

# newvistas



summer 2019, volume 31, number 1

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

## “I have a great future now”

Diana's life-changing story inside



### inside

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# Young Teen Turns Troubled Life Around With Help of Bridges Teen Center

*"I'm so grateful for the help I got from Vista Hill and Bridges because without it I would have kept using alcohol and marijuana and probably ended up in a really bad place, like jail or even dying. The counselors made me work hard and taught me so much about myself and how to deal with my problems. The support I got from Bridges was incredible and it's the reason I've been sober a year now and can look forward to going to college and someday becoming a doctor."*

— **Diana**, 16, client at **Bridges Teen Center**

**A**rely and Joel remember feeling both afraid and helpless as they watched their 14-year-old daughter Diana become involved in alcohol and drugs, which led to fighting at school and stealing.

"It really got bad when we heard a boy threatened her through social media saying he was going to bring a gun to school and shoot her," Joel recalls. "That's when we pulled her out of school, but we had no idea what to do after that."

Fortunately, a concerned counselor recommended they send Diana to Vista Hill's Bridges Teen Center.

"We had never heard of Vista Hill or Bridges, but we needed help, and after that first meeting and listening to the director and the counselors, we had confidence that this was the right place for Diana," Joel says.

Flash forward 18 months and it's apparent Joel's instincts were correct. After going through Bridges, Diana's life has improved dramatically. She stopped using drugs and alcohol and learned how to deal with her problems, including depression.

No one is more pleased with Diana's turnaround than Program Manager Patricia Ulloa, especially when she remembers the state the teenager was in when she entered Bridges.

"Diana was in trouble like so many of the teens we see here. She was abusing alcohol and marijuana, her grades had fallen, she was having communication problems with her parents and she was struggling with anxiety and depression. She was so withdrawn we could barely get her to speak."

Ulloa says Bridges has had many years of success treating distressed teens because it equips them — and just as importantly, their families — with a variety of recovery tools that help them address not only their substance use, but the problems underlying it. Among the many services are individual,



group and family counseling and therapy, recovery education sessions and aftercare counseling.

"Bridges works because we show young people like Diana how to make internal and relationship changes, as well as the positive health choices necessary to replace the drug and alcohol use," Ulloa says. "Today, Diana has a completely different and positive attitude. She continues to stay clean and is going to school through our Bridges Academy. She has a strong new connection with her church, belongs to a youth group and has a wonderful outgoing personality."

Diana's mom is thrilled with the change in her daughter.

"I was so worried that Diana was going to become addicted to heavier drugs and end up in jail," Arely says. "But Bridges gave us our daughter back. She's even better than before, and the reason the program works is they truly care about the kids and they include the entire family in the support and treatment. We couldn't be more grateful to everyone at Bridges for what they've done for our family."

For her part, Diana is equally grateful to Bridges because it's put her life on a positive new path.

"The program was really challenging for me and I didn't really want to do it at first," she says. "But once I saw how much the people at Bridges cared and how the tools they gave me really worked, I was able to open up, and I knew I could get through anything with their help. Best of all, I've got the trust of my family back, I'm sober and I'm really looking forward to a great future ahead."

**Bridges**  
gave us our  
**daughter back.**  
She's **even better**  
than before ...  
**Arely Hernandez,**  
Diana's mother

# Family FUNdraiser a Huge Success in Raising Money for Vista Hill Programs



Vista Hill raised more than \$140,000 with a family-friendly interactive evening on January 26 at the Fleet Science Center in Balboa Park. The “Building Stronger Families and Brighter Futures Family FUNdraiser,” which replaced Vista Hill’s traditional annual gala, was co-chaired by Heidi Dorman and Alicia Rubio, with Mary Alice and Ron Brady serving as honorary chairs. The 2019 “IMBY” (In My Back Yard) Award was presented to the National Charity League (NCL) San Dieguito Chapter. The evening included a special art exhibition by Stein Education Center adults who were instructed by the San Diego Art Institute, silent and live auctions, food stations, dancing and a showing of *Dream Big* inside the Fleet’s iconic Heikoff Giant Dome IMAX Theater. Proceeds will support Vista Hill’s programs in the areas of intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders.



*For Mary Alice and Ron Brady (seated center) supporting Vista Hill is a family affair.*



*(L to R) Joanne Garcia, Sr. Director Stein Education Center Adult Services, with fellow NCL members: Sally Lee, VP of Philanthropy and 2024 Ticktocker, Tara Gordon, with her mother, Mahtab Beheshiti.*



*(L to R) Event Co-Chair and Friends of Vista Hill Board Member Heidi Dorman with son, John, alongside Co-Chair Alicia Rubio.*



*(L to R) CeCe Canton and KPBS General Manager Tom Karlo, are enjoying the virtual reality video of “A Day in the Life at the Stein Education Center.”*



*(L to R) Next generation Vista Hill supporters building the future!*



*CEO Robert Dean and family getting a groove on at the silent disco.*



## Vista Hill's Marisa Katzman Has a Passion for Helping Others

Marisa Katzman, LCSW, was on her way to law school when fate stepped in and changed the entire course of her life.

The Program Manager for Vista Hill's new ADAPT program (see story page 5) remembers the moment exactly because she had just become a college intern with the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) program.

"I wasn't really even aware what a social worker was, but I got to observe these amazing people serving as mentors and protectors for kids in the child welfare system and it made me realize that was the kind of work I wanted to do in my career."

It was a perfect choice for Katzman, because like almost everyone who works at Vista Hill, her overriding passion in life is to help people.

"My dad is a doctor and my mom is a nurse, so I grew up watching them devote their lives to helping professions," says Katzman, who grew up in El Cajon in East County. "From a young age they instilled in me the importance of community service. They made me aware that I had a very good life but that not everyone did, and that I had a responsibility to give back when and where I could."

Once Katzman realized her calling, she finished up her undergraduate degree at San Diego State University and obtained a masters in social work at Azusa Pacific University near Los Angeles, where she graduated with honors.

She moved back to San Diego, and in another good stroke of fortune, her very first job was with Vista Hill, where she was hired as a Perinatal Case Manager in 2012.

"It was a wonderful and challenging way to start my career because I got to have immediate impact by helping chemically dependent pregnant women address their substance use disorder to deliver healthy babies and also support them in becoming thriving moms," Katzman says. "To have clients

tell us that they owe their lives to the work we do is the ultimate reward."

After four years, Katzman was promoted to Manager of the Perinatal Case Management and Drug Dependency Court programs and earlier this year was given the opportunity to head up Vista Hill's new ADAPT program.

"I'm excited about the chance to create a new program from the ground up, especially one that's using a unique new model in which therapists actually go into family homes to treat peripartum depression," she says.

This new opportunity is why Katzman believes she has found a home at Vista Hill.

"I couldn't be happier with how my career is going, and one of the reasons is Vista Hill," Katzman says. "This is one of the most innovative and skilled social service agencies you'll find anywhere. I love working here because every staff member truly believes in our mission of 'Stronger Families, Brighter Futures.' We really are making a difference in thousands of lives every year and I'm thrilled that I get to be a part of it."



## Stein Education Center Adults Featured In Exhibition at San Diego Art Institute

The creative work of a talented group of Stein Education Center Adult artists will be featured this June at a special exhibition at the San Diego Art Institute (SDAI).

Paintings, sculptures and other art created by the Stein clients will be exhibited in the 2019 Youth Alliance Showcase this coming June 4 to 15 at SDAI's location at 1439 El Prado in Balboa Park. The exhibition will also feature the art of students from the California Art Education Association and Words Alive.

Vista Hill and SDAI partnered to offer quality art instruction to Stein clients, providing them with an enriching and therapeutic experience. SDAI has also worked with clients in Vista Hill's ParentCare Family Recovery Center and Bridges Teen Center.



Stein Education Center adult client, Tessa Lovato, proudly showing off the paper mache turtle and octopus.

# New ADAPT Program Will Address Gap In Post-Partum Depression Treatment

Vista Hill has created a unique new program that for the first time will take therapists into family homes to treat peri and post-partum depression. According to research presented by the County of San Diego, maternal depression is the most common complication of childbearing, and is associated with mother-child bonding difficulties, increased crying, delays in language development, behavioral problems in children and maternal suicide (*Screening*, 2015).

The Accessible Depression and Anxiety Peripartum Treatment (ADAPT) program was launched earlier this year to fill a gap that has been identified in treatment of peri and post-partum depression in populations with lower access to health care. Underserved communities are disproportionately affected, with African-American and Latina women experiencing depressive symptoms more often during and after pregnancy than other racial/ethnic groups.

The four and a half year program funded for \$1.1 million each year by the County of San Diego's Behavioral Health Services, will provide intensive therapeutic services to approximately 200 families annually, as well as less intensive case management support and referral services to another 100 families.

"This program came about because the County asked for community input on what health issues need more attention, and post-partum depression was high on the list," says ADAPT Program Manager Marisa Katzman. "ADAPT will reach an entire group of county residents who are suffering from this health crisis but who have been unable to receive any treatment at all." Referrals to ADAPT will come from public health nurses in the County's Maternal Child Health and Nurse Family Partnership programs whose clients present with peri and post-partum symptoms. ADAPT therapists will establish contact with the families and provide six months of in-home therapy in an effort to help stabilize the entire family.

"This is a program not just for women who have new babies, but for fathers and the entire family," Katzman says. "The arrival of a baby is a huge adjustment for most families, and the sudden changes in sleep patterns and schedules can trigger depression and anxiety in all family members. Left untreated, these issues can become crippling."

San Diego County identifies that failure to screen and treat post-partum depression and anxiety has long-term consequences for children, parents and the community as a whole. The 2010 Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) Survey showed that 14 percent of women giving birth in San Diego County were diagnosed with post-partum depression. Additionally, at least 10 percent of fathers also experience post-partum anxiety and depression but are often left out of the current treatment models.

Katzman is optimistic the program will have a significant impact because of the in-home nature of the therapy.

"A lot of families with limited resources are unable to go outside the home to seek treatment for post-partum depression for a number of reasons, whether it's the expense, lack of transportation or fear of losing their privacy," Katzman says. "We believe that bringing the therapists right into their homes where they feel comfortable will expand participation in the therapy and dramatically increase the effectiveness of the treatment."



*Vista Hill's innovative new program will take therapists into family homes to treat peri and post-partum depression.*

**newvistas** is published twice a year by the **Friends of Vista Hill Foundation**,

8910 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., San Diego, CA 92123.

Vista Hill is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

*Some Vista Hill programs are funded all or in part by the County of San Diego, HHSA.*

[www.vistahill.org](http://www.vistahill.org)

## Two New Programs Target Underserved Through County's "Innovations" Effort



*BHConnect staff testing out the mobile devices that clients will use to connect to their Mental Health Navigators.*

Vista Hill has always been innovative in creating mental and behavioral health service programs, but it has taken innovation to a new level with two recently launched programs funded through a partnership with San Diego County's Health and Human Services Department.

ADAPT, an in-home therapy program for women and families suffering from post-partum depression (see story page 5), and SmartCare BHConnect, a tele-mental health program, were created by Vista Hill in response to the County's request for new

programs that would provide mental health services to underserved populations using unique approaches, according to Robert Dean, Vista Hill President and CEO.

The County previously held a series of public forums to ask the community to share what it believes are disparities in mental health programs in San Diego County. The goal, Dean says, was to come up with new ideas for programs that would qualify for "Innovations" section funding under California's Mental Health Services Act. That legislation, approved by voters 15 years ago, levied a 1 percent tax on those with more than a million dollars in reportable income, and to date has raised more than \$15 billion to fund mental health programs around the state.

Dean is excited about the potential of the two new programs to help entirely new groups of people. He's confident they will succeed not only because they're innovative, but because they're built on the foundation of closely related expertise Vista Hill has developed in both areas over the years.

"ADAPT is innovative because no one has taken post-partum therapy into homes on a large scale," Dean says. "Vista Hill for years has been working successfully with moms and families with mental health issues through our Perinatal Case Management/Dependency Drug Court and ParentCare Family Recovery programs. And with BHConnect, which is unique because it relies on smart phones and tablets to keep mental health patients engaged with their therapy, Vista Hill had already developed expertise in tele-psychiatry and other technology-based approaches through our other SmartCare programs."

## Former Construction Industry Executive Elected to Vista Hill Board of Directors

Christopher J. Day, a San Diego construction industry executive and a former Navy officer, has been elected to the Vista Hill Board of Directors.

Day retired in 2015 as Vice President of Swinerton Inc., a major California-based commercial construction company with locations in seven other states. Day helped start Swinerton's San Diego division in 1999, and as head of marketing and business development, led the company to annual revenues of \$3 billion.

Before joining Swinerton, Day was a Project Manager at Koll Construction Company and a Project Manager at UC Irvine and UCLA. Day was an officer with the U.S. Navy from 1977 to 1984, serving in Special Warfare and Surface Warfare. He received a BS in Agricultural Engineering from the University of California, Davis.



"Vista Hill is one of our community's leading experts in helping San Diegans recover from substance abuse, and that particularly resonates with me because I had my own problems with alcohol when I was a young man," Day says. "I understand the pain people feel when they're in crisis and I know that even if they reach bottom and think there's no way out, with hard work and assistance they can find a path back to a good life."

Day is looking forward to finding a new way to give back to his community through Vista Hill.

"Based on my military career and building industry experience, I'm a very mission oriented person, and Vista Hill's mission of 'Stronger Families...Brighter Future' is exactly the kind of important and ambitious effort I want to become involved with at this stage of my life," Day says. "Vista Hill is doing a lot of good things in our community and I want to be a part of it."

## Vista Hill Mourns Passing of Major Donor Audrey Geisel

Vista Hill is deeply saddened by the passing of our dear friend Audrey Geisel. She was Vista Hill's largest donor and made so many dreams possible for our organization and the families we serve. We were thrilled to honor Mrs. Geisel with the IMBY (In My Back Yard) Award in 2007. Her generosity inspired others in the San Diego community to give to Vista Hill. As the first line of the 2011 New Vistas article says, "A wonderful angel has been watching over Vista Hill for two decades and her name is Audrey Geisel."

Mrs. Geisel, who was a registered nurse earlier in her life before marrying the late Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel, was frustrated in the 1970s and 80s when she had trouble convincing anyone to pay attention to mental health causes, let alone contribute to them.

"To be honest, I felt like I was fighting the battle alone and actually gave up for a number of years," she said. "I never understood how people could ignore their fellow human beings as they struggled with mental illness, substance abuse issues and other problems that are

part of the human condition. But, I found out about Vista Hill and all the tremendous things they were doing. I was thrilled to discover an organization that was really helping to serve the toughest of the tough, and I was excited to help expand their resources and ability to assist even more people.

"While I enjoy donating to the arts, education and science, I will never forget that there are countless numbers of human beings living at the edge of our society who are equally deserving of assistance. Unfortunately, to this day we still battle indifference and ignorance. But thankfully, with the caring support of an organization like Vista Hill, we've made real progress in providing the kind of help that truly transforms lives and strengthens our community. I'm honored and blessed to have played a role in the remarkable process," said Mrs. Geisel in the 2011 New Vistas article.

Audrey Geisel will be greatly missed and forever remembered.



## Longtime Vista Hill Supporter Virginia Napierskie Passes at 94

Vista Hill has lost one of its longest and most dedicated donors and supporters, Virginia Napierskie, who recently passed away at the age of 94.

Virginia, along with her husband, Glenn, who passed away in 2006, first began giving to Vista Hill in 1991 and over the years donated nearly a half million dollars to an organization she fell in love with. She also was a major sponsor of Vista Hill fundraising events, serving as Fashion Show Presenting Sponsor 12 times, including this year's event on May 31.

"Virginia lived a long, beautiful life and our condolences go out to her entire family especially her daughter, Friends of Vista Hill Emeritus Board member Connie Conard, who herself has served on and chaired many Vista Hill events," said Robert Dean, Vista Hill CEO and President. "At this year's Fashion Show we will honor and remember Virginia for her steadfast loyalty and indelible mark she left on Vista Hill and the entire community."



(L to R) Dynamic Duo, Connie Conard and Virginia Napierskie.

Virginia took a particular interest in supporting Vista Hill because she believed in the organization's mission and its ability to transform the lives of those suffering from mental and behavioral health issues, according to Rachel Peniche, Friends of Vista Hill Executive Director. In 2010, her longtime financial and emotional commitment to Vista Hill, including sponsoring a number of galas, led to her being honored along with Connie with the organization's highest honor, the In My Back Yard (IMBY) award.

"Virginia was an elegant, fun and gracious woman who we all loved and adored at Vista Hill, not just for her generosity but for how she embraced us like extended family," Peniche said. "She will forever be remembered and her legacy lives on in so many of our programs."



Friends of Vista Hill Foundation

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## Save the Date



Vista Hill Council on Mental Health Luncheon

**Wednesday, October 16, 2019 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

“Finding Yourself by Finding Community: Reflections on Growing Up ‘Far From the Tree’”

Speakers: Dr. Joseph Stramondo and Leah Smith

Hyatt Regency La Jolla

Chair: Elyse Sollender



Vista Hill 2nd Annual Family FUNdraiser

**Saturday, February 8, 2020 5 to 9:30 p.m.**

The New Children’s Museum

Co-Chairs: Heidi Dorman and Kimberly and Lauren Rubidoux