

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



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



Coen enjoys seeing his teachers, therapists, and friends over Zoom while staying safe at home.

Coen Thrives with Distance Learning

Article By Jenny Seto, Villa Esperanza Services Special Events Coordinator

2020 was a difficult year for everyone, but especially for working parents with school-age children. They have had to become super parents, balancing working from home with overseeing their children's virtual education and personal growth, all while making sure they were safe, healthy, and happy. A challenging task for parents with neurotypical children – a herculean one for parents with children with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The difficulties increase exponentially as children with special needs strive to understand the COVID-19 pandemic, the reasons they can't go to school any more, and the disruptions in their normal routine. No one can do it alone, and it takes a great team working together to ensure special needs children have the support they need during these difficult times.

Villa School staff have been working especially hard to connect with their students and provide distanced learning over the past year. With patience and creativity, they have helped their students get through the pandemic and even helped some thrive in this unconventional learning environment. One of these students is Coen, a high school student with autism. Coen has been with Villa for eleven years, and Villa teacher Ziad, speech therapists Kimberly and Michelle, and occupational therapist Rebekka are working directly with Coen's mom Wendy to help shape his continued education and development.

Ziad has been impressed with Coen's progress during the pandemic. "He is one of my students who has actually benefitted greatly during distance learning," Ziad shared. "This is mainly due to Wendy's involvement in his routine and the communication with staff. She always makes sure Coen has support in person during his virtual sessions, whether it's herself, another family member, or a neighborhood peer." Coen's success is the result of a true collaboration between Villa, Wendy, and Coen's other in-home supports. Speech therapist Kimberly commented, "Wendy has put forth great effort in

ensuring that the members of Coen's team are consistently communicating with one another. Although we are physically apart, we are all working together and Coen is responding beautifully."

When the pandemic first started, Wendy turned to Villa and Coen's other in-home supports to help him learn what was happening. "It was a team effort. In particular, the Villa staff used creative tools to help him understand the situation. His teacher Ziad wrote a song called 'COVID 19' and uploaded it to the class stream. Coen liked that song and memorized it well," Wendy explained. "Kimberly and Rebekka also showed him videos of the dangers of this pandemic. With all that information, he learned that he needed to wear a mask when outside, to keep six feet of social distance, and to stay home."

Coen had difficulty navigating the new normal, but was able to adapt quickly. "The changes in the delivery of his educational platform were stressful at first, but with the caring and flexibility of the Villa staff, Coen learned to adjust and took it in stride," Wendy recounted. "The online platform has actually been beneficial. I am able to see his learning process, and as a result, I appreciate the patience and expertise of his teacher and occupational and speech therapists so much more! Coen also really enjoys the fact that he can stay home and still see his classmates."

Coen's team works together to ensure he has a fully rounded curriculum, building a strong foundation for his continued growth. With occupational therapist Rebekka, Coen is developing his computer skills and learning how to screen share in Zoom; exercising by following along with YouTube videos of yoga, tabata, and Zumba workouts; keeping a journal of his emotions; and understanding how to identify when he is hungry, thirsty, or tired. With speech therapists Kimberly and Michelle, Coen is working on his verbal communication. "Coen has made noticeable improvement in his vocal loudness and intelligibility over the past few months," Kimberly shared. "What we work on in speech therapy is supported at home by Wendy and through online learning by Ziad and Rebekka, just to name a few. For example, at my request Ziad used his guitar to write musical notes to match Coen's target speech phrases so that we could work on his intonation. Through consistent



Coen shows off his class project! His colorful glass of eggnog came together with a little help from his teacher, Ziad, and his mom, Wendy.

practice with the Villa staff and in-home supports, Coen has made great gains in this area."

While Coen is working hard with his teacher and therapists, Wendy has to work twice as hard to help oversee Coen's education while being a working mother. "It is not easy, but it is a matter of priority. Taking care of myself as I take care of Coen is essential," Wendy commented. "I reconfigure our schedule to include time for us to exercise, make arts and crafts, and cook. Doing things that we enjoy together helps us cope." And on days she can't be there for Coen, Villa can be. "Villa is of utmost importance in helping Coen through this extraordinary time. The fact that he still sees the same people every day helps him maintain a sense of consistency in

this changing world."

Villa School will continue to strive to provide consistency and support to students and families as this year continues, under the direction of new principal Dr. Gary Woods. Dr. Woods, former superintendent of the San Marino School district, started in November and shares Villa's passion for communication and teamwork. Although the campus remains closed to students, Dr. Woods has been working diligently with teachers and therapists to ensure Villa students are receiving virtual distance learning and social interaction, and has started bi-monthly Parent Connect Zoom meetings for family members. "I encourage all of our parents and guardians to join me for these meetings, and hope to 'meet' you there," Dr. Woods shared. "Our ability to work together and continue to keep each other informed are critical elements during this challenging time."

2021 will bring a new set of challenges, but Wendy is confident that the staff at Villa will continue to rise to meet them. "Everyone at Villa, I am certain, has done their best in serving all families," Wendy said. "But I must say, Coen's staff, Ziad, Kimberly, Michelle, and Rebekka, have gone above and beyond to be available to us. For that, we are so grateful!" Coen's success is a great example of Villa collaboration and innovation in action. Though we are facing unprecedented times, the professionals at Villa will continue to work together to provide love, care, and support to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families, as we have for the past 60 years.

Villa School families, you are invited!

Dr. Gary Woods, Principal of Villa Esperanza School, invites parents and caregivers to join him for Zoom meetings on the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month at 12:00 Noon. These meetings provide an opportunity to receive timely updates, as well as learn of ways to support each other during these challenging times. Email Dr. Woods at GWoods@VillaEsperanzaServices.org for the Zoom link!

Planning for Our Future, and Villa's

Article by Frank Tranzow, Villa Donor and Former Villa Board Member

In September 1972, we moved our young family to Arcadia. The Youell family were our next-door neighbors. I was a partner in the management consulting practice of a fast-growing national CPA firm. Bob Youell, whose son was a Villa resident, and I became very close friends.

At the end of 1980, the ability to become involved in our community, spend more time with the family, and trade the corporate world for an entrepreneurial adventure, led to my resignation from Touche Ross & Co. Immediately, I was asked by many of my friends, "What are you going to do?"

I decided I wanted to spend at least 20% of my time in charitable services. Bob Youell, aside from discussing mutual business interests, asked how I intended to achieve that goal. Knowing of Bob's work with Villa Esperanza, I was not surprised when he offered to introduce me to their program and needs. Upon introduction to the Villa staff, I immediately explored involvement and subsequently joined the Board.

Many encounters with residents and staff were memorable, but two stand out. First, at a fundraising dinner at the Athenaeum, I spoke to a young resident who unforgettably conveyed the brilliance of the Villa program to me. Second, a visit to the Agoura Hills site allowed me to experience the loving nature of Villa work.

I had known the Director of the Fuller Foundation for almost 20 years. As the retirement funds from my CPA firm employment were inadequate, we discussed the many benefits afforded by a Charitable Remainder Unitrust. Specifically, it allowed us to provide funds to charities in whose long-term service we had great confidence. Additionally, it would provide income from the trust assets to meet our retirement needs, and funds invested in the trust were partially tax-deductible.

We further established a second trust with a 20-year longevity to provide education funds to our children and grandchildren. Such a trust structure has the further benefit of providing funds to our designees, including Villa Esperanza, at a specified date before the trustees' passing.

The financial benefit of the trust met our need, but the joy of supporting organizations like Villa Esperanza is a real blessing.



Frank Tranzow and wife, Till, planned ahead for both themselves and Villa by establishing a CRUT.

What is a Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT)?

A charitable remainder unitrust (CRUT) is a special, irrevocable trust which has two primary characteristics: (1) once established, the CRUT distributes a fixed percentage of the value of its assets (on an annual or more frequent basis) to a non-charitable beneficiary and (2) at the expiration of a specified time, the remaining balance of the CRUT's assets are distributed to charity.

If you would like to know more about how you can support Villa with a charitable trust, visit our website at <https://villaesperanzaservices.planmylegacy.org> or contact Gioia Pastre, VP of Development at (626) 449-2919 ext. 118 or GPastre@VillaEsperanzaServices.org. For specific advice regarding this and other planned giving ideas, please contact your professional advisor.

VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES DIRECTORY

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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)

626-398-4435, ext. 172

Employment Services

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)

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

2020-2021

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VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES

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

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

Villa Esperanza Services is turning 60! To celebrate, we are reflecting on the previous six decades of love, care, and hope. When we last looked back, it was 1961 and Villa Esperanza had just been incorporated as an official non-profit. We start now in 1966, and the times, they are a-changing. Public support for institutionalization was waning, and families are trying to find a different way to assist their loved ones with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Already a pioneer of the industry, Villa Esperanza Services was uniquely suited to help lead the way. Villa's small, homegrown school had proven to be not only successful, but sustainable. Its first generation of students were graduating, but it was becoming apparent that there was a small problem. For all of the positive changes made to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, there was not yet a place for these new young adults to go. If Villa wanted to successfully transition its students into members of their greater community, it would have to be proactive.

By the mid-1970's, Villa had purchased three residential homes to provide assisted living services for special needs adults, giving them a combination of independence and support. When the school graduates struggled to find employment, a workshop and thrift store were established to provide job training. Before the decade was out, Villa had expanded beyond just Pasadena and purchased "The Ranch" in Ventura County, which was used as an adult day program and job training site.

Villa was quickly becoming more than the initial vision of a school house. In order to be a center of hope for its community, the organization realized that it would need to grow with its students.

