

A Space for Possibilities



Kurt Freidenberger sets up for Kidspace visitors

interests them.” Miguel Lyons-Cavazos, Tierra’s PIP Project Coordinator, adds, “Any business can participate in a PIP! Once an internship has been completed, our goal is for the associate to get hired by the company where they currently work, or by another potential employer offering a similar position.”

The PIP process is usually fairly simply, but since Becky, Kurt, and Karen are served by three different regional centers, it took some time and planning. Michaela adds,



Karen Hoge prepares art materials for Kidspace visitors

When we think about partnerships at Tierra, we envision a solid relationship built on the foundation of shared common core values, opportunities for growth, and the mutual understanding that people with disabilities can, and should be, included and valued for their unique abilities. At Kidspace Children’s Museum in Pasadena, where Tierra associates have been volunteering since 2010, that vision has come to fruition through a full-circle partnership.

Currently, Rebecca O’Donnell (aka Becky), Kurt Freidenberger, and Karen Hoge work at Kidspace twice a week. Starting off as volunteers, this group raises the bar when it comes to displaying dedication and commitment. Michaela Sanchez, Tierra Workforce Development Program Manager, shares, “the enthusiasm they exude is admirable and infectious and hasn’t gone unnoticed. We knew, after such a successful volunteer partnership, it was time to take our relationship to the next level and introduce Kidspace to the Paid Internship Program (PIP). Through a PIP, the State of California will pay the wages of individuals with disabilities for up to a year to give them valuable job experience in an industry or career that

“It’s something Kidspace and Tierra wanted to make happen, so we invested in the partnership and remained optimistic.” In October of 2019, Kidspace transitioned from volunteer partners to PIP partners.

When looking back at the development of the Kidspace PIP partnership, Vince Dominguez, Kidspace Operations Manager, shares, “We weren’t sure how it was all going to work out. But, what we did know is that we wanted Becky, Kurt, and Karen on board because they’re part of our team and do a great job. The four core values at Kidspace are community, creativity, joy, and inclusivity, the latter closely aligning with Tierra’s mission. We stand by our values and practice what we preach. The PIP program with Tierra has been one of the best decisions we’ve made.”



Becky O’Donnell spreads her wings for Butterfly Season at Kidspace

(Continued on page 2)

A Space for Possibilities *(continued from cover)*

In 2020, the pandemic brought a year-long closure to the museum, and the PIP partnership abruptly halted. The health and safety of guests and staff were the highest priorities. And, while they reopened in May of 2021 and wanted Becky, Kurt, and Karen to return, it took time to navigate the new normal that had impacted budgets and schedules.

Michaela explains, "There were a lot of unknowns, but we kept communicating; and this February, our associates returned to their positions. Our relationship with Kidspace is so natural. When I visit the museum and I see Becky, Kurt, and Karen working, I see no segregation based on disability. It's what we strive for and want for all Tierra associates."

Pauline Zuniga, Tierra Workforce Development Instructor, adds, "Kidspace includes them in staff meetings and events like the bagel breakfast and company picnic. They've all grown so much since being back. Kurt and Becky know their schedules and each museum station. And, Karen can't wait to show me what she's accomplished at the end of every shift!"



Becky O'Donnell works with children visiting Kidspace

and Karen as employees. When the right match happens, inclusion organically transpires, the stigma of societal barriers disappears, and the world holds space for possibilities.

When asked what's the best part about working at Kidspace, Becky, who holds an associate degree in child development from Los Angeles Valley College, exclaims, **"The kids! We get to sing, dance, and play with children every day. It's a lot of fun. This is my dream job!"**

The partnership that began 12 years ago has an even greater purpose these days. Vince shares, "Having Tierra associates on our team sets an example to all the children that come here. Representation matters. It says, 'yes, you can have a disability and still have a career and make a difference in the community.'"

Tierra is proud to announce that as of this July, Kidspace

officially hired Becky, Kurt,



Karen Hoge organizes Kidspace inventory



Kurt Freidenberger shows Kidspace visitors the ropes

A Message from Tierra's CEO, Rebecca Lienhard



Happy Summer! In this edition, you will find highlights of Michael Leon's speech where he articulately summarized his life's journey with a keen understanding that 'quit' was not in his vocabulary. I am hoping that throughout the pages of this issue, you will find a similar theme. Kurt, Becky, Karen, Andrei, and Kevin are doing the same with their new positions. Since January, 18 associates have secured a new paid job, eight associates have gotten a paid internship, four individuals have received a promotion, two artists held sold-out shows at Tierra's Gallery, one artist gave a live talk at Fox Corporation, and five students have earned an Associate of Arts degree with three matriculating to Cal State Northridge in the fall. In their own way, each of these amazing people has demonstrated that 'quit' was not in their vocabulary either.

During my 32 years with Tierra, I have worked with hundreds of individuals who have challenged the world's opinion of ability and the definition of success. It is an honor to work beside such determined and gifted individuals. I hope that you will find a small glimpse of these lives in this summer edition. Cheers!

Congratulations Kevin Hand!



Kevin Hand, Tierra Associate, has been a longtime valued volunteer for the YMCA of the Foothills, who, prior to the pandemic, volunteered at the Créscenta Valley Family YMCA branch four days a week. When the YMCA re-opened after closing for almost two years during the pandemic, they contacted Tierra and asked Kevin to return, not as a volunteer, but as an employee! Debbie Pile, YMCA Membership Administrator, explains, "Kevin was such an excellent volunteer. He had a good rapport with the members and really grew as a worker. Then COVID hit. But, when we re-opened and brought Kevin back, he flourished!"

Through Tierra's Paid Internship Program, Kevin is officially a valued employee of the YMCA of the Foothills working three days a week, five hours a day. Vince Inculano, YMCA CEO, shares, "When I saw Kevin in a YMCA staff shirt earlier this week, it literally brought joy to my heart...Kevin is a Y Staff Professional. Truth be told, he was always part of our family, but I gotta say, it sure feels good to see him in a staff shirt! One of the best parts of my day is when I arrive in the morning, and on the way up to my office I see Kevin hard at work. We share a 'hello' and a smile and sometimes talk about the Dodgers."



A story like Kevin's is what we strive for every day at Tierra - person-centeredness, passion, honesty, value, respect, and full-engagement. We believe opportunities like this are possible for our associates, students, and artists through valued partnerships and diligence. Many thanks to our amazing partners at the YMCA for setting an example that we hope many businesses will consider following. Congratulations Kevin!

Congratulations Andrei Maté!

Let's give a big round of applause to Andrei Mate, Tierra Workforce Development Associate, who recently completed his first 30 days of employment at Amazon Fresh!

A 2021 alumnus of Project Search, a program dedicated to preparing high school students with disabilities for success in competitive integrated employment, Andrei was offered a position with Amazon Fresh during his last week of the program and started immediately after graduation. Andrei's job consists of a number of tasks, including keeping the store organized, clean, and making sure inventory on the floor is well-stocked. He's been doing such a good job that Amazon had him working on the biggest shopping day of the year - Prime Day!



Karla Rodriguez, Tierra Workforce Development Instructor, shares, "Over the past thirty days, Andrei has developed and learned so much, and he does the majority of his tasks independently. From learning how to use a handheld scanner to communicating any issues that arise with his team, Andrei has become a more well-rounded employee in the past month and his support team couldn't be prouder. Despite being on his

feet all day and spending extended periods of time in the walk-in refrigerators, Andrei has never once complained. Amazon Fresh is lucky to have an associate like Andrei!"

Andrei's parents, Irwin and Marian Mate, are incredibly proud of how much their son has accomplished, exclaiming, "Time flies so fast and it's our son's 30-day anniversary!" Marian added, "As his parents, we couldn't be more grateful for the love, support and congratulatory messages Tierra del Sol and the staff, managers/directors, and his peers have given Andrei. They've acknowledged his potential, harnessed his strengths and capabilities, and helped him develop his skills with Project Search all the way down to how he continues improving his innate abilities. Special thanks to Karla for doing a great job as Andrei's job coach and updating us on his daily activities during his work week, as well as to Moriah Magdaleno, Tierra Program Manager, for putting together all that Andrei needed to get this wonderful job at Amazon Fresh."

Andrei, keep up the incredible work! We'll be rooting for you and checking in very soon.

Tierra's Summer

A valued resource

"Estate & Late Life Planning."

June 15th

"Preserving your assets to ensure your wishes are fulfilled after you're gone is something each of us should do, sooner rather than later," stated Angela Wethor, attorney, CPA, and Corporate VP with New York Life's Advanced Planning Group. "Establishing a will, living trust, and medical directives, as well as assigning an informed and willing executor/trustee, are essential to the process. By having an estate plan, you can avoid having your assets go to probate, which in California, can be an expensive and drawn-out process, often taking up to two years." When addressing Special Needs Trusts, Angela noted that these are important for family members with disabilities so that their inheritance is protected, while preserving their eligibility to receive Social Security and Medicaid benefits. Reviewing these plans every few years and addressing changes that can result from disability, death, discord, divorce, or distress, as well as changing tax laws, were also key takeaways.

"Failing to prepare... is preparing to fail" --- Benjamin Franklin

"The last couple of years have certainly taught us that we do not know what tomorrow brings," shared Julie Snyder, who asked the poignant question, "Have you thought of a plan to care for your loved one with a disability, after you're gone?" As Tierra's Life Planning Navigator, Julie has worked with numerous families to help them begin the process of developing a plan for all aspects of future caregiving. She emphasized the importance of answering simple questions such as creating a "Letter of Intent" to document how their loved ones will be cared for as they both age and change.

Answering simple questions such as: What is their daily routine? Who are their friends outside of their home? and identifying likes and dislikes, are all important in creating the Letter of Intent.

Citing that this is the first generation of adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities who are living normal life spans and will most likely outlive their parents, Julie noted that communicating with siblings and family members to put a plan in place is key to avoiding disruptive changes in all parties' lives. Because the aging process for people with disabilities is so new, systems and services are currently underprepared to assist families with identifying their needs and creating an in-depth plan. Tierra is prepared to help with this process by assisting in creating a Letter of Intent that serves as a roadmap for families to translate their dreams for the future into specific goals and an action plan.



Series Workshops

orce for families!



Understanding Alzheimers in Individuals with Down Syndrome

July 12th

Eric Doran, Manager of UC Irvine's Down Syndrome MIND Program and Sharon Trocki-Miller, family advocate, were the featured speakers at Tierra's 2nd Summer Series workshop.

For families with a loved one with Down syndrome, the information presented by Eric Doran was of tremendous value, particularly with this population's lifespan tripling from what it was 50 years ago. Eric's 20 years of research shed new light on the fact that 25% of people with DS are over age 40 and will live another twenty years; yet, Alzheimer's continues to be their leading cause of death. And, while signs of the disease are most commonly seen between ages 50-53, it can often develop five to ten years prior. Eric addressed the signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in people with DS stating, "Promising research is being done to develop testing to identify the early onset of the disease and reduce its symptoms. Certain medications and identifying good health habits, (diet, exercise and sleep) have also proven helpful in combating this debilitating disease."

Sharon shared the personal side of growing up and caring for her younger sister, Robin, a twin with Down syndrome, who developed Alzheimer's dementia. Her touching story resonated with many families on the call and provided insight to the love and care that a person with DS needs, particularly as they age.



Parent Focus Group

August 17th

As a Regional Trainer for the National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia practices and a Certified Late Life Planner who has assisted hundreds of Tierra families in planning for the future, Julie Snyder hosted a Parent Focus Group as Part III of Tierra's Summer Series Workshops. Eric Doran joined Julie to provide key resources and field candid questions from parents whose loved ones have intellectual and developmental disabilities. "Many parents have been asking for this kind of support group for some time and we look forward to hosting more in the coming months," shares Julie.

For future Parent Focus Groups and questions regarding person-centered life planning, please watch your email or contact Julie at: jsnyder@tierradelsol.org or 818-415-2331.

Meet Christiam Osorio

This year, Christiam Osorio, who started working in the Upland art studios in 2019, sold her first piece of art. Her amazing mixed media piece sold from the Tierra del Sol Studio Call online exhibition. When she heard the news, she couldn't believe it and was overcome with joy and surprise. Christiam shared the news with fellow studio artists who began to cheer and broke into a celebration dance! She was so happy and almost in tears. Christiam thanked her art mentor and exclaimed, "I am an artist! A really good artist!"



Christiam Osorio in Tierra's Upland Drawing Studio



Air Balloon and Pyramid and Cake and Lady Gaga, by Christiam Osorio. Mixed Media On Paper, 18x24, 2022

save the date

ZINE ART WORKSHOP

Tierra's Artist Teaching Teams returned this summer with a Zine Workshop at the Joclyn Senior Center.

Keep an eye out for this fall's art workshops and join us for a creative experience!



Tierra's 15th Annual Golf Tournament

A Hole-in-One!



Blue skies and warm smiles were par for the course as 140 golfers teed off at North Ranch Country Club's Lakes & Valley courses Monday, April 25th, at Tierra's 15th Annual "Tee Off For Tierra" Golf Tournament. The shot-gun start, BBQ lunch, dinner reception, and silent auction, were highlighted by an inspirational speech from Michael Leon, Tierra Associate and eLearning Instructor.



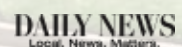
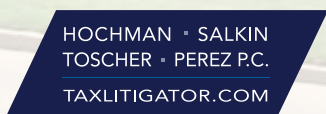
"I'm extremely proud that you have chosen to support Tierra del Sol by participating in this golf tournament. People with developmental disabilities in my neighborhood—and YOUR neighborhood—should be included... in schools, sports programs, church activities, and the workforce! You can help associates like me to be a part of your business. You can do this by being friendly, supportive, showing respect, and including us because we want to work, and we want to contribute to society and the community at large."

A standing ovation followed Michael's closing words, "The one thing I want to ask you to do today, tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day... treat people with developmental disabilities just like everyone else."

On behalf of all the people Tierra serves, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our sponsors, golfers, donors, dinner guests, volunteers, and Golf Committee.



THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR SPONSORS





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

Thank You for Being Our Champions!

On behalf of the more than 750 associates, students, and artists that Tierra del Sol served last fiscal year, *thank you for being our champions.* Because of you....

We volunteered in the community to help others in need.
We got our first job and proudly earned a paycheck.
We completed college degree and certificate programs.
We created art and inspired others.
We taught our peers online and worked hard to reach our goals.
And, we showed the world what people with disabilities are truly capable of.
You are our champions of inclusion and value for all people with disabilities, and we are grateful for all that your generosity has done to help us continue leading meaningful lives.

Your continued support makes a difference.
Visit tierradelsol.org for details on ways to give.



Check us out on
social media:

📷 [tierradelsoldn](#)
📘 [tierradelsolfoundation](#)
🐦 [tierradelsoldn](#)

