



**SLO County Help Me Grow** is a county-wide system that supports children and their families by providing free developmental screenings and linkages with community services to promote healthy growth and development for all children from birth to age five. Help Me Grow brings together families, pediatricians, early care and education, and human service providers to ensure that San Luis Obispo County's children reach their optimal potential.

## **NOVEMBER'S HERO**

Kristin Gautrey  
*Early Start Service Coordinator  
Tri-Counties Regional Center*

**Kristin Gautrey is a champion for children, supporting some of our most vulnerable families, particularly through the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

As an Early Start Service Coordinator with Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC), Kristin uses her expertise within a statewide system of early intervention resources for infants and toddlers. Early Start is a family-centered approach designed to help children reach their greatest developmental potential -- offering specialized instruction, therapy and behavior services, and parent-to-parent support.

Though Kristin has been with TCRC for almost 7 years, she has worked with young children ever since high school in a variety of different roles such as Summer Camp Counselor, Preschool Teacher, After-School Director and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Provider. It was while working with children on the spectrum that Kristin found her true calling in the field of special needs. The work is also what ultimately led her to become a foster parent. She says that seeing how families can be broken and repaired really inspired her to want to be a bigger part of the process, and she is grateful for a partner who shares that vision.

TCRC values Kristin's optimism, her ideas and ability to maintain a professional outlook and demeanor in difficult situations—keeping her eyes on the end goal no matter what—to best

serve both the individual child and family unit. As with many agencies, the Pandemic forced a quick flip to remote models for Early Start services, and Kristin made this transition feel as safe and positive as possible. She is in frequent communication with families, and always checking in to see how they are adapting within this ever-changing landscape of care.

Though it can be tough and messy work, Kristin cherishes watching the progress her families make, being their steady cheerleader and celebrating the little moments along the way. Her message to moms, dads and caregivers is to always trust your gut instinct and speak up if something feels "off" with your child. We know the earlier the better for addressing developmental concerns, and there is a great system in place thanks to agencies like TCRC that specialize in providing supports to ensure that our young children don't fall through the cracks.

**Thank you, Kristin.  
You are a true Hands-On Hero.**