



## Fuel Up With Villa's Student- Run Barista Cart!

Article By Jordan Paggett, Villa Esperanza Services  
Community Engagement Coordinator

**G**et ready to warm up with the Villa Barista Cart, now open for business! Our CEO, Kelly White, and several other staff braved the June Gloom to get their hands on one of their delicious drinks. "A fun idea and a great story to tell!" Kelly exclaimed while mingling with school staff. Kelly's not the only one excited about this unique venture. While speaking to others in the Villa Barista Cart line, the buzz of satisfaction and admiration could be felt throughout the crowd. Innovative and empowering, this latest project is focused on students achieving their goals in a whole new way!

Meet the Villa Barista Cart, a creation of one of Villa School's Behavior Interventionists, Philip Garcia, aimed at providing students with an alternative way to learn and practice social interactions, teamwork, and money counting. "With the current campus remodel, we had to adapt our student store, which meant limited space for students to work," Philip explained while helping Jasper and Stephanie, two school students, set up the cart with the day's pastry selection. The Villa Barista Cart now provides an additional space where more students can complete their goals while honing similar skills. Plus, it gives Villa staff a Starbucks experience right on campus. Imagine sipping on a delicious horchata cold brew while chatting with our talented student baristas, all while supporting their growth and development. It's the best way to start the day!

Our cameras captured the first moments of Villa students Jasper and Stephanie as they prepared for their big opening day. Jasper dons his barista gear, ready to serve up some delicious brews. Meanwhile, Stephanie is tending to



**Students, Stephanie (left) and Jasper (middle), and Behavior Interventionist Philip (right) on the opening day of the Villa Barista Cart.**

the new cart items, her interest peaked when the cart is wheeled out to the lower campus playground. Behind the mobile stand, she greets every person in line with a warm, "Hello, how can I help you?" These students are clearly passionate about their new venture, putting their all into every detail.

The Villa Barista Cart is not just a student-run initiative, but a community effort that deserves recognition. Local business Peter & Sons Inc., a lumber company Philip connected with, graciously donated the lumber for the cart. Thanks to their generosity, as well as Philip's dedication and enthusiasm, the Villa Barista Cart could be built. Philip has lovingly crafted each element: from staining the wood to crafting the perfect menu, he's gone above and beyond. Let's not forget the ultimate treat - fresh pan dulce conchas, which Philip brings in all the way from East LA.

The Villa Barista Cart has been an incredible success! It started with a bang on opening day and continued

with a standing ovation at the Villa School end of the year program and graduation this June! Parents, family, and friends of the students chatted and laughed as they stood in line at the student-run cart before and after the program. With minimal help needed, Jasper was able to wow the crowd with his skills and adeptness. The line snaked around the playground as families, staff, and peers joined in the excitement and supported the cause. Jasper stole the show with his relaxed demeanor and attention to detail, offering parents a glimpse into how their own child could thrive when given the opportunity. His patrons couldn't stop raving about his hospitality and the delicious treats offered.

The Villa Barista Cart is a sensation that's here to stay, so if you find yourself on our main campus, why not fuel your own success with coffee and watermelon lemonade? If you haven't visited our campus yet or would like to return, please reach out for a tour by contacting Michelle Cox, Director of Philanthropy, at (626) 449-2919 ext. 128 or [MCox@VillaES.org](mailto:MCox@VillaES.org). We hope to see you at the Villa Barista Cart soon!



Jasper prepping to begin working the Villa Barista Cart.

## Behavior Intervention at Villa School

Villa School provides comprehensive services for each student. In addition to the classroom teachers and aides, Villa students also have access to Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Behavior Intervention as needed. Villa's Behavior Interventionists are **Board Certified Behavior Analysts** with lots of experience working with our population, which includes students with moderate to severe autism. The goal of behavior intervention is to help students decrease maladaptive behaviors that limit a student's access to their academic work. Villa's behaviorists also focus on increasing social skills and functional communication skills.

Philip, one of Villa's Behavior Interventionists, shared his specific style. "I have a proactive approach to behavior intervention. My interventions focus on preventing behaviors, rather than reacting to them," he said. **"I emphasize having a compassionate care approach always."** Philip's love for his students is evident in his creation of the Villa Barista Cart! Thank you to our Behavior Interventionists, who are a big part of the Villa School team.

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Behavior Interventionist



Laura (left) and Marissa (right) posing with their "Villaland" artwork for Villa's 2023 Fundraising Gala.

# How Marissa Found Her Spark with Guidance and Glitter!

Article By Jordan Paggett, Villa Esperanza Services Community Engagement Coordinator

Villa participants unleashed artistic talent and showcased their creativity at Villa's annual Blue & White Fundraising Gala! For the past several years, Villa's students and adults have created artwork to be sold at Villa's gala. Letting their work speak for itself, our participants prove each year that creativity knows no bounds within our inclusive community.

Marissa, a talented participant from our Dimensions Adult Day Program, created a stunning artwork for this year's gallery. The gala theme was "Villaland," a playful twist on Candyland, and Marissa collaborated with her staff, Laura, to create a one-of-a-kind masterpiece on canvas. Using various techniques to encourage independence, Marissa's love for finger painting shone through. "We made sure to incorporate her favorite way of painting into the piece," Laura shared. "If you look closely at the piece, you can see she used her fingerprints to paint the road. I also let her choose the colors, which made for a beautiful creation."

Tailoring activities to what the participant enjoys is an important part of Villa's customized person-centered programs. In addition to the finger painting, Laura shared her other secret to keeping Marissa engaged in their art project - glitter! By redirecting Marissa's focus and providing gentle hand-over-hand guidance, Laura helped Marissa stay on track and bring her artwork to life. It shows how small, thoughtful gestures can make a big impact on someone's creativity and confidence. "Making this artwork has really benefitted Marissa. She is able to sit for longer periods of time and has opened up space for us to bond," Laura commented. "While we painted, she'd smile and dance along to music we had playing, completely absorbed in her work." When asked what music inspired Marissa there seemed to be only one answer: "Bye Bye Bye" by NSYNC.

Marissa's painting was featured as part of the silent auction at Villa's gala. While we have to wait another year for the next official Villa art gallery, Villa's programs are hard at work all year long ensuring that our programs are customized to our participants so they continue to be engaged, happy, and doing what they love.

**"She used her fingerprints to paint the road."**

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## SPLASHING AROUND WITH VILLA'S OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY CLINIC

Our Occupational Therapy (OT) clinic had a fun filled day during their water play event with all of Villa School students who attend the Extended School Year over the summer. They enjoyed interactive water activities in the sun and had the opportunity to purchase refreshing Watermelon Agua Fresca's from the Villa Barista Cart. Rebekka Manzella, Villa's OT Director, shared: "These events help students challenge themselves with motor skills and sensory exploration." Villa students enjoyed their summer fun through the end of July, and we look forward to welcoming them back at the end of August for the new school year!



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