



Poway Padres make their movie debut

As part of the recent premier celebration of a new documentary film about the team titled "Playing with Heart," Poway Mayor Steve Vaus and Councilmember John Mullin welcomed back the founder of the Poway Padres, Nancy Greenwold, at the Lake Poway Tony Gwynn statue, 23 years after the team held its first practice

Where it all began

In 1998, Nancy and her husband Doug had just moved to Poway with their son David because of Poway Unified School District's Special Education reputation. As a big sports fan, Doug knew the value of team sports and the impact it would have on the physical and emotional well-being of the participants. Poway resident Tony Rubino was touched by a story in the local paper seeking a coach for a newly formed softball team for young adults with special needs. "I had coached many years with



Photo by brotherjoe/MissionFocused

PONY Baseball programs in San Diego but had never worked with young adults with special needs," Tony explains. He contacted Nancy and they met for the first practice at Lake Poway. Soon thereafter, he asked two friends, Gene Maienschein and Ron Hernandez, to help coach.

A special idea grows

The Poway Padres' participation and reputation have grown over the years in the community thanks to the support from the City of Poway Parks and Recreation department and cooperation from the Girls Softball Association. With a roster of players that has grown from 12 to 70 and three skill levels, the team's increasing success has fulfilled Doug and Nancy's goal of improving players physical and emotional well-being. It

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has also met another goal: raising awareness of the needs of families and individuals in the special-needs population.

In addition to the softball team, Nancy and Doug started the first special needs men's group home in Poway, followed by a women's group home which the City of Poway helped support. Then Nancy and fellow Powegian Beverly Andreos started the PASS organization, a family support group for special-needs parents that still meets today.

A community player

Over the years, this organization has brought together a group of parents that share a common bond. In turn, these families lend their support to many community causes and events, including the annual Poway Rotary Parade with city council members joining them in using squirt guns to cool off the crowd and giving rides to Poway Padres players.



Taking it one step further

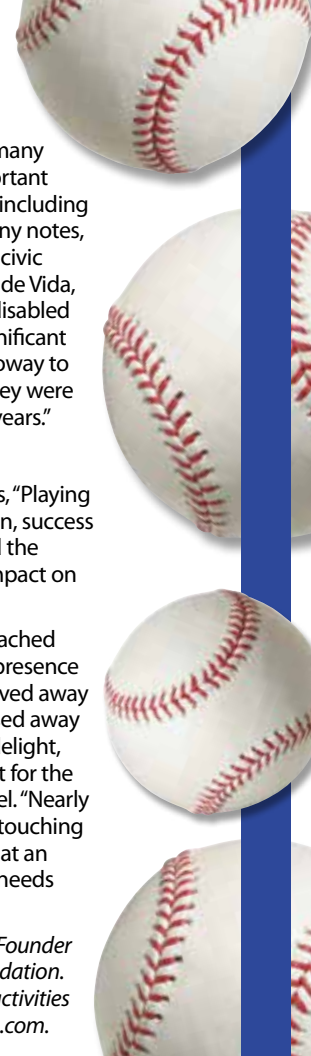
Inspired by the Poway Padres players and families, many local leaders have worked tirelessly to provide important services for special-needs adults in the community, including independent living options and adult education. Tony notes, "Mayor Steve Vaus, city councilmembers, and other civic leaders deserve special recognition for making Villa de Vida, a 53-unit apartment building for developmentally disabled adults, a reality in Poway." The project required a significant financial and property contribution by the City of Poway to develop this unique affordable housing project. "They were instrumental in making it happen after seven long years."

"Playing with Heart" hits home

This new documentary film about the Poway Padres, "Playing with Heart," was produced to capture the joy, passion, success and abilities of this group of special young men and the support they receive from their families and their impact on their community.

Prior to the premiere showing of the movie, Tony reached out to Nancy urging her to attend the event as her presence would be especially meaningful. The family had moved away from the Poway area some time ago and Doug passed away two years ago. To the team's and many old friends' delight, Nancy and her son David flew in from the East Coast for the movie premiere held on July 23 at Maranatha Chapel. "Nearly 300 people were in attendance," says Tony. "It was a touching tribute to Doug and Nancy's vision of the impact that an organized softball team would have on the special-needs community in Poway."

Tony Rubino is still the Poway Padres coach and is the Founder and President of the North County Special Needs Foundation. To learn more about the film and other special needs activities in North County, visit www.ncspecialneedsfoundation.com.



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