

Loosening the Ties

by Angie Baker, PhD, OTR/L, CTRS, Director of Occupational Therapy

When I first began treating Lisa, she needed restraints on both hands to keep her from hitting herself or pulling out her hair, a cushioned head band to keep her from banging her head, and a full-time aide to prevent self injurious behaviors from escalating. Lisa has been actively participating in school based occupational therapy twice a week for an hour for 4 months, and she seems like a different child to me now. Lisa can demonstrate diaphragmatic breathing as a self regulation tool. She can move her body using typical movement patterns that previously initiated panic and fear. She can now eat at the dinner table with her family and go for almost a full school day without requesting her "ties" as an external support to keep her body in control. More importantly, she smiles more.

As a school-based occupational therapist (OT) here at Villa, I collaborate with special education teachers, speech therapists, behavior therapists, and parents to help a burgeoning population of children with autism and other developmental disabilities to achieve school success. This team approach has been instrumental in helping Lisa, and many other Villa students, blossom with new found sensory processing, sensory motor, fine motor, gross motor and general independence skills.

Occupational Therapists have been using holistic and alternative treatment approaches to assist children with disabilities for decades. In OT sessions we use fun, functional activities to engage school children in their therapy. Lisa's therapy sessions have primarily focused on sensory integration techniques. During OT, Lisa and I sit on a large bolster swing



Lisa performing exercises to help her use both side of her body together.

and perform oral motor and visual motor exercises in the form of games and songs. These types of exercises are important to enable students to use the full range of motion of their eyes, including proficiently visually moving to points from far right to far left, in the top middle and bottom of their visual field, as well as to encourage movement patterns such as diagonals and circles.

Lisa and I also use our swing time to engage in facilitated breathing techniques that she has now nearly mastered. She has been able to independently decrease her anxiety and heart rate by using this tool in class with little prompting. Lisa enjoys upper body exercises that improve her muscle tone, strength,

(Continued on page 5)

Farewell Message from the CEO

2008-2009

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What a difference a few months makes! I was just re-reading my remarks in the last issue and so much has changed that it's hard to know where to begin! Let me start with the change of my long-planned retirement date from June 2009 to March 31, 2009. In December, I decided to leave earlier to help reduce Villa's expenses with the continuing state budget cuts and because the new senior team is in place and ready to lead. I am so pleased to announce that Kelly White, Villa's long-time COO, will become the next CEO on April 1, 2009. I have every confidence that under Kelly's leadership Villa will come through its current and future challenges successfully.

Let me speak to a few of the challenges ahead. We thought that we knew the worst when the state budget deficit next year was going to be \$42 billion and we were going to be cut 3% in our regional center-funded programs in addition to the 10% cut in our employment services program last year. Another 7.1% cut is very possible in September. The state economy continues to deteriorate and is now depending on the federal stimulus money to prevent deeper budget cuts. And, if service providers, like Villa, weren't already anxious enough about the financial situation, for most of March, the regional centers reported that they would run out of money and not pay providers for critical client services in May and June! Finally, at the end of March, the State Department of Developmental Services "found" enough funds to carry providers through May and hopefully most of June 2009.

As you know, regional center-funded services, especially residential small group homes, have been under-funded for many years. Villa has survived and become strong because of prudent management and our great donors and grants support. We have already had to cut our expenses by over \$400,000 for this fiscal year and much more will be required next year if all of the cuts go through. Unfortunately, the primary sacrifices affect staff by reducing hours, cutting positions and reducing overall expenses including some benefits.

We are always working on creative avenues for short and long-term funding, but we will be relying, as never before, on our families and other supporters to help us get through this difficult time. We have been involved in advocacy efforts to prevent these catastrophic cuts at many different levels and with other agencies. We will be asking all of you to join us in these important efforts, but it is the families of those most affected by the cuts that the politicians and regional centers will listen to.

I am sorry to have such news in my last "message" to all of you, but I want each and every one of you to know that I appreciate all of the warm support that you have given me. It has been my privilege to be Villa's CEO over the last 12 years, to lead a wonderful "team of excellence", and to work with a great board. I have been privileged to see the growth and development of our special children, adults and seniors over the years. They are, after all, the reason that we are all a part of the very special mission that is Villa Esperanza Services!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dottie Nelson".

Dottie Nelson
CEO

Leadership News

WISHING DOTTIE ALL THE BEST

Villa's Board of Directors thanks Dottie Nelson, CEO for 12 exceptional years. With Dottie's leadership Villa has grown from a \$3 million organization to a \$10 million Center of Excellence offering 9 diverse programs; created a continuum of services for children, adults and seniors with disabilities that covers Autism to Alzheimer's; increased staff from 125 to 250, serving over 1,000 individuals and their families; and become a sophisticated, professional, and systems-based organization providing quality care and services. Thank you Dottie, we wish you all the best on a well-deserved retirement!

WELCOMING KELLY WHITE

Kelly White accepts new role as Villa's CEO effective April 1, 2009. Villa staff surprised Kelly with a Congratulations Party in the Braun Center.

We are very pleased to welcome three new members to Villa's Management Team. Aaron Kitman is our new Vice President of Adult Programs and will oversee Pasadena and West Region. Marcia Ortiz joins us as our new Director of the West Region.

We are also pleased to announce the promotion of Casey Gregg, Villa's School Principal, to Vice President of Children and Youth Programs! Adding to our comprehensive school is our new Director of Occupational Therapy, Angie Baker, Ph D.



Kelly White, Villa's new CEO as of April 1.

ANOTHER FOND FAREWELL

Lastly we announce the retirement of Johnnie Wall, Vice President of Senior Services and Community Relations. Her last day with Villa was December 31st. Her programs included Care Management (CMOC) and Adult Day Programs (ADP) at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Johnnie started Villa's CMOC program in 1999 and added the ADP a year ago. She was also our visible presence in many communities as CMOC covers 42 cities in the San Gabriel, San Fernando and Conejo Valleys. A Farewell Reception was held for Johnnie where families, friends, volunteers and staff said their good-byes. We thank Johnnie for all that she has done for Villa and we will miss her!



Johnnie Wall and Jorge Lambrinos

WAYS YOU CAN HELP!

In these challenging economic times we are all finding ways to save. Here are some suggestions to help make your dollar go further! Thank you for all you do for Villa.

ESCRIP – FOR VONS, MACY'S & MORE!

Sign up with eScrip and every time you shop at any of the 6,000 merchant locations, a percentage of your purchase will go to Villa

- Go to www.escrip.com
- Enter our Group ID # 137839250
- Click on Sign up

TARGET

School Fundraising is in the Card! Use your Target Credit Card and help raise money for Villa.

- Call 1-800-316-6142 or go to www.target.com to designate Villa
- Target will donate 1% of all your Target Card purchases to Villa.

When signing up online click on Community at the bottom of the main page, then click on Education, then on Take Charge of Education to designate Villa.

CAMPBELL'S LABELS FOR EDUCATION

You can help Villa earn free merchandise by collecting labels from Campbell products and forwarding them to Villa. Simply save labels or clip proofs of purchase from Campbell products and send them to Villa.

BOX TOPS

Clip the Box Tops coupons from hundreds of your favorite General Mills products and send them to Villa! Each Box Top is worth 10¢.

Send BOX TOPS and CAMPBELL'S LABELS to:

Villa Esperanza Services – Giving Back
2060 East Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91107

HOLMES BODY SHOP

VILLA wins when you choose Holmes Body Shop for repairs. Holmes Body Shop in Pasadena will donate 5% of the repair total to Villa. Ask them about it and they'll take care of the rest. Visit them online at www.holmesbodyshop.com to print the certificates.

Around Villa

VILLA VOLUNTEERS

Happy National Volunteer Week to all of the wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to the very special people Villa serves!

Villa is fortunate to have volunteers from different walks of life strengthening our community. Whether it is working directly with our children and adults or behind the scenes in our administrative offices, Villa is richer to have each of you share your skills with us. **THANK YOU!**



We would especially like to thank our Loyola High School Seniors who dedicated three weeks to Villa during their Community Service Senior Projects in January. Eric Andersen, Taylor Barnes, Andrew Garcia, Peter Raptis (shown above with Villa students) and Mitch Snowden—you all made a tremendous impact on our students and are remarkable young men. We hope you'll come back and visit us.

To learn more about volunteering at Villa contact (626) 449-2919 ext. 168 or vvoors@VillaEsperanzaServices.org

END OF SCHOOL

Join us for our School's annual Awards Ceremony on Friday, June 19 from 10:00 – 12:00 a.m. in Villa's Braun Center. Each classroom will perform and each student will receive recognition for their accomplishments. Everyone is welcome!

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Nancy B. Pierson, Parent

Villa Esperanza is “speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves.” I'm sure you will agree that Dottie Nelson, Villa's CEO, makes a moving statement with these words.

With the recent increase in the population of people with autism, Villa's mission of compassionate care for the developmentally disabled has expanded to include the most challenging group in the moderate to severe range. The children's program now is particularly focused on children with this diagnosis, but Villa's adult programs are preparing to serve them as well.

My son, Toby, has autism and has been a Villa student for 14 years. He is now 18 and is in one of the wonderful new high school classrooms. When he started at Villa, Toby was non-verbal with no attention span and a violent, often self-abusive, temper. He had (and still has) no language. With infinite patience and love, the teachers, speech therapists and classroom staff at Villa Esperanza have nurtured him along to become the calm, funny and helpful person he is today. By seemingly endless repetition of simple lessons and exercises Toby has learned to type words and even sentences. Toby has a voice, at last. Thank you, Villa!



Toby communicating with Lisa during speech therapy.

ART ONLINE!

Villa student, Tyler Sparks now has his art online! “Sunny” was created during Villa's eight week art therapy program and it has been published on Artsonia, the world's largest student art gallery on the Internet! Anyone can view the school gallery online at: www.artsonia.com/schools/VillaEsperanzaServices1. Check it out.



Tyler with his mother Denise Sparks in front of his masterpiece, “Sunny.”



Dustin, Villa student, drumming with Matt, a Villa volunteer.

EMPLOYMENT NEWS

Congratulations to Mathew Madsen, Alfonso Craig and Janelle Presley. They are the new work crew assembling breast pumps for Limerick Inc.

We are excited to announce Karapet Gurunyan has been chosen for the position of maintenance service occupational trainee out at Lanterman Developmental Center. This position is 40 hours a week and job duties include housekeeping and janitorial duties.

This past December Anthony Brouwer became the newest Villa member to begin work at Lovebirds Café & Bakery in Burbank. Anthony, a delivery driver, is one of four individuals with disabilities employed by Lovebirds.

We commend each of you on a job well done!



Anthony taking lunch orders at Lovebirds Café & Bakery.

Loosening the Ties *(Continued from page 1)*

and endurance but also promote interhemispheric integration of the brain. Trainings with Lisa's teacher, classroom staff, and behavior therapist have ensured that Lisa can participate in these therapeutic activities throughout the day. If you ask Lisa, she will tell you that her favorite things in OT are "breathing" and "backbends."

As an OT, I take pride in seeing the students I work with become more independent, require less equipment and external supports, and further participate in their academic environment. Once students begin to obtain sensory modulation techniques and self care skills they are filled with a sense of pride and self control. They are often able to access their true personality that may have been hidden behind negative behaviors for quite some time. With the services that Villa Esperanza provides, our students can show us their sense of humor, communicate their needs, and, of course, smile more.

We would especially like to thank the Ayrshire and Rose Hills Foundations for providing funding to start Villa's OT Clinic.



Lisa stretching during OT.

THANK YOU EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS

The goal of the Employment Services Team is to match work desires and needs of individuals with disabilities with job openings in the community, building partnerships for success. We want to thank the many companies that partner with us to provide employment opportunities for Villa's adults. When you are shopping at these fine establishments please let them know you appreciate what they do for individuals with disabilities.

American Heritage Landscaping
Banana Republic
The Buggy House
Camp Kinneret
Corner Bakery
Costco
Danny's Farm
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
Limerick
Lovebirds Café & Bakery
Manna
Nature Watch
On Call Medic
Pacific Theatres
Ralph's Supermarket
REI – Sporting Goods
Smart-N-Final
Starbucks in Vons
Superior Super Warehouse
SYSCO Food Services of Los Angeles, Inc.
Target
USPS General Mail Facility / Cafeteria
Unisource
United Methodist Church,
Westlake Village, CA
Vons
William Casey International University

(Partial listing...community partners continue to grow!)

Thank You, Danke Schön, Grazie, Salut — We can't say it enough!

PFAR



The Pasadena-Foothills Association of Realtors Charitable Foundation recently awarded Villa's Hjelte-Phillips Speech & Language Center with a \$10,000 grant. Villa Board Member, Marybeth Rehman-Dittu accepted the check at the annual check presentation party.

TOURNAMENT OF ROSES



Bond...James Bond—Really it's Damion Lee, Villa's Director of Residential Services, with the Queen and Court

Last October the 2008 Tournament of Roses Queen and Court toured Villa. Our students were all smiles as the queen and court visited each classroom, presenting roses and Halloween gifts. We hope Villa will be a permanent stop on their tour schedule for years to come.

SWIFT FOUNDATION

The Swift Memorial Health Care Foundation awarded Villa with a \$2,500 grant to provide care management services to seniors in Ventura County.

Villa's Care Management Outreach Collaboration (CMOC) program provides information and referrals, intake screening, in-home assessment, care planning, service authorization/arrangement, case monitoring and periodic reassessment. This program is designed to meet the needs of the growing population of older adults, adults with developmental disabilities and their families and caregivers who are currently disenfranchised from care services and need support from a variety of service providers.

S. MARK TAPER FOUNDATION



The S. Mark Taper Foundation awarded Villa Esperanza Services with a \$50,000 grant to purchase a 12 passenger handicap accessible van. This vehicle will be used daily providing transportation for children, adults and seniors with developmental disabilities to and from day programs; work and employment training programs; medical appointments; educational classes; community outings; Special Olympics practices and games; social activities and group activities on the weekends; and school field trips for Villa's students. Villa's transportation program provides over 700 one-way trips each week.

VILLA GUILD, BETTING ON A WINNER



More than 200 guests joined us for a beautiful day at Santa Anita Race track for Villa Esperanza Guild's 11th Annual "A Day of Thoroughbred Racing" Saturday, February 28. The event raised \$67,000 to support Villa's Hjelte-Phillips Speech and Language Center and Adult Residential and Independent Living Programs for individuals with developmental disabilities. Thank you to all our Guild Members and to those who participated!



Advocates Kathryn Trimble and Bob Moore speak out about budget cuts.

the budget. Personal stories were also shared in hopes that funding cuts would not directly impact service providers. Regional Centers receive their funding from DDS which in turn support service providers like Villa.

ADVOCACY

Villa Board member and participant Kathryn Trimble, along with Villa parent, Bob Moore and two of Villa's leadership staff attended the California Disability Services Association Stakeholders Meeting relating to costs in the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) system.

The current California budget requires a cut in funding to DDS. Two forums were held for DDS to hear ideas and suggestions on ways to cut



Villa adult participants happily accepting their awards.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS, KUDOS AND AWARDS

Villa's annual Adult Awards Dinner celebrating the achievements of ALL our adult clients was held last fall. The evening included dinner and an awards presentation where each participant received a Certificate of Achievement with accolades from each program director. Additional awards were presented to the following individuals for their above and beyond efforts:

Dimensions Achievement Award

Liza Coquia
Reene Fudil

Julia Stahl Residential Award

Virginia Myers
William Gilchrist

The Michael Canter Star Award

Adalberto Sanchez
Tye Horn

Elene Chaffee Loebbecke Employee of the Year Award

Antoinette Cisneros
Ariel Holm

Betty De Santis Residential Award

Kevin Sterling

Community Outreach Award

Michelle Allen

Dottie Nelson Outstanding Participant of the Year

Nina Pendergrass

Villa Esperanza Services touches the lives of individuals helping their dreams come true in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

MAIN OFFICE

Villa Esperanza Services
2060 East Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91107
Tel 626-449-2919
Fax 626-449-2850
email: info@VillaEsperanzaServices.org
www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM SITES:

Adult Day Program (ADP) & Care Management Outreach Collaboration (CMOC) Main Office

Westminster Presbyterian Church
1757 North Lake Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91104
Tel 626-398-4435
Fax 626-398-4707

Care Management Outreach Collaboration (CMOC) Satellite Office & Independent Living Skills (ILS)

Under One Roof Human Services Center
80 East Hillcrest Drive, Suite 103
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Tel 877-446-4900
Tel 805-446-4500

Dimensions Adult Day Program

2031 East Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91107
Tel 626-449-2919
Fax 626-449-2850

Employment & Transition Services

756 Lakefield Road, Suite F
Westlake Village, CA 91361
Tel 805-446-1939
Fax 805-446-1959

Hjelte-Phillips Speech & Language Center

435 North Craig Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91107
Tel 626-795-8355
Fax 626-449-2850

School Campus & Occupational Therapy Clinic

2116 East Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91107
Tel 626-449-2919
Fax 626-395-0174

Adult Residential Homes:

In Pasadena: Allen House, Brown House, Chester House, Dominion/Morehart House, Murphy House, Stahl House, Villa Apartments, Wagner House, Wynn House
In Thousand Oaks: Norgaard House

A special thank you to the Kwianis Club of Pasadena for volunteering at the event!

Calendar of Events



School Parent Association Monthly Meeting

3rd Monday of Every Month

12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Call Casey Gregg, School Principal for more information

(626) 449-2919, ext. 117

April is

Autism Awareness Month

National Volunteer Week

April 20-24

CAN (Cure Autism Now) Walk

Saturday, April 25

9:00 - 12 noon

Rosebowl

Blue & White - Western BBQ

Sunday, May 31

La Canada, Calif.

11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

School Awards Ceremony

Friday, June 19

10:00 - 12:00 a.m.

Angel Frames: A Collection of Very Special Art

Public Opening -

Sunday, August 9

Armory Center for the Arts

21st Annual Tournament of Hope

Monday, September 29

Glendora Country Club, Glendora

For more information about our events, please call Vanessa Voors at (626)449-2919, ext. 168 or send an email, vvoors@VillaEsperanzaServices.org.

P.S.

"I drive by Villa three days a week during the time students and clients are disembarking buses and vans, I am impressed by what I observe. At times students or adults can be very trying but what I see is your endeavor to redirect and keep them safe. I applaud you and say 'thank you.'

Villa is probably one of the greatest assets the City of Pasadena has to offer. There are few facilities that accommodate such a varied group of individuals. All of you are to be commended for your dedication to children and adults helping to make their lives productive with your tender loving care."

—Irene Albeck

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