

All the News Worth
Chirping About from
Villa Esperanza Services
Spring 2025 Newsletter



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

A New Chapter of Empowerment and Community Support!

Article By Jordan Paggett, Villa Esperanza Services Volunteer & Engagement Coordinator/CIP Skills Instructor III



Villa Esperanza Services Board and donors during Ribbon Cutting ceremony. | Photo by Matt Morseth from Practice

Pasadena, CA – “Recently driving past Villa Esperanza I was amazed by the transformation. I couldn’t help thinking of the blue door entrance way; once a symbol of hope, taking us from hopelessness to an extraordinary adventure filled with possibilities.” Irene Albeck, a dedicated parent and retired special education teacher, took a moment to share her thoughts on the campus transformation. The reflections, read aloud by Villa Chief Executive Officer, Kelly White during the successful Ribbon Cutting of Villa Esperanza Services Phase 2 Capital Campaign highlighted the significant changes that have taken place and the positive impact on the community.

A diverse group of over 180 attendees gathered on a lovely sunny March afternoon for the much-anticipated Grand Opening. The event welcomed generous donors, family members, participants, neighbors, and dignitaries, all united to celebrate this significant milestone for the organization.

Villa Esperanza has a proud history of growth and expansion, highlighted by notable achievements over the years. The journey began with the Villa master plan approval from city officials and five years of dedicated planning, culminating in the completion of the first phase opening in 2018. This initiative resulted in the construction of seven new classrooms, a multipurpose room, and an engaging playground, greatly enhancing resources available to the community.

In 2023, Villa Esperanza proudly initiated Phase 2 of its ambitious Capital Campaign. This new phase includes the addition of three spacious classrooms, thoughtfully designed to accommodate high school students while ensuring an

optimal learning environment.

Each classroom is designed with an open concept that encourages collaboration among students and school aides. Villa High School teacher Kahlea Santos emphasizes, "The natural lighting and high ceilings create a refreshing atmosphere. A beautifully designed classroom truly inspires me and makes me excited to be a teacher!"

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This expansion features a personalized Developmental Behavioral Therapy Center designed to provide a calming space for students to engage with Behavior Therapists. Additionally, it includes a state-of-the-art Occupational Therapy Clinic tailored to meet the diverse needs of those we serve. The Occupational Therapy team expressed their excitement about the new facility, emphasizing its potential to increase support for students' sensory needs and deliver more individualized therapy. They noted, "The capability to accommodate multiple swings simultaneously is a transformative development. This level of customizability allows each student to select their preferred activity, whether it's the zip line, swings, or hammocks, each of which helps support their various sensory needs."



Phase 2 construction team gathered together at the Ribbon Cutting.

In addition, we've added a Physical Education and Therapeutic Center to promote sports, exercise, and creative activities for our community. Thalia Stoffers, Sr. Special Events & Public Relations Coordinator for Villa's Philanthropy department, shared her enthusiasm: "Many of

our adult individuals served have been eagerly anticipating a space that will accommodate fun activities like Zumba."

This ambitious Capital Campaign has been made possible thanks to the generous contributions from numerous donors, many of whom have been with us since the inception of Phase 1. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Campaign Co-chairs Tracy and Dick Hirrel and Lisa and Tim Sloan, whose leadership has been instrumental in launching this campaign. Their support has truly propelled us forward, and we are endlessly thankful for their commitment.



City of Pasadena Councilmember Rick Cole speaking during the Ribbon Cutting.

Rick Cole, City of Pasadena Councilmember spoke during the Grand Opening, providing inspiring words to all in the crowd with a quote from Winston Churchill, "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us." He provided the sentiment that with these new buildings it now provides new opportunity for community growth and pride. "Additionally, a heartfelt thank you goes out to the entire Villa Team—your unwavering dedication and patience have made this achievement possible."

The successful completion of Phase 2 represents a pivotal milestone in Villa Esperanza's mission to promote growth, learning, and community engagement. This achievement underscores the organization's commitment to developing inclusive and functional spaces that empower students and adults to excel. Irene's poignant message resonates deeply as she reflects further, "The metamorphosis of the building on Villa Street will be in my mind a tribute to those few parents who dared to dream so long ago."

The Power of Community in Times of Crisis!

Article By Jordan Paggett, Villa Esperanza Services Volunteer & Engagement Coordinator/CIP Skills Instructor III

In the wake of tragedy, communities often reveal their true strength, fostering unexpected connections among individuals. During these challenging times, collective bonds emerge as beacons of hope, illuminating paths of compassion and support. It is within this communal spirit that individuals find solace as they unite to care for one another and fulfill the need for solidarity. Whether through acts of kindness or collective resilience, the strength of community shines brightest when we need it most.

At Villa Esperanza Services, our commitment to community support is at the heart of our mission. This commitment became particularly significant when wildfires began affecting the Pasadena/Altadena area on January 7th, directly impacting many of our residents, students, and staff. In these difficult circumstances, our dedication to serving others remains unwavering, and we are united in our efforts to help those affected navigate these trying times.

One key initiative in the beginning was our Donation Drive, a grassroots effort sparked by our Philanthropy team and expanded with the support of our Community Integration Program (CIP). Staff members Paula and Roger were among the first to step forward, volunteering to assist even before a dedicated donation center was established. Perla, the CIP Supervisor, emphasized their efforts: "They have spent the entire week calling donation sites, offering support, and driving around town to collect items we are low on."

Through proactive outreach strategies—including community conversations, social media engagement, and mass text communications—it became clear that there was a significant demand for essential items and support. This realization ignited a collective spirit of determination among our community members.

Terri, Villa School Administration Supervisor, encapsulated the emotional impact of the community's involvement: "It's emotional watching past and present staff come through with donations. To have a united front has brought tears to my eyes."

Thanks to partnerships with other organizations and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, our Donation Drive flourished. It was uplifting to witness entire families, including staff and adult participants, come together to donate, driven by the understanding that we all play a role in uplifting those around us.

Taira, an adult participant who experienced displacement, expressed her gratitude for the support: "I am happy to have clothes; it felt like shopping! I was happy seeing my staff too." Her experience highlights the material and emotional relief provided by the donations, emphasizing the camaraderie that has emerged during this time of uncertainty.



Perla, Pasadena Community Integration Program Administrator holding the donation sign used to direct those searching for items.

VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES DIRECTORY

PASADENA

2116 E. Villa Street
Pasadena, CA 91107
www.VillaES.org
Tax ID #95-2148860

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

80 E. Hillcrest Drive, Suite 206
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Main Number
805-446-1939

**Community Integration
Program (CIP)**
805-446-1939, ext. 129

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805-446-1939, ext. 126

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with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities*

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THANK YOU CIP FOR VILLA'S FIRE RELIEF DONATION CENTER!



Thank you to our Community Integration Program staff who gathered together and helped run the Donation Center for those two weeks in January. Your support and efforts went on to help the wellbeing of so many from our community!