

# VISTA MARIA NEWS

FALL 2019

## Transitioning to the Work World

**Nineteen-year-old Zadalynn came to Vista Maria in 2018 after living in more than 15 foster homes. She was placed in the Independent Living Plus Program in Shepherd Hall.**

In her short time at Vista Maria, she has represented the organization at many events and has been a wonderful speaking ambassador. In April, she was recognized at the Vista Maria Celebrating Women event as a 2019 "Woman of Achievement."

This year, Zadalynn is transitioning to the work world with Epitec, one of Vista Maria's most loyal supporters and sponsors. She is working as front desk support and is responsible for opening and closing the office.

Epitec is a staffing service firm based in Southfield. Her supervisor, Chief Sales Officer Rebecca Bray said, "Vista Maria is critical to breaking the cycles of negativity in these young women's lives. Vista Maria's supportive environment helps develop these young women so they can thrive."

"Zadalynn has been a great addition to the Epitec team," added Rebecca.

"I love my new job at Epitec," said Zadalynn. "My favorite part is greeting everyone in the morning because everyone is so friendly. I'm so grateful to Rebecca Bray for offering me this job and I am looking forward to the great opportunities ahead."



A natural athlete and mentor, Zadalynn worked at Footlocker during high school. She is charismatic, genuine and makes good decisions in the face of temptation.

She is working on SAT prep so that she can attend a four-year college focused on law/criminal justice and athletic training. In the future, she looks forward to owning a home with a dog that greets her when she gets home. 🐕

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# From the President & CEO



Our year-end theme is “give thanks and give light.” All of the Vista Maria team is grateful for the hundreds of volunteers who help us throughout the year. We work together to light the way for our youth.

One band of volunteers that generally works behind the scenes but is essential to our work is the Vista Maria Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of professional men and women who may not know each other at first, but over time the friendships seem like family. This group welcomes in new members and becomes cohesive due to their compassion for aiding children to overcome abuse and their passion for Vista Maria’s mission.

In December, we are giving thanks for three Board Directors who have served the Vista Maria mission for decades as their board terms are coming to an end. James Gouin, Board Chair, Denise Hogstrom, former Vice Chair and Executive Committee member, and Lynn Quigley, Board Secretary have been integral to the leadership and missional success of Vista Maria. For years, they have served as mentors, strategists, networkers, counselors and most importantly friends. We are grateful for their leadership and commitment to

our mission. Although they are leaving the board, they will continue to be champions and give light through their support and connections. They are truly Good Shepherds.

We are also thankful for our staff, campus and the financial blessings that enable us to serve children who have suffered and survived traumatizing and abusive relationships. We are thankful for the youth entrusted to our care, because we believe that we are called to aid that child. Our youth carry the heavy burdens of abandonment, anger, loneliness, shame and guilt. We work with youth to release the burdens they were never meant to carry. We also encourage each child to engage in restorative relationships so that she can manage through her past and know that she is beautifully and wonderfully made.

Because of our supporters and staff, we are able to give light and hope to children who have experienced so much pain, loss and abandonment. It is through your gifts of volunteering and treasure that we are able to meet the continuous demands to serve youth who need to recover from abusive pasts. Our year-end gift appeal is the way that you can help and support our ministry.

Pura Henry Strong is a shining example of our collective efforts. This month, we were able to celebrate Pura’s



graduation from Ferris State University with a bachelor’s degree in social work. We are thankful for her perseverance, resilience, and spirit. Her success is, in part, because of all of you! We were able to support Pura with the treatment, housing, life skills development, and scholarships that aided her. Through your financial gifts, the Vista Maria team is able to provide therapeutic, restorative relationships and tools so that youth, like Pura, are able to move from the darkness of abuse to the light of hope, healing and achievement. Please take the time to make a year-end gift and give the gift of light to hundreds of youth entrusted to our care. Please visit us at [www.vistamaria.org](http://www.vistamaria.org) and make a donation today.

On behalf of the Vista Maria team, thank you for your support and we wish you a holiday season filled with hope and light. 🌟

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

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## RESTORE Campaign Needs Your Help

Vista Maria is one of the only treatment providers within the State of Michigan uniquely trained and positioned to provide the restorative care, treatment and education for children rescued from a life of human trafficking.

Since its creation at the end of 2014, the Vista Maria WINGS program has provided refuge and restoration to more than 200 young women who were victims of this type of verbal and physical abuse. Today the need for

treatment housing far outweighs Vista Maria’s capacity.

As construction continues for the Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Treatment Center on the Vista Maria campus, we are happy to report that \$2.9 million has been generously donated to date. Your contribution to the RESTORE Capital Campaign can make a difference today and for many years to come. Another \$1.7 million remains to be raised to bring this important building to completion. A big thank you to our many donors including:

- DeRoy Testamentary Foundation
- McGregor Fund
- Carls Foundation
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis
- Northridge Church/Love Runs
- S. Strietzel Estate Gift
- Abhi Shah Foundation
- Seed Foundation

To learn more or get involved, contact Angela Aufdemberge at [aaufdemberge@vistamaria.org](mailto:aaufdemberge@vistamaria.org). 🌟

# Fostering Success One Baby At A Time

Two years ago, St. Clair Shores Mom Melissa Piaseczny simply posted on Facebook that she was thinking about becoming a foster parent. A friend connected her with Foster Home Development Supervisor Sarah Gies of Vista Maria and the journey began.

Fast forward 24 months and Melissa has helped prepare three newborns, a two-year-old and a nine-year old for adoption readiness by serving as a foster parent. She typically fosters the children for three to five months until the children move to adoptive parents or are returned to their biological family.

“There’s never a perfect time to make the decision to become a foster parent,” said Melissa. “You’ll always have an excuse why a different time would work better. Just get started and ask a lot of questions. Sarah made me feel comfortable and confident throughout the licensing process. I have learned that is OK to set boundaries that work for me and my family.”

Melissa, a single Mom of a 12-year-old daughter, has learned that she prefers to help newborns rather than older children. She currently is fostering a two-month old baby boy who was born with marijuana in his system.

“He’s a beautiful boy,” added Melissa. “My role is to serve as a bridge. I can give comfort and care to a drug-addicted baby so that a Mom and Dad are set up for success when he is ready to be adopted or reunited with family.”

Melissa works for a very supportive employer. As part of the technology team at Rock Connections, she works from home most days. The company also gives her 10 paid parental leave days and a \$1500 stipend for each foster placement.

When asked what drives her to foster, Melissa shared that she came from an abusive home and that she feels every child deserves to be safe and feel loved. As the oldest child of four, her role was always to protect her siblings.

Melissa is very diligent about taking photos of the babies and children while they are with her. “No one deserves to have a big hole in their past,” she said. “I



always give the new parents a link to a Google Drive filled with photos so the child can have memories. They change so much in those early days. That is my gift to the foster children.”

“I am grateful to Sarah at Vista Maria,” said Melissa. “She still helps me every time I have questions. Without her coaching, I don’t think I would still be doing this two years later. She’s wonderful.” 🌈

To learn more about becoming a foster parent, contact Vista Maria and learn more at 313-240-4355 or at [fostercare@vistamaria.org](mailto:fostercare@vistamaria.org).

# September's Empowerment Breakfast Sold Out

The sold-out September 20 Empowerment breakfast raised \$50,000 and had more than 200 registered guests at the Detroit Athletic Club.

The one-hour breakfast program offered an unforgettable and informative presentation of the extraordinary work of Vista Maria to address the needs of girls ages 16 – 24 who are either homeless, have aged out of the foster care system or have yet to be adopted with no family support. Focused on the Shepherd Hall Transitional Living Program, the event showcased the remarkable results of the young women who have gone through the program. 🌟



A big thank you to our sponsors:

Table Sponsors:



Event Supporters:



## Mission and Vision

### OUR MISSION:

We foster restorative relationships and deliver innovative care, treatment, and education so that vulnerable youth and families believe in their worth, heal and build the skills for success.

### OUR VISION:

All children, families and communities achieve success through continuous learning and relationships that promote personal, professional and family well-being.

## Save the Date for 2020 Events

Mark your calendars now for the following Vista Maria special events:

- ▶ Celebrating Women: April 23
- ▶ Ford Golf Outing: June 1
- ▶ George Blaha's High Hopes Golf Invitational: June 8
- ▶ Annual Meeting and Special Recognition Breakfast: June 26
- ▶ Women Fore Women Golf Outing: August 11
- ▶ Dolly Drive: TBD
- ▶ Empowerment Breakfast: September 18

# Aufdemberge Wins SEEN Changemaker Award

**V**ista Maria  
President and  
CEO Angela

Aufdemberge was honored with a SEEN Magazine Changemaker Award in the Nonprofit Category at a ceremony at Cranbrook Academy of Art on October 23.

"I am honored to be recognized by SEEN magazine as a 2019 Changemaker," said Aufdemberge. "While the honor was bestowed upon me as the leader of Vista Maria, I celebrate the distinction with my colleagues and most importantly the young people we serve. They are the true changemakers in their lives and in our community." 🌟

A graphic for the "Give Thanks Give Light" campaign. It features a yellow silhouette of a person's face in profile, looking upwards. To the right, the text "GIVE THANKS Give Light" is written in a mix of fonts. A blue butterfly is positioned above the word "THANKS". At the bottom right is the Vista Maria logo, which consists of a stylized blue and yellow figure and the text "VISTA MARIA".

Be the light and help us to continue our service to build restorative relationships that lead to hope and healing. Cards of Thanksgiving were recently mailed to the homes of our supporters. Please be generous this holiday season. 🌟

## Make the Holidays Bright at Vista Maria

Thanks to many kind elves, we are able to deliver holiday gifts and stocking stuffers to the young ladies in our housing programs.

If you'd like to help this holiday season, bring the unwrapped gifts to Vista Maria before December 16. To schedule a drop-off time Monday-Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., contact 313-271-3040, ext. 384 or email [volunteer@vistamaria.org](mailto:volunteer@vistamaria.org).

Here's a few ideas from the holiday wish list. For a complete list, contact the Volunteer department.

### Bath & Body

- Chapstick or Carmex (no glass)
- Lip gloss (no glass)
- Eye shadow, eye liner and mascara
- Body wash and lotions
- Edge control product
- Elastic headbands and hair ties (no metal clasps)
- Braiding hair
- Multi-cultural hair products

### Clothing

- Girls' sizes 12 to 16
- Misses' sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL
- Women's sizes 14 to 18
- Slippers sizes 5 to 12
- Socks
- Basketball shorts
- Hats
- Leggings and sweat pants
- Pajamas

### Fun and Games

- Journals or composition notebooks (no spiral bound)
- Coloring books, word search and activity books
- Crayons, gel pens, markers, colored pencils
- Age-appropriate board and card games

- Playing cards
- Basketballs, volleyballs, soccer balls
- Craft kits
- Yarn and plastic crochet hooks (size 1)



# Vista Maria Board of Directors

## Executive Committee:

James Gouin (*Board Chair*)  
President, Tower International

Denise Hogstrom Kurowski (*Vice Chair*)  
EVP, SSES Global L.L.C | Managing Partner,  
DMH & Associates

Russell Agosta (*Treasurer*)  
Retired Partner, Grant Thornton LLP

Lynn Quigley (*Secretary*)  
Retired, Ford Motor Company Fund

James Bernacki (*Member at Large*)  
Senior Vice President, Comerica Bank

Sister Marta Ceballos (*RGS Representative*)  
Sisters of the Good Shepherd

## Board Members:

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Elizabeth James  
Mary Beth Kelly  
Paul Morris  
Beth Rose  
Jeffrey Sokolowski  
Gregory Spinazze  
Carol Taylor  
Margaret Warner  
Alexis Wiley  
Mary Williams

## Executive Leadership:

Angela Aufdemberge  
*President and CEO*

Meredith Reese  
*Chief Integrated Behavioral Health Officer*

Kathy Regan  
*Chief Financial Officer*

Donald Fields  
*Vice President, Organizational and Individual Development*

Karen Hall  
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*Director, Human Resources and Quality*

Kelly Small  
*Director, Strategic Initiatives*

Michael Smith  
*Director, Foster Care and Independent Living*

Mary Vogt  
*Director of Marketing and Fund Development*

## How to reach us:

For additional information on any of the articles in this issue, please contact the Marketing and Fund Development Department at 313-271-3050.

- ▶ Jessica Marcetti, manager of volunteer resources, extension 114
- ▶ Sarah Lesch, senior manager, corporate development and events, extension 332
- ▶ Taylor Baroli, special events manager, extension 343
- ▶ Ganelle Lesnew, donor and database manager, extension 400

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