

## "The Purpose of Life is a Life of Purpose"

– Robert Byrne

*Being valued and included. It's the fabric of Tierra's mission; and, exactly how Renee Steimer and Linda Anderson feel as longtime employees of The Daily News. Renee, who celebrated 16 years, and Linda, who celebrated 14 years, have been Tierra's longest working employees with the newspaper since the partnership began in 2000.*

When Renee was born, the doctors informed her mother that she had Down syndrome and would not live past her second birthday. Today, Renee is 55 years old and, thanks to those who believed in her, has led a full and productive life.



Renee and Linda at The Daily News

Limited services and society's lack of understanding of the value of a child with Down syndrome brought much heartache and frustration to Renee's mom who knew her daughter was capable of more than she was being offered. "I fought long and hard with the Board of Education and the Regional Center to get Renee the support and education she deserved," tells Judy. "She was part of several pilot programs for children with special needs at a variety of public schools; and, although they seemed progressive at the time, the teachers lacked the dedication and commitment that these children needed."

"That all changed the day she came to Tierra del Sol, over 30 years ago. The staff at Tierra saw her potential and believed in her. Renee blossomed and grew in leaps and bounds. She learned new ways to communicate and express her opinions."

*Continued on page 2*

"Back in the 60s, there were basically no services for children with Downs and having Renee at home, full-time proved challenging on many levels. At age 10, she moved into a group home, but spent a great deal of time on the weekends with her siblings, who loved her dearly," recalls her mother, Judy Steimer. "Although initially she could not speak, she was able to understand everything and had a level of intelligence beyond what people gave her credit for."

## Message From Rebecca Lienhard, CEO



*That's been one of my mantras - focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end, because once you get there, you can move mountains. – Steve Jobs*

Our message is simple. Our values are simple. Our mission is simple – Workforce Development, College to Career, and Careers in the Arts. Simple. Yet, for the 750 individuals with disabilities who Tierra del Sol supports each year, the road is unique, and at times, complex. *Continued on page 2*

## Life of Purpose (continued from page 1)

"We were so grateful to those at Tierra who valued her and took the time to discover her gifts and abilities. It wasn't long before she began volunteering at senior centers, the YMCA and eventually got a paying job at *The Daily News*."

"I remember the day Renee was hired. She was one happy camper! After getting several paychecks, she took me to dinner and insisted on paying the bill," tells Judy with a tear in her eye. "We are all grateful that employers like *The Daily News* have given my daughter and others the opportunity to have a better life."

For Linda Anderson, life changed dramatically when she came to Tierra in 2000. Having lived at home with her parents her entire adult life, Linda moved into a group home shortly after her mother passed away and her father fell ill. "She was 51 years old and unsure of herself and her future," recalls Julie



Snyder, Tierra Client Services Manager. "After volunteering for several months in the community, her self-confidence grew and she began doing things she never thought possible, like taking public transportation by herself and learning to use a computer. Linda's positive attitude brought smiles to the faces of everyone at the senior center where she volunteered. It wasn't long before she got hired by *The Daily News*."

Today, Linda handles numerous administrative tasks in the newspaper's editorial and advertising departments, with skill and pride. "I love my job," smiles Linda. "The people are the best part, and I have a really cool boss. Earning a paycheck is great, too."

Ron Hasse, Publisher and CEO at *The Daily News*, shares, "Tierra employees operate much like everyone else in this organization. They show up on time, get assignments from their supervisors and work hard completing those tasks. Renee and Linda are fantastic individuals who make a difference in our organization and lift the morale of everyone they come in contact with. They have become like family and have made our partnership with Tierra a great and positive experience for everyone at *The Daily News*."



## Stand Up for Your Rights!

*Calling all parents and family members of persons with developmental disabilities.*

**Tuesday, October 18th – The Candidates Forum**

As two strong and longtime advocates of people with developmental disabilities exit their seats in the California State Senate, we must make our voices heard to those who will replace them! We must show those candidates running for office that we represent a significant group of voters who will cast their ballots for those legislators who value the lives of people with disabilities. Please plan to attend this important Candidate's Forum and show them that your loved one must not be forgotten when making important decisions about funding for people with disabilities.

**Tuesday, October 18th • 6:30 – 8:30pm**

**Sam's Café at New Horizons**

**15725 Parthenia St. • North Hills • RSVP 818-778-4416**

## Message from the CEO

(continued from page 1)

In this issue, you will read the success stories of people who have overcome the challenges of their disabilities on a daily basis, in order to find their passions, their voices and ultimately, their careers. These folks were born with Down syndrome, autism and deafness. These folks, for whom society has immediately diminished the possibilities, solely based on their diagnosis, are proving that, with the right supports and services, they can find their rightful place in the world. These folks are creating a world where their contributions are valued, their gifts are accepted, and their existence is fully woven into the fabric of the community.

You will meet Renee, for whom I had the honor of being her first job coach, when she accepted her position at *The Daily News*. Even now, I can remember walking the hallways with typical first-day jitters. I glanced over at Renee, who was walking to her desk with a sense of purpose, a look of confidence, and joy in her eye, knowing that she had a job. Sixteen years later, Renee has proven that people born with profound challenges can turn an opportunity of a job into a career of a lifetime.

Yet, these stories don't materialize by happenstance. These stories are borne from partnerships and the sheer determination and belief that our communities are stronger if all of their members are accepted and valued for their contributions.

Our focus is simple – a strong and vibrant community is one in which all of its members contribute their strengths and assets to the common good. Our mission is simple – empower people with disabilities to fulfill their potential and desire to become productive citizens who are accepted, included and valued for their contributions. In the end, it is worth it; we can move mountains.



# Holy Rosary Food Pantry for the Poor

*Tierra's professional volunteers further the mission of over 120 non-profit organizations throughout the San Fernando, San Gabriel and Santa Clarita Valleys. Over 600 volunteers gain valuable workforce development skills while providing over 55,000 hours of service each year. From senior centers to day cares, homeless shelters to animal rescues, Tierra clients are making a difference and changing our community!*

Holy Rosary Church in Sunland is one of the many sites where Tierra volunteers are helping the needy in our community each week. As an integral part of the parish's food pantry program, Tierra clients sort, bag, package and distribute food items to nearly 500 people each month. Thanks to a community effort, local businesses and stores donate hundreds of pounds of fresh produce, eggs, vegetables, bread, rice, canned meats, fish and other products on a regular basis. Tierra coach, Wendy Garcia, who has overseen the Holy Rosary Tierra partnership for 15 years, notes, "Lupe, Kevin and Phyllis take pride in what they do and those receiving the food are patient and grateful. We're glad we can be a part of such an important program that helps so many people."



## Tierra's Professional Volunteers Further the Missions of Community Non-Profits

### Dream Team Keeps Special Spirit Ready for Riders!

The Special Spirit Equestrian Center finds great value in the work that Tierra's professional volunteers do three days a week at their Shadow Hills location, where therapeutic horseback riding is provided for the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with special needs.

"We call the Tierra volunteers, *The Dream Team*, and they've been doing an amazing job for two years now," tells Eva Lund, founder of Special Spirit. With 20+ horses that need a place for their food and tack, as well as 40 individuals (ranging in age from 3-35) that ride each week, it can get overwhelming for us to keep these areas clean and organized. When Tierra comes to the rescue, we are ready for a busy weekend and our deck area is now free from dust, due to the great attention it gets from *The Dream Team*. We cannot thank the Tierra crew and support staff enough for their loyalty and support."



### Partnering with VIC Helps Valley's Seniors

Since partnering with the Valley Interfaith Council over a decade ago, the work of Tierra's professional volunteers contributed through our Workforce Development Services, has brought smiles to the faces of hundreds of seniors on a daily basis, throughout the San Fernando Valley. From packing and delivering lunches for 160 homebound and Meals on Wheels seniors each day to prepping and cleaning at the Alicia Broadus Duncan Senior Center in Pacoima, as well as entertaining the seniors at Olive View Manor Senior Center, Tierra clients experience the joy of giving back, while learning valuable job skills.

"They're awesome," tells Renee Ledesma, ABD's Community Relations Manager. "We serve lunch to 65 seniors each day at this center and the Tierra clients have been helping us prep and clean for over two years now. They are efficient, hardworking and help us immensely in feeding and caring for so many seniors in our community. There is always a need for great, dependable volunteers, and I'm not sure how we would get by without them."



## 2015-16 annual GIVING

### VISIONARY

The Ahmanson Foundation  
Honorable Michael D. Antonovich  
The Rose Hills Foundation

### INNOVATOR

Anonymous \*      John Gogian Family Foundation  
The Green Foundation      Rebecca & Michael Quevedo \*

### PARTNER

Diana & Kevin Brown \*      National Endowment for the Arts  
The California Endowment      Patti & Don Redding  
Kaiser Permanente Panorama City      Lon V. Smith Foundation  
Fanny & Svante Knistrom Foundation      Wells Fargo Foundation  
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### 2015-16 Giving Levels

Visionary	\$50,000 and above	Benefactor	\$2,500 – \$4,999
Innovator	\$25,000 – \$49,999	Patron	\$1,500 – \$2,499
Partner	\$10,000 – \$24,999	Friend	\$1,000 – \$1,499
Advocate	\$5,000 – \$9,999	In-Kind	\$5,000+ and above

### ADVOCATE

Autism Speaks  
Bolton & Company  
Mayer Brown  
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The Getty Foundation  
Raul Huerta \*  
Joyce & Henry Harris \*  
Hamer Toyota  
The Littman Family \*  
Joseph Nicoletta  
Montrose Church \*

### BENEVOLENT

Bill Allen \*  
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Dennis Degen \*  
The Walt Disney Foundation \*  
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Emergency Food & Shelter Program  
Caroline & Salvador Esparza \*  
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Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Foundation  
Heffernan Foundation  
Randall & Kay Huff \*  
Rebecca & Ray Lienhard \*  
Christine Likes \*  
Elizabeth Likes \*  
Jan & Stephen Maseda \*  
Lorena McWilliams \*

## *A Legacy of Love...*

Tierra was founded by eight trailblazing families who wanted more than what the world would allow their son or daughter to become 45 years ago.

Today, the dedication and sacrifice of our parents continue to keep Tierra alive for their loved ones, enabling them to lead a life of value and inclusion. Their altruism and foresight is what will also sustain Tierra's future for the one in six children now being born with a disability.



on of Tierra del Sol. Your exceptional generosity is a true reflection of  
th developmental disabilities to be accepted, valued and included.

## ADVOCATE

Pasadena-Foothills Association of  
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Jeanne Ward Foundation

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Diane & Craig Martin  
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National Health Foundation

Newman, Aaronson, Vanaman  
The Family of Susan Neal  
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Rountree Glass  
Kyle Stoutland  
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Karen & Tom Zimmerman

## FRIEND

Anonymous  
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Leonor & Thomas Anderson \*  
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Althea & Bud Brown  
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Dena & Ryan Fridborg  
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The Hafif Family Foundation  
Harrington Group, CPAs  
Interior Removal Specialists  
Kiwanis Club of Claremont  
Foundation  
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## LEGACY OF LOVE

The Bartus Family  
The Bryant Family  
Rosalee Garcia  
Estate of Lois Hansen

Estate of Patrick Harris  
Estate of Mary Ellen Hughes  
Shirley & Thomas Mahan  
Jennifer & Alan Moses

June Stanton  
Elisabeth & Milt Stimson

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTORS

The Daily News

Madeliene & Pat Modugno

US Foods

\* **Founding Circle of Inspiration Members**

Tierra is grateful for the commitment and vision of such parents as Elisabeth & Milt Stimson, the newest members of Tierra's Legacy of Love—a special group of individuals who have invested in Tierra's future through an estate plan gift.

"We added Tierra as a beneficiary in our will because, as parents, we feel that it is up to us to ensure that Tierra is around to serve people with developmental disabilities, long after we're gone," share Elisabeth and Milt. "Having the distinction of being started by parents, it is only natural that parents should

help ensure Tierra's long-term future for our sons and daughters. We believe in Tierra's values and hope that others will continue to support Tierra today, and also consider a plan that's right for them, their loved ones and Tierra's future."

For more information on establishing a Special Needs Trust or meeting with a Estate Planning Partner, contact Chief Development Officer, Cathy Galarneau, at 818-352-1419 x235, or [cgalarneau@tierradelosol.org](mailto:cgalarneau@tierradelosol.org).





## Artist Spotlight: LEUL ASFAW

Leul Asfaw's career as an artist has reached new and exciting heights in recent months, with the addition of curator and teacher populating his resume.

Born with autism, Leul joined Tierra's First Street Gallery Art Center in 2012, shortly after high school. Working inside a studio proved to be a huge challenge for the young artist, whose love of nature and passion for being outdoors was captured in exquisite landscapes that often depicted the relationship between earth and sky. As time went on, Leul became accustomed to working within a studio space and soon became a disciplined artist, researching work and developing stylized techniques, as well as experimenting with mixing colors that resulted in a signature palette. His painting and illustration skills became more prolific as he added ceramics and collage to his repertoire of artistic abilities.

Through his exploration of new media and projects, Leul challenged himself as both an artist and person this past summer, proven when he made his debut as curator for First Street Gallery.

By shifting his role from that of artist to curator, Leul stepped outside his own artistic point of view and explored the varying approaches and renditions of how other artists' captured landscapes and nature. "His deep interest and encyclopedic knowledge of the work of fellow artists made him the perfect candidate to serve as our first artist curator," tells Seth Pringle, Gallery Manager.

During the next several months, Leul worked with Seth to learn the multiple steps of curating an exhibition, which included developing a show concept, selecting and inviting artists, determining the gallery layout and using the basics of graphic

design. "I was very impressed with his decisiveness," shares Seth. "Once he selected a theme for the show, Leul knew what artists and work would be a good fit and made all the decisions,



moving forward. The result was a group show, entitled *The Clouds on Top of the Mountains*, an exhibition exploring the phenomenology of contemporary landscapes, which included selected work by First Street Gallery studio artists and artists from the region. Leul also learned the importance of marketing an exhibition and speaking about his curatorial vision, both on social media, and through in-person gallery tours.

Earlier this year, at the Joslyn Senior Center, Leul was also able to share his perspective and expertise in his new role as Teacher in the Tierra-led class series, *Exploring Art Practices*. Alongside fellow First Street Gallery artist Jonathan Jackson, Leul led a class of 20 students in exploring inner thoughts through collage techniques. Leul said of his teaching experience, "It's important for me to show people how to do art. It's fun to teach them. Art is challenging, but just have fun with it."





# Art Careers and Empowerment: MARIE GRACE PEDRIGAL

Upon introduction to Tierra del Sol, Marie identified herself as a deaf weaver. Like a musician is to an instrument, this artist is to her loom. With infectious enthusiasm and unwavering commitment, Marie Grace Pedrigal lives to work on her 36" inch floor loom. Her artwork comes from a deep personal narrative. Whether she creates paintings and ceramics, or scarves and tapestries, she does so with an obsessive dedication to telling her story: Her love for weaving.

By utilizing mobile applications to draft and design intricate patterns, Marie's work is at the intersection of technology and art. Her instinct for color and imaginative design extends beyond the loom. Marie's drawings center around her creative practice, her paintings illustrate landscapes of colors that tie into the yarn that warps the loom. She creates a foundation that reflects the beauty around her. Noting time of day, season, light and shadow, Marie Grace illustrates her dreamscapes and lived experiences.

This artist has, more than any before her, directed her own path. Sunland Studio Arts was growing, but the trajectory was uncertain. Marie anticipated the new direction, injected her passion, and quickly drew the attention of other artists. She began showing others the process, inspiration, and results of beautiful creations from fibers. She warped simple looms, and shared with admirers how they could weave something beautiful from seemingly plain materials. With the same patience and enthusiasm, she would teach American Sign Language to others so that they could learn her language and the vocabulary of the textile arts. Encouragement

through facial gestures, body language, and visuals, Marie Grace Pedrigal shows that there are no barriers when it comes to creative expression. "There has always been interest in fibers but starting a textile studio didn't seem plausible until I met Marie. She is the expert we needed, and she has a way of making you believe that you can achieve anything," says Maria Jones, Program Director of Sunland Studio Arts.

Sunland Studio Arts is a progressive art studio that supports artists to find passion, and venues to share their individual point of view. Artists work in fine arts, ceramics, and a new textile studio. Workshops and classes will be offered in each of these areas; come learn from artists who are passionate about the arts, like weaver, Marie Pedrigal.







9919 Sunland Boulevard, Sunland, California 91040

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The graphic features the text "14th Annual" in yellow script inside a red maple leaf. To the right, "TIERRA DEL SOL" is in small red uppercase letters, followed by "FALL FESTIVAL" in large green and orange serif letters. A yellow leaf and an orange pumpkin are also part of the design.

# 14th Annual TIERRA DEL SOL FALL FESTIVAL

Join Us for This Important Annual Fundraiser!

**Saturday, October 15th, 2016 • 10:00 am - 3:00 pm**

9919 Sunland Blvd., Sunland, CA 91040

**FOOD, FUN, ART, MUSIC and MORE!**

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