



**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.

## **JULY'S HERO**

Susanne Murphy,  
*MA Education Specialist*  
*Early Childhood Special Education*

**Susanne Murphy is a Champion for Children, providing a level of skillful support for some of our most vulnerable little ones—that has a lasting impact for years to come.**

For more than 25 years, Susanne has worked with children facing complex challenges. Her career in Early Childhood Special Education began in college, when she went into homes to help young kids who had profound disabilities. Since that time, Susanne has used her knowledge and expertise in a variety of settings: preschools, assessment and intervention sites, and now as an Early Intervention Specialist with the SLO County Office Education (COE) for children aged birth to three years. Referrals often include children who are deaf, hard of hearing, have orthopedic impairment, deaf/blindness, and visual impairment, among others. Early intervention for these children is a high priority, as their families understandably have more needs, more questions, more specialists, and more elaborate case management details. Susanne and her team at COE provide these supports—giving parents safe space to share ideas, get feedback, monitor progress, and swap uncertainty for empowerment by gaining a better understanding of their children's unique strengths.

Without a doubt, Susanne is changing lives through her insight, patience, and compassion. Colleagues say children really respond to Susanne and make remarkable progress under her

gentle guidance and comforting presence. Consider the story of Kayla, a very shy little girl who would not talk to anyone, but was able to connect with Susanne and the two formed a special bond. Mom Manuela credits Susanne for teaching her how to help Kayla in new, effective ways. Furthermore, when Kayla needed to go to therapy miles away, Susanne found an organization to help cover the cost of gas, linked the family to other resources and has continued to be a mainstay in their journey. For Susanne, this role is a gift; she says it is most rewarding to witness the growth and transformation in parents as they help their child(ren) reach individual milestones. She also believes strongly that it is our job as a community to connect families to the supports they need to raise healthy, strong individuals. We could not agree more, Susanne.

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



"Hands-on Heroes" is a recognition program, coordinated with partner agencies, that honors individuals making a difference in the lives of young children and families. The year 2021 highlights Heroes working in child growth and development. To learn more about "Help Me Grow" and "Hands-on Heroes," please visit [slohelpmegrow.org](http://slohelpmegrow.org) and [first5slo.org](http://first5slo.org).