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ONE-ON-ONE WITH TED T. PEÑA

U-T profiles of notable local people

A festival with taste

STORY BY NINA GARIN, PHOTO BY JOHN GIBBINS • U-T

This weekend is the La Jolla Festival of the Arts, a two-day event put on by the Torrey Pines Kiwanis Club that features art, food and music.

Kiwanis member Ted T. Peña, 59, is the festival's executive director. The Encinitas resident also has a consulting business, providing advice for corporations and nonprofits.

Peña, who once worked for IBM, tells us how the La

Jolla Festival of the Arts helps local charities that provide services for San Diegans with disabilities.

The festival is from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Sunday at UC San Diego's Warren Field (at Voigt and Gilman drives). Tickets are \$14 at the door. Call (760) 753-1670 or see lajollaartfestival.org for details.

Q. What is the La Jolla Festival of the Arts?

A. It's an elegant and high-quality art showcase, with nearly 200 juried artists, terrific local entertainment and your favorite craft beer and fine wine surrounded by the aroma of delicious cuisine.

Q. When and why was it created?

A. It started as a fundraiser for the Torrey Pines Kiwanis in 1987 to raise funds for adaptive sports and recreational programs for San Diegans with disabilities. It is the brainchild of former Torrey Pines Kiwanis member and photographer Dallas Clites.

Q. Why did you get involved?

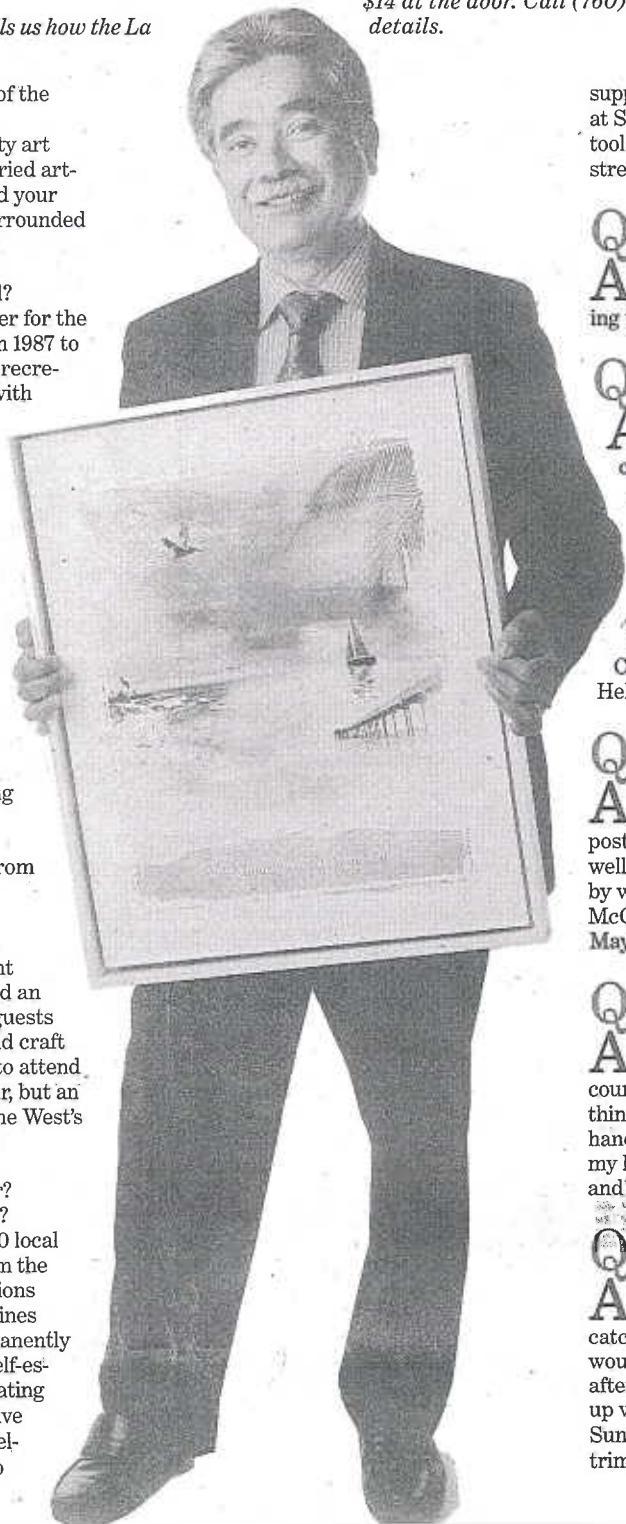
A. My colleague and friend from the San Diego Jaycees (the Junior Chamber of Commerce) invited me to join the Torrey Pines Kiwanis. I have always reached out to the community in some fashion and getting involved with the La Jolla Festival of the Arts seemed like a perfect fit for my interests in helping others.

Q. How has the event changed from its first year to now?

A. The festival started with 60 artists and a simple taco bar. It has grown to 200 artists, excellent live music, a dozen food vendors and an open, inviting environment where guests can roam the grounds with wine and craft beer. We expect over 8,000 people to attend this year's event. It's not a street fair, but an elegant and relaxing venue to see the West's best in arts and culture.

Q. The event is also a fundraiser? Can you explain who benefits?

A. Each year, there are at least 30 local organizations who benefit from the festival's proceeds. These organizations address the mission of the Torrey Pines Kiwanis, helping severely and permanently injured San Diegans rebuild their self-esteem and independence by participating in athletic programs, such as adaptive snow skiing, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball and sailing. We also



support other programs like Arts for Healing at Sharp Healthcare, which brings artist tools to patients who are recovering from the stress of surgeries and rehabilitation.

Q. How much has the festival donated to these charities over the years?

A. We have provided over \$1.7 million to many charities over the years, impacting the lives of 35,000 San Diegans.

Q. What is one part of the festival you never miss?

A. As the executive director, I make it a point to meet as many artists as I can, stop in and listen to every musician and of course taste the many cuisines available. I'm also a real pet lover, so while I meet with some of our beneficiaries who have booths at the festival, I spend a little bit more time with some of those who involve animals in their adaptive programs, like Canine Companions, Paw'sitive Teams and the Helen Woodward Animal Center.

Q. Have you bought art pieces for yourself at the festival?

A. Yes, I have — or shall I say, my wife, Laura, has. There are some festival posters that have fit our home décor very well, so we have a collection of those created by wonderful artists like Karen McLean-McGaw, Katy Reeve-Weesner and Thomas Mayberry.

Q. What is one thing people would be surprised to find out about you?

A. I used to play the accordion and then played drums as a teenager for a country band with roots from Tennessee. I think they'd also be surprised that I'm pretty handy with tools. I've enjoyed remodeling my home with a new kitchen and a bedroom and bathroom addition.

Q. Please describe your ideal San Diego weekend.

A. I enjoy road biking with friends up the coast, working on the home and catching a good movie with Laura — that would be Saturday. Sunday would include an afternoon watching or playing golf, catching up with the Padres and finally enjoying our Sunday evening BBQ dinner, with all the trimmings.