

1999 VISION IN PHILANTHROPY AWARDS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is the TRIPOD Model School Program?

TRIPOD is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

TRIPOD is committed to developing, demonstrating and disseminating an effective program for educating deaf and hard-of-hearing children along side their hearing peers in full inclusion public school classrooms.

(1) History of TRIPOD and Related Achievements of its Founder, Megan Williams

In 1980, Megan Williams and Michael Shamberg, parents of a newborn son, were celebrating his birth, while his big sister was adjusting to having a new baby brother. When the baby was eight months old, his mother noticed something wasn't quite right. She suspected their son might not be hearing. The pediatrician diagnosed a possible ear infection. Finally, at the age of nine months, her suspicion was confirmed. Her son was diagnosed profoundly deaf. She did what most parents do: researched all of the options available regarding communication, education, and support services. She made hundreds of phone calls around the country. Their options were limited. Why couldn't their son be in a classroom with deaf and hearing children together?

Megan sought out two well-known educators of the deaf, from CSUN and Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Working with community leaders and educational professionals, they realized the dream of a co-enrolled program with hearing and deaf children learning side-by-side.

In January of 1984, with just four children, the first TRIPOD Montessori Preschool opened its doors in a small house in West Hollywood. Deaf and hard-of-hearing children were co-enrolled with their hearing siblings and peers in a Total Communication setting. In this natural environment hearing children modeled language for the deaf children, while the hearing and deaf children together learned sign language. The TRIPOD Model School Program grew grade by grade along with its first student. By June of 1998, the TRIPOD program had grown to serve children from birth through high school.

TRIPOD Today

- The TRIPOD Model School Program serves 123 children from birth through high school in the Burbank Unified School District.
- In September of 1993 the TRIPOD Model School Program was recognized as a regional program serving Burbank, Glendale, La Canada and Pasadena Unified School Districts under the administration of the Foothill and Pasadena Special Education Local Plan Agencies.
- In June of 1998 the first five TRIPOD students graduated from Burbank High School along with their hearing friends.