

## Employment for All

### *A Message from Tierra's CEO, Rebecca Lienhard*

As I began to reflect on the message for this newsletter, I realized that there has been one re-occurring theme throughout our years together — employment...for all.

You must know by now that I believe that everyone, here at Tierra, can be employed in some capacity in the community. This employment may vary from life-long volunteerism, short-term internships, to regular employee status, and every possible configuration in between. Employment is greater than being valued and accepted. It is a means of delivering ourselves out of poverty and gaining power and control over our lives. It is a means of evolving from being a dependent human being to an interdependent adult. It is a means of creating identity that goes beyond the disability label and changing the world - one person at a time.

Our staff have shown that they believe this, too. They have continued to support each of the people we serve to launch themselves into the lives that they desire. Their stories are inspiring and bring me to my knees with gratitude for the work that they do.

Our Tierra workforce deserves jobs with which they can support their families with good benefits, decent pay and an encouraging and engaging work environment. We must be willing to fight for this, as well!! To date, Tierra pays slightly above minimum wage, while still offering a good benefits package. But, this is not enough. We, along with many other providers throughout the State, are experiencing a 40% turnover rate. Many of our staff are forced to work second and third jobs, or simply leave to find higher paying jobs in other industries. It hurts you, and it hurts us, but more importantly, the people we serve feel these changes deeply, and it is simply not right!

We must continue to find companies who see that hiring a person with a disability is good business and not an act of charity. AND, we must fight together, at the State level, for fair wages for Direct Support Professionals.

I have made this commitment to our staff...

***I commit to never waver from my vision of 'employment for all.' I commit to being transparent, to fight for you at the State level, and to lead this organization with the values in which I lead my life — honesty, integrity, hard work, family and faith.***

Won't you join me? Together, we are stronger. Together, WE ARE TIERRA.



*Tierra's Direct Service Professionals celebrate a cumulative 93 years of service (see pages 4-5)*



# Outsider Art Fair 2019

Congratulations to the artists of Tierra del Sol's progressive studios for their second year of presenting work in the prestigious Outsider Art Fair in New York City! This year's January Fair brought more than 15,000 collectors, gallerists, curators, artists and art lovers together to walk through the wonderful gathering of galleries from around the world. Nine of First Street Gallery's artists were represented and almost all sold a piece during the exhibition. Paintings, drawings and mixed media sculpture by artists Evelyn Campos, Mary Lou Dimsdale, Julia Hagen-Brenner, Sarit Halo, Evan Hynes, Michael LeVell, Daniel Padilla, Helen Rae, and drawings by Hugo Rocha wowed the crowd. The First Street Gallery booth had new as well as returning fans, including Pulitzer Prize winning art critic Jerry Saltz and Director/Curator of White Columns Matthew Higgs. Matthew Higgs had his first view of Mary Lou Dimsdale's pieces and immediately posted praise of her exciting work on his trend-setting Instagram page.



Helen Rae, Artist with First Street Gallery

Outsider Art Fair, NY, 2019

Ted Degener, renowned Photographer, and Eric Lue, Artist with First Street Gallery



First Street Gallery booth at Outsider Art Fair, NY, 2019



# NICKELODEON

The artists working in Sunland Studio Arts were invited to exhibit their work in the gallery at Nickelodeon in Burbank for the month of February. The group exhibition featured bright and bold depictions of fantastical animals, landscapes, abstract, and figurative works to complement the fun and creative space the art and artists at Nickelodeon share.



Jacqueline Montes de Oca, Tierra Artist, and Victor Picou, Artist/Sunland Studio Arts Volunteer



Nickelodeon Art Gallery



Tierra Artist, Marlena Arthur, at Nickelodeon Art Gallery

## Artists-Teaching Team at LACMA and 7x7!

Los Angeles County Museum of Art hired one of Tierra's Artist-Teaching Teams to teach at the Museum!

Artist-Educators, Katie Mendoza and William "Bill" Marshall, led two successful back to back workshops for over 80 LA County educators at the Museum. The team, including two staff mentors, designed a creative lesson plan based on the museum exhibition, and led the groups to explore their own creativity and potential for art.



William Marshall, Artist-Educator



Katie Mendoza, Artist-Educator

A few weeks later, Katie and Bill recapped their teaching experience for a group of 50 guests by being one of the 7 presenters at the highly successful "7 x 7" event recently held at First Street Gallery, in collaboration with American Museum of Contemporary Art and the dA Center for the Arts. Bravo, Katie and Bill!

# 2019

## Already an Art-Filled Year!

**"Expressions" at Descanso Gardens, now through June 9, 2019**

This show includes work by Tierra artists Leul Asfaw, Anthony Barnes, Shaina Barnett, Evelyn Campos, Terra Clendening, Mary Lou Dimsdale, Manuel Guerrero, Victoria Gutierrez, Julia Hagen-Brenner, Sarit Halo, Jonathan Jackson, Trina Kirkman, John Lund, Jackie Marsh, John Maull, Dru McKenzie, Jackie Montes de Oca, & Vicente Siso.

**"Multiple Colors" at Square I Gallery, February 2019**

This group exhibition includes extraordinarily imaginative landscapes, portraiture, and creatively visualized ideas, by artists Marlena Arthur, Leul Asfaw, Anthony Barnes, Wesly Haynes, Jonathan Jackson, Michael LeVell, John Maull, Zack Stewart III, Antoinette Stroman and delightful miniature ceramic guitar sculptures by Herb Herod.

**"Interwoven" at First Street Gallery, through April 2019**

Artists at Sunland Studio Arts, who utilize looms and various needlecraft to create dynamic textile pieces, found their origins in The Felt Project, a recent guest artist collaboration with Artist, Lisa Anne Auerbach, Professor of Art at Pomona College. Artists explored felt as a medium for art production, creating dozens of unique works that were shown in the Chan Gallery at Pomona College.

**Felix Art Fair in Los Angeles, California February 2019**

Matthew Higgs presented and sold artwork by First Street Gallery artists, Helen Rae and Michael LeVell.

**Helen Rae solo exhibition at Good Luck Gallery**

First Street Gallery artist, Helen Rae, had her third solo exhibition at the Good Luck Gallery in Los Angeles, earlier this year. Helen enjoyed the show reception and a celebration of her 80th birthday, arranged by gallerist, Paige Wery. The show has since sold out to collectors from around the world and has been reviewed by Art Forum and Artillery Magazines, adding to Helen's extensive publications list.



# What Makes Tierra a S

Did you know that there are a number of individuals who have supported our clients for over a decade? Meet a few of the remarkable men and women who have dedicated their lives to people with developmental disabilities and learn what makes Tierra so special to them.

## Maria Isela Castellanos

*Direct Support Professional, 21 Years Served*

"When I started, I was 30 years old, so I've grown up with the clients. I didn't know how to speak English when I began, so my co-worker, Laura, took the time to teach me. Then, the clients taught me. The things I have learned have been because of



Tierra. I learn for my clients – they have helped me grow as a person, spiritually, and I've learned how to work with them. All the areas of my life, Tierra has been there.

For example, I was scared to touch paperwork and the computer, but now...I thank Tierra del Sol because they trained me and now I can do so much, more than I thought I could. Now I enter my T-logs, run reports, and I go...WOW, I know how to do that!"



## Susie Ayala

*Core Instructor, 18 Years Served*

"I have gone through a lot of heartache in my life. I lost my brother 11 years ago, which was very difficult for me, and when I came back to work, the clients would ask me, 'Are you okay? Sit down and tell me what's going on.' I was very sensitive and they lifted my spirits up. Three years ago, I lost my mom. I took time away to care for her because she had dementia. When she passed, I didn't want to stay home anymore. I needed to come to work and I saw that the clients filled so many voids within me. I was able to care for them and make a difference.



The love of the clients has made me stay here. I truly believe that they are my inspiration. When I started I was 42 years old, and now, I'm 60. The clients have seen me grow, seen my kids grow, and to me, they are part of my family. There are some clients and families I have grown very close to and have a life-long friendship with, and that is why I have stayed with Tierra for so long."





# Special Place to Work?

## Ketty Izquieta

*Direct Support Professional, 17 Years Served*

"When my son was diagnosed with ADHD, and later on, Tourette syndrome, it was so hard. He was very difficult, so I had to research ways to deal with him, and I took many trainings with regional center. Dealing with behaviors like my son's can be very hard. It is the same here. Sometimes, I have to work with clients who have very challenging behaviors and that becomes difficult. And since all clients are unique and they all learn differently, I have to get to know each person individually. But, I enjoy what I do. The

truth is, the pay isn't that great, but I don't

do what I do because of the money. I do what I do because I feel gratified and I take pride in my job. I am proud of what I do, and how much I help each person I have worked with.

Many people think what I do is hard, but I know my job, the clients, the environment... and when you know something, it is easy. That's why I have stayed at Tierra for so many years, I know what I do, I enjoy it, and I make a difference."



## Kurt Hagihara

*Direct Support Professional, 19 Years Served*

"I found the initial job opening in The Daily News under 'Social Services' and thought it would be a good match for my degree in Sociology. When I first started at Tierra, I observed clients participating in Ceramics and Art classes and playing basketball during their morning break. I was really excited to join such an uplifting atmosphere. Of course, it wasn't easy when I began. I worked with non-verbal clients who had assaultive behaviors, toileting issues, seizures, and ambulatory challenges. Through

many trying and exhausting days, I learned new ways to bond with the clients. Now that I work with clients who have professional volunteer positions, I enjoy seeing them do more tasks on their own.

The hardest part of the job is having to say goodbye. I've been to two funerals and a memorial service for three different clients. Each time, I wondered if I could have done more.

What makes Tierra special is that new challenges are constantly being presented and new bonds are always possible whether with clients or staff."



## Thomas "Tom" Miranda

*Direct Support Professional, 18 Years Served*

"There are key people at Tierra that have taken me under their wing and shown me the ropes. I enjoy what I do because I can see results.

A speaker that came to Tierra said, "Help the people you serve find their music. What makes them tick." Like when you hear a good song and it takes you to your happy place - you can sing it and you don't care how it sounds. But it takes you to that

place. That's what I look for when I work with each client and am building a relationship with them. I try to help them find their music, no matter what it is.

I have very strong relationships with the clients and the families I have worked with over the years.

I always told myself, if I ever work for someone, I'm going to prove a point and I'm never going to miss a day of work. So, in the last 18 years I have been with Tierra, I've never missed a day. It doesn't matter how good you are at your job, if you're not there, you miss out, so I make it a point to always be there."





# The Masedas Make A Lasting Difference

Jan and Steve Maseda, whose daughter, Theresa, has been attending Tierra del Sol since 2004, value what Tierra has done for their family. "If it weren't for Tierra, I am not sure what we would do."



The Masedas, both longtime, active board members, and Jan, Tierra's Board Chair since 2015, have invested countless hours, resources and talents into sustaining Tierra's mission. "We know that Tierra was started by families," tells Jan. "And, its continued success, is dependent on the support of each and every family of those Tierra serves, now."

"By joining the 'Legacy of Love' (Tierra's planned giving program), and creating a Special Needs Trust, we have the piece of mind of knowing that Theresa will continue to have the life she has now—where she lives and how she spends her days—after we are gone. And, by naming Tierra the beneficiary of that Trust, we are doing our part to make sure that Tierra continues to be there for Theresa and others, perhaps even without government funding."

"With our Special Needs Trust, along with the Letter of Intent that we established through *Tierra's The Future is Now Workshops*, we learned how to ensure that Theresa has a meaningful life. We hope that every Tierra family will think about planning for the future, sooner, rather than later."

"Tierra is a very special, unique place, and we would like to see it flourish for many years to come. With one in six children being born with a developmental disability, we need Tierra to continue to be there and help our loved ones and others lead a life of dignity, value and purpose."

**Watch your mail for upcoming "The Future is Now" sessions being held at Tierra in June and October. Contact Julie Snyder at [jsnyder@tierradelsol.org](mailto:jsnyder@tierradelsol.org), for details.**

## Believe and Trust That Anything is Possible



Tierra's programs and services have evolved over the years, empowering men and women to go into the community and apply themselves as professional volunteers and/or paid employees. However, the concept of going out into the world can be daunting, and many guardians and family members fear that this kind of transition just isn't possible for their loved one. The Giraco family had these fears when their son/brother, James, transitioned to a community-based, volunteer schedule.

Maria Giraco, James' sister, shares, "For years, James was under the protective wing of all things Tierra. Suddenly, he was being nudged out of the nest, and we were apprehensive by the lack of a safety net underneath. Our fear was the biggest challenge, not his."

It wasn't overnight, and it took work on the part of both Tierra staff and family, but a year later, James is thriving. Tierra Coach, Manny Grajeda, shares, "Volunteering in the community has empowered James, and for the first time in his life, he is using Access transportation and loves it!" And for James' Father, Gabriel, "That's what's most important to us, that James is happy."

Perhaps the most inspiring lesson any of us can learn from the Giraco family is how important it is to trust and believe in your loved ones. Maria's advice? "Believe wholeheartedly that your brother, sister, daughter, or son may be singularly labeled, but they are absolutely NOT limited. Do not allow your own uneasiness to keep your loved one from flourishing. Have faith, be emboldened, and know that change is good, especially for those we love the most."



From left to right: Gabriel Giraco, Nick Vega, James Giraco, Mauricio Palacios, Evan Babcock and Tierra Coach, Manny Grajeda





# Tee Off for Tierra!

On Monday, May 6th, Tierra held its 12th Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Angeles National Golf Club. A sold-out course and full house for the reception, auction, and dinner made the event a huge success.

***A highlight of the evening included a tribute to Bud Brown, whose 40 years of service as a valued and committed partner of Tierra del Sol was recognized by leadership, supporters and staff alike!***

Whether it's advisor, volunteer, fundraiser, donor, advocate, ambassador or Board Member—Bud's role in bringing growth and success to Tierra has always been about the clients.

A sincere and humble individual, whose business card reads, "retired twice," Bud is truly a people person. His enthusiasm for Tierra, and generosity in sharing personal and professional relationships over the years, has created valued and long lasting partnerships with businesses, organizations, educational institutions, and individuals throughout the San Fernando Valley.

When Tierra needed funding in the late 90s, Bud was influential in initiating the *Burn the Mortgage* Campaign and raising money from Hamer Toyota's Annual Golf Tournament, which ultimately paid off Tierra's entire mortgage. The milestone event was celebrated in 1997, with a huge bonfire on the Sunland Campus, where clients, families, staff, supporters, and firemen, alike, watched Tierra's mortgage, go up in flames!



Sarit Halo, Tierra Artist, and Bud Brown

In 2015, Bud began the *Opening Doors for the Disabled* Campaign which raised funds



to pay for the installation of automatic doors throughout Tierra's Sunland Campus, ultimately empowering even the most severely disabled individuals to enter and exit buildings with the touch of a button.

He later raised funds that paid for the installation of electronic gates, which gave staff who started and stopped their day in the early morning hours or late at night, the luxury of staying in their cars as they entered and exited Tierra's campus.

While fundraising and advocacy has kept Bud busy over the years, he never lost sight of his relationship with the clients and staff—all who agree, Tierra is a better place because of Bud Brown.

## Special Thanks to Our Major Sponsors!



Los Angeles Daily News





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[www.tierradelsol.org](http://www.tierradelsol.org)

Join us for the  
**Summer Tile Workshops**  
at the Progressive Studios of Tierra del Sol  
**Saturdays**

**June 1st and 15th**

**9:00 - 11:30 am or  
12:30 - 3:00 pm**

**Sunland Studio Arts**

**9919 Sunland Blvd., Sunland**

**contact: [mjones@tierradelsol.org](mailto:mjones@tierradelsol.org)**

**June 8th and 22nd**

**9:00 - 11:30 am or  
12:30 - 3:00 pm**

**Upland Art Studios**

**134 N. 2nd Ave., Upland**

**contact: [lromero@tierradelsol.org](mailto:lromero@tierradelsol.org)**

**Watch your email for details and our events calendar at [tierradelsol.org](http://tierradelsol.org)**