

VILLA VIEWS

SPRING 2018

The Newsletter
of St. Joseph's Villa



BRIDGING THE GAP

**James finds his voice at
the Villa's Center for
Autism**

Teacher Jesse Brown (left) and James interact in the Villa's central garden.

Twelve-year old James has moved almost as many times as his age. As part of a military family, he has lived in Texas, Kansas, Colorado, Ohio, West Virginia and now Virginia. James was also diagnosed with autism at age two.

His mother, Alicia, said they knew something was off since the day James was born. He slept through the night from the start and had no interest in people.

Years later, public school became a major challenge. James is nonverbal and has

sensory processing disorder. Even in autism classrooms, inconsistent staffing made a difficult environment for James on top of living in a new place. Alicia felt he was falling through the cracks. She found the Villa's Center for Autism when James's school recommended private placement.

"The day I came to tour, it was like worlds opened up. It felt like a big, warm hug," she said.

Within a few months of James coming to the Villa, Alicia saw remarkable changes in his communication skills. For the first

time, he was willingly communicating with anyone he came across using his tablet. Now he is learning to use verbal words.

"For a nonverbal child to be comfortable enough to speak is huge," said Alicia. "The teachers and staff at the Villa are so positive and patient with James. They're really amazing."

The positive changes for James and his family didn't stop there.

Continued on next page.

Bridging the Gap (con't)

One unique aspect of the Villa's Center for Autism is its emphasis on community-based instruction. Multiple times a week, each classroom has the opportunity to go out into the community and engage in various learning activities, ranging from fun and therapeutic to functional and vocational. Prior to James coming to the Villa, taking him on family outings was a constant struggle.

"Now he's going grocery shopping, going to places like Jumpology, and he loves it," said Alicia.

Alicia also says that James and his older brother, 15, have become closer since he started at the Villa.

"Now they're playing games together, playing outside.... they just want to be together all the time. Sometimes I actually have to separate them. They're best friends," she said.

James's father has since retired from the military after 22 years of service, The family is now looking to purchase a home and put their roots down in Virginia. With a newfound sense of stability, Alicia is hopeful for James's future.

"Our goal is for James to be the very best James he can be," said Alicia. "Whatever his place may be in the world, we just want him to find that and be successful in what he wants to do."

DID YOU KNOW?

Our Center for Autism has taken students on more than **500** outings for community-based instruction in the past year.

Aaron and Brianna find housing and hope through Flagler youth services

Few things test the strength of a relationship like the possibility of becoming homeless. Young couple Aaron and Brianna faced such a test when they moved into his mother's apartment to avoid living on the street. But the situation was dire.

Aaron's mother was in and out of the hospital with health issues, and the apartment was practically uninhabitable with mold and caved-in ceilings. Eventually they were evicted with nowhere to go. Aaron and Brianna wound up sleeping on benches and behind stores.

"It was cold. It was a very scary situation," said Aaron. "But together we got through it with St. Joseph's Villa."



Youth Rapid Rehousing Case Manager Lolita Matthews (left) with Brianna and Aaron

Aaron says the Villa came at just the right time. Without any other personal supports, Aaron and Brianna were referred to the Flagler Housing & Homeless Services youth rapid rehousing program.

"They [Flagler] said, 'You find a place you want to live, and we'll help get you there. But you have to put in the work.' They gave us the independence and control, so we hit the ground running," said Aaron.

Within 20 days, Aaron and Brianna obtained housing in their own name. They also found jobs working at the same restaurant. With budget coaching from Flagler, now they're saving for their future. In time Brianna hopes to go to school to become a registered nurse, while Aaron—inspired by working with the Villa—wants to become a guidance counselor for middle or high school students.

"I love St. Joseph's Villa like family," said Brianna. "They've done so much for us. They're life changing."

Villa receives four-year COA accreditation with highest marks



Including COA, St. Joseph's Villa is licensed and accredited by 39 different entities.

The Council on Accreditation (COA) is the nation's highest accrediting agency for the full continuum of child welfare, behavioral health, and community-based social services. After an extensive self-review and onsite visit by an evaluation team of industry experts, St. Joseph's Villa received accreditation for the next four years. Villa programs, services, administration and management were found to meet best practice standards and ethics requirements.

COA accreditation signifies that an organization is providing the best possible services to all of its stakeholders while effectively managing its resources. The COA report gave high marks in particular to the Villa's environment of service delivery, family involvement in treatment, risk management, financial reporting, staff development opportunities, and quality of board leadership.

"Our integrity as an organization and our respect for our clients are at the core of all the Villa is and what we do. I am incredibly proud of our staff for this accomplishment," said Kathleen Burke Barrett, Villa CEO.

Edna's decades of dedication change lives

At 96 years old, Edna Carter has volunteered in the Villa's Donation Center for 20 consecutive years and shows no signs of slowing down. Every Tuesday she is joined by a group of friends through AARP Southside to sort community gifts of clothing, school supplies and housewares. She makes sure all items are organized and neatly displayed so Villa children and families can easily find what they need.

What keeps Edna coming back?

"I love children," she said. "I always enjoy seeing them and guiding them as they pick things they want."

Items given to the Villa's Donation Center go straight to children and families at no cost to them. This important resource would not be available without the steadfast commitment of volunteers like Edna.

To find out how you can help, please contact Kathy Perun, Director of Community Engagement, at 804-521-5577.



Alumna to provide for Villa's future of service through planned gift

When Mary Caliandro first came to live at St. Joseph's Villa in 1935, the area surrounding the campus was known as Dumbarton, Virginia. It was isolated without any nearby shopping centers or bus stops. She may have felt far from things back then, but Mary's memories of the Villa are happy ones.

"I had a lot of friends at the Villa," she said. "It was my home. I love the Villa."

Mary made provisions for St. Joseph's Villa in her will. From the sale of her home, she plans to pay tribute to the place she and her sister called home for ten years.

"It's wonderful to be able to give something to an organization that has done so much for others," said Mary.



Mary Caliandro



Alumnae at St. Joseph's Feast Day

Mary shared her decision to make a planned gift with fellow alumnae when they gathered at the Villa to celebrate St. Joseph's Feast Day in March. She also encouraged them to consider doing the same.

The Villa's mission has grown and expanded since Mary lived here. Now she is helping ensure the Villa means just as much to the children and families who will come in the future as it did to her. The Villa continues to evolve to meet emerging community needs, but through Mary's memories and provision in her will, to her it will always be home.



By making a gift in your will to St. Joseph's Villa today, you are ensuring that children and families of future generations will have access to groundbreaking services that help them reach their full potential. All it takes to get started is a conversation. You may be surprised at how easy it is to give a gift and make an impact that can last forever.

Contact us to learn about establishing your legacy at St. Joseph's Villa:
www.NeverStopBelieving.org/Foundation • 804-553-3220

Villa joins statewide advocacy efforts

During the convening of the 2018 Virginia General Assembly, the Villa engaged with community partners to participate in conversations around legislation impacting our children and families. We joined other nonprofits at Mental Health Advocacy Days, held by Voices for Virginia's Children, NAMI Virginia, Mental Health America of

Virginia, and VOCAL, and Housing Advocacy Day held by Virginia Housing Alliance.

Villa CEO Kathleen Burke Barrett and Director of Community Partnerships Craig Hedley also delivered testimonies in support of children's mental health services at a state budget hearing. The hearing was held by the Virginia General Assembly's House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees.



Children's Mental Health Day advocates at the Virginia State Capitol

One family, two generations, unlimited potential with Brook Road Academy



Matt and Mason (center) with English teacher Ben Walters (left), Head of Academy Jeff Carretto (right), and Spanish teacher Israel Melendez (back). Walters and Melendez taught both Matt and Mason.

The academic and social pressures of high school can overwhelm any student. For ninth grader Mason, those pressures compounded when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Surgery was a success, but left Mason having to re-learn some speech and motor skills. His confidence was lost and school became a major source of anxiety. Just talking about it was often stressful enough to bring him to tears.

Mason's step dad, Matt, understood what he was going through since he struggled with low self-esteem and social anxiety at that age. Matt came to the Villa's Brook Road Academy in tenth grade, and remembered that as his turning point.

"Brook Road Academy is definitely one of a kind," Matt said. "The teachers never gave up on me. They had confidence in me when I didn't have confidence in myself."

Matt made honor roll for the first time in his life when he came to Brook Road Academy. He recalled his teachers instilling in him the value of respect, encouraging independent thought, and preparing him for the outside world. To this day he stays in touch with his Brook Road Academy friends. Matt thought it would be a perfect fit for Mason, and when Mason took the tour, he agreed.

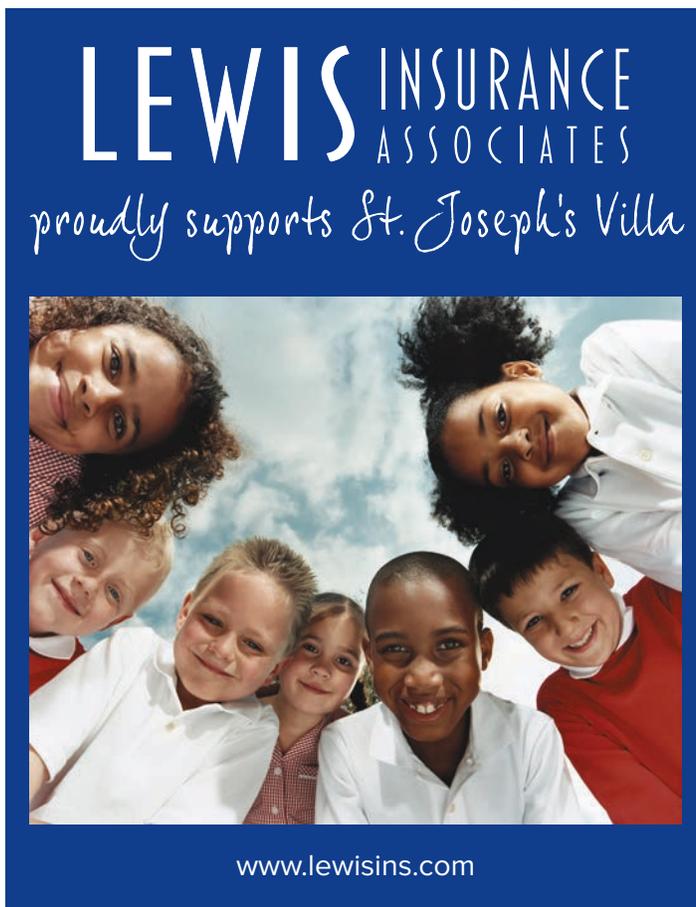
Brook Road Academy became a turning point for Mason just as it did for Matt. Now he looks forward to school and has the confidence to speak up in class. He even participated in the school's winter basketball league.

"The vibe is like home. I feel very at ease here," said Mason.

"The school has evolved with the times," said Matt. "But one thing that hasn't changed is that here, you can be you."

Brook Road Academy teacher Ben Walters received the 2018 Margaret Shepherd Teaching Award from VAISEF. (Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities)

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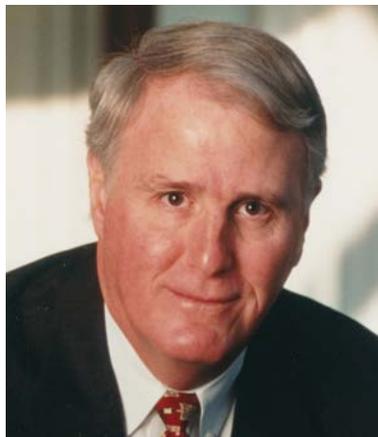
DID YOU KNOW?

The Villa has served **49 localities** throughout Virginia since 2015.

Remembering longtime Villa leader and champion, John McCann

St. Joseph's Villa would not be what it is today without John McCann. For more than 30 years he served as a volunteer and leader on our boards, most recently as president of the Villa Corporation Board.

We will always remember John for his firm conviction, astute guidance of our organization, and his heart and compassion for the children and families we serve. John's work has changed countless lives at the Villa and throughout the Richmond region. We will miss him greatly.



Adult Day Support links Christine to community and career

Day Support participant Christine embodies the Villa's motto to "never stop believing." During her years in the program, she has continually set new goals for herself and achieved them with the encouragement of staff. She has taken to the stage to sing and dance at Villa Idol, engaged the community through volunteering, and recently begun a career in hospitality.

As Christine transitioned from the Villa's Youth Day Support to Adult Day Support, she focused on learning employment skills. Day Support staff helped by conducting practice interviews, assisting with applications, and teaching appropriate dress. Staff also connected Christine to a job opening at a local hotel. She started working on weekends, and has done so well she now works three days a week.



When Christine isn't working, she makes time to volunteer. Every week Day Support provides transportation for Christine to work with Villa community partners Hope Thrift and Meals on Wheels. Program manager Shanika Stubbs says Christine has thrived taking on more responsibility.

"She can walk up to doors and deliver meals to clients independently now," said Shanika. "She loves helping others and does things on her own without being asked."

Christine's future is looking bright, and we can't wait to see where her goals take her next.

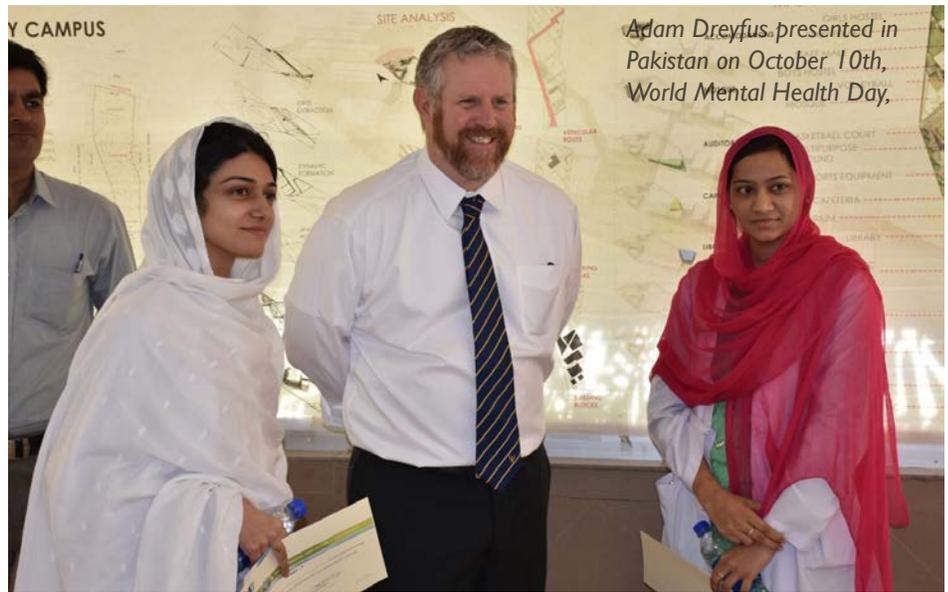
Day Support provides instruction and recreation for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The program recently expanded to serve adults like Christine who are 21 and over.

Villa Center for Autism growing as global model

A new parent survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control suggests that about one in 45 children has autism, up from one in 68. The rate of autism isn't only rising in the United States—it's a trend seen the world over.

Sarah Dooley Center for Autism director and internationally recognized expert Adam Dreyfus recently traveled to Pakistan to share the Center's educational model and outcomes at Foundation University and Rahman Medical Institute. The symposia were attended by hospitals and organizations from all over the country. Adam is among the first autism experts to visit that area of the world and advance partnerships in education.

Adam and Center program manager Leora Wagner also presented at the



Adam Dreyfus presented in Pakistan on October 10th, World Mental Health Day,

Association for Behavior Analysis International Conference in Paris in November, one of the largest autism conferences in the world.

Research shows that the impact of

autism on a child's future can be significantly mediated through education. With the support of partnerships, the goal of our Center for Autism is to help students transition back to their public schools and to the community.

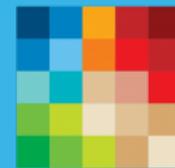


Above: Altria leaders from as far as Connecticut participated in a volunteer engagement training and day of service at the Villa.

Right: Altria volunteers added a new paved walkway to enhance accessibility between the Learning & Therapy Garden and adjacent playground.



Partner Spotlight



Altria

The Villa's partnership with Altria dates back nearly 30 years, through both their employee giving fund and volunteering. In 2012, more than 50 Altria volunteers gave a total of 385 hours to construct the Villa's Learning & Therapy Garden.

Altria volunteers regularly return to maintain and enhance the garden with new features for our children and youth.

"We understand the critical programming and services that St. Joseph's Villa offers to meet important community needs," said Charlie Martin, ALCS Corporate Citizenship. "Our employees appreciate the opportunity to contribute, particularly through volunteering."



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James finds his voice at the Villa's Center for Autism

LINKING TO THE COMMUNITY

Christine begins career with the help of Adult Day Support

HOPE FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Aaron and Brianna find housing and stability with Flagler youth program

We never stop believing in children and their families.

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New collaboration with FeedMore to benefit Villa students on multiple levels

St. Joseph's Villa and FeedMore are teaming up to prevent hunger for Villa children and families. Through the new "Backpack Snack Shack" program, located on campus, any Villa student in need will be able to obtain fresh produce and non-perishable goods, and bring them home in a provided backpack.

"Sending food home in a concealed backpack helps eliminate any stigma for the kids," said Matthew Kreydatus, director of the Villa's Career and Transition Services (CATS).

CATS students will make regular trips to FeedMore to "shop" for

donated food items and supply the Villa Snack Shack. In the process they will learn vocational skills such as budgeting and inventory management, as well as social responsibility for helping others.

"This partnership with FeedMore is a phenomenal opportunity for all of our students," said Kreydatus. "We are excited to build this program and make sure no Villa child or family goes hungry."

