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Las Trampas Inc. Celebrates 50 Years of Service to the Developmentally Disabled

By Sophie Braccini



Ron Kilgore in the "Sensory Room" Photo Sophie Braccini

On Thursday October 16, Las Trampas Inc. will host an Open House & Art Show in the Lafayette campus at 3460 Lana Lane (off Moraga Boulevard). Las Trampas is celebrating its 50th anniversary with an art show, music, a raffle, campus tours and refreshments.

In 1958 founding parents bought and incorporated the 3.5 acre property and facilities that had been started a few years before as a school for developmentally disabled children. The Center evolved to what it is today, a range of programs and services for adults who have some degree of mental retardation.

Las Trampas manages licensed group homes, supported living services and vocational and developmental services. Las Trampas currently serves sixty seven adults. "Our philosophy is to integrate people in the community as much as possible," says Associate Director Ron Kilgore, "some can live independently in one of our residences; they come here for activities, and we support them in their everyday life."

Service-based programs such as Las Trampas cost ten times less than the old model where adults were institutionalized in hospitals, and are better for their development. Some of the residents are holding jobs in surrounding cities, helping with yard and janitorial duties.

The community involvement has been important for Las Trampas' sustainability. "We get 10% of our funding from in-kind donations," says Kilgore "many local groups have helped us as well." He cites the Lafayette Sunrise Rotary that is helping with the landscaping, the Lamorinda Presbyterian Church that built the large overhang that protects consumers from the rain while they wait for the bus, Chevron who sent a group of volunteers to repaint the entire facility, or individuals like chef Chuck from the Lafayette Park Hotel who comes once a month to engage the clients in his cooking activities.

The result of the team effort is a staff that has a very low turn over. Rakeshia, who has been working in the center for four years, says, "I do it because it is fun and rewarding. I do something useful and can sometimes witness progress in the patients." Kilgore believes that their way of engaging their consumers is the reason of their success, "we used to think that people with Down syndrome wouldn't live past their 20's or 30's. Here we see them aging in their 60's. I believe it is because they are living a meaningful life."

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