

Hector Del Valle, MSW is the Southern Regional Coordinator for the Accessible Icon Project. Mr. Del Valle's life changed forever when, as a high school student, he got behind the wheel after drinking and using drugs and was in a car accident. Paralyzed from the accident, he continued his drug use to tune out his injury. At his high school graduation, Mr. Del Valle spoke from the heart about his accident and drug use. In 1985, he met then President Ronald Reagan in person during the president's campaign to raise the drinking age to 21. Mr. Del Valle's story quickly gained national attention, and he developed a passion for public speaking—visiting high schools across New Jersey to persuade kids to learn from his mistakes.

Mr. Del Valle sought out help for substance abuse in 1989 and uses his experiences to help others. He worked for an independent living center instructing Latino families about disability services. Mr. Del Valle earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Central Florida and worked as a counselor with homeless veterans at the Center for Drug-Free Living in Orlando. He is currently spearheading efforts to bring more recreational activities and resources to Central Florida for wheelchair users. Mr. Del Valle started a Central Florida chapter for the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA) as part of that goal.