

All the News Worth  
Chirping About from  
Villa Esperanza Services  
Fall 2021 Newsletter



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



**Antonio Salazar, Jr., an avid fan of all things sports and Dodgers, practices his swing during recess.**

## Antonio Hits it Out of the Park!

*Article By Lindsey Harrison, Villa Esperanza Services Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator*

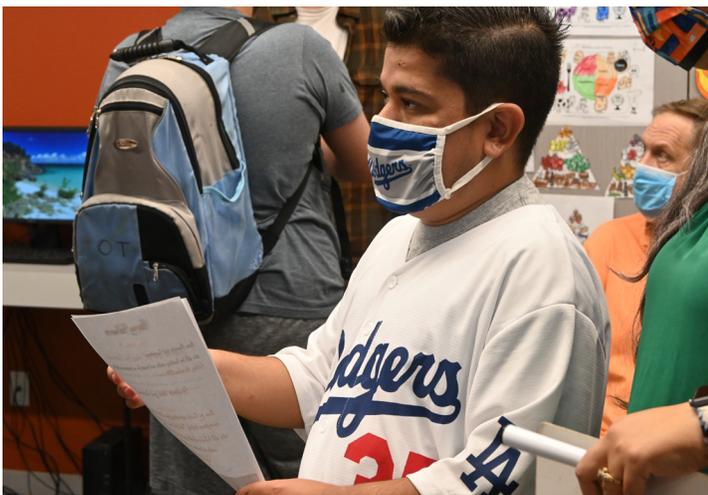
Few in Villa Esperanza Services' high school classrooms take art as seriously as Antonio Salazar, Jr, and even fewer that feel comfortable directing their peers through the steps of their classroom art assignment.

"You have to put your name on it," he directed another student holding a drawing. The student stared down at the drawing, unsure, so Antonio gently took the drawing, flipped it over, and pointed. "You need to put your name right there, on the back."

Antonio is twenty-one and a high school student at Villa School. The staff that works with him describe him as a leader. Having been with Villa now for three years, he knows how the classroom works and is always ready to assist his fellow students. A helpful trait, as he and his classmates transition back to in-person instruction.

"You know it's funny," Antonio's father, Antonio Sr., noted. "He doesn't really speak up to many people. But for his peers, he has no problem giving them direction. You can tell that he is within his comfort zone with his classmates."

It has not always been like this. "When Antonio first came to Villa, he had intense service needs," Gwendolyn Meier Eberhard, Director of Villa's Speech and Language Center, shared. "He needed 1 to 1 assistance from staff to get through his school work." Antonio struggled at some of his previous schools, particularly when it came to behaviors and making friends.



**Antonio invites his classmates to an upcoming school event with the assistance of his speech therapist.**

Villa was quick to provide the support Antonio needed to develop his independence and become more social. In the classroom, Antonio worked on the skills he would need to transition to adulthood. With his speech therapists, he worked on his social skills like asking questions, listening for answers, and replying to follow-up questions.

“He has grown so much!” Gwendolyn continued. “He no longer needs 1 to 1 assistance and has made a couple of really close friends.” In just a few short years, Antonio has started to thrive.

As he prepares to transition into adulthood, Antonio now has a strong foundation he can use to participate in a broader variety of programs for adults. Antonio is now not just a participant in the classroom, but a leader. He no longer struggles to socialize with his peers, but has many friends, like best friends Brian and Manny. The trio is often found eating lunch together and discussing their individual hobbies. For Antonio, this means talking about all things sports.

Antonio Sr. shared that his son’s reaction to sports is something truly special. “When we first started taking him to sports games, we were worried that the sound would be too much for him. But as he got older, he would just light up once we got to the stadium.”

Like a true Angelino, Antonio is a hardcore Dodgers fan, and he is rarely seen without the team’s signature colors or logo around campus. But it’s not just baseball that catches Antonio’s interest. Before the pandemic, Antonio was involved in multiple sports leagues, like soccer and bowling.

Art is another of Antonio’s passions and it is often combined with sports in creative ways. While staying safe at home during the height of the pandemic, one of Antonio’s big projects was to create t-shirts decorated with nods to his favorite sports teams and players. All of them have their own unique, “Antonio-original” spin.

“They all have his flair, a combination of things he’s seen that catch his interest.” Antonio Sr. said. “He’ll make a Dodgers shirt with an interesting logo he saw in a commercial, for example.”

When it comes to preparing Antonio for his first steps into adulthood, Gwendolyn shared that art is a big part of his future. “One of his current goals is learning to budget for art supplies,” she shared. “He assembles and names all of his artwork. Eventually, he could have his own webshop to create and sell his work.”

When asked what has helped Antonio succeed at Villa, Gwen is quick to point out the importance of students’ personal perspectives and interests when creating their Individualized Education Placements or IEPs. “At Villa, we recognize the students’ passions and tailor the educational goals around them. We include and encourage students to voice what they want for themselves.”



Photo credit to @iambearsun

## Bearsun’s Journey

Congratulations to Bearsun who just completed his cross-country adventure! Bearsun, or also known as Jessy Larios, walked from Los Angeles to New York City to support Villa Esperanza Services, along with several other amazing charities.

Bearsun’s journey is a wonderful example of overcoming obstacles to reach your goals. Thank you so much to both Bearsun and his fans for supporting Villa and raising over \$17,000 for Villa’s children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities!

# The Spirit of Giving Hope

Article by Katie Hamrick, Development Assistant

Hope is here at Villa this holiday season! Its is found in the daily services Villa provides to children, adults, and seniors with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Hope is also evident in our loyal supporters. Villa's mission of Love, Care and Hope is thriving today because of the generosity of donors like you.



**Pictured celebrating the holidays pre-pandemic, left to right, are Villa participants, Kathryn and Michael, making holiday cards for the Children's Hospital; Digger's Garden Club volunteers, Tracy and Marsha, delivering holiday cheer for Villa's residents; student Shakobe opening a gifts from community partners Pillsbury and Stone|Dean.**

Villa Board Member, Nadia Lee writes that "every time I come to campus and see a smiling client, that inspires me to give to Villa. Every time I meet and chat with a Villa staff or teacher who is so passionate about Villa, that inspires me to give to Villa." We are so grateful for all our supporters who find purpose and joy in supporting the deserving children and adults Villa serves.

According to longtime Villa supporter, Dick Hirrel, "when all things are considered, why not help those who are the most deserving." Similarly, Brij Lal, notes that "the smile and satisfaction of Villa's clients feeling good about themselves makes it feel really worthwhile." Our students thank you for helping give them a voice; our adults thank you for helping them find employment; our seniors thank you for providing support for individuals living on their own. We thank all of you for your spirit of giving hope this holiday season!

## Thank you for considering a gift to Villa this holiday season.

Options to consider include:

Give the gift of **Appreciated Stock** and take a charitable deduction up to 30% of your Adjusted Gross Income and avoid paying capital gains tax.

**IRA Charitable Rollover**, if you are 70 1/2 or older, you can make a tax free gift to Villa directly from your IRA.

**Cash Donations**- The CARES Act allows for individuals that itemize on their tax return to deduct contributions up to 100% of their Adjusted Gross Income through Dec. 31, 2021.

Please consult your financial advisor for further details.

**To learn more, visit [VillaEsperanzaServices.PlanMyLegacy.org](http://VillaEsperanzaServices.PlanMyLegacy.org) or contact Gioia Pastre at (626) 449-2919, ext. 118 or [GPastre@VillaES.org](mailto:GPastre@VillaES.org)**

## VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES DIRECTORY

### PASADENA

2116 E. Villa Street  
Pasadena, CA 91107  
[www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org](http://www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org)  
[info@VillaEsperanzaServices.org](mailto:info@VillaEsperanzaServices.org)

#### Main Number

626-449-2919

#### Villa Esperanza School

626-449-2919, ext. 119

#### Hjelte-Phillips

#### Speech & Language Center

626-449-2919, ext. 176

#### Occupational Therapy Clinic

626-449-2919, ext. 140

#### Community Integration

#### Program (CIP)

626-449-2919, ext. 172

#### Employment Services

626-449-2919, ext. 161

#### Adult Residential Program

626-449-2919, ext. 113

#### Independent Living Skills (ILS)

626-449-2919, ext. 108

#### Dimensions Adult Day Program

1990 E. Walnut St.

Pasadena, CA 91107

626-346-9109, ext. 103

#### Adult Day Program (ADP)

1757 N. Lake Ave.

Pasadena, Ca 91104

626-398-4435, ext. 106

### WEST REGION

Community Conscience

Human Services Center

80 E. Hillcrest Drive, Suite 206

Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

#### Main Number

805-446-1939

#### Community Integration

#### Program (CIP)

805-446-1939, ext. 129

#### Employment Services

805-446-1939, ext. 126

#### Independent Living Skills (ILS)

805-446-1939, ext. 129

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# VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES

*Where Hope is Hard at Work for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities*

2116 East Villa Street  
Pasadena, CA 91107

[www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org](http://www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org)



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This year's Tournament of Roses parade theme "Dream, Believe, Achieve" echoes Villa's goal of inspiring individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities reach their full potential. We were honored to have the Queen and Court visit the Villa School during Halloween activities! The students enjoyed showing off their door decorations and meeting each of them.



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