



Tye's Journey in Self-Advocacy

Article By Jenny Seto, Villa Esperanza Services Special Events Coordinator

Tye Horn has been breaking barriers his whole life, and he doesn't plan to stop now. "I have been out here in Ventura County since 1991, and I started at Home Depot in September of that year," Tye shared. "It helped with my special needs. As a cashier, a lot of people told me at that time, 'That's too hard, Tye, you can't do that.' But I proved them wrong over the years." Today thankfully, intellectually/developmentally disabled individuals working at large companies are becoming more commonplace as employers recognize their skills and how much they can contribute. In a few months, Tye will be celebrating his 30th work anniversary at Home Depot. "Home Depot has been good to me. I have worked in different departments over the years. I started out with carts and helping people load their purchases. Now I'm in Hardware, which is one of my favorite departments, along with Gardening," Tye said. "I plan to stay in the Hardware department for quite a while if I can."

Tye is an active member of the Villa community and has been with Villa for 16 years. He is a former Villa board member and is part of Villa's Independent Living Skills (ILS) Program as well as Villa's Employment Program in the West Region. While Villa's main campus is in Pasadena, Villa also has several programs based in the Conejo Valley to serve adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities in Ventura County. Beth McMonagle, Villa ILS Skill Instructor, has been working with Tye for four years and had "nothing but great things to say about him. "Not many other people can say they've held a job for 30 years! That alone shows Tye's heart and dedication all on its own," she commented.



Tye is an experienced public speaker and a powerful self-advocate. He hopes that he can encourage other special needs individuals and their families to do the same.

In addition to being an excellent employee, Tye has many other strengths as well. Two of his great passions go hand in



Tye (right) with his son. Tye is a proud single father to a son with special needs.

hand: public speaking and educating people about the special needs community. Because he enjoyed giving speeches, Tye joined the nonprofit educational organization Toastmasters International to learn more. "Toastmasters is a group that helps you improve your public speaking. It's quite good for people who are shy or maybe have a speech problem," Tye explained. "I loved being a part of Toastmasters and won quite a few ribbons for my speeches! It was exciting, and I loved the butterflies that go through your stomach when you're standing there talking to people and giving your speech." Now with so much public speaking experience under his belt, Tye hopes to use that skill to teach others.

"In the past, I've run into people that have never heard of the Regional Center. They didn't know that their kids could get help and that there are programs that can help them

with their special needs," Tye shared. "Since I have a lot of experience with different programs and working with the Regional Center, I would really like to help educate families so they know what resources are out there. I want to make speeches, raise money, educate people, and keep programs for individuals with special needs going."

Tye's ambition and success are particularly admirable as he also balances being a single father to a son with intellectual/developmental disabilities. "Tye had big dreams of going to college, but at the age of 24, he had a son who also had special needs," Beth recounted. "Tye stepped up and became a single father, raising a wonderful, down to earth child." Though the path was difficult, Tye wouldn't change a thing. "I am proud of what I have done with my life and raising my son," he reflected. "I am a proud father, and I know that he is a proud son. I am blessed to have him in my life, and I am blessed to have the support I have."

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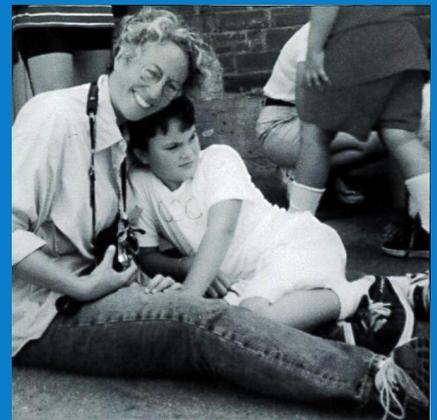
Villa has been proud to be part of that support for Tye for the past 16 years. "Villa is a really great nonprofit program, definitely one of the best I've seen since I started going to programs," Tye said. "I really like that Villa takes care of their clients. I know I have good support through Villa, and the staff have been really good to me." Advocacy and education were cornerstones of Villa's founding 60 years ago, and Villa is proud to help support people like Tye who advocate for themselves and the intellectually/developmentally disabled community at large.

Villa's Anniversary Reflection

Villa Esperanza Services is turning 60! To celebrate, we are reflecting on the previous six decades of love, care, and hope. We previously left off in the 1970s after a decade and a half of program expansions had moved Villa Esperanza beyond just a schoolhouse to reach individuals and families of all ages. We now slide into the '80s to an organization trying to balance all of its new responsibilities. Changes from both the community and within Villa caused a funding shortage. Villa needed to adapt and needed to do it fast.

This is the situation that incoming Executive Director Dottie Nelson found when she took charge of the organization in the mid-1990s. Thankfully, she was up for the task. The programs at Villa were quickly restructured, streamlining services to save money. Additionally, Villa applied for and received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to renovate and sustain the homes in the Residential Services Program.

Despite the changes, Villa continued to grow, adding more classrooms to the school and more assisted living houses to the community. The Employment Services Program also expanded by partnering with businesses to create new job opportunities for program participants. As a new century dawned, Villa's future was brighter than ever.



Grace Falls in Love with Learning

Article by Lindsey Harrison, Villa Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator

While starting at a new school is always challenging, starting at a new school during a pandemic is a whole new experience. Luckily, with the help of Villa's teachers and staff, several new students have begun their education successfully at Villa School since the pandemic began. One of these students, Grace, is thoroughly enjoying being in the virtual classroom. As a recent addition to one of Villa's Elementary classrooms, Grace has never attended Villa School in person. Currently, her only experience with classroom instruction is through Zoom and distance learning.

Grace's mother, Denise, had to fill in to help Grace since the classroom aides were out. "When Grace started, it was so hard to get her to sit for class," Denise recalled. "She's like a cat. That might be a strange thing to say, but she does everything on her own time. She is really sweet and affectionate, but you have to stand back and let her come to you."

Fortunately, Grace and Denise were not alone. At Villa School, Grace had a team of therapists that worked with her teacher, Carol, to help Grace get acclimated. With time, repetition, and patience from both Villa staff and Grace's family at home, Grace started to fall in love with school.

Once Grace was comfortable meeting with her class online, she quickly showed all those around her how much she loved to learn. "Zoom was a barrier at first," Carol shared. "But now even on the weekends, Grace asks for me and her therapists." Carol is quick to list multiple areas in which Grace has shown improvement over the last 9 months: everything from reading to technology. But Grace's favorite subject by far is math. "This child loves to do math. Just loves it," Denise shared with a laugh. "It calms her down. When she is having a bad time, she goes and works on her touch math."

Overall, Grace is thriving at school. Carol credits Grace's success to the effective collaboration between Villa staff and Grace's family. One silver lining of distance learning has been the ability to work with her students' families directly. "Collaboration with the families has worked out so well," Carol commented. "Parents can see what we are doing in class because we are doing class over Zoom. Before, they wouldn't really know about these specialized techniques, but now they can see it in action and know what it is." This will be a real advantage when the students go back in-person as parents will be able to mirror the techniques at home that the students are learning in the classroom.

Grace's journey at Villa School is just beginning. The next step? Getting her ready for in-person instruction. "Grace has started to ask for her classmates outside of class," Denise said. "I am curious to see what is going to happen when she goes back to full, in-session school." Villa is slowly and safely bringing students back to campus, with optional, limited in-person sessions currently being offered in addition to virtual services. Once it is safe, Villa looks forward to welcoming all of our students back to the campus.



Grace takes a break from her Kindergarten lessons over Zoom to enjoy an outing with her family.

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Hjelte-Phillips

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Occupational Therapy Clinic

626-449-2919, ext. 140

Community Integration

Program (CIP)

626-398-4435, ext. 172

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626-449-2919, ext. 161

Adult Residential Program

626-449-2919, ext. 113

Independent Living Skills (ILS)

626-398-4435, ext. 108

Dimensions Adult Day Program

1990 E. Walnut St.
Pasadena, CA 91107
626-346-9109, ext. 103

Adult Day Program (ADP)

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Human Services Center
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Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

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Back to School!

Villa Esperanza School is excited to be welcoming back some students to the school campus! This Spring, Villa started using a hybrid model of distance learning and limited in-class instruction. Classrooms currently have a capacity of 2 students per room, but we hope to bring more students back to in-person instruction this summer and return to full capacity by Fall.

Thank you to all the teachers, aides, and school staff that have made this process possible! We know the last year has required a lot of patience and flexibility, and we appreciate your dedication to the students and families we serve.