

VILLA VIEWS

The Newsletter
of St. Joseph's Villa



UPLIFTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Former Villa student returns as inspiring school counselor

Mysonne and his student, Milan, take a moment to enjoy the campus plant life during their walk.

Since 1834, the Villa has been home to countless stories of resilience and triumph that show how a supportive community can lift up an individual, and change the course of their life. Stories like Mysonne's.

Meet Mysonne, a 2021 Villa graduate who today proudly serves as a counselor for elementary students in our Dooley School. Mysonne says he discovered his passion for helping others while he was a student here himself, and that his educators set him on the path to tap into his potential.

Focusing on education was once an uphill battle for Mysonne as he faced challenges in and out of high school. On tougher days, anger would boil over into aggression. However, life began to turn around when he engaged the Villa's Career and Transition Services (CATS). The CATS team played a pivotal role in helping him realize his self-worth, and offered him what he needed most at the time – connection.

"They introduced me to the world outside of the Villa," he said.

Mysonne gained his first job opportunity through CATS working at a vegan restaurant, and was mentored by the restaurant owner. There, he developed communication skills and learned to be comfortable in a work environment. CATS also took him to a music studio, where he created music for the first time.

When Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger toured the Villa in 2020, Mysonne personally welcomed her to his school, and was invited to visit her office at the U.S. Capitol – which he did a month later.

Uplifting the Next Generation (con't)

All of these activities coordinated by CATS were designed to help Mysonne build confidence, life skills, and a plan for success after high school.

“Meeting the Villa staff was eye opening,” said Mysonne. “CATS showed me if you have a passion you want to pursue, you have to believe in yourself and put yourself in situations to progress your talents or your craft. Invest in yourself and take the risk.”

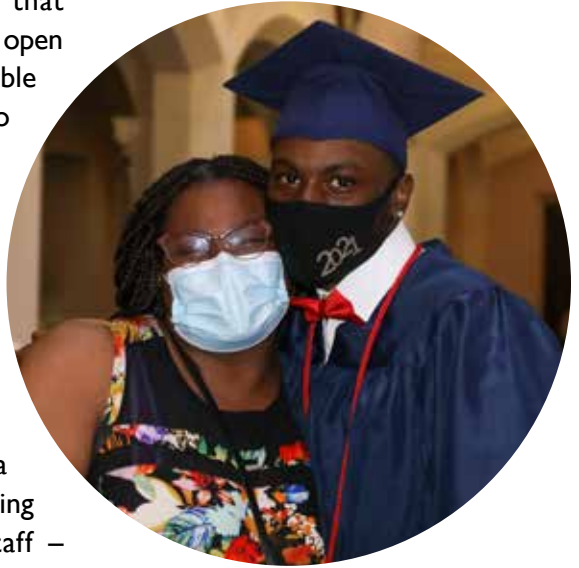
Now, in his new role as a counselor, Mysonne looks to his own experiences to provide guidance for younger students. He says that the students he works with remind him of himself before he came to the Villa. First and foremost, he takes time to learn about each individual, understand their story, and meet them where they need to be met.

“If I know I’ve been through something in my life, and that child is going through the same thing at that moment, maybe

I can take my experience and help them become a better person in their situation, or learn not to let that situation define them. I try to be an open book and help kids feel comfortable communicating what they need, so that we can help them achieve it.”

Mysonne plans to go back to school and continue expanding his skills in the field of youth counseling. He hopes to one day become a home-based counselor or clinician. But for now, he’s happy to be making a difference at the Villa while learning from the education services staff – now his colleagues!

“It feels incredible. It feels like I’m in the right space. You might have your challenges working with students, but you also have staff who are full of positive energy. Kids feed off of that energy. I know I want to be a part of that positivity.”



“I don’t think I’ve ever met a young person that was so plugged in to his goals or as self-aware in my 13-year career in youth development. Mysonne was such a gift to the Villa that made coming to work very easy. Essentially, all we had to do was hold a metaphorical mirror up so he could see just how talented and special he was, and we are all the better for it.”

- Garland Guion II
Program Lead of Operations, CATS



Mysonne welcomes Congresswoman Spanberger to the Villa’s Dooley Center for Alternative Education.



Left to right: Gene Tayman, Director of Technology; Rebecca Heiser, Clinical Services Operations Coordinator; Bob Larkin, Director of the Crisis Receiving Center; Linda Saltonstall, Senior Director of Clinical Services. Special thanks to our Facilities Team!

Central Virginia's first youth Crisis Receiving Center nears completion

An innovative new program is preparing to open on the Villa campus!

The Crisis Receiving Center (CRC) is launching early 2024 in partnership with Henrico County to provide youth and their families immediate access to mental health services. Currently, few options are available to families with a child in crisis. Local hospitals help, however emergency departments often have long waits and are not as suitable for children already experiencing a traumatic situation. Trained mental health professionals at the CRC will offer 24/7 call and walk-in service, and provide comprehensive assessments and crisis intervention. Discharge planning begins with admission; youth can remain at the CRC for up to 23 hours, and in that time will be linked to the next appropriate level of care.

Construction crews have been hard at work all summer to complete renovations, and progress has been quicker than expected! Designed to feel like a home rather than a hospital, the 1,800 sq. ft. facility will house a calming room, assessment room, therapy room, and comfortable recliners where youth will receive services. Because a crisis impacts the whole family, family members will be an integral part of treatment. There will be a designated area where families can relax and be supported while they are with us.

The launch of the CRC marks the Villa's second regional partnership to provide youth with critical mental health services. Our Crisis Stabilization Unit opened on campus in 2012 in partnership with Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) Region 4. In collaboration with other Region 4 programs, such as REACH and CReST, the CRC will ensure rapid, effective response to youth who need immediate attention for mental health emergencies.

CRC's throughout the country have historically served adults, and proven to be a valuable asset for freeing up community resources from emergency rooms to law enforcement. We hope to begin a trailblazing program that leads to more options for children and adolescents throughout Region 4 in Virginia.

Building Better Lives: Inspiring Success Stories from our Housing & Homeless Services

Meet two of **over 700 neighbors** who found safe and stable housing through the Villa last year:

Cody

Cody experienced a cycle of homelessness for most of his adult life while struggling with substance use disorder. After two years of living on the street, he is now on the path to breaking that cycle with wraparound support from the Villa.

Working in tandem with our Mental Health Skill Building team, Flagler Housing & Homeless Services helped Cody obtain affordable housing and sign a lease in his own name just 20 days after intake. Flagler provided financial assistance for his deposit and first month's rent, and continues to help him maintain housing through personalized support services and linkages to community resources. Cody frequently says, "I can't believe this happened as fast as it did." Today, he loves sitting on his back porch enjoying the tranquility of his new home, and is on track to independently pay his housing expenses within the next three months.

Lisa

Lisa contacted the Villa for help after receiving notice that she would lose her housing in 14 days. Living on a fixed income, she had no savings left to pay her rent arrears after taking care of her monthly bills.

Our Housing Stabilization Case Manager worked with Lisa to create a repayment plan, and presented the plan to the property manager in hopes that it would be accepted in exchange for delaying her eviction. To Lisa's relief, the property manager agreed, and she worked to successfully complete the repayment plan. Lisa says she can now direct her energy on restoring her relationships with her adult children, and credits her case manager Kristin for ensuring a better future for her family.

A Slice of Success: Students Learn the art of Pizza-Making



Students from our Dooley School and Dooley Center for Alternative Education are taking part in a fun new activity: making pizza! Working in the kitchen, they're learning valuable skills that they can not only bring home, but apply to future jobs – from time management and teamwork to following health and safety standards.

“We look at this opportunity as a way for our students to display their talents, feel positive about themselves, and be more visible on campus while serving great food,” said Matthew Kreydatus, Senior Director of Career and Wellness Services.

Students are able to be creative in how they prepare the pizza, incorporating different herbs and seasonings in the sauce and choosing their own toppings. In the spring, students will harvest fresh tomatoes, spinach, onions, and other ingredients from the Villa's Learning & Therapy Garden that they can use in their pizza, and in the process experience first-hand how food can go from seed to table.

“The Pizza Shoppe” is now housed in Cottage 4, which is undergoing transformations to become the Villa's Transition and Wellness Center. The Center will include more job training opportunities for students in the future. Pizza making kicked off in September, and Kreydatus looks forward to growing the activity even more, saying “We want all of our students to feel a sense of belonging, generosity and independence, so they can engage more with their school and home environments.”



Katie Chlan

*Senior Director of Flagler
Housing & Homeless Services*

Katie began working in the homeless services field in 2005, and has worked extensively with individuals experiencing both homelessness and serious mental illness. Throughout her career, she has held multiple positions in both the nonprofit and government sectors including program manager, grants administrator, and executive director. Katie completed the Emerging Non-Profit Leadership Program in 2009, received her certificate in Non-Profit Management in 2012, and is a member of Leadership Metro Richmond's Class of 2015.



Bob Larkin

*Director of the Crisis
Receiving Center*

Bob has worked in the human services field for nearly 40 years. Most of his experience has been serving children and adolescents, and their families, in roles that have included foster parent, runaway and homeless youth counselor, manager, director, and senior training specialist. He has presented at national conferences on topics such as grief and loss, and has served as a certified teaching parent with Boy's Town and the National Teaching Family Model. Bob and his wife currently sponsor a young woman from Afghanistan in their home.



Walter Spence

*Director of
Infrastructure*

Walter has been in construction and maintenance for over 20 years, most recently with a Virginia-based senior living company that grew over 200% in ten years. In that ten-year period, he was in charge of upgrading communities to enhance the resident experience. He has developed, led, and trained multiple maintenance teams focused on providing the best possible living environment for clients. As a Richmond native, Walter is passionate about helping the community and is excited to be a part of St. Joseph's Villa.

How a Rhythm-Based Music Game is Teaching Students Essential Social Skills

One of the biggest challenges in educating students diagnosed with autism is encouraging them to try new things and explore new ways to engage with the world. At the Sarah Dooley Center for Autism (SDCA), we focus on utilizing their 'affinities' (things they like to do) not only to improve their communication skills, but also to feel comfortable in a wide range of environments and social situations. To accomplish this, we encourage our teachers to engage with their students in novel ways.

One of our amazing teachers, John Bellows, recently introduced a new activity to his classroom with terrific results. John and his team started using the rhythm-based Nintendo Wii game 'Just Dance' to get students up and moving, use social skills, and conquer anxiety through the universal language of music. As they play, students also work with their classmates on friendship building and, most importantly, having fun.

Students attend SDCA for a wide range of reasons, including language and social skills challenges, but also because they have difficulty with transitions, following classroom directions, and learning through observation. John's creative use of a fun, experiential activity helps his students in all of these instances. It has even helped with morning transportation, as his students are excited about getting to school and spending the day with John and his team.

If you've ever had the pleasure of working alongside students with autism, you would know that patience and



passion for what you do are key attributes for our educators. But the secret sauce is being creative and constantly coming up with new ways to engage and excite these kids. We're lucky to have such a committed and creative staff here at SDCA!

Our Sarah Dooley Center
for Autism students learned

22,500

new words last year,
setting a new school record!

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Boosting Fitness: Marathon Kids program empowers Villa students to go the distance

Would you believe us if we told you that students at our Sarah Dooley Center for Autism completed **47 marathons** last school year?

Using the **Marathon Kids** app, SDCA students can track movement and see how many miles they've run or walked in real time. Participants begin gym class by scanning their individual QR code, doing as many laps as they feel able, and logging that distance in their Marathon Kids profile. The program is designed to inspire students to work towards a larger goal in small increments, at their own pace. By breaking the large goal into smaller pieces, it can seem less daunting and more approachable. So far, SDCA students have logged over 1,200 miles!

However, it's not just about the laps, said Kirk Tower, our Health & P.E. teacher who piloted the program. "It's about the engagement." Tower helps students work



on their motor skills through the program, placing pool noodles and hula hoops around the gym and encouraging students to step on, step over, or even jump over obstacles. "They love being challenged," he said. Students also have the opportunity to build STEM skills while using the app.

After last year's success with the Marathon Kids program, Recreation Services is bringing it back again this year with the goal of increasing mileage and completing more marathons. Staff will also have the chance to participate, so that everyone can share in the benefits of exercise.



Partner Spotlight: Bank of America

Our friends at Bank of America have supported our mission for many years, from donating groceries and school supplies to rolling up their sleeves for campus improvement projects. This fall, a team of volunteers assembled Welcome Home kits with essentials for newly housed families, and tended our Learning & Therapy Garden.

"Bank of America is incredibly proud to not only be neighbors with St. Joseph's Villa, but partners in the community," said Keith Sanders, Community Relations Manager. "The work SJV does is incredibly important and we're happy to support the mission of creating brighter futures for all children and families."

We're grateful to Bank of America for their lasting impact at the Villa!



If you are over 70 ½, Fall is a great time to make sure you've made your Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) for 2023.

Did you know that once you reach the age of 70 ½, you can increase your charitable impact by making gifts from your IRA? The IRS allows you to donate up to \$100,000 per year, tax-free, directly from your IRA to charitable organizations of your choice. This popular gift option is commonly called the IRA charitable rollover, but you may also see it referred to as a Qualified Charitable Distribution, or QCD for short.

IRA QCDs are not subject to income tax, so they do not qualify for a charitable deduction. However, the benefits of this planned giving option, as highlighted above, come from reducing your taxable income.

You can give any amount (up to a maximum of \$100,000) per year from your IRA directly to a qualified charity such as St. Joseph's Villa without having to pay income taxes on the money. Gifts of any value \$100,000 or less are eligible for this benefit, and you can feel good knowing that you are making a difference at St. Joseph's Villa.

Why Consider This Gift?

- ✓ Your gift will be put to use today, allowing you to see the difference your donation is making.
- ✓ Beginning in the year you turn 73, you can use your gift to satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD). Making QCD's at age 70 ½ could potentially lower your RMD in subsequent years.
- ✓ You pay no income taxes on the gift. The transfer generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your deductions.
- ✓ Since the gift doesn't count as income, it can reduce your annual income level. This may help lower your Medicare premiums and decrease the amount of Social Security that is subject to tax.

Questions?



Please contact **P.J. Shaver, CFRE**, Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving at 804.553.3220, pshaver@sjvmail.net, or visit sjvarchwaysociety.org to learn how you can build your legacy at the Villa.

For Those 59½ Years Old or Older

If you are at least 59½ years old, you can take a distribution and then make a gift from your IRA without penalty. If you itemize your deductions, you can take a charitable deduction for the amount of your gift.

At Any Age

No matter your age, you can designate St. Joseph's Villa as the beneficiary of all or a percentage of your IRA and it will pass to us tax-free after your lifetime. It's simple, just requiring that you contact your IRA administrator for a change-of-beneficiary form, or download a form from your provider's website.



St. Joseph's Villa, its employees, and representatives, do not offer legal or financial advice. Please consult with your attorney, financial advisor, estate planner, or accountant before making any arrangements.

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YOUTH CRISIS RECEIVING
CENTER**

**USING TECHNOLOGY TO
ENGAGE STUDENTS AND
UNLOCK POTENTIAL**

**INSPIRING SUCCESSES
FROM FLAGLER HOUSING
& HOMELESS SERVICES**

We never stop believing in children and their families.

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WE'RE HIRING!

At the Villa, you can help change the lives of over 3,000 children and families this year!

We're seeking compassionate individuals to join our Youth Crisis Receiving Center Team:

- Registered Nurses
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Clinicians
- Parent Support Professionals

Learn more about the program on page 3!

We're also hiring:

- Classroom Assistants
- Direct Support Professionals
- Autism Counselors
- and more!

Visit JoinSJV.org for all current opportunities and apply today!

