



Villa Residential Administrator Dino with his team Wesley, Renorman, and Christian, showing off their new personal protective equipment (PPE) outfits.

“Not All Heroes Wear Capes!”

Article by Shana Baiz, Villa Esperanza Services Grant Writer

That’s what Deshawn Waters, one of Villa’s Residential Administrators, had to say about his team...and we couldn’t agree more!

In just a matter of weeks, our entire world changed. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, Villa’s programs underwent swift changes to ensure the safety of our clients, staff, and community. The bustling Villa Esperanza School campus quieted and most of our day and employment programs were temporarily suspended. We went from enjoying the company of friends and colleagues to a life of “social distancing” and uncertainty. No one knew what to expect.

While for many of us quarantine meant isolating at home, it meant something completely different for our Residential team. Our Residential Program began operating on overdrive, supporting our residents at home 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Following early conversations with the Los Angeles County Health Department, Villa’s unsung heroes stepped up to the plate. “Our team immediately started leading by example—doing what needed to be done and getting

in there to help," said Damion Lee, Director of Residential Services. Villa immediately purchased personal protective equipment for all our homes, implemented entry procedures that included taking temperatures for staff, and developed thorough cleaning protocols. We staggered meal times to ensure distancing within the homes and communicated regular updates to residents and loved ones.

As we implemented these major changes, we were concerned that some residents might not understand why their day-to-day lives had to shift so dramatically and wondered about the potential side effects of this new normal. "The longer this goes on I am a bit worried about unintended consequences that may come from being separated, being inside and not as mobile," said Chester House resident Sandy's sister, Mary Marasco.

"Our team immediately started leading by example - doing what needed to be done and getting in there to help."

Like many of us, Villa's residents thrive on routine and their ability to connect with peers and community members—all of which would be challenged significantly. New protocols meant residents could no longer visit family and friends, and would miss out on the volunteer activities, employment, and day programs that gave their lives meaning and purpose. These would be extraordinary adjustments for everyone.

While the changes were difficult, our residents have responded incredibly well in the face of adversity. "They have been very flexible," said Damion. "Our residents have an understanding of the virus and know they are staying inside to stay safe." To combat boredom and stay healthy, some residents are picking up new hobbies. Allen House resident James Knowles, for example, has become somewhat of a cooking connoisseur! Rather than heading to the store for processed snacks, he's now making his own pita chips and preparing healthy meals and salads in the house kitchen. One resident is making daily use of his stationary bike, and others are using their outdoor basketball court to get fresh air and stay active.

With the support of Residential staff, residents also



Villa Resident James is combatting boredom and staying healthy by picking up new hobbies, like baking his own pita chips.

continue to enjoy the activities they loved pre-quarantine. Those who attended Villa's adult day programs were provided with take-home activities including arts and crafts and money management lessons. Some residents are participating in virtual Social and Service (SAS) Club meetings, and others are writing notes to community members across the country. The ladies at Villa's Wynn house have been doing Zumba every day, and are occasionally joined by Residential Administrator, Marites Beltran. "Zumba is the best, and it also helps me manage my stress. I like to have fun at the house and encourage the ladies during their Zumba—cheering them on and dancing with them!" she said.



Villa staff member Jackie helps Villa Resident Sandy to FaceTime with her family.

Thanks to the support of our generous donors, Villa has been able to purchase computers and tablets for all our residential homes. Our special adults can watch movies, participate in virtual classes, and stay connected through video calls with family and friends. "On my birthday, Jackie helped Sandy FaceTime with me that morning to say happy birthday, and all of the ladies in the house got in on the wishes and sang happy birthday," said Mary. "I cannot tell you how much that meant to me."

Villa is always grateful for our dedicated staff, but now more than ever we are humbled by their dedication and love for the individuals we serve. Thank you to the entire Villa community for supporting our

participants, staff, and family during these unprecedented times. We can't wait to see you all in person as soon as it is safe to do so!

Together in Spirit

Villa Esperanza Services may be practicing social distancing as much as possible to protect our clients, families, and staff, but we are still together in spirit! We checked in with families, clients, and staff to see if they had any messages for their Villa community, and this is what they had to say:



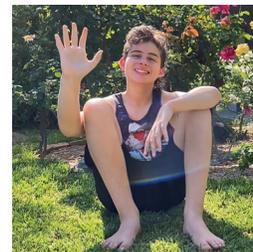
"I have enjoyed helping the residents at the Chester house stay engaged and healthy. We do activities outside in the backyard and we take walks to boost our Vitamin D. Don't quit! Just like every other time before, we'll get through this too." — Montrey, ADP Program Coordinator

"On behalf of my brother, Alex, and my family, thank you so much for the ongoing support that Villa Esperanza continues to provide us. We received your letter, informing us of your decision to pay Alex as though he was working full time... We are truly thankful as it will help Alex pay for his essentials like rent and food. We are blessed to be a part of the Villa community and will always be appreciative of the generosity and thoughtfulness it has shown to Alex over the years." — Matthew, Villa Family Member



"Villa's West Region Programs have been blessed with having many 'angels' to help us with the people we serve during this pandemic. This has been a time where everyone has truly come together to help one another without anyone asking 'why,' just asking 'how can I help?'" — Irene, Manager of Residential Services - West Region

"Hello to all my teachers — Jasper here. I wanted to say thank you for all you do. I miss you and think of you. I enjoy our online sessions. Thank you Miss Rowena for sending the stuff for me every day. Shhhh, my mom tries but she isn't you. Stay safe!" — Jasper, Villa School Student



Congratulations Villa 2020 Graduates!

Villa School congratulates its 2020 graduates! In June, the school came together with students and families over Zoom to throw a virtual graduation ceremony. One of our graduates, Mason, has been with Villa for over a decade! During the graduation ceremony, his family shared, "Villa has been so much a part of Mason's life. So thank you Villa and all the people there and for all that you've done for Mason." Congratulations again, Villa graduates! We look forward to seeing how far you'll go in the future.



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Community Integration Program (CIP)

626-398-4435, ext. 101

Employment Services

626-449-2919, ext. 161

Adult Residential Program

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Independent Living Skills (ILS)

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Dimensions Adult Day Program

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Adult Day Program (ADP)

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WEST REGION

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Human Services Center
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2020-2021

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If you wish to receive the newsletter via email let us know at info@VillaEsperanzaServices.org.

Villa School might be providing services remotely, but that doesn't mean our students had to miss out on Prom! Teachers and therapists from Villa School pooled their talents together to create a unique, one-of-a-kind, virtual party experience for our kids.

Thank you so much to our Villa School Staff for bringing this important school experience to our students, safely at home! It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces, and we are looking forward to the time when our students can safely return to campus!

