

newvistas



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stronger families... brighter futures... since 1957

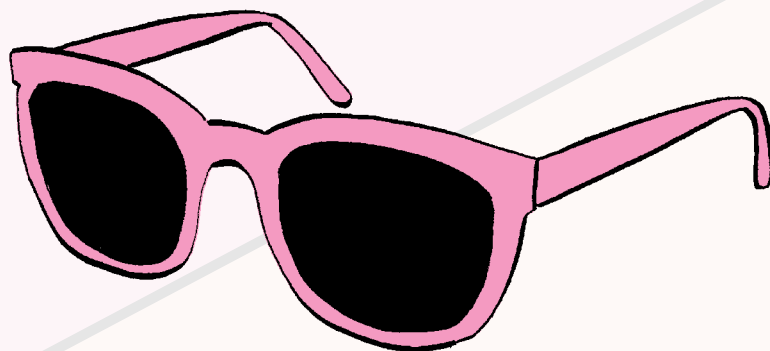
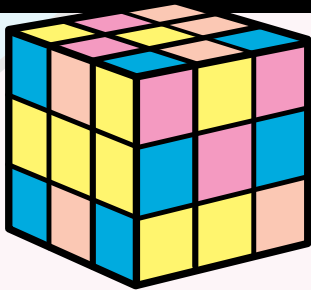


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“I feel something different – happy”

Michael's life-changing story inside



Fashion Show was a “Totally Awesome” Success

Vista Hill’s 27th Annual Fashion Show Luncheon was one of the most successful and exciting in the history of the event, raising a fantastic \$125,000 that will be used to support critically needed programs that help more than 25,000 San Diego County residents each year.

The theme of this year’s show—chaired for a third straight year by Kamaya Jane—was “Totally Awesome ’80s.” And awesome was exactly how you would describe the many highlights of the event attended by more than 400 guests at the Town and County on April 20.

Guests were cheerfully greeted as they entered the hotel by clients from Stein Education Center’s Adult Services. The event got off to a thrilling start when alumni and staff of ParentCare Family Recovery Services launched a flash mob that wound its way through the many boutique vendors and shoppers.

Another highlight was the recognition of four amazing Vista Hill volunteers—Pam Palmer-Lowe, Faith Stagg, Susan Straub and Jeanette Usher—all of whom volunteer at ParentCare. Friends of Vista Hill Executive Director Rachel Peniche described how each volunteer’s unique dedication and contributions have helped ParentCare thrive in so many ways.

The excitement continued with the arrival of U2’s Bono. Almost no one realized that the rock star was actually President and CEO Robert Dean in disguise. Dean shared with the audience that for more than 60

years Vista Hill has been providing important services to those most in need in our community: the children, teens, adults and families challenged by substance use disorders, mental health issues and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Among the most emotional moments of the day was a remarkable speech and singing performance by Michael, a wonderful young man whose life has been transformed by Vista Hill’s Stein Education Center (SEC). In sharing his incredible story, he expressed gratitude to the program for helping him overcome severe developmental and behavioral challenges and putting him on a path for success as an adult. He then received a rousing standing ovation when he sang a beautiful rendition of Rick Astley’s “Never Gonna Give You Up” accompanied by his music teacher Jefferson Jay.

Michael’s love of ’80s music is what inspired this year’s theme. Michael was a bit nervous but knows like the lyrics in the song say Michael is “never gonna say goodbye” completely to the many friends and SEC staff that he has befriended (for more on Michael, see page 4).

Special thanks go to our “Neon Green” presenting sponsors Virginia Napierskie (for over a decade!) and an anonymous donor. Thanks also to our two “Neon Orange” sponsors and Friends of Vista Hill Board members Patti Holmes and Barb Crew. On top of that, “Barb Crew’s Crew” grew even bigger this year as she recruited nearly 80 of her friends to attend the show.

We also appreciate NBC 7’s Megan Tevrizian serving as mistress of ceremonies and Gretchen Productions for staging another terrific fashion show.

Thanks to the help of all our really rad sponsors, underwriters and guests, this truly was one of most “awesome” Fashion Shows ever!



CEO Robert Dean as “Bono”



Thursday Club members: (L to R) Dee Van Horne, Kathryn Vaughn and Bev Zukor are great shoppers.

Fashionistas (L to R) Maureen Sage, Dee Ammon and Barbie Spinazzola.

Volunteers (L to R) Susan Straub, Jeanette Usher, Faith Stagg, Pam Palmer-Lowe and FVH Executive Director, Rachel Peniche.



ParentCare clients, alum, and staff in the Flash Mob.



Stein Education Center adults from Kearny Mesa Tessa (L), staff member Nick and Dominique.

Part of "Barb Crew's Crew" Rancho Bernardo Rotary Group are loyal Fashion Show attendees.

Honorary Chair Rachel Ficara (L) and Fashion Show Chair Kamaya Jane rocked the '80s outfits.



L to R: Tina Belinsky and Laura Maio modeling Village Hat Shop fascinators.



Stein Education Center Dramatically Changes Life of Developmentally Disabled Teen

“The best part about the Stein Education Center by far is the people. This school has made me feel something I didn’t feel before—happy! They’ve taught me so many skills. I’m a better communicator and I learn from my mistakes and understand the consequences of my actions. My personal goal is to work together with people to help change the world in a positive way. My life now holds infinite possibilities.”

— **Michael**, student at **Stein Education Center**

Those heartfelt words above provide a glimpse of the power of Vista Hill programs to change lives. They describe the remarkable impact the Stein Education Center (SEC) has had on Michael, from an out-of-control, angry, tantrum-throwing teenager to a calm and extremely mature young adult who is confident and optimistic about his future.

SEC specializes in helping children with some of the most severe developmental and intellectual disabilities in San Diego County. In fact, they’ve come to SEC because their own school districts were having difficulty properly helping them.

When Michael arrived at SEC—first in the after-school recreation program at age 9 and then as a full-time student at

13—he presented a major behavioral challenge, according to Dave Bear, Stein Education Center teacher.

“He would scream and yell and get angry, and when he exploded he would throw or destroy things,” recalls Bear, who has worked closely with Michael the past six years. “He didn’t want any part of SEC and when he wasn’t arguing or confronting us, he refused to learn and often just wanted to stand outside the classroom.”

However, with the critically important support of counselors, speech and occupational therapists and other teachers, Bear and the team were able to gradually turn Michael’s behavior around. It required a series of small steps progressing over a period of years, but eventually Michael began to control his emotions and frustration and actually enjoyed learning.

Today, at 22, Michael is a calm, caring and an optimistic individual who has been equipped with an array of academic and vocational skills. He plans to use these skills when he graduates and transitions to an adult community-based program where he can continue to grow as an individual.

Michael’s mother, Sokkheng, can’t believe the change in her son and is excited about his potential.

“You wouldn’t recognize Michael today from when he first came to SEC,” she says. “It’s almost like a miracle, he’s such a different person now. I really believe he’s got a very good future and I’m grateful to the SEC staff for their wonderful work.”

Bear, who plans to help Michael transition into his adult world and stay in touch with him in the years to come, is equally gratified about Michael’s transformation.

“Michael is a truly wonderful success story, but helping each SEC student reach their highest level of independence is what we strive to do every day,” Bear says. “To see Michael progress from where he began to then be able to live independently and have a job and a productive life, is what makes all the hard work we do at SEC worthwhile and completely gratifying.”

Michael’s singing has helped him connect with others and communicate better. He performed at this year’s Fashion Show and received a standing ovation.

**Michael
is a truly
wonderful
SUCCESS
story**



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Stein Education Center Speech Department has Major Impact on Lives of Special Needs Students

Educating children with severe cases of autism or other significant developmental or intellectual disabilities is beyond challenging. Teaching students who are nonverbal, unable to feed or dress themselves and who are continually disruptive, if not violent, is one of the most difficult jobs in education.

Simply attempting basic communication with these students alone is a monumental undertaking. Fortunately, the Speech Services Department at Vista Hill's Stein Education Center (SEC) is not only able to reach these students, the highly trained staff has a unique ability to advance the children to almost miraculous places that amaze their families.

Working in close partnership with SEC's classroom teachers, occupational therapists and counselors, the speech staff meets weekly with all the students at SEC who have speech services as part of their Individual Education Plan (IEP). They wield an array of state-of-the-art speech therapies and technologies—including iPads and Smart Boards—to establish communication and relationships with even the most non-verbal of students.

The remarkable eight-year journey of Michael (see cover story) is one example of the department's ability. But Sandra Shapiro, MS, Coordinator of Speech Services, who personally worked with Michael for almost eight years, says every student's experience at SEC is a success story, however big or small.

"I remember working with a student who had no language at all and only had a few manual signs she could use for communication," Shapiro recalls. "In a few months, using an iPad, we were able to teach her how to express herself by selecting words on the screen. She loved to hear the iPad's life-like voice, and over time, she learned to communicate most of her needs us-

ing her iPad. Her parents couldn't be more thrilled."

The services the speech department provides go far beyond helping the students learn to communicate. In addition to teaching students how to read, staff shows them how to use their new language ability to develop social skills and to behave properly.

"The severe level of disabilities among our students is such that it means what we do is not a quick process," Shapiro says. "Every student is different so we customize our services to their individual needs. But each of their journeys begins with the smallest of steps. We may work for months or even a year just to achieve one tiny bit of progress, but for that student it's often a huge leap forward and one we can build on to help them progress ultimately toward a future where they can enjoy maximum quality of life and independence."

One way Shapiro knows she and her staff is having an impact is through the deep appreciation expressed by the families.

"Unless you've been there, you simply cannot comprehend the overwhelming challenges and disruptions these families face in having a special needs child and dealing with the many behavior issues and impact on siblings," she says. "When we're able to improve the skills and behavior of their children, and make them and their parents feel valued, they begin to see SEC as a true lifeline that dramatically improves quality of their family life."

For Shapiro and her staff, watching their students improve is hugely rewarding, but they are also proud of the impact their work has on the community.

"Public school districts around the county send SEC many of their special needs students because they don't have resources to properly address these children's needs," Shapiro says. "Without the services we provide, it's very likely many of these families would have no where else to turn. By giving them hope backed up by real progress that changes their children's lives, I think SEC is making our community a better place for all."



Coordinator of Speech Services Sandra Shapiro works with Michael on body language.

Longtime Board Member Bob Graham Passes at 82

Bob Graham, who devoted more than half of his life to Vista Hill as a donor and member of the Board of Directors, has died at the age of 82.

“We are truly saddened by the passing of Bob Graham, who served so capably on our board for 45 years,” said President and CEO Robert Dean. “Bob had a true passion for Vista Hill and our mission, and his countless contributions were instrumental in leading this organization to its position today as one of the most important providers of mental health services in San Diego County.”

Graham joined the board in the early 1970s when Vista Hill was still focused on operating mental health hospitals. Graham helped lead the way in Vista Hill divesting those facilities and move instead into providing the kind of personal and critically needed outpatient mental services it specializes in today.

When Graham retired from the board in 2017, he looked back on his service to Vista Hill and made sure he would remain a part of its future.

“I’m so proud that in my 45 years on the board I was able to play a small role in lighting a fire within this great organization—and sometimes making sure that flame didn’t go

out,” he said. “But it’s also important to me that Vista Hill continues to grow and thrive long after I’m gone. I’ve always known the best way to accomplish that is to share my good fortune in life by remembering this wonderful organization in my will. Nothing I’ve ever done in my life will ever have the kind of impact that Vista Hill has had on so many lives. It has been a true labor of love and I will miss it tremendously.”

Graham was a longtime business leader in Long Beach. After attending UCLA, the Orange County native started his career in banking, left that for a decade to help Barron Hilton run several of the hotel magnate’s companies and finally ended up going out on his own as an entrepreneur, building five highly successful companies in the medical instrument and chemical specialty fields.

Graham is survived by his wife, Barbara, daughters Christine Graham Ericksen and Jacqueline Graham Gratke, and son Brian Graham and grandchildren.



Vista Hill Board Director Bob Graham will be remembered fondly.

Leaving a Legacy: Peggy Matthews was a True Role Model for Giving Back

When Peggy Matthews passed away in January, she left behind a legacy that included more than fond memories. Amongst her charitable gifts was a bequest to Friends of Vista Hill to support foster children and their families.

“Peggy was an incredibly generous person,” says Ann Mound, former Senior Development Advisor. “Although she was well respected for her success in the fashion industry, it is her warm personality and that incredible smile I remember most. She was always one of the first people to support our events, and always made an effort to introduce her friends to Vista Hill.”

Peggy Matthews grew up in St. Paul, Minn. A fateful accident in a university chemistry lab dissuaded Peggy from a career in science and put her on the path to a successful career in fashion and special events. A short stint as a model introduced her to the wider world of the fashion industry and ultimately to Mademoiselle Magazine as the Midwest Editor. In 1972, she and her beloved husband Bob moved to San Diego, and Peggy made it her mission to immerse herself in what our community has to offer. For more than 40 years, she took a hands-on, active role in multiple non-profit

organizations, often helping plan special events and/or coordinating press coverage. She continued to be active well into her 90s!

As everyone who knew Peggy will attest, it was a privilege to call her a friend thanks to her warmth, generosity and easy laugh.

In 2015, Peggy made a \$25,000 gift to support Vista Hill’s Incredible Families Program, which provides mental health treatment and support services to children and families involved in Child Welfare Services of San Diego County. In honor of her gift, the Play Therapy Room at Vista Hill’s Kearny Mesa facility is named in her honor.

Peggy’s estate gift continues her legacy of support and care for people faced with the challenges of mental illness, substance use disorder or intellectual and developmental disabilities. Making a legacy gift can be as simple as including Friends of Vista Hill in your will or trust with a specific amount (as chosen by Peggy), or a percentage (example: 10 percent to Friends of Vista Hill to support its general



For Peggy Matthews giving back was always fashionable.

continued on next page

Peggy Matthews *continued from previous page*

operations.) You may also designate a specific program such as ParentCare or the Stein Education Center, or ask that the funds be held in our endowment fund to help ensure the long-term financial stability of Vista Hill programs.

Friends of Vista Hill is honored to have been a part of Peggy Matthews' life and to remember her through this bequest. Because of her generosity, thousands of individuals will be given the chance to improve and enhance their quality of life.

For more information on how you can leave a legacy gift to Vista Hill, please contact Rachel Peniche at 858.514.5151 or rpeniche@vistahill.org.

Peggy Matthews promotion photo for Mademoiselle Magazine circa 1960s.



Save the Date



Vista Hill Council on Mental Health Luncheon
Thursday, September 6, 2018 • 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Speaker: Walter Suskind
Topic: "Walking the Sibling Path: A Brother's Journey with Autism"
Co-Chairs: Julie Bronstein and Ann Mound
Hilton San Diego Resort (Mission Bay)



"Life, Animated" — Movie Screening
Thursday, September 6, 2018
Stein Education Center, 6145 Decena Drive, San Diego, CA 92120
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.



Vista Hill's Family FUNdraiser (in lieu of Gala)
Saturday, January 26, 2019
"Imagine the World Through A Different Lens"
Fleet Science Center in Balboa Park



Vista Hill's 28th Annual Fashion Show
Friday, May 31, 2019 • 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
"America's Finest Fashion Show: A Salute to San Diego's 250th Anniversary"
Chair: Clarice Perkins
Town and Country San Diego

For more information about sponsorship and underwriting opportunities or to contribute, visit www.vistahill.org or call **858.514.5151**



Friends of Vista Hill Foundation

8910 Clairemont Mesa Blvd.

San Diego, CA 92123-1104

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A Few of Our Greatest Needs ...



Many thanks to Las Patronas for their recent grant of \$20,000 to purchase a gently used van for our Stein Education Center. We transport hundreds of students each day to integrate them into the community to maximize their independence and give them the opportunity to volunteer and work. We are always in need of new and gently used minivans. If you would like to contribute and be part of our road to success for our special needs students please contact Vista Hill at 858.514-5151.



We are delighted with our collaboration with the Chinese School of San Diego and Chinese Bilingual Preschool and thanks to Jersey Mike's for doing a diaper and disposable underwear drive for our infants in our ParentCare and Perinatal Case Management program and for our students and adults at the Stein Education Center. If you would like to donate diapers or disposable underwear please contact Vista Hill at 858.514-5151.