

Views from a Vista Hill Parent Care Volunteer

Riding the trolley one morning on my way to Jury Duty, I began conversing with a man who works in the court system here in San Diego. As we talked, I happened to mention that I am a volunteer at Vista Hill ParentCare. Not only had this man heard of this program, but also he greatly respected it, commenting that he wished there were more programs with the quality of those at Vista Hill.

I echo those sentiments. When I first began volunteering, I read some of the literature, and I was definitely impressed. This program is multi-faceted, offering help to young women in many areas--from the basic addiction problems to dealing with anger and, of course, parenting without the cushion of drugs and/or alcohol.

The world today is complex, full of constant challenge. Women who have been seduced by the world of drugs and alcohol have a tremendously difficult path to walk as they seek a way out, as they seek to embrace a healthy life-style. Many of these women have lost custody of their children, and they long to be united with them. However, they realize that first they must be free of addiction, self-aware, and educated in good parenting skills.

Of course, not all of these women succeed; some drop out of the program. But all of them do try, and the Vista Hill ParentCare counselors are there to help them each step of the way. I am impressed with the caring shown by these counselors as they interact with the program participants. And I am impressed with the courage and desire shown by the young women who sign in each morning.

Such a program is extremely expensive, and volunteers are definitely needed. Volunteer duties might not appear to be tremendously important, but what we do makes a difference. When volunteers answer the telephone, record data, put together orientation books, sell snacks, or hand out ParentCare "dollars" for the women and stickers for the children, they are giving the professional staff more time to work with participants in the program, more time to prepare instructional material, more time to discuss the needs of the women who have turned to Vista Hill ParentCare for help.

As someone who made it safely through the 60s, I appreciate the opportunity to help these women. Compared to what most of them are dealing with, my life has been easy. Many people over the years have helped me; it feels good to be able to give something back.

Vista Hill Parent Care needs financial support and volunteers -- to work at the front desk or help in the Lipinsky Family Therapeutic Learning Center.

So for some people reading this, Vista Hill ParentCare might be a great place for your philanthropic dollars...or it might be the perfect volunteer spot for you. Or both. Why not check it out? I did, and I love it.

--Judi P.

(former high school English teacher)