



VISTA DEL MAR
A COMMUNITY OF SERVICES

WINTER 2010

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**One Team,
One Dream**

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VISTA DEL MAR CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES • REISS-DAVIS CHILD STUDY CENTER
JULIA ANN SINGER CENTER • HOME-SAFE • FAMILY SERVICE OF SANTA MONICA

VIEW



NEW FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Provides 'Wraparound' Support for Children and Families

Vista Del Mar is participating in a new program that was recently piloted in Los Angeles County, Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC), which is a collaboration between Vista's Wraparound and Adoptions/Foster Care programs.

ITFC is different from traditional foster care in many ways. For families participating in ITFC, only one child is placed per home. The foster family then becomes part of the full treatment team; intensive assistance is provided for each family.

Mary Martone, Associate VP, Intensive Home Base Services says, "It takes a special kind of family to respond to this program." The program provides training on working with kids with a history of trauma or challenging behavior. Mary says the program does not seek to re-create the care of a residential facility within the home—but the foster parents are given training to that level, so they are able to respond as a professional would when challenges arise.

"It takes a special kind of family to respond to this program."

The extra training and support is designed to ensure that the child will not be re-traumatized when in the foster home. Some of the challenging behaviors ITFC parent participants are trained to respond to include situations where the children are verbally defiant, refuse to participate in family activities or somehow tests the parents' commitment to them. Mary says, "We help them anticipate and give them solutions and options."

The first Vista family to participate in this program includes a youth development counselor (YDC) from Vista. This YDC met her foster child when working with the child in residential care and has now taken her in as a foster child. Mary says, "Giving professionals an opportunity to take on this role adds another treatment dimension."

There are plans to expand this program at Vista with ongoing efforts to recruit both families and foster children.

For more information on our Foster Care programs, visit our website at www.vistadelmar.org

THREE 'HAPPY, LIVELY' CHILDREN

In September 2003, Vista Del Mar senior adoption social worker Judy Goldman got a phone call. She was asked, "Do you have a family that would adopt a child with Spina Bifida?" Her answer was an enthusiastic "Yes!"

"I feel that children find you," Tom Armentrout says, and through that phone call, baby Alex "found" Tom and his spouse, Ben Wiswall. Eventually, two more children with Spina Bifida, Annalise and Augustus, found their way to Tom and Ben's family.

Alex was born two months premature and weighed just 3 pounds 13 ounces. His new dads became Alex's strongest advocates. They were with him through his early surgeries and learned all they could about Spina Bifida. Today Alex is a thriving seven year old, mainstreamed in school, and cognitively on target.

Annalise was born in 2005 and was placed directly from the hospital into a group home. Tom and Ben adopted Annalise in 2006. Annalise also needed surgery and was in a full-length body cast for three months after she joined the family. Her parents, and big brother Alex, were by her side through it all. Today she is in kindergarten at the same neighborhood school Alex attends.

According to the Spina Bifida Association, "Spina Bifida is a neural tube defect that happens in the first month of pregnancy when the spinal column doesn't close completely," and it is the most common permanently disabling birth defect in the U.S today.

The Armentrout-Wiswall children have a team of doctors who track their progress. Ben says, "There's help out there for raising a child with special needs: wonderful coaching and advice from experts. A lot of people contribute to the growth of our children."

When asked about the adoption process, the first thing Ben says is, "I want to be very complimentary to Vista. They made the adoption process easy. The Pathways to Parenting classes were invaluable. The home study was smooth and efficient. Vista held our hand through the complicated process."

"We have three beautiful, happy, lively children," says Ben. "We would have missed out on what is a great joy in our lives if we'd limited our options to only children who could walk."

"I feel that children find you"

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HOLIDAY GIFTS GIVE CHILDREN JUST WHAT THEY WANT

Willemina "Ooster" Oosterbeek has served as the holiday coordinator at Vista for "at least twenty years." Every year she coordinates the many toy donations that Vista collects and distributes to children in need. The children who receive the toys range in age from birth to 17 years old, and the toys range from baby blankets to MP3 players—and everything in between.

*"I know I've given a lot to Vista,"...
"but I've also gotten a lot back."*

By early November this year, the Vista board room was filled with brightly colored games, books and stuffed animals stacked neatly on tables. Ooster and members of the Board of Directors and Associates coordinated and wrapped the gifts which were distributed to 420 children from Vista's HomeSAFE program at their annual holiday party. Ooster says, "When the kids have the party, they're very appreciative. It's really nice...it's the one time of the year when they get what they want."

Gifts are donated by members of the local community and local businesses; Vista employees also solicited donations. "There are a lot of generous people around, I tell you," says Ooster.

Ooster has been part of the Vista community for over 45 years. She started in 1963 as a childcare worker and went on to become a supervisor. Since her retirement in 1996, she has volunteered at Vista. "I know I've given a lot to Vista," she says, "but I've also gotten a lot back."

"OOSTER'S" WISH LIST

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| K'Nex Building Set | Character Bed Sets (Twin) |
| Littlest Pet Shop Playset | Dora the Explorer Play Set |
| Lego Sets (all ages) | Baby Floor Gym |
| Spiderman Bop Combo | LeapFrog Learning Toys (all ages) |
| Hot Wheels Set & Carrying Case | Baby Blocks/Shape Sorters |
| Lego Truck | Ride On Toys (Infants/Toddlers) |
| Liv Doll Set | GIFT CARDS |
| Art Supply Sets | Toys R Us |
| Craft Sets | Best Buy |
| Fur Real Friends | Target |
| Pillow Pets | Ross |
| Basketball/Football | |
| Sports Equipment | |
| Model Cars | |

If you would like to help fill Ooster's wish list, contact the development department at development@vistadeimar.org.