



Clockwise from top left: New Directions travel adventures include trips to Utah's national parks, Disneyland and Hawaii.

## New Directions

Travel Opportunities for Everyone

**T**hirty years ago, when spirits were high, many members of the Adult Residential Program at Devereaux prepared to spend the holidays off-campus, where they would celebrate with family and friends.

But Dee Duncan, who worked at the facility at the time, looked around and saw something amiss. A small group of residents with mild to moderate developmental disabilities had no place to go, and would be alone at the very time of year when most people gather together.

That's when she got into action with a bold plan that would take her life in a different direction—along with the lives of thousands of clients for decades: she decided to take that group to Disneyland.

"At the holidays, you can't have people spending time alone," she reflects in the calm and peaceful surroundings of the backyard garden of her lovingly restored Craftsman bungalow. That's just the kind of person Duncan is—a kind, thoughtful and imaginative innovator who does things first-class—at home, in business and in her own enthusiasm for travel.

When she first had that brainstorm—the very beginning of New Directions travel for people with disabilities—the first group of participants hadn't had much opportunity to experience the freedom of travel or to spend holidays in a joyful, loving environment with others who cared for them.

But Duncan was determined to change that and do something special for them. She called it the Holiday Happiness Program. Three decades, and 12,000 New Directions participants later, that initial foray to the

happiest place on earth has expanded to all kinds of adventures around the world.

If Las Vegas, Hawaii, the Grand Canyon and New York City aren't exciting enough, how about Australia, Israel, Japan and even Galapagos Islands? And these travelers aren't content to stay on a tour bus—they enjoy adventurous activities like hot air ballooning, surfing, snorkeling and river rafting, just like everyone else.

They stay in upscale accommodations, dine in fine restaurants and enjoy shopping sprees, visiting local attractions, meeting new people and making new friends while traveling. Just like everyone else.

Let's face it: dealing with all the uncertainty that travel brings can be stressful for anyone. To ensure that New Directions trips go off without a hitch, Duncan relies on a well-trained, highly experienced team of tour guides that accompanies every group. The ratio may range from 1:1 to 1:4 guide to participants. Traveling in these small groups allows more personalized, attentive services and a low-key, non-touristy experience.

But Duncan stresses that the real secret to New Directions' success is an approach that treats participants with "total respect." And, as great as the opportunity is for enhanced self esteem and expanded horizons that travel offers participants in the program, there's another essential benefit: The general public learns so much when they see New Directions clients living full and active lives. Just like everyone else. ✱

For more information about New Directions, call 805/967-2841 or visit [newdirectionstravel.org](http://newdirectionstravel.org).