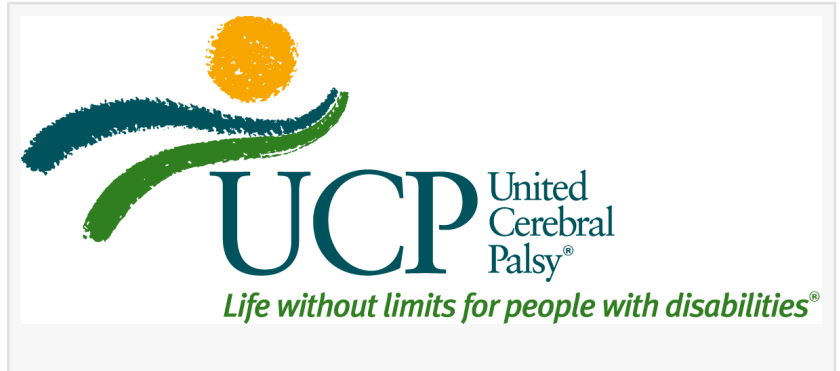


United Cerebral Palsy Conference Gathers Leaders, Advocates, and Innovators to Advance Disability Inclusion and Services

UCP's Annual Conference explored innovative solutions, addressed challenges in disability services, and advanced inclusion for people with disabilities.

VIENNA, VA, UNITED STATES, May 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [United Cerebral Palsy \(UCP\)](#), an international



leader in providing resources and assistance to individuals with disabilities, recently concluded

its 2026 Annual Conference in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, bringing together affiliate leaders, advocates, partners, and disability community stakeholders from across North America for a week of collaboration, innovation, and connection.

“

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Diane Wilush, interim president and CEO of United Cerebral Palsy

Centered on the theme of Elevating Vision, Expanding Horizons, the conference aimed to prepare the UCP Affiliate Network for tomorrow’s challenges — including funding uncertainties, rising service demands, and the ongoing direct support professional workforce crisis. Sessions also highlighted emerging research, innovative technologies, and forward-thinking service models shaping the future of disability services.

Throughout the event, attendees engaged in discussions focused on advocacy, workforce development, service innovation, leadership, healthcare technology, and

strengthening community inclusion. Speakers included disability experts, affiliate leaders, advocates, healthcare professionals, and community partners focused on improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities and their families.

“This conference showcased the incredible strength, creativity, and dedication that exists across the UCP Network,” said Diane Wilush, interim president and CEO of United Cerebral Palsy. “When

we come together around a shared mission, we unlock new ways to expand opportunity and strengthen our services. The ideas shared here will continue to shape our work moving forward.”

A keynote address from comedian, author, and disability advocate [Zach Anner](#) stood out as a highlight of the conference. Born with cerebral palsy, Anner shared his experience of receiving therapies as a child through a UCP Affiliate in New York — a full-circle moment that resonated deeply with attendees. He encouraged the audience to embrace authenticity, resilience, and inclusion.

“Coming back to speak at a UCP event felt incredibly personal,” said Zach. “Organizations like UCP helped shape my journey early in life, and having the opportunity to share my story with people who are changing lives every day was truly special.”

Attendees also praised the conference’s collaborative atmosphere and forward-looking focus.

“This conference was energizing on every level,” said John Sprogis, president and CEO of UCP of the Inland Empire in Palm Desert, Calif. “The opportunity to learn from peers, exchange ideas, and reconnect around our shared mission reinforces the power of this network and the importance of the work happening in communities every day. There were so many valuable takeaways from exhibitors and partners offering resources and solutions that can help us strengthen services and better support the people we serve.”

UCP also honored exceptional individuals and organizations during the conference through its



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UCP Annual Conference attendees engaged with a robust lineup of exhibitors and partners offering resources and solutions that can help affiliates strengthen services and better support people with disabilities.

annual awards program, recognizing impactful contributions to service, innovation, public policy, and community partnership across the network. Honorees included:

- Roger Slingerman (UCP+ of Central California), recipient of the Excellence in Leadership Award
- Lori Opiela (UCP of Seguin of Greater Chicago), recipient of the Service Excellence Award
- U.S. Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (Pennsylvania), recipient of the Legislative Award
- Steven Ortiz (Mutual of America Financial Group), recipient of the Chair Award

“Working with UCP has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career,” said Steven Ortiz. “Through this partnership, I’ve gained a deeper understanding of how important UCP’s mission is — promoting independence, inclusion, and opportunity for people with cerebral palsy, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and other disabilities. It’s truly an honor to support this work and the incredible impact the network has in communities across North America.”

“UCP is a network driven by purpose and possibility,” added Wilush. “This conference was a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when leaders, advocates, and partners come together.”

The 2026 UCP Annual Conference was made possible by the generous support of these proud sponsors who share UCP’s commitment to advancing independence and inclusion for people with disabilities: Jazz Pharmaceuticals, MassMutual SpecialCare, The Mahoney Group, Numotion Foundation, and Waymo.

The 2027 UCP Annual Conference will take place April 12-14 in San Diego, where the network will gather once again to advance innovation, expand opportunity, and strengthen inclusion and independence for people with disabilities. UCP welcomes prospective sponsors, partners, and presenters interested in contributing to next year’s event. For more information, contact PartnerWithUs@UCP.org.

About United Cerebral Palsy

United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) was founded in 1949, and today, its network of affiliate organizations across North America provides a wide range of services annually to approximately 200,000 children and adults with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. These services include information, resource referral, advocacy, research, educational instruction, early intervention, therapies, job coaching, integrated employment, home and community-based services, recreational opportunities, and housing assistance. UCP is committed to the mission that all people with disabilities should be treated as equal members of an inclusive society. [Learn more at UCP.org](#).

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