

FRED Conference
A Golden Heart Ranch Production
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Disability Housing Pioneers Named as FRED Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients

FRED Conference Has Announced Michael and Nancy Kerson for Inaugural Award

Manhattan Beach, CA – March 10, 2014 – Today the FRED Conference announced that Nancy and Michael Kerson are the 2014 recipients of the FRED Lifetime Achievement Award. This award is being given in recognition of the persons or organizations that have committed a lifetime of effort and success in the field of disability rights.

The FRED nomination committee selected the Kersons in recognition of over 40 years of service and leadership to create and sustain Vine Village, residential and day programs dedicated to providing people with developmental disabilities the quality of life that should be the birthright of every citizen. Vine Village occupies a beautiful 25-acre ranch in the famed Carneros grape-growing region of southern Napa County, California.

“We are honored to recognize Michael and Nancy with this inaugural award for their lifetime of achievement,” said FRED Director Mari-Anne Kehler. “They are role models for the rest of us who are working to advance housing and meaningful jobs for adults with disabilities. It is remarkable to consider they have been pioneering this work since 1973! We are indebted to their visionary work.”

Vine Village <http://www.vinevillage.org> was founded by Michael’s parents in 1972 to provide an alternative to institutional living for his sister, Debbie, who has Down Syndrome and was soon to graduate from school. They wanted to provide a place for those with disabilities to have the same quality of life as their non-disabled peers. Their programs emphasize personal development, social interaction, independence and the security of being accepted and valued.

In addition to its residential program, Vine Village is also renown for its Arts & Country Day Program. The spacious and light-filled art studio is tucked among gardens, pastures and opens lands, which often provide inspiration for a variety of arts, such as painting, ceramics, mixed media, textile arts, jewelry making. Professional artists and teachers work with the clients and provide a calm atmosphere of mutual respect that nurtures creativity and self-expression.

Michael and Nancy have been married 43 years and have raised two children, Saanen and Aaron.

About FRED Conference: FRED is the premier organization to galvanize leaders focused to advance and enhance the futures of adults with disabilities. FRED is dedicated to the idea that all individuals deserve to live their passions, and determine their choice of the future they live. FRED brings top thinkers: experts, families, and self-advocates, together to share leading practices and accelerate approaches to building those futures. www.FREDconference.org

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