

# The Desert Voice

Published by consumers of Desert Haven Enterprises for persons living with developmental disabilities

Desert Haven Enterprises  
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Lancaster, CA 93535



Second Half Issue  
2020-2021

## PROJECT INDEPENDENCE IS BACK!!!



"Remote services" is a term that likely none of us had ever thought of before the pandemic. Following the "Safer at Home" order last year, in-person services came to a very quick and unexpected stop. Immediately, Desert Haven had to find new ways to continue to provide services and consumers learned new ways to participate in those services. Through the use of cell phones, Ipads, computers and other devices, Desert Haven staff and consumers came together for remote services from the safety of their homes. While this has been very effective in keeping our programs going for consumers and keeping us all safe, it definitely could never replace the importance of in-person, face-to-face human interaction. So, from the moment of the shutdown, Desert Haven's leadership immediately started planning for the safe return of consumers and staff as soon as possible.



First, because they were considered "essential workers" and spent their day out in the community, consumers enrolled in the Work Readiness Program began returning to in-person services last May. Next, we began working to re-open the Project Independence Program. Thanks to the hard work of Executive Director Jenni Moran and DTAC Manager Lorraine McKesson, Desert Haven Enterprises was able to successfully and safely reopen Project Independence to in-person services in the month of June 2021!! After more than a year of being away from one another, this was a welcome site for staff working in the Project Independence building, where the halls were



dark and quiet for way too long, as well as for the returning consumers. Consumers began to trickle in, slowly increasing from 7 to 12 to the now nearly 50 in-person participants. Thankfully, participants are no longer limited to sitting in front of a computer screen. Now they can safely move from class to class learning new skills along with their peers!

Obviously, safety is and has been our first priority with the reopening. Special accommodations have been made and continue in order to keep everyone safe and well. As a result, training rooms have new lower occupancy ratings, as do DH vehicles for community outings. Also, the usual and customary COVID protocols are in place, including wearing masks when not eating, social distancing, and taking temperatures, etc.

Thank you to all the staff and consumers of the Project Independence team for bringing life back to the building! We also want to give a shout out to our remaining consumers who continue to receive remote services from the safety of their homes. We so appreciate you; we miss you; and we look forward to the day that we are all together under one roof again very soon!

## DESERT HAVEN KNOWS HOW TO THROW A RETIREMENT PARTY



Desert Haven thanks Becky Dillon for her 30 plus years of dedicated service to the agency and, most important, to the consumers of DHE. Becky announced her retirement, but returned to in-person service shortly before leaving in order to see her beloved consumers again. As a result, we were lucky to have the chance to celebrate her properly with a catered taco cart luncheon and an epic distanced dance party! The day was filled with memorable slide shows, good conversation, great food, and amazing dancing!! Becky helped change the lives of many DH staff and consumers throughout her tenure here and we wish her the absolute best in all her future endeavors. Happy Retirement!!!



# Consumers of the Month

Congratulations to our fellow coworkers, selected by the staff as Consumers of the Month for the second half of 2020-21:

### Work Readiness - AV

*(Community-based Employment Skills Training)*

- Vanessa Bailey
- Eddie Garcia
- Heidi Ventura
- Samuel Simmons
- Alicia Noble
- Luke Kontis
- Denise Duarte
- Randy Willis
- Laura Stepp
- Nicholas Lopez
- Sonya Ellis
- Ever Pineda
- Mina Caldwell
- Anthony Campos

### Work Readiness - SCV

*(Community-based Employment Skills Training)*

- Tyler Elliot
- Matthew Ruiz

### Supported Employment Individual Placement

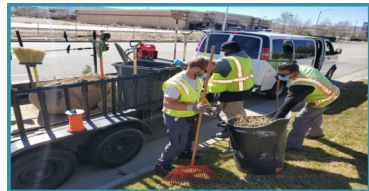
*(Community-based Employment)*

- Richard Guzman - Enterprise Rent-A-Car
- Larry Netherly - City of Lancaster

Great Job and Congratulations!

## Working Hard in the Elements

All of our crews work hard. Many work hard in the elements...the extreme heat and extreme cold that comes with living and working in the High Desert. While all staff and consumers are trained in weather-related safety measures, heat and cold are no joke when you are working hard. However, many of DHE's crews do it day in and day out, without fail and without complaint. So, if you are one of those crew members working in these elements, we recognize and thank you and remind you to stay safety-minded at all times. Wear the proper clothing for the weather, take the proper breaks, and hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. Your well-being is top priority!



At right, the Commercial Grounds Maintenance Crew is hard at work keeping our community looking beautiful...no matter the weather!

## We want to hear from you!

The Consumer Advisory Committee is looking for new members. Let your Counselor know today if you are interested.

The Desert Voice is a newsletter for and about consumers of Desert Haven Enterprises. If you are interested in writing or sharing a story, poem, photo, artwork or anything else you would like to see published in the newsletter, please contact the facilitators of the Consumer Advisory Committee: Lorraine McKesson (Project Independence), Elizabeth Hanson (Work Readiness Antelope Valley Multipurpose Crews), Joe Martinez (Work Readiness Antelope Valley Grounds Maintenance Crews), or Christina Bonner (Work Readiness Santa Clarita Valley Crews).

You may also reach out to Eric Walker, as well.

## Steve Casselman Wins National Volunteer of the Year Award



Desert Haven's own Steve Casselman has put in many hours of amazing work at numerous volunteer sites, including Love This Horse Equine Rescue in Mojave. Through his volunteer work at this site, Steve was recognized on a national level with an award presented by the ASPCA.

The "Good People for Good Horses Award" recognizes the incredible work done each day on behalf of horses who have been rescued and are being prepared for a new home. Steve was honored for his efforts in improving the well-being of horses in the United States and for his contributions to promoting adoption of these horses in need.

Below Steve poses at the rescue with his good friend, named after him, Steve Jr.



Volunteer - Steve Casselman  
Non-profit served: Love This Horse Equine Rescue

"He is one of the hardest-working volunteers that we have encountered at our rescue. In addition to volunteering, Steve has spent his personal money from his part-time paid job to buy supplies for the rescue. Moreover, for Steve, coming to our rescue to help with the hard physical work is not just a volunteer opportunity, but he takes ownership and pride in helping our horses."

For his efforts, Steve received an honorary belt buckle and shirt on behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and The Right Horse Initiative.

Way to go, Steve! We are so very proud of you!

