



The Learning Centers at Fairplex



January 2019

Providing a wide spectrum of innovative, enriching educational experiences that bring learning to life.

From Ballerina to the Circus to Fairplex Ambassador



After roller skating from a platform 100 feet in the air and dancing with the French ballet, taking care of a few rabbits and chickens is like being back home in Argentina for Noemi Figueroa. Mimi, as she prefers, can be found every morning tending the barnyard brood or picking ripe produce at [The Farm at Fairplex](#) as a volunteer with [The Learning Center's Ambassador program](#). Mimi is the kind of volunteer organizations dream of -- passionate, loyal and replete with stories to regale other volunteers. And at 91 years of age, Mimi has a lot of stories.

Take the one where she was discovered at age 8 by a Russian ballerina who took Mimi under her wing until Mimi performed with the French ballet in 1941.

Or when she joined Ringling Bros. Circus and traveled throughout Europe performing on skates on the high platform or showing off elephants (which she calls her "babies") or riding atop a stallion around the three rings.

"I've had a very happy life," she said.

Mimi started volunteering for Fairplex 15 years ago, during the [LA County Fair](#). The Fair had a robust volunteer program and it seemed perfect for the then 76 year old. After her son passed away seven years ago, she started volunteering year-round for different events.

"I was lonely. The house was too big, too empty, too quiet."

About four years ago, Mimi switched her volunteer activity to The Farm. She's there every day, harvesting peppers and carrots, telling farm manager Don DeLano when they need to plant more and making coffee for the other volunteers.

"She's like the Energizer bunny," said long-time friend and neighbor Joanna Payne-Jones.

"Mimi is always the first one to work, the first one to volunteer."

When not at The Farm, Mimi is volunteering at a homeless shelter in Pomona.

But, "Fairplex keeps her going," said Joanna.

The Ambassador Program offers many opportunities for volunteers. The diversity of events makes it flexible for most schedules. During the Fair in September, volunteers assist with the FairKids Field Trip Program, acting as docents and assisting students and teachers through each step of their visit.

"All my life, I can't sit in one place. I like helping people," said Mimi. "The Farm is peaceful.

This place is a beautiful place."

For more information or to sign up to be a Fairplex Ambassador, click [here](#).

Above left, Mimi Figueroa celebrates her 90th birthday with Fairplex President & CEO Miguel A. Santana.



Photos of Fairplex Ambassador Noemi Figueroa's life as a circus performer.



An article from a 1950s German newspaper about Noemi Figueroa's high-rise roller skating act.



Noemi Figueroa and The Learning Centers Ambassadors assist at The Farm.

Save the Date

[The Learning Centers](#), in conjunction with Fairplex has a host of fund- and friend-raising events coming up in the next few months. We encourage you to come out and support our programs.



All new STEA2M Fair
March 16



Spring in the Farm,
April 13



The Master Gardener series
at The Farm begins in April.

Interested in joining us to support this great cause?

[Volunteer](#)

[Donate](#)

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Our Mission

The Learning Centers provides a wide spectrum of innovative and enriching educational experiences that bring learning to life, benefit our diverse communities, and prepare our participants for success.