

## Entrepreneur to open school for farm laborers in Soledad

BY LAUREEN DIEPHOF 9/26/07



Noel Irwin Hentschel, world traveler and president of the Noel Foundation, as seen with Mother Teresa. In 1988, Noel began working with Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. She was inspired by Mother Teresa to establish the Noel Foundation to serve those less fortunate.

Noel Irwin Hentschel, of Los Angeles and Stonepine in Carmel Valley, a world traveler and president of the Noel Foundation, joins with the CET (Center for Employment Training) to open the Soledad Life Academy for under-privileged farm workers, with priorities granted to those who reside in remote labor housing units throughout Soledad and Monterey County.

The announcement for this endeavor was made at the exclusive Stonepine Estate, owned by Noel and Gordon Hentschel, in Carmel Valley on Sept. 20, during a groundbreaking ceremony for a chapel. The chapel will be built on the Stonepine complex and dedicated to the Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the Blessed Virgin Mary by Bishop Richard Garcia of the Monterey Roman Catholic Diocese. The ceremony celebrated the 10th anniversary of the feast day of Mother Teresa and the nativity of the Blessed Mother. The event also marked the 10th anniversary of The Noel Foundation.

According to Hentschel, ties with Mother Teresa of Calcutta began for her in 1988 when she and her husband attended the Young Presidents Organization. The organization composed of entrepreneur's under 40, held a conference in New Delhi where Mother Teresa was the keynote speaker. "It was a significant and emotional time for me," Hentschel said. She wrote a note to Mother Teresa the night before, with the hope of handing it to her the next day. The next day, during Mother Teresa's speech, she sat in the back of the room. During the speech Mother Teresa told the young entrepreneurs how powerful, and how it would put everything in perspective, if each one of them would use the same energy into helping those less fortunate, as they do in their business. "This is the part that grabbed me," said Hentschel. "After the speech, I ran to the front of the room and she took me, put her arms around me and put my head between her head and her heart. She told me that Jesus loves me," Hentschel relates. "I felt close to God on earth in her presence. I continue to feel God's presence." Hentschel spoke during a phone interview from the Stonepine Estate in Carmel Valley. This event inspired her to work with Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity that was begun by Mother Teresa.

Hentschel's interest in travel and the inspiration she received from Mother Teresa gave her the desire to help the poor around the world. This led her to establish The Noel Foundation. A heart for others' plight actually began as a youngster, the oldest in a family of 10 children, raised in Fresno. "We were always sharing," she said of her family. "At the age of nine I was moved by what I saw of children in the developing world." She told herself that she must do something to help children and dreamed of one day adopting kids. "All of this (life) journey is part of who you become. "Who you become is impacted by your family," she added. But on that one day she heard Mother Teresa, it was the event that became the building blocks of the work she does today, she said.

On Sept. 20, 1989, Hentschel established the Noel Foundation, with the purpose of helping women in the developing world and the U.S. learn financial independence. She developed different projects on the international front and named a few of those to be in Jordan, Mexico, Philippines, Pakistan and China. The Noel Foundation brings partners together in order to facilitate projects throughout the world.

The inspiration for the partnership with the Noel Foundation and CET came out of an event during a 1,000-person rally in Los Angeles. According to Hentschel, a young woman got up and

complained about not having enough money to live on from her job as a maid. The entire speech was in Spanish, Hentschel said, with mostly English speakers in the crowd. Hentschel started to think that it would be in the woman's best interest to learn English. How could she advance to earning more money without a basic language skill in America? It is the language of the U.S. and people need fluency - those who don't are disadvantaged. Hentschel was quick to point out that she is learning Spanish and feels it should be taught in the schools. "I love our Mexican heritage, it is beautiful, and I'm proud of it," she said.

Hentschel decided, with the help of her friend Bishop Richard Garcia, to open an academy for farm laborers to teach life skills in America to enable them to earn more money. Mother Teresa's philosophy, according to Hentschel, was to start small, "start by helping one person at a time," she said, and she took that to heart in all of her endeavors. Courses offered in the new Soledad Academy will include remedial education, GED preparation, English-as-A-Second-Language, life skills, job search preparation, vocational skills and placement assistance. Classes will consist of 12 students during a 12-month period. New pupils will be admitted at any time.

One of the goals is to outreach women and out-of-school youth in the rural and remote areas of South Monterey County who are interested in achieving self-sufficiency through education, human development and occupational skill training. The school will also offer child daycare and help students with basic human needs including referring them to other community resources such as housing assistance, food banks, healthcare, legal assistance, job help and the services of the Soledad Adult School.

The Noel Foundation will provide all instructors' wages, classroom supplies, desks, passenger van and driver and child daycare needs such as diapers, playpens, toys and teachers. Also announced at the Stonepine event was the appointment of The Noel Foundation's new Executive Director, Dr. Anna Vassilieva, Ph.D. Dr. Vassilieva has been teaching at the Monterey Institute of International Studies since 1990. She is a professor and head of the Russian Studies Program at the Monterey Institute. An author, translator and editor, professor Vassilieva was born and raised in Eastern Siberia, Russia.

Hentschel is an active member of the TIA (Travel Industry Association) and serves on select boards including the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute, the L.A. World Affairs Council, the Patron of the Arts at the Vatican, and the Board of Regents at Loyola Marymount University. She holds an honorary doctorate for humanities from Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island. Success Magazine named her as one of America's leading entrepreneurs ranked with Oprah Winfrey and Martha Stewart. Time Magazine called her a "local hero" for service in South Central Los Angeles where she accompanies sheriffs on ride-alongs and provides Education Through Travel programs to help prevent youth from joining gangs.

Her commitment to public service was expanded when she ran for lieutenant governor in California. She is a regular political panelist on television shows, Week in Review and Beyond the Beltway. Hentschel attended Notre Dame Academy, before living in Israel, where she began her career in the service industry. She worked in every facet of travel and tourism including cargo, airline and hotel, before co-founding ATI with Michael Fitzpatrick.

She and her husband Gordon are the parents of seven children. They live in Los Angeles and Carmel Valley at Stonepine Estate Resort.

The philosophy she imparts is to believe in God and believe in yourself. She has always felt her faith gave her strength in business. "You can do anything with hard work, but you need help of God and others," she said. As she delegates in her work, she said it's a hands-on approach, with teamwork. "People work with you, not for you," she said. "Share your vision is the first part of business she said." Her vision of the Soledad Academy will come true soon. The doors will open sometime around December, she said.