

WINTER ISSUE 2021

Looking Forward to New Possibilities



L to R: Tierra's Lelani Dixon, Program Director; Rebecca Lienhard, CEO; Jan Maseda, board member with daughter, Teresa, Tierra associate

Tierra's associates, their families, and our staff each have a story to tell. Their experiences, development, and overall involvement – be it professional or personal – are part of the intricate fabric that makes the history of Tierra del Sol dynamic and essential to our community. As we lead with our values of person-centeredness, honesty, respect, and full engagement, we continue to open the doors of opportunity and lay the foundation for generations to come.



Theresa Natividad with son, Neil, Tierra associate

In this issue, you'll read about Tierra through the words of the people we serve, our families and staff, and those who weren't afraid to support our mission and make noise at the Capitol level. You'll also enjoy highlighted moments from our 50th Anniversary celebration as well as successes that took place this Fall.

Rebecca Lienhard, Tierra's CEO, shares, "It warms my heart to see so many testimonials from our folks. These individuals are shining examples of the hundreds of people we serve each day who are in the community, making a difference, helping propel Tierra's mission forward and reminding us that we are creating a world where value, employment, and independence are possible, regardless of the notion of disability."



Patrick and Karren McClenahan, board member with daughter, Kelly, Tierra associate

What is tierra to you?

"Tierra helps me conquer my fears and believe in myself. To me, Tierra del Sol feels like home. I can always reach out to my job coach, or anyone else, if ever I need anything. They are there for me."

Chloe Houghton
Tierra Board Member and
Workforce Development Associate



"I look at Tierra as not only an organization, but we are a big family, helping and uplifting each other. No matter what background we come from or what ethnicity we are, we don't look at that. We look at how we can better ourselves. Some people who have inspired me at Tierra are my coach, Romina, for teaching me how to take feedback and be more positive. And, Michael Leon, for helping me become more confident with my public speaking skills."

Matt Maher
Tierra eLearning Instructor and
Workforce Development Associate



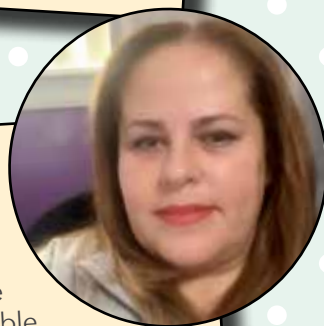
"Not only is Tierra a place for people to learn to work in a professional environment, it is also a place where all people are accepted and included. May this great foundation continue for the next 50 years so all people, everywhere, are accepted and included every single day."

Michael Leon
Tierra eLearning Instructor and
Workforce Development Associate



"All of our past and present associates at Tierra del Sol are family. We help each other achieve our desired goals and objectives while learning and sharing valuable life skills and experiences."

Minelva Davila
Workforce Development Instructor



H I R E D !



Anthony Vasquez
Hired by Smart & Final
as a Store Associate



Jacqueline Cuellar
Hired by Khol's as a
Part-Time Associate



Natalie Loera
Hired by Macy's as a
Recovery Associate



Sirui Chen
Hired by California Pizza
Kitchen as a Kitchen Assistant

Congratulations to those who landed the job! And, good luck to the well-trained candidates who are looking forward to earning a paycheck in the coming year.

“What would our world be without those that can paint, draw, weave, or sculpt?”

The creativity and talent of our artists never ceases to amaze me. By giving these individuals the freedom and tools to express themselves, we’ve found a way to not only share their talent with the world, but to also give the world the gift of their work. The business of being an artist is real. From preparing a portfolio and curating work to creating art, this is a career path that Tierra artists definitely take seriously.” —Rebecca Lienhard, Tierra CEO



“To me, being an artist grants me purpose and a sense of belonging to show that we can reach our goals and we can reach new heights we aren’t even aware of. My goal is to use my art and my public speaking as a vehicle for advocacy. And, not just for me, but for all the individuals at Tierra, and beyond!”

Shaina Barnett
Sunland Studio Artist



“My name is Evan and I’m proud to be an Artist. I am also an art curator, arts educator, and a spokesperson for both my art and the art of others with developmental disabilities.”

Evan Hynes
Upland Art Studios Artist

CAREERS IN THE ARTS ZINES DEL SOL

Check out the highlights from Zines del Sol, a group show of artwork, zines, ceramics, textiles, and more, all created by the artists at the Tierra del Sol Studios!

If you would like to purchase artwork from this show as well as from other Tierra artists, visit tierradelsolgallery.org and check out our online store.



Celebration TO THE NEXT



“This celebration is about the people we serve. Their stories, their accomplishments, and their challenges were made possible by you, their family members, our amazing staff, and many dedicated community partners. Thank you for the role you played and helping us celebrate and honor those who have been a part of Tierra’s history, today’s successes and tomorrow’s endeavors.”

Rebecca Lienhard
Tierra del Sol CEO

“We need to support organizations like Tierra...50 years of not just inclusion, but helping people live to their full potential. It’s one of the things I love about Tierra. You see it in all the folks who have spoken today, that they are living life and they are doing things, it’s positive, and it warms my heart every time I interact with this organization. I am so grateful for the work that you do and will continue to be supportive in any way that I can. Happy Birthday, Tierra!”

Bob Blumenfield
Los Angeles City Councilmember
3rd District



“I’ve been with Tierra’s NEXUS program for nine years. I started at Los Angeles Pierce College and graduated with a certificate in Child Development. I did my internship at Child Development Institute (CDI) and have had several internships that followed CDI. My last internship was with Metro Link, which was paid. Internships have helped me learn my strengths and weaknesses, and I’m still taking college classes online to pursue office work. I’m also learning acting from the Born to Act Players and am loving Tierra’s eLearning workshops!”

Nilasha Kurukulasuriya
NEXUS Student in Tierra’s
College to Career Program



L to R: Tierra’s
Rebecca Lienhard,
CEO, Nancy
Bissonette-
Andrew, Chief
Clinical Officer,
Julie Snyder,
Life Planning
Navigator, and
Rebecca Hamm,
Director of
Arts, were each
honored for 30+
years of service
with Tierra.

rs and Cheers XT 50 YEARS!

TIERRA DEL SOL
FOUNDATION

50th

ANNIVERSARY
1971-2021



“I am proud to represent this community and Tierra del Sol in the state assembly. When I was elected, one of the first persons I met with was Rebecca Lienhard and other advocates, who came to my office to tell me more about, not just this organization and the amazing work they do in our community, but about the movement of inclusion. And that's what we are celebrating here today, 50 years of inclusion and training everyone for the workforce.”

Luz Rivas
California State Assemblymember
District 39



“My name is Debbie Bidel and I am 38 years old and I came to Tierra del Sol ten years ago. I was nervous when I started my program because I did not know anyone. The staff made me feel very welcome. Tierra has taught me so many skills and I have worked at wonderful places. Last year, I learned a lot about computers, and I did not know anything about Zoom before the pandemic! Now, I can show my dad what to do when he is stuck and needs to get into his zoom meetings.”

Debbie Bidel
Associate in Tierra's
Workforce Development Program



Remembering Shirley Sydow



Karen and Shirley Sydow – the early years



In May of 2021, Tierra and others said farewell to Shirley Sydow, a longtime Tierra parent whose devotion to her daughter Karen, inspired thirty years of remarkable volunteer service and the love of so many whose lives she touched.

As the parent of a daughter born with cerebral palsy and autism in 1960, Shirley experienced firsthand the challenges and isolation of raising a child with developmental disabilities. "There were no services back then to help Karen or support her," shared Shirley in a 2017 interview. "Tierra became her life and we were happy for her to have a place to go; a place that provided the best environment for each individual."

Her role as a tiger mom and passion to get involved at an organization that helped her

daughter was immediate and contagious. For 15 years she led a parent service group and organized annual spaghetti dinners that raised money for a new pool heater and air conditioners for the classrooms among other on-going improvements for clients and staff. Although soft-spoken, Shirley was never intimidated to address a room full of people, especially when it came to advocacy for those with disabilities. As a highly skilled quilter, she hand-crafted beautiful quilts that were donated to Tierra's fall festivals, galas, and golf tournament auctions. In 1998, she joined Tierra's Board of Directors and continued inspiring parents to get involved through advocacy, volunteerism, and fundraising.

Having worked closely with Shirley for many years, Steve Miller (Tierra's past CEO) recalls, "When I think of Shirley, I'm reminded that love is an action word. She poured her love for Karen into devoted service to every school and organization that served her daughter. Her service to Tierra as leader of our parent service group and on our board, helped us establish a culture and set of values that honor the uniqueness and basic goodness of each person and family it serves. What a Legacy!"



Chef Shirley at Tierra's Spaghetti Dinner



Several months after we said goodbye to Shirley, Karen passed away. In honor of Karen's life, Shirley's son, Erik Sydow, wrote a loving, unconventional obituary about his sister that went viral after LA Times journalist, Daniel Miller, retweeted it and wrote an article. The story touched hundreds of thousands of people and resulted in McDonalds and Coco-Cola hosting multiple fundraisers in honor of Karen, designating a percentage of the funds to Tierra's programs and services. It's moments like these when the universe reminds us we are not alone and the story of our lives is more impactful than we realize.

Thank You to Our 2020-2021 Circle of Inspiration Members

Your exceptional generosity is a true reflection of your commitment to empowering all individuals with developmental disabilities to be accepted, valued and included.

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The Stanton Family

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Foundation

PARTNER

(\$10,000 - \$24,999)

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COI Members: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



9919 Sunland Boulevard, Sunland, California 91040
www.tierradelsol.org

SAVE THE DATE

15th Annual *Tee Off for Tierra!* *Charity Golf Tournament and Auction*

Monday, April 25, 2022
details coming soon



**NORTH RANCH
COUNTRY CLUB**
- Westlake -

On behalf of the men and women we serve, Tierra's Board of Directors, and staff, we wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with good health and happiness. Thank you for celebrating this commemorative year with Tierra del Sol. We look forward to the opportunities that await us all in 2022!

Check us out on social media:

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