

ANDRE SOBEL RIVER OF LIFE FOUNDATION

Giving is an art form.

Splendid new foundations are often born from personal tragedies and nurtured by reaching out to others. This truism epitomizes Valerie Sobel, who lost her charming, brilliant son, Andre, to brain cancer at age 19, and then her husband, Erwin, to suicide.

While gathering strength to endure tragedy and move on, Sobel discovered great gratitude within herself for having known her son and husband, for having had financial security to provide her son with personal attention and the best medical care during his illness, and for having had a profound spectrum of experiences within her family relationships.

Drawing from that deep well of gratitude, she established the Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation, which provides funds to single parents of catastrophically ill children when those parents are in financial crises. These funds can help with food, transportation, utilities, and medications, often preventing eviction or foreclosure. "By caring for the single caregiver, we care for the child," Sobel succinctly explains.

As an interior designer, Sobel lives a life immersed in beauty, utilizing the finest paintings, sculptures, fabrics and furnishings in projects. After tragedy struck in the mid 90s, she applied creative principles to serve her foundation. For her extraordinary efforts, the Los Angeles Business Journal named her 2007 Philanthropist of the Year. —Liz Goldner



Valerie Sobel, interior designer and founder of the Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation. Courtesy of the Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation.