

South Bay Friends of Peppermint Ridge offers far-off fundraising for Corona facility

By Cynthia Washicko, *The Daily Breeze*

POSTED: 10/16/16, 4:23 PM PDT UPDATED: 3 DAYS AGO
0 COMMENTS

It seems like a case of odd bedfellows — a small group of South Bay residents devoted to raising money for an adult care facility in Corona.

But for Barbara Aranguren, it's all about peace of mind.

Her daughter, Tina, has developmental disabilities, and when Aranguren, a Palos Verdes Estates resident, started looking for a place for Tina to live, she had trouble locating a facility that provided the level of engagement and care Aranguren was looking for.

Then she visited Peppermint Ridge, a Corona facility that offers care for adults with a range of developmental disabilities, and Aranguren felt comfortable with the idea of leaving Tina to live outside her home.

The facility gave her the peace of mind for what she said is the foremost worry for family members of people with developmental disabilities.

“The biggest worry any family member has (is) what’s going to happen when I’m no longer here?”

As Tina grows older, she’ll likely need a different level of care than she does now, Aranguren said. At other facilities, that could mean uprooting her to go to an unfamiliar place without the other people she has befriended. And that’s a common concern for families like Aranguren’s.

“When you have a person in this situation, what you want to do is find the best place you can find and you hope they’ll live there the rest of their life,” Aranguren said. “In reality, it doesn’t always happen. But it’s more likely to happen if, once they need more care, they don’t have to just go to some new place far away and not see their friends anymore.”

The fact that Peppermint Ridge offers care for a range of special needs means Tina has a greater chance of spending the rest of her life among the people she has come to know over the years.

“It’s as close as we can come to finding the perfect place,” Aranguren said.

But then she became a board member.

As president of the nonprofit Peppermint Ridge board, Aranguren got an inside look at just how strained the facility’s budget was. State funding reimburses only about 85 percent of Peppermint Ridge’s expenses, which means the facility has to raise at least \$1 million every year to keep its doors open.

COMMON PROBLEM

It's a problem care facilities around California have been facing for years. A [2015 report by the Association of Regional Center Agencies](#), an organization of groups that advocate for people with developmental disabilities, found that California spends the least amount of money on each person with developmental disabilities than any other state. That, coupled with the economic downturn of 2008, left Peppermint Ridge in a difficult place.

"Oh my goodness, things were so tough," Aranguren said.

That's when she decided she would do something to help the facility where she hoped her daughter would spend the rest of her life. So she gathered a small group of friends, and they began brainstorming possible fundraisers. That 10-person group developed into what is now South Bay Friends of Peppermint Ridge.

Aranguren said the group knew they couldn't handle a large event, and they wanted the vast majority of the money raised to go back to the facility and not event costs.

They eventually settled on [a wine-tasting event](#) at the WineShopper in Torrance, and Aranguren said each member took up some portion of the planning, donating time and money to get the tasting off the ground, even though only two members had family members at Peppermint Ridge.

"It's a really special group," she said. "I know they do it because they know my daughter and they know me, and that's really special."

To date, the group has raised more than \$70,000 for Peppermint Ridge. And while that's only a fraction of what the facility needs, Aranguren stressed that it's a boon to the facility that serves 100 adults with a wide range of care needs.

The number of attendees hasn't grown much over the years, but individual elements of the fundraiser, like the silent auction, have improved with each event, she said. And many supporters opt to simply give their donations to the facility without attending the event.

"While it's not giant, it really helps the Ridge, and it's needed," she said.