



Our mission is to protect, foster,
develop and advance the rights
and interests of people with
developmental disabilities.
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OUR BEGINNINGS: 1971

In late 1960s and early 1970s, a new era was dawning for the developmentally challenged. New attitudes and new laws would take those with disabilities out of institutions and place them in the community and more in the mainstream. As parents, we were excited about the better lives now promised to our intellectually challenged children. We saw the new system as an opportunity and as a responsibility to create the very best lives possible for our children. We were active in helping to establish the San Fernando Valley's first public schools for the developmentally challenged – West Valley School, East Valley School, and the Diane Leichman High School. After these schools opened in 1970 and 1971, we turned our attention to our children's future.

Concerned about their opportunities and care as adults and their long-term living arrangements, we had a vision for our children's future. Thus in 1971 we formed a nonprofit organization, originally named The Valley Parent Group for the Trainable Mentally Retarded, to advance the rights and interests of people with developmental disabilities. From then on, it was full speed ahead for us. We learned about grants, foundations, licensing, building codes, and state, city and county regulations. We attended community meetings.

Our thanks to Dolores Zimmerman for her "History of Valley Village," upon which much of this narrative is based, and to Guenther Engel for his chronicle of Valley Village.

THE LATE '70S: OUR FIRST GROUP HOME

As parents, we worried constantly about what would happen to our adult children when we could no longer care for them. We wanted to provide for their permanent care. We had envisioned a village, but the government wouldn't fund that approach because it didn't involve the residents enough in the broader community. So we took the mainstream route and, in 1976, a dream came true as we opened our first home for adults with developmental disabilities. The residence in Sylmar housed six young women. We called the home Valley Village. The parents actually had to shovel out debris from the building that they spruced up and furnished. June Stanton made the curtains and bedspreads for the six women. We had a grant promised, but we had to get the home ready -- furniture, kitchen utensils and all – before the home could be inspected and approved.

THE LATE '70S: OUR THRIFT SHOP OPENS

In October 1976, our Thrift Shop opened at 7329 Reseda Blvd., the first of several locations for the store over the years. Volunteers would put in countless hours collecting donated items and staffing the store. The revenue from the Thrift Shop was vital then. It was often needed to fund equipment or payroll for our service programs.

OUR EARLY LEADERS

Our Valley Village family owes a tremendous debt to the founders and early leaders of the organization, who worked tirelessly to create programs, services and structure for people with developmental challenges. All who helped in the early years were pioneers. We can't thank you all by name here, but be assured that we appreciate your contributions in leadership, time and assets, and we know we wouldn't be where we are without you. You can take pride in the organization you created.

"From the beginning, so many people helped. A lot of educators who didn't have a developmentally disabled child also gave their time and shared their expertise. We are grateful to all who aided the cause of Valley Village and the developmentally challenged."

--Dolores Zimmermann

"The hopes and dreams of the founding parents for a lifetime of dignified care for their developmentally disabled children have been so generously fulfilled by Valley Village."

--June Stanton

Fred Chapa, our first executive director, served Valley Village for more than 25 years. His typical reply when presented with a need for Valley Village: "Not to worry."

THE LATE '70S AND '80S: MORE HOMES

Our next home, for young men, opened about a year after the home for women. Altogether in the late '70s and early '80s, we opened five more homes. Later in the '80s, we started to purchase homes again. Over the years, we have added new homes for a present total of 18 family-style homes throughout the San Fernando Valley.

THE '90S: A DECADE OF GROWTH

The 1990s brought many changes, beginning with our name. In 1990, we changed our corporate name to Valley Village. Also in the early '90s, we opened after-school and day-camp programs for school-age children at the West Valley Special Education Center.

In the mid '90s we opened first Adult Development Center, which provided activities to stimulate our clients as well as being a safe place for them to spend the day. Here they developed both motor skills and life skills. They also enjoyed music, arts and crafts, and fitness programs, which provided additional stimulation and therapy. In 1994, we opened a 12-bed nursing facility to provide the extra care needed by our clients with health conditions.

THE LATE '90S: GROWTH CONTINUES

In 1995, we purchased Valley Village Center in Winnetka, with the first floor devoted to the Adult Development Center, and with administration and the nursing staff for the residential program on the second floor. The adult development program here is divided into two components: the core adult development center and a behavior component.

MOVING INTO THE NEW CENTURY

In the early 2000s, Astoria House, a continuous-care nursing home, opened to care for our medically fragile clients. The Sunland Adult Development Center and Adult Day Health Care Center also opened.

In the early part of the decade, the Thrift Shop closed after many years and various locations. Records show that it earned over \$1 million thanks to the dedication and loyalty of volunteers. It had kept us going through lean times.

In 2001, we purchased the McDonald's restaurant property next door to our Winnetka administration building. We converted the building, and we were able to expand our day program and open our after-school program. In 2002, the Valley Village Foundation was established to act as a supporting foundation for Valley Village to ensure its long-term viability and fiscal stability.

"I love Valley Village. The commitment of the volunteers and staff is amazing. From the early 1970s when the founding parents met to plan for their developmentally disabled children's future, Valley Village has grown into a model program providing residential and day programs. It is truly the place where adults with developmental challenges thrive. Valley Village is an asset to the community, and I feel privileged to be assisting in this worthy endeavor."

-- Councilman Dennis P. Zine, Los Angeles City Council, Third District, Retired and Valley Village Foundation Board Member Emeritus

THE 2010S: HARD TIMES (AGAIN)

We entered the second decade of the 21st Century in a recession, with unemployment high, foreclosures rampant, and belt tightening our new mode of life in government, business and personally. But our clients are still smiling.

While much has changed in the past four decades, for our clients, much remains the same. They still need continuous care, and they and their families depend on us to provide a safe, nurturing environment. Many of our clients have grown older and have much greater needs for care, and our funding gets tighter. Through the decades, the commitment of our staff and our generous supporters stays strong, keeping Valley Village the place where people with developmental challenges thrive.

2011 AND BEYOND

In 2011, we celebrated our 40th anniversary. We have weathered many a storm financially but our commitment is stronger than ever. We serve some 400 clients in our residential and day programs. We have two Adult Development Centers and an Adult Day Health Center. We are a model program for services for adults with developmental challenges. Our level of in-depth medical services makes us the only program in the San Fernando Valley where developmentally challenged adults with medical problems can attend day programs. Our homes are cheerful and are residents well cared for. They feel safe and they have fun.

In 2013, we opened our Larkspur Home. Larkspur is our newest nursing home to care for medically fragile individuals coming out of the state developmental centers that are now being closed. As part of the state legislation that created the home, there is a nonprofit housing corporation that owns the house and a nonprofit that runs the programs. Valley Village operates the residential component and provides an in-home day program for our clients in this unique partnership.

As of 2014, we have 17 residential homes and four condominiums for clients who can benefit from a less restrictive setting. Many of our residents have stayed for years, and they are no longer young.

The men and women that Valley Village continues to serve are aging and we continue to look for new funding opportunities and partnerships in the community so that we can provide safe and enriching programs for our clients, even when traditional funding sources are scarce. In 2015, Valley Village again faces serious reductions and unfunded programs. In the same year, Valley Village is invited to join the California State University Northridge Neighborhood Partners In Action Canoga Park Initiative, that matches us to new resources in the community. Valley Village's Executive Director, Debra Donovan is also a leading advocate for the developmentally disabled and is often asked by local, state and federal elected officials for education. It is an exciting, yet challenging, time to be a part of the community at large, as well as the special needs community.

"For over 40 years, Valley Village has been serving families in our community. Thank you for your continued dedication to support, protect, and foster those with developmental disabilities. It is truly an honor to be involved with this incredible organization."

-- Councilman Mitchell Englander, Los Angeles City Council, Twelfth District

45th Anniversary

Valley Village celebrated 45 years of service in 2016. We continue to serve some 400 individuals with a staff of over 350 throughout the San Fernando Valley, now with a budget of over \$18,000,000.00.

Despite our success, we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to advocate vigorously for our clients with our legislators and pursue new funding to provide the best care possible for our very special clients. But we can do it, for it's a labor of love.

Thank you to our volunteers, supporters and staff for over 45 years of hard work and generous giving.