



# VISTA MARIA NEWS

SPRING 2018

## Fighting the Good Fight

### Vista Maria steps up human trafficking advocacy work

In 2011, Vista Maria President & CEO, Angela Aufdemberge, posed the question to Detroit leaders in health and human services as to what they wished Vista Maria would do that it wasn't already doing.

"I clearly recall one individual's response: 'something isn't right, I think we're returning our children back to people who are trafficking them,'" Aufdemberge notes. "She meant that the child welfare care givers were unknowingly returning girls to individuals who so often were the ones exploiting them. It was only then that I began to realize the complexities of human trafficking."

Soon after, Aufdemberge tasked Vista Maria's Vice President of Treatment Programs, Meredith Reese, with researching treatment programs for domestic adolescent victims of human trafficking. The unfortunate finding was that few dedicated programs existed. Soon after, Reese began to design a best-in-class victim services treatment model for child survivors of human trafficking. Within a year's time, Vista Maria launched the Wings program.

Since then, the program's treatment model has evolved to meet the changing realities of the human trafficking epidemic.

"Our team has learned a great deal since the first implementation of the Wings program model, we continue to adapt and evolve to address the complicated traumas experienced by our youth," Reese says.

Local and national organizations are learning from each other to continually improve services for survivors. The Vista Maria team regularly provides advice and consultation to others who are looking to develop programs to serve human trafficking victims.

As the human trafficking epidemic has grown, so too have the coalitions to fight it. Reese is a member of three different human trafficking-focused task forces in Michigan. She collaborates with law enforcement and other victim services agencies to ensure the approach to working with human trafficking survivors is trauma informed.

"Before a girl can tell you what has happened to her, she needs to feel safe, she needs to have her basic needs met," Reese explains.

### Part of our history

Developing services and programming to help young women move from victim to survivor, is part of the Vista Maria and Good Shepherd legacy. Back in the 1800s, Sr. Mary Euphrasia, foundress of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, developed housing, care and education for young women who were imprisoned in France. Her vision was to move the young women out of the prison setting and to treat them with compassionate care while teaching them life skills and a trade so they could be self-sustaining.



Says Aufdemberge, "Although the trades and life skills we teach the girls in our care have evolved since Sr. Mary Euphrasia's time, the basic premise of values-based care, education and life skills development has transcended time."

Vista Maria continues to find ways to address the unmet needs of at-risk children and families so that they can heal, believe in their worth and build the skills needed to succeed.

### Educating the public

The work Vista Maria is doing in the victim services realm for human trafficking survivors has earned it a reputation as a thought leader. Nearly every week, Aufdemberge or Reese is

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# Restoring Lives, Families, Community and Hope

## Dear Vista Maria Friends and Family,

You may have already heard about our need to expand our treatment capacity to serve more rescued child survivors of human trafficking. Our Restore capital campaign will enable us to serve up to 32 concurrent girls needing care, support, treatment and education. What you may not have heard is that the treatment housing will include the addition of an Emergency Intake Wing. The Emergency Intake Wing, or EIW, provides an innovative, multi-discipline trauma-informed approach to the rescue and restoration of a trafficked youth.

Imagine a teenage girl about 15 years old who has an older boyfriend. He is handsome and tells her that she is special and beautiful. For her, the affection and flattery is a first. Her family tells her she is dumb and ugly, and twice she has been raped by an adult male in her own home. To escape the pain, she starts chatting on various Internet sites. She meets her boyfriend, Sean, through an Internet-dating site. Sean is charming; and at first, he is gentle and assuring. Sean promises that they will run away together some day soon.

Today, the promises are far away. She is in a hotel room somewhere

near a freeway. She knows that if a customer complains, she will be hit. Her job is to make these men happy. She checks her hair and makeup in the mirror, double checking that the black eye from yesterday is covered with makeup. She says to herself, "make him happy, make him happy."

She hears a knock on the door. When she opens the door, a tall nice-looking man comes in. They engage in small talk, and then she asks him if he paid Sean in the lobby. He nods, and then she asks what he would like. As she begins to undress, the man stops her, and police officers come through the door. It is a raid. She is scared and ready to run. She thinks, "where is Sean?!" From this point on, everything is a blur. Officers are collecting things from the room and putting them in bags including her cell phone. She is asked questions about Sean and other girls. Her

heart and her head are pounding. All she can think of is running.

Next, she is escorted to the back of a police car. Tears are streaming down her face. More questions at the police station with different officers, and then someone takes her picture. Her head is pounding, the bruise on her cheek is throbbing, and makeup is running down her cheeks and neck. Hours have passed. She is scared. Remember, she is only 15. More hours pass, and she is escorted to another building and office. The woman asks her questions and explains something about protective services. Again she thinks, "where is Sean?!" Another hour passes, and someone explains that she needs to go to the hospital for a rape kit and medical clearance. She thinks, "what the ----?"

At the hospital, she waits and waits. Why? She overhears a conversation. Her case is not an emergency, and there are other



*"I've gained the coping skills I need to deal with life in healthy ways. Vista Maria's Wings program, which helps victims of human trafficking, allowed me to become more independent, while increasing my self-confidence. Because of the program and Vista Maria staff, I've also improved my people skills, and I feel more comfortable in a group setting."*

*– Wings client, age 17*



more critical cases ahead of hers. She thinks, "why can't I leave?" More than 10 hours have passed since arriving at the hospital, and she still hasn't been able to shower, change her clothes or eat a decent meal.

What if we could change our care of this 15-year-old victim? Would you want to help her? Vista Maria's Emergency Intake Wing will provide a safe, secure location for the police, child welfare, medical and mental health professionals to come to a rescued child. It is where trauma-informed care meets just-in-time services delivery. By changing the experience for the rescued child, we may be able to build rapport with her and begin a

*"It is where trauma-informed care meets just-in-time services delivery."*

relationship that results in decreased truancies and improved care.

Your pledge, or gift, to the Restore campaign will aid us in serving more

rescued victims, and you will be helping us to provide more innovative and compassionate care to traumatized youth looking to find their voice once again. 🌟

# restore

LIVES • FAMILIES • COMMUNITY • HOPE

## How you can help:

- Make a pledge or donation to the Restore campaign. See if your employer will match it.
- Tweet, post and share the link to our website ([www.vistamaria.org](http://www.vistamaria.org)).
- Educate. Share our story with others.

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## Fighting the Good Fight

asked to speak to a new audience on the topic. It's something they're happy to do.

"I take protecting our youth to heart," Reese says. "People need to be aware of the signs of human trafficking and that there is a way out."

Often those audiences are made up of physicians, emergency medical technicians, dentists, social workers and other mental health professionals.

"These individuals are the ones most likely to observe bruises or repeat injuries," Reese explains. "We talk through what to do if they suspect human trafficking and how to get help."

Vista Maria has stepped up efforts to educate the general public as well through the sharing of key human trafficking messages with the media. Aufdemberge was profiled in the February issue of *HOOR Detroit* magazine sharing the realities behind the epidemic. She regularly participates in print, radio and TV interviews to further educate the public.

"We have the training and the hands-on experience of working with victims in a way that helps them heal and find their voice," Aufdemberge says. "It's incumbent upon us then to share that knowledge with others to fight back against this devastating crime."

In May, Aufdemberge will travel to Washington, D.C. to speak at a human trafficking conference at the U.S. Capitol. During her visit, she'll call on legislators to discuss pending legislation relevant to the human trafficking plight.

"It's not enough for us to focus inward," she says. "By adding our voices to those fighting this epidemic nationally, and even globally, we move the needle that much further in putting an end to human trafficking for good." 🌟

## DONOR & VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# Lace Up Detroit

## Local ladies share passion for shoes with Vista Maria

Just before Thanksgiving, volunteers with Lace Up Detroit hosted the first “Boots and Bites” event on campus. The non-profit organization transformed the Ford Motor Company Activities Center on the Vista Maria Campus into a giant shoe boutique where the 139 girls living on campus were able to select brand new, name-brand boots, slippers and socks for winter. Lace Up Detroit volunteers acted as personal shoppers for the girls and also catered a special meal.

Created by women with a passion for shoes and giving back, Lace Up Detroit was founded in 2015 and has distributed more than 1,500 pairs of shoes and winter boots to children and in the past has funded athletic shoes for two of Vista Maria’s after-school sports teams.

“The Boots and Bites event was very successful,” says Suzanne Seitz, Lace Up Detroit President. “It was really special to see the reaction of a young woman when she found a pair of boots that fit her well and that she was proud to wear.”

In addition to the Boots and Bites event, the positive effect of Lace Up Detroit will last for years to come as a result of the organization’s interior redesign of Vista Maria’s shoe boutique.

Says Vista Maria President and CEO Angela Aufdemberge, “The space is now more inviting and has more of a store atmosphere displaying valuable shoes and providing a nice space to try on the different styles.” 🌍



Volunteers with Lace Up Detroit prepare for the “Boots and Bites” event.



The Lace Up Detroit shoe boutique at Vista Maria.

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# Southwest Airlines & Interval International

## Travel partners donate airline tickets and resort stay to Vista Maria

Since 2011, Southwest Airlines has generously donated 18-round trip tickets to Vista Maria each year. Some of the tickets are used in fundraising efforts as silent auction and raffle prizes at Vista Maria’s signature events including Celebrating Women and Dolly Drive. Others are used for staff travel during the year.

“Southwest Airlines believes in loving people, building resilience and living responsibly,” says Patty Greene, Manager of Community Affairs & Grassroots for Southwest Airlines. “Supporting Vista Maria’s work, caring for young women in

need, helps fulfill those goals.”

Vista Maria employees use the Southwest vouchers to attend various clinical training sessions.

“Due to the generous support of Southwest Airlines, Vista Maria is able to make our training and development dollars for staff go even farther,” says Vista Maria President & CEO Angela Aufdemberge. “In many instances, the savings on air travel has enabled us to send more employees to training in places such as Los Angeles, Boston and St. Louis.”

Another valued hospitality partner is Interval International, which annually



donates to Vista Maria a seven-day stay at one of its more than 3,200 resorts around the world. Typically, this stay is paired with two Southwest Airlines tickets making up one of the most sought after silent auction prizes at Celebrating Women. 🌍

# Bringing holiday magic to Vista Maria

**Vista Maria's Volunteer Resources Manager, Becky Hermann, thinks everyone should have a chance to peek behind the curtain at the goings-on at Vista Maria during the holiday season.**

"If you ever lose faith in humanity, you need to come to Vista Maria at Christmas time," she says.

Hermann is alluding to the more than 100 individuals, corporations and churches that donate their time, talent and treasure to ensure every girl at Vista Maria has a special holiday experience. It all starts weeks before Christmas when businesses like AVL in Plymouth and churches like Kirk in the Hills in Bloomfield Hills reach out asking how they can help.

"Every girl who lives on campus gets four presents to open on Christmas morning and a stocking," Hermann says.

To that end, each girl residing at Vista Maria is asked to create a wish list.

"Because many of the girls have never had a Christmas before, sometimes they don't even know what to ask for," Hermann notes.

Hermann's team along with the many volunteers and organizations that chip in for the holidays aim to make sure every girl gets something she wants, not just something she needs.

"This past Christmas, Kirk in the Hills filled the stockings for all of the 28 girls in Beata Hall," Hermann notes. "AVL fulfilled the wish lists of 24 other girls."

With so many gifts, comes the need for many wrappers. Volunteers answered that call as well including many employees from Ford Motor Company.

When Christmas morning finally arrived, the girls awoke to find gifts and a stocking outside their door. Many of the girls took their gifts down to the common



Volunteers from Ford Motor Company wrap gifts.

area of their building to open them near the Christmas tree. Later in the day, they enjoyed a special meal.

"Staff members texted me photos of the empty boxes and wrapping paper, sharing in the girls' excitement," Hermann says. "They let me know that this is why they don't mind working on Christmas Day. We can't thank our donors and volunteers enough for helping us bring holiday magic to our girls." 🌈

## Save the Date!



**Vista Maria's 19th Annual Celebrating Women:**

**May 3, 2018, The Henry, Autograph Collection, Dearborn**

Vista Maria's signature event, Celebrating Women recognizes a phenomenal women in the community and honors girls living at Vista Maria who have made exemplary achievements in their academic and treatment programs this year.

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## Our Mission

We deliver innovative care, support, treatment and education to vulnerable youth so that they heal, believe in their worth, and build the skills needed to succeed.

## Our Vision

We will ensure that vulnerable youth and families are supported, prepared and equipped to achieve lifelong success.



## Upcoming Vista Maria Events

### High Hopes Golf Invitational

June 11, 2018 at the Knollwood Country Club

### Annual Meeting and Special Recognition Breakfast

June 22, 2018 at the Dearborn Inn

### Women FORE! Women Golf Outing

August 9, 2018 at Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center in Plymouth

### Dolly Drive

August 15, 2018 at the Royal Oak Music Theatre

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