

Sonoma Valley Sun

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## Lia Transue named Individual of the Year for 2007

*Dyann Espinosa*

The Sonoma Valley Museum of Art is one of Sonoma's treasures—a combination of cultural achievement and community resource. Since its inception in 1998, it has become an integral part of Valley life, and much of the credit for that is due to Lia Transue.

SVMA was born out of the passionate beliefs of a small group of people who felt confident that Sonoma would welcome and support a center for the arts. As the concept took shape, volunteers came forward to lend their support. Among them was Transue, an artist and art director of the Sonoma Community Center.

Transue had grown up in New York City, inspired by the diversity and profusion of its great art and renowned museums. She moved across the country to study at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, and received her M.F.A. in illustration from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco.

As the dream of a museum began taking shape, Transue continued her volunteer work while pursuing her career as a fine artist and exhibiting her work locally. Then in 2000, the museum's current location was leased and scheduled exhibitions began. That year brought more than 4,000 visitors to the museum. In 2001, the SVMA purchased the building and hired Transue as its first full-time director.

Transue has served as executive director of the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art since that time, and along with an incredibly dedicated team of board members and volunteers, she has participated in the realization of the museum's mission: To be a center for the arts that promotes the creation, exhibition, collection and preservation of fine art in all its forms, and to provide a meeting place and educational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the SVMA, and a year-long series of events is underway to celebrate this landmark in the museum's history. Transue credits the board of directors for initiating and supporting innovative programs that reach out to the community. "This town is amazing and the people this museum attracts are an extraordinary group," said Transue. "We can tap into a wealth of experience in all realms from the people of Sonoma."

When Transue was informed that she had been selected in the category of "Individual of the Year" by Three House MultiMedia, she responded from a collaborative standpoint: "This is quite an honor, I never expected something like

this. I share this award with all my fellow executive directors, my family, friends and the board of directors of the museum, who over the years have helped me to succeed and understand the true meaning of leadership.”

Sculptor, Jim Callahan, the first president of the museum, said, “The original vision was to enhance the lives of the people in Sonoma. The Sonoma Valley Museum of Art is owned by everybody here and will continue to grow because it is now a true part of the community.”

For Transue, being part of that vision and seeing it flourish is the measure of her success. “Art is meant to be shared and nurtured. This community, with its many expressions of the creative force—whether in art, agriculture, wine or literature—recognizes that and is whole-heartedly a partner in the museum and its mission.”