register: [tinyurl.com/scrapbooking21-22](https://tinyurl.com/scrapbooking21-22)

#### TEEM-G

#### Teen Empowerment, Entertainment, and Motivational Group

Every other Friday  
4:00-5:00 PM Via ZOOM

January 14, 28 -February 11, 25

A place where teens ages 13-17 with  
special needs have a voice! Build your social  
community, gain new experiences and  
express yourself, along with a host of  
fun-filled activities and useful resources  
and networking connections for transition  
into adulthood. Disability, not inability!

Call us to register!

#### Sibling Support Group

4 Weekly Sessions; Tuesdays  
March 8-29, 4:00-5:00pm via ZOOM

Support group for children ages 8-12 that  
have a sibling with special needs. Meet peers,  
find support & participate in activities and  
games in a fun and safe environment.

Register: [tinyurl.com/FSsiblingsupport22](https://tinyurl.com/FSsiblingsupport22)

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

#### Sensory Play

Once a month ; 1st Thursdays  
January 6, February 3, March 3, April 7  
4:30 – 5:15 PM via ZOOM

Sutter County residents with children with  
special needs ages 0-5: Join us for sensory  
activities & music with Ms. Leanne Cox from  
Little Stars Music and Movement to support  
young children's sensory needs.

Register: [tinyurl.com/FS-Sensoryplay](https://tinyurl.com/FS-Sensoryplay)

#### PALS Playgroup

Once a month; 3rd Friday  
January 21, February 18, March 18,  
April 15, May 20 10:00-10:45 AM  
via ZOOM

Playgroup for Yuba-Sutter parents/guardians  
and children, ages 0-5, with special needs.

Register: [tinyurl.com/PALSplay21-22](https://tinyurl.com/PALSplay21-22).

#### Mornings in the Garden

Weather permitting; Once a month;  
4th Saturday  
April 23, May 28 10:00-11:00am  
In-person

Children with special needs and their families,  
bring a friend & join us at the Artisan  
Community Garden at 1333 Butte House Rd.,  
Yuba City. Spend time gardening and doing  
arts & crafts activities.

Register at: [tinyurl.com/FSGarden22](https://tinyurl.com/FSGarden22)

#### DADs Group

Wednesday, April 27, 2022  
6-8pm In-person

Make connections with other dads of children  
with special needs & grab some wings to eat!

Call us to register!

#### Family HIKE Day

Saturday, April 9, 2022,  
at 11am  
Location TBA

Join us on an accessible family outing for  
children & young adults with special needs  
and their families. Gas card will be provided  
once arriving at the location.

Call us to register!

## TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS

### Safe Places and Calm Down Spaces

February 4, 2022; 9:30-11 am via ZOOM

Maintain or regain social-emotional regulation by using safe places in the home or classroom! We'll explore sensory support and regulation tools that meet children's individual needs. Presented by Thelma Amaya, MSW, with the Yuba Co. Office of Ed. Child Development Behavioral Consultation Program.

Register at: [tinyurl.com/FScalm22](https://tinyurl.com/FScalm22)

### Crucial Conversations at the IEP Table

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

10-11am via ZOOM

IEPs can be crucial conversations; there can be opposing opinions, strong emotions, and high stakes. Learn effective strategies for how to listen and communicate your needs when sitting at the IEP table with guest presenter, Lora Gonzalez, Yuba County SELPA Director.

Register at: [tinyurl.com/IEPcrucialconversations](https://tinyurl.com/IEPcrucialconversations)

### IEPs, 504s, Assessments, Supports & Accommodations

Thursday, March 31, 2022

5-7pm via ZOOM

Join us alongside Disability Rights of California as we learn more about the Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504s, assessments, supports, accommodations and parent rights. Let's learn how to support your child in school! Available in English and Spanish.

Register at: [tinyurl.com/FSIEP22](https://tinyurl.com/FSIEP22)

### Visual Supports Workshop

Monday, April 11, 2022

3:30-5:30pm via ZOOM

Behaviorist Kevin Douglas & Delaynii Howard, Speech Language Pathologist, present on visual supports and how they can help your child. Learn benefits of using them at home or in school, and how to incorporate them into your everyday routines.

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/FSvisualsupports2022>

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Yuba-Sutter-Colusa United Way Community Resource Fair

Saturday, May 21, 2022

10:00am- 1:00pm

Sam Brannan Park on Gray Avenue,  
Yuba City

Community Resource Fair includes a free lunch, kids' fun run, hourly drawings, info about community resources & activities for all ages.

For more info call 530-743-1847.

### YS Walk-N-Roll

Saturday, May 21, 2022

10:00am-1:00pm

Geweke Field, 808 Gray Ave., Yuba City

The YS Walk-N-Roll for Special Needs and Disability Awareness is excited as it anticipates its return to the community. This will be a short walk/roll accessible for all which will be taking place next to the United Way's Community Resource Fair. Gather, share hope, resources, & raise awareness and acceptance of the different types of special needs in our community.

Call us for tickets and to reserve your free shirt.

### Bistro in the Buttes 2022

Saturday, May 7, 2022

5:30 pm

The Bistro in the Buttes will be an in-person outdoor event which will include dinner, live auction, raffle, and live entertainment. Join us for a night with friends and celebrate our children with special needs.

Bistro in the Buttes is our longstanding community event raising funds to support programs such as Able Riders, support and play groups, parent trainings, and system navigation.

For more info call (530) 751-1925 or check the [familysoup.org](https://familysoup.org) in March to register.

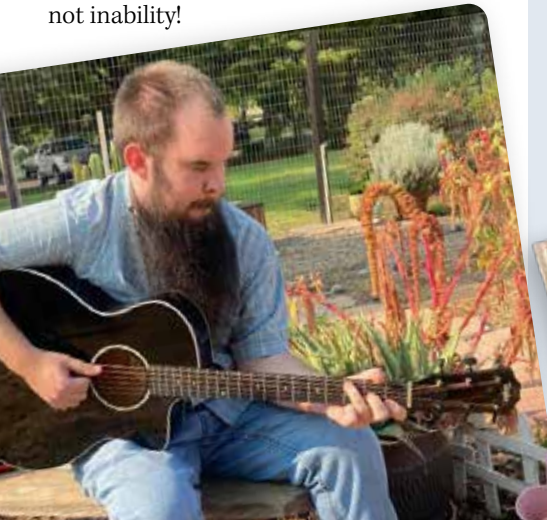


Stay up-to-date by following us on Facebook or Instagram @familysoupyubacity or visit our website calendar at [familysoup.org/events](https://familysoup.org/events)



# Meet the **Staff** Travis Nichols

My name is Travis Nichols. I am a 22-year-old completely blind man who was born and raised in Yuba City aside from a stint at the California School for the Blind. I have always had a passion for helping to uplift and empower my fellow brothers and sisters within the disabled community. I remember my old music teacher, a blind man himself, would always tell us, "We are blind, not broken." This quote has been a bit of a guiding mantra when faced with adverse situations. And I believe that this quote translates to any and all disabilities. Ever since my early years, music has been a part of my life. I have been a bluegrass/american musician for going on eleven years now. In my experience, music has been one of the strongest, most effective empowerment tools in my arsenal. It transcends any and all barriers and helps to promote connection and camaraderie. I am indescribably grateful that I was able to acquire this position with Family SOUP as a Youth Coordinator. We may be tiny, but boy, are we mighty. I look forward to meeting, connecting, and growing with as many of you as I possibly can. I end this with a sincere stay safe and an exuberant see you soon, and remember, disability not inability!



## In Our Library... Dots for Tots

In an effort to provide media that is accessible to any and all persons, the Family SOUP Lending Library has introduced a brand-new section containing braille books for young children. Along with stunning tactile graphics that the kiddos are sure to love, the books contain a wealth of information that will allow a child to learn braille in a fun, mind-broadening way. One book in particular, "It Can't Be True!" by DK Braille, accomplishes this in spades. This recent print/braille acquisition is a book that is filled with wondrous comparisons and mind-blowing facts that will allow a child to gain an understanding of just how massive some of our world's biggest animals, places and things are. If you are the parent of a child with a visual impairment or simply one with an inquisitive mind, this book, along with the others in this section, will not disappoint.

Head over to [familysoup.org/library](http://familysoup.org/library) to browse the available titles and check out books & DVDs online!





# Highlighting Some of Our Students!



It is amazing to me and so rewarding to watch our students grow while they ride!

Written by Jamie Nichols - *Able Riders Instructor*



**Kaiden** :: When we first met he was shy and would get overwhelmed easily. With each passing session this boy's sweet and happy

personality is shining through! From fighting his helmet, answering with no to each question even if he meant yes, or struggling to get on his horse.

Now happily giving me his hand to stand still to put his helmet on with a huge smile on his face getting ready to ride. Now he climbs up the steps of the mounting block with confidence! He would put his arm around my neck as I lifted him on, but last week I got to stand next to him as he mounted his horse all on his own! Our last session was the first time he never said no to a question. I was so very proud of his words, his thank you every time someone helped him! These are big strides in our arena!

I struggle putting into words what it means to watch all our students grow. To watch our students laugh, or get so creative when hiding a stuffed animal from me!

So many strides are being made each week! Some of our kids put 2 hands in the air with confidence during stretches, when before they wouldn't let go of the horn. The laughter we enjoy, the jokes that are made are priceless. I am so grateful to continue to build friendships and enjoy our laughs.



**Daniel** :: One of our non-verbal students, was very shy and reserved when we first started riding together. Mostly repeating what I would say. Each riding session he is growing

and showing so much confidence! If asked which stuffed animal he wants he can point and tell us the name. When asked a question he will answer what he would like to do! It's simple but a huge stride for us. He loves giving the animals a ride on his saddle and when I ask him the names of each animal he is loud and proud to say each name! I am so very proud of him and enjoy his giant smile... even though he smiles bigger when he sees the "John Deere" feed truck come through.

## Meet the **Board**

# Nicolo Orozco



Having grown up in a family served by Family SOUP, I am so excited to join the board! My earliest memory at Family SOUP is waiting in the library as a child reading a book about how all cats have

autism. Over the years, I have come to appreciate what an amazing community resource Family SOUP is and the value of their mission of empowerment.

I earned my bachelor's degree in Psychology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. before returning home to Yuba City to pursue a career in education. In the Spring of 2020, I began a graduate program in Elementary Education only to quickly pause and step back to join California's Disaster Healthcare Volunteer Program when schools physically closed. I spent much of 2020 serving those communities most stricken by disaster and helping those who had nowhere else to turn.

After what was such a difficult year for all of us, I was so happy to return to education and serve students the way I best know how. I am now teaching an amazing group of 5th and 6th grade students who I learn from every day, and today I live in Yuba City where I take care of my amazing rescue dog, Squiggles.

I look forward to bringing my personal passion and strong experiences to Family SOUP as we continue to work to empower families of children with special needs and serve our community. I hope to meet you all soon!

## Meet the **Staff**

# Elizabeth Hermosillo-Ervin



Hello! Allow me an opportunity to introduce myself as the new Spanish Peer Navigator to Family SOUP. My name is Elizabeth Hermosillo-

Ervin, I was born and raised in Mexico, but I am now a long-time resident of the Yuba Sutter area. I have been married for over the last 17 years, and I am a mother of four charming boys named Jacob, Elliot, Rocco, and Milan. I felt very flattered when Family SOUP approached me to become a part of their team. Family SOUP has made my experience raising my two youngest boys with special needs easier and more enjoyable by providing support, encouragement, and most importantly resources. Being a parent to children with special needs is filled with joy along with many ups and downs, and having a shoulder to lean on is always helpful. In the past for an abbreviated period of time I participated as a Family SOUP Board Member, a position I left due to my youngest son having a compromised immune system. Nowadays, I am about to achieve an Associate Degree for Transfer in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis on special needs. As a family we enjoy going to the beach and participating in any activities where our youngest son is fully included. As for my favorite things to do, I like to drink my morning coffee and to learn how to grow succulents. I cannot wait to start working with all of the Spanish speaking families that could benefit from my experience, encouragement, and support!



# Meet the **Board** Kindlelon Respicio



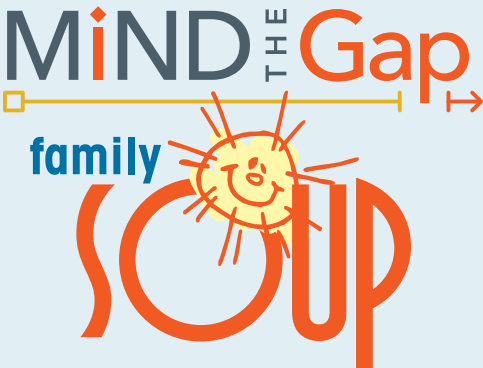
My name is Kindlelon (Kobie) Respicio. Family SOUP has been a very important part of my life for the past 14 years. They helped my transition from the Sutter County Special Education Program to mainstream education.

I had a hard time learning throughout my elementary school years and was labeled mentally retarded. However with the support of Family SOUP, Mary Pickering, school teachers and the disability learning center, I was able to succeed. This got me through my middle and high school years. In June 2017, I graduated with honors from Yuba City High School.

At 13 years old, I started Kobie's Quest with the motto "Believing in children and young adults with intellectual and physical disorders can be high achievers". Family SOUP was the sponsor. The team ran 5k runs to help raise awareness of people with intellectual and physical disabilities. At 11 years old, I joined the Yuba -Sutter Special Olympics swim team and have

swum with the team, each year, ever since. In 2017, I was honored with an Honorary ESPY award for swimming and my educational accomplishments, as well as my commitment to help make a difference for people with intellectual disabilities. This led to my receiving a proclamation by the Mayor of Yuba City, Stan Cleveland.

In May of 2021, I graduated from Saint Mary's College of California in Moraga with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Justice, Community and Leadership with a minor in Ethnic Studies. I am currently working on my master's degree in Organizational Leadership at Saint Mary's College while working part time with the California Department of Rehabilitation. I aspire to pursue a PH.D. in Leadership at Gonzaga University. Family SOUP impacted my life, I do not think I would have gotten this far without them. Now it's time for me to give back to Family SOUP as a member of the Board of Directors. Living the life as a person who has autism and a significant learning disability, I hope to help Family SOUP make a positive difference to children and young adults who have an intellectual disability along with their families.



**Has your child recently been diagnosed with a developmental disability or delay?**

Would you like help understanding your child's diagnosis and support as you navigate the special needs service system

To sign up or for more information please call Family SOUP at (530) 751-1925

or visit our website at <https://www.familysoup.org>





Family SOUP is excited to congratulate

# Jen Johnson

as one of the recipients of the:

## Ryan Jon Maloney Continuing Education Scholarship!

### “My Inspiring Story”

by Jen Johnson

Let me tell you my inspiring story about my experience and perseverance as I continue my education as someone who has been diagnosed with a disability. It all started when I was very young, and I was in elementary school. My mom put me in special educational classes because I was diagnosed with mental retardation at a young age. As I progressed in school it got hard for me to learn as much, I loved to learn what was being taught in class. As it was time for me to go into middle school it got even harder for me to learn and understand what was being taught there and I was giving speech therapy to help. As I got to the 8th grade and almost ready to graduate middle school and go on to high school. I was scared because I was afraid, I couldn't make it even though at the age of 10 I had a goal in mind to get my high school diploma and then eventually go onto a college and maybe a university.

When I graduated middle school and went on to high school. I still had to take special ed. classes because I was learning less than everyone else was and the kids made fun of me and called me names. I even had to take an extra year of high school to get all my credits. My disability was proving to be a handle for me and eventually lent to

me having anxiety and depression because I was very lonely and didn't have a lot of friends for having this disability. Even though I had that dream in mind to get my diploma and go to college one day. When it did come time for me to graduate from high school, I got to learn more about my disability and found out they now call it a learning disability instead of mental retardation. I graduated high school with a certificate of completion saying I completed the required course. I was happy with it but still let down because of my disability. I want to go far. So, when high school was over, I applied for Yuba College. I got in and took a few classes and found out the

*Thank you to our generous donors, in memory of their loved one, for making this scholarship possible.*

hard way that without having that diploma I couldn't get financial aid and I didn't have a job at the time. So, coming up with money for books, supplies and lunch was hard, and my classes were doing

poor. After a semester of college, I dropped out and talked with my father about how to get my diploma. He told me about this school online called Penn Foster High School where they send you all the books and you study; take the test and you get your diploma.

Well, I went for it even though I had this disability. It took me at least three to four times on each test to get a good score to pass it. I never gave up even though there were times that were hard, and I wanted to quit because it took so long for me to learn



it. I never gave up though, I kept going at it. Eventually after five or six years and some tutoring from a friend I eventually

got my high school diploma. I was determined to get my diploma even though I had a disability. After I got my diploma, I took a break from school altogether then finally went back to college. I took a few more classes and eventually I saw myself failing again cause my disability was getting the best of me at learning. Eventually I found a program at the college called D.S.P.S which stood for Disabled Students Programs and Services. At first when I approached them, I was scared because I didn't want people to know that I had a learning disability, and that people would make fun of me. When I walked into the D.S.P.S building everyone inside was very nice and asked if I needed help. It made my anxiety go away and I said, yes, I need to talk to someone about having a learning disability and they told me I was in the right place. After I signed up with my counselor, she gave me the courage and confidence that I could succeed in college despite having this disability.

To this day I still have my disability and even though it still takes me longer to do my work and studies I push through and even though I am almost finished and soon to get my certificate of Veterinary Assistant. Which I had no idea I could do. I want to push myself further if I can and go to a university with a disability because I believe in myself and I believe I can do it and get the degree I want. It might take me longer to get it, but it never stopped me before. So, this is my inspiring story and experience and perseverance as I continue my education as someone who has been diagnosed with a disability.

## Meet the Board

# Janine Hughes



I am very excited and honored to be a part of the Family SOUP board. I have worked in special education for the past sixteen years in a variety of capacities serving in

different districts, counties and non-public schools. In my different career experiences, I have had the opportunity to work in the entire continuum of Special Education from preschool to age 22. Over the last five years, I have worked for Yuba City Unified and Sutter County Superintendent of Schools which have both given me great experiences in the area. I have a love for our students and the work we do in supporting them to reach their full potential. One of the areas that is important to me is the support of the staff to be their best when working with our student population. It is vital that Special Education staff get the support and the training that they need in order to provide high quality Special Education services to students. Recently, I changed positions and I now work at Auburn Union School District as the Director of Student Support and I reside in Lincoln. I have a fifteen-year-old daughter who is making her way through high school and learning to drive. For fun, I love spending time outdoors and exploring what the world has to offer as far as nature, city or just general fun. Throughout the years, I have been very impressed with the work done by Family SOUP and the support that they offer. I am looking forward to being part of the Family SOUP board and the continued support for the community.

# Board Members

Kimberly Butcher ..... *President*  
 Matthew Miller ..... *Vice President*  
 Cynthia Martinez ..... *Secretary*  
 Sukh Purewal ..... *Treasurer*  
 LaDonna Curteman  
 Kindelton Respicio  
 Janine Hughes  
 Nicolò Orozco

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Adrienne Maloney ..... *Executive Director*  
 Amber Soto ..... *Administrative Assistant*  
 Travis Nichols ..... *Youth Coordinator*  
 Chris Hickey ..... *Resource Parent*  
 Cynthia Sandoval ..... *Resource Parent*  
 Navpreet Gill ..... *Peer Navigator*  
 Elizabeth Hermsillo ..... *Peer Navigator*  
 Cindy Chandler ..... *Regional Liaison*  
 Janis Perrucci ..... *Financial Director*  
 Brenda Leonhardt ..... *Able Riders Director*  
 Jamie Nichols ..... *Able Riders Instructor*

# Our Mission

is to empower families of children with special needs through support and education to reach their full potential as members of the community.

We are a 501 (c)3 tax exempt non-profit organization.

Your donations make our programs possible.

## Thank you Sponsors & Supporters:



### Return Service Requested

**If your address changes:** Each returned piece of mail costs us \$0.50 and your Family SOUP mail is delayed. If you move, please call or email Amber Soto with your new address at: (530) 751-1925 or [ambers@familySOUP.org](mailto:ambers@familySOUP.org)



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Nicolo Orozco

.....

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Cynthia Sandoval ..... *Resource Parent*  
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Elizabeth Hermosillo ..... *Peer Navigator*  
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