

[Top Teachers & Employees](#) [Top Employee](#)

Tania Morales – 2024 Top Employee

Published March 4, 2024 Admin Only:



Beyond Blindness, Santa Ana

Charlie was born with a rare genetic condition called Hunter syndrome. He went into the hospital at 3 months old for an intensive two-week chemo course before receiving a stem cell transplant.

The treatment worked, but at 5 months old, an incident occurred during a surgery where his heart stopped for 35 minutes. Charlie survived, but suffered a massive brain injury.

“We went to save our baby only to go home with a list of disabilities and ailments we were never prepared for,” says his mom, Kristin McKay, in a letter to Beyond Blindness in Santa Ana. “He couldn’t lift his head, he couldn’t see and he had lost every ounce of personality he had worked so hard to gain. We went home with a very sick, very disabled child. I felt so lost, heartbroken and severely depressed. I spent countless hours late at night trying to learn about all of the new things he was enduring. But that’s when I met Beyond Blindness.”

That’s also when she and Charlie met Tania Morales, who has been named Parenting OC’s Top Employee of 2024.

“Tania has been our beacon of hope since the day we met her,” McKay says. “She entered our home and taught us about his cortical vision impairment while explaining all of the things we could do to help him with it. She explained all of the accommodations that could be made so that Charlie could still participate in learning. She gave me hope and she provided the tools to successfully advocate for him.”

Morales, who is now an Early Childhood Classroom manager, joined Beyond Blindness in March 2017.

“I have had the opportunity to work in almost every department that is related to students,” Morales says. “I worked as an assistant teacher, early interventionist, lead teacher and now as a manager. Exploring and understanding each position has helped me grow into my manager role. I understand what my staff needs, and the needs of the children and parents.”

Beyond Blindness President and CEO Angie Rowe says Morales is always very focused on the development and safety of the students.

“Tania builds personal relationships with her students and families,” Rowe says. “She makes every child and parent think they are her favorite student and family. She attends birthday parties and adoptions ceremonies for all her kiddos outside of working hours. She truly goes above and beyond all the time.”

And always has a smile on her face.

“Tania has such a positive attitude and cares deeply about our mission and the work we do,” Rowe says. “No matter how short-staffed she is or stressed she is with what is going on in her classrooms, she never, ever shows it. She’s always got a smile on her face and is putting the kiddos first. No matter what.”

Morales says she’s inspired by the children and their development that she sees every day.

“What inspires me the most is knowing how much potential each child has and how capable they are,” Morales says. “I have had the opportunity to work with a lot of families for a very long time and have created an amazing relationship because I have not only seen their child grow, but the parents as well. They are a great inspiration. Everything is possible.”

Morales says that every day at Beyond Blindness is an adventure.

“You never know what’s going to happen or how our day is going to be,” she says. “Having four wonderful classrooms can keep you busy. Typically, I check in with all my staff and make sure they are OK and ready for the day. I do tours with potential new families, meet with current families and occasionally I must be a lead teacher or an assistant when we are short-staffed.”

As for Charlie, he will no longer attend the Beyond Blindness preschool program because he has now graduated to transitional kindergarten. But, McKay says, he is a Beyond Blindness alumnus forever and will receive services as he needs them. She recalls the impact of those early days working with Morales.

“Prior to Charlie starting the day program for infants, Ms. Tania had us come to the school for his early intervention session so we could get acquainted,” McKay says. “My son could not sit up on his own at that time. Tania took him right to a table and sat him in a slightly modified chair to work on an activity. I was blown away to see that he could actually sit in the chair and did so well. While she probably didn’t bat an eye, it was a huge turning point for me. That was the moment that I realized that I needed to always try new things with Charlie, even if I thought he couldn’t do it, because he deserved the opportunity to surprise us. That one simple moment empowered me to challenge Charlie.”