Friends of Vista Hill and the Stein Education Centers have launched an exciting new fundraising project in which Vista Hill donors and community members are joining forces to complete the “World’s Largest Puzzle.”

Rachel Peniche, Friends of Vista Hill Executive Director, said she came up with the idea when seeing a news story about the surge in popularity and demand for puzzles that has occurred since the start of the pandemic.

“Everybody I knew was getting into puzzles because they’ve been spending so much time at home, and I then discovered that Kodak had released a 51,300-piece puzzle they’re calling the world’s largest,” Peniche says. “The puzzle piece has been a symbol/logo of autism and autism spectrum disorders since 1963. Those who support the use of the puzzle piece as a symbol of autism believe that it accurately represents the puzzling nature of the condition and how even today when we have a better understanding of autism than we did in the 60s, there is still much more to know. The ‘Puzzle for a Purpose Project’ just seemed like the perfect fit and an innovative replacement for our fall fundraiser.”

Peniche launched the “Puzzle for a Purpose Project” by purchasing the puzzle, which actually comes as 27 individually packaged puzzles containing 1,900 pieces each. Each individual puzzle is a photo depicting a “wonder of the world” captured by a professional photographer.

“We’ve been engaging the talents of donors and community members and their families and friends to complete the individual puzzles,” Peniche says. “It’s also a fundraising effort to benefit our Stein Education Centers, as each piece can be sponsored for one dollar or the whole puzzle for $1,900.”

The project also offers an educational opportunity for students at the Stein Education Centers. Staff will use completed puzzles to highlight two different wonders each week for 13 weeks in the programs’ art, music and cooking classes.

The project kicked off in September with the culmination event for putting all the puzzles together coming in early January. To enhance the fun, the project will be memorialized through donors, clients and community shooting photos and videos of their puzzle parties. To commemorate this activity, a film documentary will be put together and released on January 29, 2021, which is “National Puzzle Day.” The completed puzzle will measure 30’ long by 6’ tall.

“This has been such a fun and entertaining project for everyone, and I’m confident we’ll reach our goal of raising $51,300,” Peniche says. “But it’s also been an important vehicle for raising awareness in the community of the incredible job the Stein Education Centers are doing in educating those with autism spectrum disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities.”

If you are interested in sponsoring a puzzle piece, or many, please visit the Vista Hill website www.vistahill.org for more details and click on the green donate button.
President-CEO / Board Chair Letter

This past year will go down as one of the most challenging in Vista Hill’s history. Yet despite the severe impact of the pandemic, we’re proud to report Vista Hill has exceeded expectations in carrying out our important mission of providing 27,000 San Diego County residents with mental/behavioral health, educational and social services.

As we observed a number of other agencies in our field reduce services or shut down completely for months, Vista Hill committed not only to staying open but finding innovative new ways to reach and serve our clients amid the mandatory public health restrictions the pandemic warranted.

There were several critical factors that helped Vista Hill successfully navigate this challenging new environment. Governor Newsom acted quickly to address the pandemic while making sure the state stayed strong in its commitment to maintaining the social service and health needs of Californians.

And we are deeply grateful to our partners/funders: San Diego County’s Behavioral Health Services and Probation Services, the San Diego Regional Center, area school districts and others who have maintained service agreements to keep Vista Hill involved, engaged and whole over the past nine months. As a result, Vista Hill has remained stable, financially strong and experienced minimal layoffs and furloughs.

Just as importantly, was the remarkable job our more than 500 employees—from our directors, to the managers and the staff who actually work with our clients—did in stepping up to the difficult task of adapting our services to the pandemic. The pandemic has certainly been disruptive in countless ways to Vista Hill, but thanks to our staff’s courage, creativity and positive spirit, the essential services we provide to our thousands of clients and families have continued uninterrupted.

Vista Hill employees never lost their focus in making sure services continued, with the highest priority being the health and safety of our clients and themselves. The way they adapted to the crisis has been remarkable, whether using televideo and phone, or taking the proper health precautions and continuing to work with clients in-person.

We’re pleased to report their work has not gone unnoticed in the community, as almost all of our partners have shared with us their admiration and respect for our employees’ skill and dedication this year. We are proud of every one of our Vista Hill employees and consider them all heroes.

We are also grateful for the support of our wonderful donors during this time. Many have reached out to ask how they can help, financially or otherwise. For example, with so many developmentally disabled adult clients going to distance learning and activities practically overnight, donors helped us with funding to acquire and distribute numerous electronic tablet devices such as Kindles. Donor support also helped fill baskets with food and other key essentials distributed to clients over these many months.

Although the future is still unclear, we can say with certainty that no matter what challenges lie ahead for Vista Hill’s staff and programs, we will tackle and solve them so that we can continue providing the services that are so vitally important to our clients and our community in general.

Cecil Steppe (left) and Robert Dean (photographed in 2019) along with the entire board, work together to carry out Vista Hill’s mission.

Cecil H. Steppe
Chair

Robert Dean
President & CEO

Combined Statement of Financial Position
At September 30, 2019 (in 000s)

ASSETS

Current Assets
Cash and Cash Equivalents $ 5,018
Investments 14,299
Accounts Receivable 5,238
Other Current Assets 339
Total Current Assets 24,894

Property, Plant and Equipment, net 8,670
Endowment and Deferred Giving Assets 5,594

Total Assets $ 39,158

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities
Accounts Payable $ 465
Accrued Expenses 1,762
Total Current Liabilities 2,227

Mortgage and Notes Payable 1,143
Deferred Rent 416

Total Non-Current Liabilities 1,559
Total Liabilities 3,786

Net Assets
Unrestricted 31,022
Permanently Restricted 1,975

Total Net Assets 39,158

Total Liabilities and Net Assets $ 36,585

The financial information in this report represents a condensed version of fiscal year 2018-2019 audited financial statements. A complete set of audited financial statements, with accompanying notes and report from Aldrich, LLP is available from Vista Hill.
Annual Fashion Show Goes Virtual and Raises More than $140,000

As many other organizations had to also pivot and move their fundraisers online, so did the Vista Hill Fashion Show. Originally calendared for May 8th, the “virtual” “Be Ready to Be Seen” themed show moved up a week to May 1st with online boutique shopping opportunities in time for Mother’s Day.

Thanks to the creative and innovative talents of Gretchen Bergman of Gretchen Productions (fashion show producer), Toby Russell of Event-A-Vision (A/V) and Anthony Bollotta of Bollotta Entertainment (pre-show production), the 25-minute show was captivating and fun. We had more than 200 viewers from across the globe (even Dubai), and thanks to the amazing generosity of our loyal and some new fashionistas, we raised $140,000!

The best part of 2020 was seeing how collaborative people were and how they rose to the occasion to generously support those who are most vulnerable in our community. We also saw organizations join forces to help those in need. In that uniting spirit, we are excited to announce that Vista Hill and A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing) are coming together to present the 2021 The Show Must Go On: A New PATH and Vista Hill Fashion Show!

A New PATH works to reduce the stigma associated with addictive illness through education and compassionate support, and to advocate for therapeutic rather than punitive drug policies. As of this past October, A New PATH has trained over 5,600 people on how to administer Naloxone and have a reported 1,252 opioid overdose reversals.

Next year’s show will benefit both organizations and those with substance use disorders. Please mark your calendars and join us on Friday, March 19, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Town and Country Resort, where we hope to host an outdoor fashion show and your favorite boutiques. This will be a hybrid event with virtual viewing options available to all guests.

TVIA and NCL Are Having a Huge Impact at Vista Hill

Community volunteer groups are an important part of filling gaps at Vista Hill and have been integral to the organization’s ability to support the many needs of the students and clients Vista Hill serves.

Teen Volunteers in Action (TVIA) is an organization of young men (grades 7-12) who, together with their families, are committed to developing community leaders through a structured program of volunteerism, philanthropy, and personal development. Vista Hill is grateful to the TVIA SD-2 Chapter who have spent three weekends doing gardening projects at the Stein Education Center special education campus and Vista Hill Apartments.

The National Charity League (NCL) is a multi-generational philanthropic organization of mothers and daughters who volunteer close to three million hours annually to over 6,000 charities in the United States. The very generous San Dieguito Chapter has donated hundreds of hours and thousands of Halloween candy bags and hygiene kits for teens and adults. They have also done food drives, created scavenger hunt and activity bags, created birthday kits, and so much more.
All teachers are special, but the incredibly challenged students with whom Cindy Mapes works every day put her in a unique niche occupied by a very small group of compassionate and highly skilled educators.

Each of Cindy’s students at Vista Hill’s Stein Education Center (SEC) special education campus is diagnosed with autism or other moderate to severe developmental or intellectual disabilities. Some cannot speak, or need assistance to complete daily life skills, and some behave in ways that range from disruptive to occasionally violent.

Proof of how formidable educating these students can be is the fact that occasionally new teachers at SEC will last only a matter of months before realizing the job is much more challenging than they anticipated. They then choose to go elsewhere, but remarkable Cindy was recently honored by Vista Hill for celebrating her 35th anniversary at the school.

How does she do it? One of the best people to answer that question is SEC Director Chayo Chavez.

“Cindy is a wonderful teacher because she has mastered an incredible skill set and because she gives her heart and soul to her students every day,” Chavez says. “Because there are limited educational materials to meet the needs of our students, Cindy is always thinking creatively to devise outside-the-box ways of educating them. She works long hours every day, evenings and weekends to ensure her students keep progressing. Cindy is an amazing teacher with a heart of gold for her students. This is not a job to Cindy but a life passion.”

For the San Diego native, that passion to help others developed during high school. Cindy fell in love with working with the developmentally disabled at the Home of Guiding Hands. After serving as a missionary in Zambia for two years, she joined Vista Hill in 1984 working in a group home and then a teacher’s aide at SEC. While working, she attended National University to get her bachelor’s degree and teaching credential.

Cindy says she loves helping her students not only learn academically, but also develop the critical daily living skills and vocational abilities to become independent, productive adults. She finds it extremely rewarding to help a young person learn to communicate and control their behavior and ultimately become a contributing member of the community.

Cindy says she owes much of her success to her fellow SEC teachers and occupational and speech therapists.

“We couldn’t do this difficult job if we didn’t have such a strong and truly committed team of talented and passionate professionals who collaborate every day to help our students progress as far as they can,” Cindy says. “This was crucial when the pandemic hit and we really had to stretch to figure out new ways of reaching our students through distance learning and Zoom to make sure they continued to learn.”

Cindy says she feels blessed to have the patience, tenacity and skills to do a job she believes is extremely important for the community. Fortunately for SEC, Cindy has no plans to retire.

“I love Vista Hill and its wonderful mission of helping those most in need,” Cindy says. “Yes, my job can be stressful at times, but the joy of helping my students and mentoring new teachers far outweighs any of the challenges,” Cindy says.

SEC teacher Cindy Mapes uses specialized iPad-based communication software to help one of her non-verbal students increase his reading skills at the special education campus.
CEO Robert Dean Celebrates 50th Anniversary at Vista Hill

Vista Hill recently honored President and CEO Robert Dean for his 50 years of outstanding service to the organization. “Rob’s incredible service to Vista Hill and our community over a half century is one of the most remarkable and effective administrative performances in the history of social service agencies in San Diego,” says Vista Hill Board Chair Cecil Steppe. “His brilliant and personable leadership, especially in the 15 years he has been CEO, has led Vista Hill from a relatively small organization to the 23rd largest non-profit in San Diego County serving 27,000 clients. We can’t thank Rob enough for his dedication to Vista Hill, and we’re thrilled he’s going to be with us a few more years. He is a treasure.”

Dean’s Vista Hill career started out modestly in 1969 when the San Diego native was hired as a dishwasher in the kitchen at Mesa Vista Hospital (a psychiatric hospital which was then owned by Vista Hill) by none other than Friends of Vista Hill Board member, Susan Straub. In the years that followed, he steadily worked his way up through a variety of clinical, managerial and administrative positions in the organization, as well as two years as administrator of Los Ninos Education Center (later renamed Stein Education Center). After 10 years as Associate Administrator, he was appointed Chief Operating Officer at the hospital in 1998 and Vista Hill President and CEO in 2004.

In its 60-plus year history, Vista Hill has experienced numerous phases of emphasis and focus. Vista Hill’s early eras of psychiatric hospital patient care and managed behavioral health care evolved into today’s breadth of community programs services in mental health, substance use disorders and intellectual / developmental

Facilities Manager Rod Engel Will Retire After 46 Years

Facilities Manager Rod Engel, a friendly and familiar face to almost every Vista Hill employee, will retire at the end of this year after a remarkable 46-year-career of helping keep the organization running at its highest efficiency.

Engel and his small but incredibly hard working and talented team are involved in every aspect of maintaining and improving Vista Hill’s facilities, from the smallest job of changing a light bulb to actually building out offices and classrooms, and carrying out major construction projects.

“Rod isn’t a teacher or counselor, but he’s one of the most important employees to ever work at Vista Hill,” says CEO Robert Dean. “His ability to keep our facilities up to date and running smoothly has created a stable and safe environment that has been crucial to our ability to provide critically needed mental/behavioral health, educational and social services to the community. Rod has literally saved Vista Hill hundreds of thousands of dollars over the decades and has been a rock upon which we have all relied. He will be greatly missed and we all wish him well.”

Rod, who started out as a part-time gardener in 1974, says he will miss Vista Hill and the many friends he has made at the organization, but he’s also looking forward to retirement and devoting more time to second career as a talented artist.

“Looking back over my many years at Vista Hill, two notable things come to mind,” Engel says. “The first is the amazing growth of the organization and how many thousands of people it now helps throughout San Diego County. The second is the dedicated, hardworking and truly amazing group of employees—from the top down—who have never lost sight of the fact that their respective jobs within the organization are not about themselves, but rather about the broad range of clients and families to whom Vista Hill provides health and wellness services. It is to these fellow employees of mine that I tip my hat and proudly say, ‘It has truly been an honor to work with you.’”
Dean feels fortunate that his career at Vista Hill has also grown and changed along with the organization. "I am indebted to a great many mentors who unselfishly coached, cajoled or motivated me along. I try to pay it forward by mentoring and encouraging others that have come into my field of view so they can expand their horizons and grow. I have to extend kudos to my wife, Liz, for always listening, sharing thoughts, being ever encouraging and supportive—without her the occasional rocky road would've knocked me over the cliff long ago."

Dean is one of those special executives who is equally skilled at leading an organization at the highest level but has the ability to relate Vista Hill employees on a very personal level. “Every business book tells you that the CEO is the leader and sets the tone for the organization,” says Human Resources Director Amber Herrmann. “The best thing about having Rob as the CEO is that he is a genuinely good and kind person. His ethics are always on display for those of us that report to him, and it gives us the latitude to do the right things. Not what is easy, or less costly, but what is right for our staff and clients.”

Herrmann adds, “As a leader in Human Resources I appreciate Rob’s leadership more than I can express, and it is due to his stewardship that we have so many other great long-term employees and the outstanding reputation Vista Hill has in the community. Rob has made an impact on each of us whether we are aware of it or not.”

Dean feels blessed that his entire career has been with such a special organization. “Vista Hill really is a wonderful organization that has been built by many over 60-plus years,” Dean says. “We’re all proud that it has had such a tremendous impact in improving hundreds of thousands of lives through critical services. Vista Hill stands for quality, inventiveness, integrity, and customer service. I’m pleased to have played a role helping our directors and managers instill that in their staff, who in turn have translated that spirit into some of the most effective social services in San Diego County.”

Vista Hill Honors Employee Service Award Recipients

- **Roberta Dean**
  - President and CEO
  - Stein Education Center: Campus
  - 50 years

- **Cynthia Mapes**
  - Stein Education Center: Campus
  - 35 years

- **Tammy Harris**
  - Stein Education Center: Campus
  - 35 years

- **David Taylor**
  - Integrated Behavioral Health Services/ School-Based Services
  - 30 years

- **Nicholas Peters**
  - Stein Education Center: Adult Services
  - 30 years

- **Joanne Garcia**
  - Stein Education Center: Adult Services
  - 25 years

- **Albert Dunmore**
  - Stein Education Center: Campus
  - 25 years

- **Theidra Lawson**
  - Stein Education Center: Campus
  - 25 years
Dear Friends,

Vista Hill continues to provide life-changing education, recovery, mental health services, and vocation and life skills to our students and clients. Vista Hill creates accessible treatment, and no matter where our families need us, we are there. Vista Hill is transforming lives through our holistic evidence-based approach, and our staff remains committed to providing the highest quality services in the safest manner possible.

Community Impact Leaders
1957 - PRESENT
CUMULATIVE GIVING

Making an impact… leading the way… for 60 years.

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Alicia and Eduardo Rubio (back row middle) with their friends supporting the Family Fundraiser.
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Windmill Thrift Shop
Women Give San Diego
Karen and Doug Yingling
Lynn Corrin, M.D. and Matthew Zetumer, M.D.

Lori and John Anewalt rarely miss the annual fundraiser.

Claudia and Jim* Prescott
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San Diego City Firefighters
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San Diego Women's Foundation
The Scandling Family Foundation
The Honorable Lynn Schenk and C. Hugh Friedman*

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Union Bank of California
US Bank/San Diego National Bank
WD-40 Company
Mandell Weiss Charitable Trust
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Windmill Thrift Shop
Women Give San Diego
Karen and Doug Yingling
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 Associates and Special Friends

OCTOBER 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2020
CURRENT GIVING

Very special thanks to those individuals, foundations, corporations and organizations that charitably bestow gifts to Vista Hill.

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(l to r) Charley and Barb Crew with Pam and Jeff Lowe

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“Do not judge me by my successes. Judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”
- Nelson Mandela

Vista Hill Board member
Fred Taylor with wife Melissa and children Maya and Miles who had a blast at the event.
Please note: Space limitations prevent us from naming all donors, but we hope you know that every dollar contributed, all the in-kind donations and each volunteer hour spent at Vista Hill means the world to us. We sincerely apologize for any unintentional errors. Please feel free to notify us if you detect a mistake at 858-514-5151. Thank you.

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The San Diego Foundation
Jewish Community Foundation San Diego
Save the Date

The Puzzle with a Purpose Project
Movie Premiere
Friday, January 29, 2021 (National Puzzle Day)

The Show Must Go On! – A New PATH and Vista Hill Fashion Show
Friday, March 19, 2021 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Town and Country Resort
Chair: Clarice Perkins Co-Chairs: Liz Crocker and Colleen Ruis Ince
Honorary Co-Chairs: Barb Crew and Barbie Spinazzola

Family FUNdraiser
Saturday, August 14, 2021 4 to 8 p.m.
Stein Education Center Main Campus
Co-Chairs: Kimberly Brady Rubidoux and Lauren Rubidoux