



VillaVoice

Providing Love,
Care and Hope for
Individuals with
Disabilities and their
Families since 1961

Villa Esperanza Services Quarterly Newsletter • Volume 3 • Fall 2007

Our Journey

by Linda Wu, Parent

In late March 2002, our son Aaron was diagnosed with autism. At the time, he was a little over 2-years-old with no speech. Our family was confused and in disbelief. Aaron's daily struggles and difficulties literally turned our lives upside down. My husband and I scrambled to figure out what he wanted and why he was so upset. Like cameras, we zoomed in and zoomed out of situations to make sense of the numerous meltdowns he had throughout the day. Sometimes we were successful, but many times we were at a loss.

When Aaron entered school, there was a sense of hope that he would pick up communication skills that would allow him to let us know his wants and needs.

But, report after report we were told that there was little progress or no progress in his communication skills. It was disappointing and heartbreaking.

In the fall of 2004, Aaron's Pre-K teacher notified me that there wasn't any speech therapy available at school because the district was having difficulty finding a speech pathologist. She gave me the option to wait or Aaron could take the opportunity to participate in the speech program at Villa Esperanza Services. I immediately made the call to set up an appointment to meet with the

And for the very first time in his life, Aaron said "Mom". He was holding my picture in his hand, and he looked right at me. I cannot put into words what I felt that day.

Director, Starla Affatati. I braced myself for a challenge because Aaron has a difficult time with new faces and oftentimes being in a new environment was overwhelming for him. My worries were put to rest after meeting Starla. Her confidence and knowledge of sensory needs put Aaron on the right

track to finding his voice. At initial speech sessions, Aaron would not participate at the therapy table. Oftentimes he would try to find a way to leave, he would cry, lie on the floor and bury his head in his hands, but Starla never gave up on him. She provided a comfortable and stimulating environment for Aaron. She allowed him to

use a large therapy ball, she also incorporated calming music and applied deep pressure to Aaron's head and limbs when he requested. All these things allowed Aaron to gradually work at the therapy table for longer periods of time and it made each

(Continued on page 3)



Linda and Aaron Wu

Message from the CEO

2007-2008

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It's hard to believe that we're coming to the end of another year. With the holidays right around the corner, we pause to give thanks for our family, friends and opportunities in our lives. It's also a time of reflection, pondering the future, setting new goals, overcoming new challenges and trying new things. As Villa enters 2008, we are committed to reaching our goals set in the Strategic Plan and becoming known as a Center of Excellence in the community.

An important component to being a Center of Excellence includes advocating for the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities, especially those who can't speak for themselves. Villa's Board of Directors, as well as senior staff, are creating an Advocacy Task Force with the goal of promoting positive change at the state and local levels. We are interested in being at the table for any proposed legislative changes.

The new year also brings new challenges and for Villa it's no different. With the continuous growth in our programs and services, Villa is devoted to improving and upgrading the School Campus. We are also beginning the process of developing a master plan for the entire Villa Campus, including administrative offices.

The end of the year also provides us an opportunity to celebrate. We look forward to the many festivities that will take place here at Villa. The clients enjoy a number of celebrations including open houses, luncheons and shows.

This holiday season, we give thanks to each of you, our Villa Family; you truly make a difference. With your support we will make 2008 a success no matter what challenges come our way. We are all building a better future for our children, adults and seniors.

Thank you and have a wonderful holiday season!

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

Dottie Nelson
CEO



Gabriel, Mia and Samantha, all from room 9, opening their house.

OPEN HOUSE

The School Open House, held Wednesday, October 17, was well attended by parents and families. The teachers worked hard and, as usual, all the classrooms looked great. Thanks to Dimensions Adult Day Program for providing the healthy refreshments and decorations and to all the staff that made the night a great experience.

Our Story (Continued from page 1)



Starla and Aaron communicating using PECS.



Aaron using sign language to ask for "more" snacks.

session a productive one.

At one of Aaron's sessions, Starla was working with Aaron in identifying members of his family. **And for the very first time in his life, Aaron said "Mom"**. He was holding my picture in his hand, and he looked right at me. I cannot put into words what I felt that day. It was a warm tingling sensation that ran down my spine. It was a wonderful feeling. In following sessions, we heard Aaron say more words like "daddy", "cookie", "more", "all done", "chips", and "eat".

The greatest change in Aaron's behavior came when Starla introduced PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). It gave him a way to let us know what he wanted and needed at the time without working himself up to a meltdown.

In May 2006, Aaron's progress took a detour. He was diagnosed with leukemia and this was the beginning of two long hospital stays and many subsequent doctor visits. I took pictures of items in his hospital room like the table, chair, light switch, his special bed, the television, the remote, and other things. These pictures were added to his PECS book. Aaron was able to use his PECS to tell us that he wanted to dim the lights, that he needed the table to be set up so that he could eat, that he wanted the television to be turned on. He was able to ask for his favorite snacks and DVDs. His doctors and nurses have commented that Aaron is such a good patient compared to some of the other typical 6-year-old patients that they have.

We are so very proud of him. He was able to use the communication skills that he developed at Villa and carry them into a completely unfamiliar environment and made it work for him.

Aaron is still primarily nonverbal, but now he's able to communicate his needs at home, at his grandparents' home, at school, and at the hospital with the use of PECS and he has learned to sign "more", "eat", and "drink". He's more alert and motivated to communicate. I know that Aaron has a long road ahead of him, but with the support and guidance of Starla and her staff at Villa Esperanza, Aaron is headed in the right direction.

SCHOOL PARENT ASSOCIATION

Carol Eblen, mother of Dustin in room 1 and Danielle in room 6, is our new President of our School Parent Association. Congratulations Carol. The Association has been busy recruiting Room Parents to assist teachers with classroom needs. Norma Pou, mother of Adrian in room 5, has started an informal support group for parents. If you are interested in learning more about it please contact Norma at 626-457-1661 or njpou@yahoo.com.

ROOM PARENTS

Room 1 & 4—Elizabeth Haynes

Room 2—Sandy Price

Room 3—Roberta Manshel

Room 5—Norma Pou

Room 6—Albert Navarro

Room 7—Erica Cho

Room 8A & 8B—We are in need of room parents for these classes. If you are interested please let us know.

Room 9—Candice Yu

Thank you to our Room Parents, and Carol and Norma.

SCHOOL DATES TO REMEMBER

November 21—Minimum Day

November 22 & 23—Closed for Thanksgiving

December 21—Holiday Program & Minimum Day

December 24 – January 4, 2008—Winter Break

Around Villa



Sharon Kuppermann, Margie Hill and Bill Gilchrist on their way to the fair.

FUN AT THE COUNTY FAIR

On Friday, September 28, 80

participants from our Dimensions and Adult Day Program boarded a five star bus and headed off to the Los Angeles County Fair. For some, it was their very first trip to the Fair. They had an exciting day visiting the animals and exhibitor booths; tasting a variety of cuisines; and enjoying the different rides. We want to thank Michael D. Antonovich, Los Angeles County Supervisor, Fifth District, for supplying the bus; Chauncey Mann, FairPlex Credentials Department, for his continued generosity and commitment to individuals with disabilities. We also want to thank the Convalescent AID Society for their support and loaning wheelchairs for the day.

AND THEY'RE OFF!



Villa Esperanza Guild is hosting their 10th Annual 'A Day of Thoroughbred Racing'

benefiting Villa's Hjelte-Phillips Speech and Language Center and Residential and Independent Living programs. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 23, at 11 a.m. at the Santa Anita Racetrack, Turf Club. The cost to attend Race Day is \$75 for Turf Club preferred seating and includes tables for four with personal TV and choice of lunch served at your table. For information, call 626-449-2919, extension 62.



Michael Greene, Assistant Director Employment Services, presenting Alfonso Craig his certificate.



Sharon Kuppermann reading a poem with assistance from Michelle Hussen, Director of Dimensions



AnnMarie Flaherty, Board Chairman, recognizing Mark Clementson's accomplishments.



Joe Morehart with friend Damon Sickman, Board Member, excited to celebrate together.

AND THE WINNERS ARE... EVERYONE!

Each year Villa hosts the Adult Awards Dinner celebrating the achievements of ALL our adult participants. This year's event was held on Sunday, November 4th at Villa's Adult Day Program site in Westminster Presbyterian Church's Morrison Hall. The evening included dinner and an awards presentation where each adult 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:

Betty De Santis Residential Award—Takashi Miyahira

Julia Stahl Residential Awards—Maria Zaninovich and Neil Eischen

Elene Chaffee Loebbecke Employee of the Year Awards—Edwin Jennings and Russell Santop

Michael Canter Star Awards—Michael Feser and Brian Bickly

Adult Day Program Achievement Awards—Sean Fudil and Waynesha Strawder

Dimensions Achievement Award—Senen Nuno and Mary Katherine Hess

Community Outreach Award—Juan Ramirez and Harolyn Rhue

Dottie Nelson Outstanding Participant of the Year Award—Leo Hsu

Congratulations to all our participants!

CLIENT SEMINARS AND TRAININGS

Villa is committed to training clients in the workforce. Villa's Employment Services Team holds quarterly Customer Service Training for our clients, including guest speakers from community businesses and peer-to-peer training from our successful community placements. We want to thank Sysco Foods District Manager, Jim English for joining us on October 24th to share with our clients what customer service means to Sysco and various employment opportunities Sysco can help generate in the community through their various vendors including restaurant chains and hospitals. We look forward to working with Sysco as an innovative staffing solution!

GIVING THROUGH YOUR IRA – TAX FREE

Until December 31, 2007, you have the opportunity to make a gift to Villa Esperanza Services through your IRA (Individual Retirement Account). You must be over 70-1/2 years-old and the contribution must be transferred directly from the IRA to Villa. This would appeal to those of you who take mandatory withdrawals but don't need the income; a gift directly to Villa reduces your reportable income. It is also good for donors who do not itemize deductions on their income taxes but want to make a charitable gift. Consult your IRA plan administrator or your financial advisor. For further information, please contact Gioia Pastre, Vice President of Development, at 626-449-2919, ext. 18.

VILLA'S RESIDENTS— BUSY BEES

Individuals in Villa's 9 group homes in Pasadena and Thousand Oaks have been busy attending a variety of events and classes. Several individuals joined us for dinner at Villa's 20th Anniversary Tournament of Hope held on Monday, October 1. Our residents attend the Inspiration of Dreams Dance Class held at the Church of Nazarene in Pasadena on Saturdays. The classes come in handy for the Ability First dance. 'Dancing with the Stars' watch out!

Our residents have been on trips to many local attractions such as the Long Beach Aquarium, fishing at The Redondo Beach Pier, Disneyland and a Dodger Game. The Installation Dinner of new members to Civitan's Special Friends was widely attended as well. On the docket for the holidays are many more parties. Fun, fun, fun!



Earl Brown, David Reed and Les Young at the Tournament of Hope Dinner.



Friends Ginny Myers and Maria Zaninovich enjoying an evening out.



Michelle, Room 9

WISH LIST

If you have Gift Cards that you want to put to use, think of Villa. We welcome the cards to help us purchase items for residents, students and needy families during the holidays. Cash donations are also greatly appreciated.

Villa's School is in need of school age gifts for our students—new toys, appropriate DVDs, books and other new items welcomed.

Dimensions Adult Day Program is in need of materials for creating mosaic tiles—dishes, ceramics, and other supplies such as grouts are all needed.

If you are interested in donating to Villa, please contact the Development Department at 626-449-2919 ext. 28.

PROVIDING LOVE, CARE AND HOPE

Villa's Care Management Outreach Collaboration (CMOC) coordinated our annual Flu Shot Clinics in early November co-sponsored by Star Home Health Resources, Inc. and the City of Pasadena & Los Angeles Health Departments. Thanks to Cynthia Davis, R.N. (Villa Nurse) for giving the flu shots.

CMOC also has a partnership with the Salvation Army to have 90 hot meals delivered to CMOC clients on Thanksgiving Day. If you are interested in helping we welcome grocery gift cards or cash donations.

20TH ANNIVERSARY TOURNAMENT OF HOPE

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Services
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Tom Recendez, Mijares Mexican
Restaurant
Kathy Waller, Community Volunteer
Herb Weaver, Community Volunteer



Committee Members, Philip Ito and Min Higa



Committee and Board Members R-lene Mijares de Lang and Brij Lal with Honoree, Joe W. DeFur of Wells Fargo.



Committee Members and Golf Ball Drop Officials Kathy Waller and Board Member Karen Shelton Brown with helicopter pilot, Howard Hamlin



Committee Members Linda Lucero, Mary Ciaravino, Herb Weaver, Rita Milostan and Kathy Palmer.

Swingin' for Hope

Villa held our 20th Anniversary Tournament of Hope on Monday, October 1st at Glendora Country Club. Chaired by Board Member Brij Lal, CEO of Wrapper USA, the event included Villa's first ever helicopter Golf Ball Drop allowing online gifts from as far away as Finland. The "internationally promoted" Tournament, presented by Wells Fargo, raised over \$175,000 for Villa's programs and services. There were 144 golfers and over 200 dinner guests for the live and silent auction, cocktails and dinner. The evening, emceed by Jorge Jarrin, "Captain Jorge" of KABC Talk Radio/Los Angeles Dodgers, included an award presentation to Joe W. DeFur, Vice President, Regional Managing Director, Wells Fargo Private Client Services for his dedication to Villa and the community. John Moran served as our auctioneer for the live auction. Over the last 20 years the tournament has raised over 1.5 million dollars to support programs for children and adults diagnosed with developmental disabilities such as autism and Down syndrome.

We want to thank Golf Honorary Chairman, Brij Lal and our Golf Committee for their years of dedication to the Tournament of Hope and Villa. We also want to thank Howard Hamlin for donating his time and helicopter for our very first Golf Ball Drop!

Special thank you to all of our Tournament of Hope sponsors and participants. You truly make a difference!

CONGRATULATIONS TOURNAMENT OF HOPE WINNERS

Ladies Closest to the Pin—Debbie Meymarian

Men's Closest to the Pin—Rudy Aguirre

Ladies Longest Drive—Kathy Waller

Men's Longest Drive—Chuck Tapert

Straightest Drive—Bob Roszkos

First Place Team—Joe DeFur, Nick Marikian,
Brian Nash and Chris Rummel

Second Place Team — Perry Colligan, John
Foran, Bill Ramsey and Bob Sellers

First Place Mixed Foursome— Paul
Abrahamian, Al Meymarian, Debbie
Meymarian and Johnathan Taylor

First Place Ladies Foursome— Starla Affatati,
Jenny Barnett, Casey Gregg and Genena
Kriewaldt

GREAT WORK!



Vicky Alvarez, completed her first 90 days at Vons, Santa Paula



Curtis Neilson, employed over 1 year at Vons, Pasadena



Keith Johns, employed over 1 year at Target, Pasadena



Tye Horn, Employee of the Month at Home Depot's Newberry Park store

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We're excited by the many new employment partnerships Villa is forming. Danny's Farm, a unique birthday party and petting zoo venue, was made possible by a community employment grant provided by San Gabriel Pomona Regional Center and Department of Developmental Services, in conjunction with Cathy and Jim Gott. As of October 1, Villa's Employment Services was approved for Group Supported Employment at Danny's Farm. Check it out at www.dannysfarm.com.

Villa has secured the janitorial contract for a private school in Westlake Village. Our crew will provide full janitorial support to the school Monday through Friday. Many thanks to the West Region Employment Services team for developing this opportunity with the school!

The City of Calabasas recently awarded Employment Services in the West Region a \$5,000 grant to assist with the purchase of a new landscaping truck for our Las Virgenes Municipal Water District's crew. We are proud to be in our second year of providing landscape services to the District's main campus and outlying stations in Malibu Canyon and Westlake Village. We appreciate the city's support of this local contract providing employment to our clients!

Villa Esperanza Services touches the lives of over 1000 individuals each year helping their dreams come true in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

MAIN OFFICE

Villa Esperanza Services
2116 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

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

Care Management Outreach Collaboration and Independent Living Skills

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

Care Management Outreach Collaboration

10100 Balboa Boulevard
Granada Hills, CA 91344
Tel 800-661-3359

Dimensions Adult Day Program

2090 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

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

RESIDENTIAL SITES

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

Calendar of Events



Aaron, Room 8, enjoying music therapy.

Monthly Tour of Villa
2nd Friday of Every Month
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Call today to reserve a space
626-449-2919, ext. 28

**School Parent Association
Monthly Meeting**
3rd Monday of Every Month
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

**Villa and All Day Programs Closed
for Thanksgiving Holiday**
November 22 and 23

Residential Holiday Open Houses
December—dates to be determined

School Holiday Program
Friday, December 21 at 10 a.m.

School Winter Break
December 24 through January 4

**Dimensions and Adult Day Program
Holiday Parties & Show**
December 21st 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Villa and All Day Programs
Closed for Holiday**
Tuesday, December 25

**Villa Esperanza Guild presents
the 10th Annual
“A Day of Thoroughbred Racing”**
Saturday, February 23, 2008
at Santa Anita Racetrack
12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**Shakespeare League of Pasadena
Gala Event**
Saturday, March 8

**Shakespeare League of Pasadena
presents “The Best Little
Whore House in Texas”**
Friday, April 4 – Sunday, April 6
San Gabriel Civic Auditorium

For more information call 626-449-2919, ext. 62 or ext. 68
or email us at info@VillaEsperanzaServices.org

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P.S.

“Tye’s award is a shining example of what one can achieve if given an opportunity!”
—Robert Efford, Director of Employment & Transition Services about Tye Horn’s
Employee of the Month award from Home Depot

