



# VISTA MARIA NEWS

HOPE EDITION 2018

## Celebrating 135 Years

### Vista Maria marks milestone anniversary

On November 22, 1883, five Sisters of the Good Shepherd opened the doors of what was then known as the "House of the Good Shepherd" in the Ward Mansion on Fort Street in Detroit. The very next day the sisters' first client, "Josephine," arrived on the mansion's doorstep. This marked the beginning of the organization's 135-year mission to serve society's most vulnerable children.

The Sisters arrived in the United States from Angers, France, in 1842 following an arduous six-week journey aboard the sailing vessel *Redemption*. They came to the United States to continue the ministry of Sister Mary Euphrasia Pelletier, foundress of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, whose work establishing communities ministering to women and girls in need was well known throughout Europe.



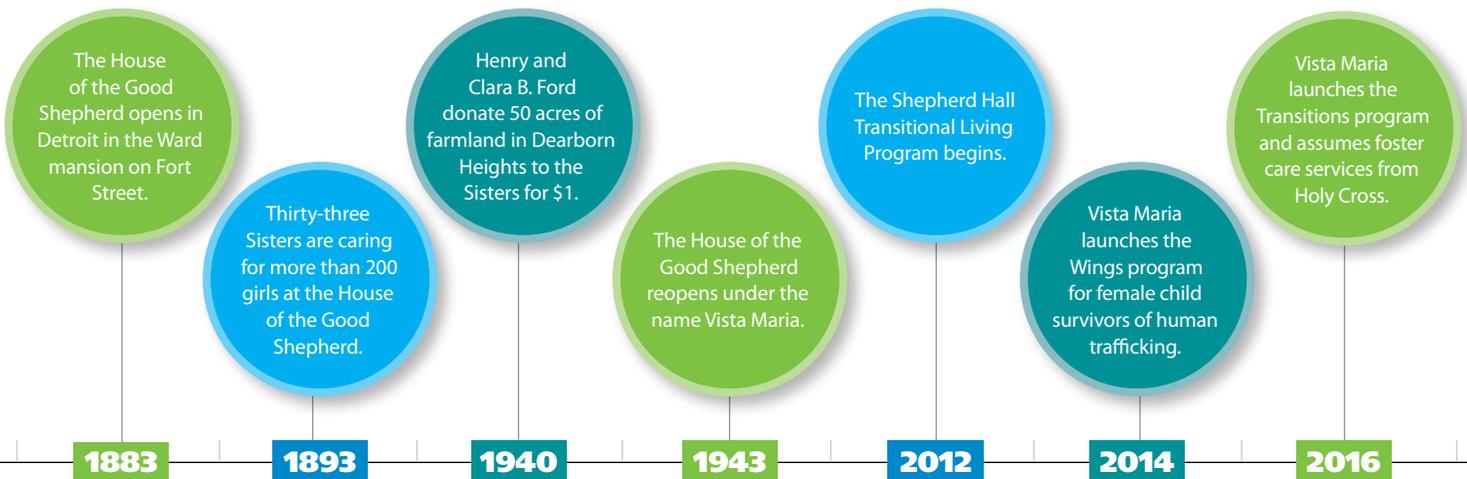
*The original House of the Good Shepherd on Fort St. in Detroit.*

Ten years after welcoming Josephine, the Sisters were caring for more than 200 girls at the House of the Good Shepherd, and in 1908, the House of the Good Shepherd began taking in girls awaiting trial through juvenile court.

By the 1930s, the Industrial Revolution had left its mark on the city, and the natural beauty that had once abounded

in the environs of the House of the Good Shepherd had been replaced by urban infrastructure. The Sisters began seeking out a new setting of healing surrounded by nature where girls could run, play and reflect. In 1939, the Sisters partnered with the Salvation Army to launch their first capital campaign, "Zip Open Your Heart."

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The campaign yielded the funds necessary to construct new buildings. The search was then on for a location.

During a nine-day Novena, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd prayed for a space to build. It was during these nine days that Henry and Clara B. Ford approached the Sisters, offering to sell them 50 acres of farmland in Dearborn Heights for a mere \$1.

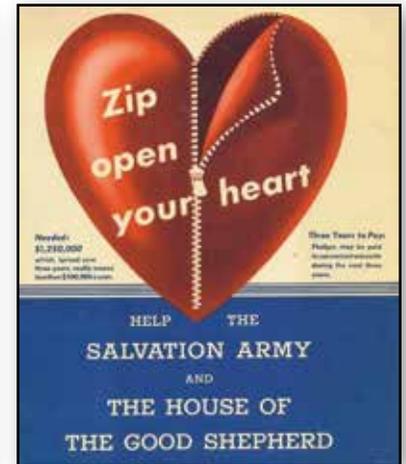
The Sisters broke ground on the new location on Warren Avenue in the early 1940s and reopened under the name Vista Maria in 1943. Over the subsequent decades, Vista Maria evolved to meet the changing needs of the girls and young women in its care. In the 1970s, the Sisters turned over day-to-day management of Vista Maria to laypersons but continue to sponsor the organization, serve as board members and stay closely involved in the agency's overall direction.

Today, Vista Maria touches the lives of approximately 1,100 youth annually through a continuum of programs designed to wrap around a child and his or her family. The goal is always to restore children to families in home settings when possible. When that is not possible, Vista Maria works with the youth in its care to develop a path that includes life skills development, employment experiences and independent living programs.

Without question, the mission begun 135 years ago by the Sisters from across the Atlantic continues today. Vista Maria is the only agency of its kind to provide comprehensive care, treatment, education and development services to Michigan's most traumatized youth. 🌈



*Sister Denis breaks ground on the Dearborn Heights campus of Vista Maria in the early 1940s.*



*Promotional materials for the 1939 "Zip Open Your Heart" capital campaign*

“KEEP ALIVE WITHIN YOU AND BRING UNDER WISE CONTROL THAT COURAGE WHICH MAKES YOU LONG TO UNDERTAKE GREAT WORKS, WHICH OTHERS MIGHT CONSIDER IT FOLLY TO ATTEMPT.”

MARY EUPHRASIA PELLETIER



# From the President and CEO with a grateful heart



The 2018 Hope newsletter is filled with the Vista Maria history in celebration of our 135th anniversary. It is amazing to think about the first Sisters leaving Angers, France,

and it taking weeks and weeks to travel to the United States and other countries to care for women and girls afflicted by abuse and abandonment. We are grateful for the leadership and vision of Sr. Mary Euphrasia and the strength of faith and courage of the sisters who traveled across the world to care for those in need.

Some of you know that I have been part of the Vista Maria family for more than 20 years. I first started as a volunteer in 1997 and became an employee in 2011. I have always been passionate about the work that we do at Vista Maria. Some say that my passion is contagious. One of the most influential events occurred in 2017 when I was fortunate enough to visit Angers, France, and stayed at the House of the

Good Shepherd. I was able to eat, pray and learn in the same place that all of the other Sisters of the Good Shepherd have. The 10-day retreat is called the Good Shepherd Pilgrimage, and it is meant to impart on lay persons the history, learning and reflection needed to carry on the mission work within the same charism framework developed by Sr. Mary Euphrasia more than 150 years ago.

When I reflect on the history and my learning, it is evident that Vista Maria thrives today due to our attention to practicing the Good Shepherd values of Individual Worth, Mercy & Compassion, Reconciliation and Zeal. The employees who are most expert at living the values have some common traits. First, they truly give of themselves every day. Each day is a new beginning with our children. The second trait is that they have a positive attitude that is welcoming and permeates interactions with children, families, co-workers and volunteers. The third trait is their ability to instill hope. Our staff see what is possible within each child.

They encourage each child to be her best self. They coach our youth to strive for success in school, with family, and in relationships. It is difficult work, but they know that instilling hope enables healing, and healing empowers our youth to accomplish amazing results.

Please join us in instilling hope that heals and empowering results by making a year-end donation. Your donation in honor of our 135th anniversary will enable us to continue the legacy of Vista Maria and the Good Shepherd charism that uplifts girls, children and families from an abusive past to a future filled with extraordinary possibilities.

Please visit us at [www.vistamaria.org](http://www.vistamaria.org) to make a gift.

On behalf of the Vista Maria team, we wish you a holiday season filled with hope and a new year filled with possibilities. 🌈

**Angela Aufdemberge**  
President & CEO, Vista Maria

## What your gift means to Vista Maria

**As Vista Maria marks 135 years, consider an anniversary-themed gift.**

- ▶ **\$13.50:** Provides a personal journal for a young woman
- ▶ **\$135:** Funds two visits by a youth to the Vista Maria hair salon
- ▶ **\$1,350:** Funds Expressive Therapies for a 12-week workshop
- ▶ **\$13,500:** Sponsors one young lady's cost of living in the Shepherd Hall Transitional Living Program.
- ▶ **\$135,000:** Enables a room to be named in donor's honor in one of our existing or future buildings.

We invite you to join us in restoring the lives of children and families this holiday season and help us provide a safe place for children to heal and find hope. Be a part of the miracle that happens when a child is empowered to create their own success and begins to believe in their own worth.

"While staying at Vista, I've built the family I always wished to have. The staff here at Vista gave me the love I desperately needed and changed my perspective of life. I was told I was beautiful for the first time ever here, I was showed through their actions that there were good people out there that cared"

- Vista Maria Client

**Please give today.**

Vista Maria wishes you and yours a Happy Holiday and a joyful New Year!

# Help raise awareness of the Human Trafficking epidemic during prevention month

January marks National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month when media and advocacy groups will be drawing extra attention to a growing global epidemic.

January 11 is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Vista Maria invites you to share the following facts about human trafficking on your social media channels using the designated hashtag **#EndTraffickingWithVM**.

- ▶ Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery—a multi-billion dollar criminal industry that denies freedom to 24.9 million people around the world. And no matter where you live, chances are it's happening nearby.
- ▶ Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. It's hidden in plain sight.
- ▶ Avoiding eye contact, exhibiting fear or anxious behavior, having few or no possessions. Learn more of the signs of human trafficking at [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org).
- ▶ January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and January 11th is National Human Awareness Day. Find out how you can join the fight against human trafficking at [VistaMaria.org](http://VistaMaria.org).
- ▶ To request help or report suspected human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Hotline** at 1-888-373-7888. Or text HELP to: BeFree (233733).



## Thank you to all our sponsors!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the sponsors of our recent events:

### 19th Annual Celebrating Women



- Chemical Bank
- Cooper Standard
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### StrikeOut Human Trafficking Event

- Chartwells
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- Prudential Security
- UAW Local 245 Bargaining Committee

### Women's Empowerment Breakfast



# Elizabeth Schmidt repays kindness she received seven decades ago

**At 12 years of age, Elizabeth Schmidt was separated from family and sent to a concentration camp. After nearly two years, she was able to reunite with her mother, and later with her father and brother**

It's because of this experience that Schmidt feels she can relate to many of the young girls at Vista Maria who are experiencing trauma and are separated from their family members.

During her own time of struggle, Schmidt recalls the kindness of one woman who gave her half a loaf of bread when she had nothing to eat. It has been her mission to repay that woman's kindness in the years since, and Vista Maria has been a primary beneficiary.

During an initial visit to campus 10 years ago, Schmidt quickly realized Vista Maria was a place she wanted to support.

"My husband and I always believed it was important to give young people an opportunity to make a better life for themselves," she says. "During that first visit to campus, I knew then and there that Vista Maria was where I wanted to help."

Schmidt has been a member of the Vista Maria Advisory Board since 2011 and feels a special affinity for the Shepherd Hall Transitional Living Program.

"At Shepherd Hall, the girls are cared for in a beautiful facility while learning the way of life," she says.



*Elizabeth Schmidt shares a moment with current Shepherd Hall resident, Zada (left), and former resident, Bailey, at the 2018 Women's Empowerment Breakfast.*

For the second consecutive year, Schmidt served as host of Vista Maria's Women's Empowerment Breakfast matching donations up to \$25,000. She was thrilled to see a full house at the September event.

"The women who attended last year's breakfast saw what Vista Maria does and came back this year lending even more support," she says. "I couldn't be happier. I have a passion for Shepherd Hall." 🌟

## Therapeutic photography on display during WEB

Vista Maria's Women's Empowerment Breakfast (WEB) annually brings together almost 200 attendees who learn about Vista Maria's Shepherd Hall Transitional Living Program and hear directly from young women who have benefited from it. This year's breakfast took place on September 21 at the Detroit Athletic Club and featured the photos of Shepherd Hall clients who participated in a therapeutic photography program instructed by professional photographer Andrea Birnbaum. 🌟



*During the Women's Empowerment Breakfast, current Shepherd Hall resident, Zada (top), and former resident, Bailey, share the photos they took as part of Vista Maria's therapeutic photography program.*

## 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.



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### HOW TO REACH US

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