

Life Steps Foundation Headquarters: Founder & CEO Virginia Franco Retires and Hands the Reins Over to Susan Chang



Life Steps Foundation Group began in 1982 as a partnership of three mental health professionals. They identified a need for in-home developmental, preventive intervention as an alternative for children with developmental disabilities and families who were unwilling or unable to receive services in an institutional setting. Life Steps was launched in the South Bay of Los Angeles County and has grown over the years to serve thousands of children and adults with developmental disabilities across California, as well as frail seniors.

Virginia Franco was one of the three health professionals who founded Life Steps Foundation. She served as the Chief Executive Officer for 35 years to guide the development of Life Steps Foundation, continually defining and updating its vision, culture, philosophy, and goals in response to growing community needs. She has built the organization into a comprehensive network that serves individuals throughout their life span. With hands-on experience, fortitude, and vision, Virginia has led by example, anchoring the organization's programming in a

solid foundation of best practices in in-home and center-based early developmental intervention, supportive living services, independent living services, and fiscal responsibility. After 35 years, Virginia Franco has retired and handed the reins over to Susan Chang effective January 1, 2018.

Susan Chang has been an instrumental part of Life Steps for the past twenty years. She joined the organization as an Infant and Child Development Specialist in 1998. Her dedication and professional acumen propelled her into positions of greater responsibility within Life Steps as she ascended steadily to the executive management position of Infant and Child Development Director. In 2008, Susan became the Chief Executive Officer of Life Steps Foundation's Children and Family Services affiliate. Since that time, Susan has overseen award-winning infant in-home projects and infant toddler inclusive center-based programs while managing project/division development and complying with regulations among other responsibilities. As the new CEO of Life Steps Foundation Group, Susan oversees program locations in Southern California, Northern California, and the Central Coast.



LSF Central Coast Adult Services: A Magical Event

Life Steps Foundation Central Coast Adult Services along with the Senior Homemaker Program spread Christmas cheer to their participants and staff celebrating their First Annual Magical Christmas. For a small donation, their community members were able to come enjoy lights, arts and crafts, Christmas music, and Santa's workshop. The setting included Reindeer stables, the Elf's mail room, Santa's naughty and nice list, Santa's meet and greet with photos, and the Treats and Sweets Bakery. They had an exciting time meeting the families in the community and seeing the joy



on the children's faces when they were able to meet Santa. Even the adults who visited had a wonderful time and were seen writing letters to Santa. There were smiles all around. They were also able to share this experience with their individuals in attendance at the Christmas party. Our individuals had big dreams when asking Santa for

gifts as they asked for cars/trucks, money, CD players, speakers for wheelchairs, clothes, and pet items. They look forward to expanding this event as well as their Halloween Haunted House Fundraiser. Please keep an eye out for updated details on their next exciting event.

LSF Santa Maria Wisdom Center: Holiday Celebration



The Santa Maria Wisdom Center participants and staff celebrated their 3rd annual Holiday Party last month. The participants were provided with new, individually wrapped gifts. The party included a special lunch and offered songs, Christmas word game, holiday craft activities, and of course, a visit from Santa and his elves. Janice Morgan LaMere and her family, with the cooperation of friends, local businesses, and New Life Community Church pastored by David Hutsko, sponsored the annual drive to obtain the gifts for participants of the SMWC's Adult Day Health Care program. The tradition began when LaMere's father, Jim Morgan, participated in the Adult Day Health Care Program

at the Center. Since her father's passing, LaMere continues to be an advocate for the expansion of the Santa Maria Wisdom Center and credits the Center for being a lifeline and important resource for local families.

Thank You Capital Campaign Donors!

LSF-Santa Maria Wisdom Center kicked off their \$1.7 million capital campaign in 2017, *Step Up for Seniors*, to raise funds for the construction of the new Center slated to open in Spring 2018. The new Center will relieve the current waiting list and increase daily capacity from 60 to 100 participants served. "We are incredibly excited and exceptionally blessed to have supporters who have stepped up to help us realize the dream of a new

Center," said Linda Gadbois, Program Director of the Santa Maria Wisdom Center. Thanks to the support of the Edwin and Jeanne Woods Foundation, the Williams-Corbett Foundation, and the Altrusa Club of the Golden Valley, the Center is \$50,000 closer to reaching the campaign goal. A generous donation of \$25,000 from the Roy and Ida Eagle Foundation was also awarded in December 2017 for program support.

LSF Northern California Adult Services: New Devices, New App!

Life Steps Foundation NorCal Adult Services was granted their “wish list” of items by the Burlingame Lion’s Club. Revivn, a hardware remanufacturing company, donated an Apple Ipad and Thinkpad laptop from the list. The Center will now be able to provide a new type of support and activities to their participants. With the Ipad product, the Center will soon be using an app called “My talk.” The app will help participants better communicate their wants and needs to the staff and decrease challenging behavior. The staff are planning to have a meeting and a participant training session on how to use the “My talk” app.



LSF Southern California Adult Services: Media Spotlight

The *News Enterprise* newspaper published the article “Angel of Long Beach Supports the Most Challenged Souls,” describing the work of Kristine Engels and Life Steps Foundation SoCal Adult Services. The editor, David Young, wrote the article mentioning the hard work Kristine has provided to the Center and the participants in Long Beach. He dubbed Kristine the “Angel of Long Beach” as she has worked tirelessly in providing her participants all the help she and the Center could provide throughout the years. Kristine’s efforts eventually lead to her becoming CEO of Life Steps affiliate Life Steps Foundation SoCal Adult Services. The full article is available to read on our website.



LSF Children and Family Services: Fun Times!

The Wee Play program in San Gabriel, California had a Thanksgiving lunch for their young participants and parents. There were eight children present along with some parents and staff members in the daycare. The parents enjoyed the lunch provided for the children. They all thoroughly enjoyed their very own Thanksgiving holiday celebration.



During the holiday season, Life Steps Foundation Northern California Children and Family Services and NorCal Adult Services hosted a joint donor appreciation cocktail social event. The event was held in a private room provided by New England Lobster Market & Eatery located in Burlingame, California. The donor appreciation is an annual event held for their supporters who contributed to their programs and events. The guests and staff had a great time with a feast of lobster and wine!

STEPPING UP FOR CALIFORNIANS WHO LIVE WITH A DISABILITY

From time to time, all of us need help taking some of the more challenging steps in life. At Life Steps, we help those with the greatest challenges by giving them training, skills and confidence to achieve greater independence and realize their personal potential. In today's economy, your support is more urgent than ever.

Please consider joining our Life Steps Community with a donation. Visit www.LifeSteps.org and click the "Donate" button today! Your name will be recognized on our Life Changer list of donors. Thank you for your support.

LIFE STEPS LOCATIONS

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