

VISTA MARIA NEWS

SUMMER 2019

Heading Home Soon to Wisconsin

May is National Foster Care Month. In the United States, 438,000 children are in foster care. One of these children, Donna, a 15-year-old, will soon be moving out of the foster care system and headed to her forever home, thanks to a hardworking adoption counselor and a loving couple from Wisconsin.

Donna has been at Vista Maria for two years in the residential program. In October 2018, her adoption counselor Crystal refreshed her adoption information in the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE). Donna's profile caught the eye of a Wisconsin psychologist and teacher, Susan and Sam Smith.

The couple made the trip from Wisconsin to Michigan for a meet and greet visit. They liked that Donna wanted to be the only child so she could feel important. They took Donna bowling and to the zoo. When they returned home, the couple put together a slideshow presentation for Donna so she

could see what her new life in Wisconsin would be like, complete with pictures of her school, her cat, her house and a loving



Chloe, the family cat

extended family. Phone calls and letters passed between the couple and the young lady became closer as they learned more about one another.

Donna visited Wisconsin for five days with permission from the Michigan Children's Institute. Happily, Donna and the couple mutually decided they wanted to move forward with the



Susan and Sam Smith from Wisconsin

adoption. Donna was so excited that they chose her out of all the possible kids and that she would be the most important person in their lives.

"We can't wait until Donna can come to Wisconsin permanently and be part of our family," said Susan Smith, the adopting Mom. "We've prayed and prayed for the right child to join Sam and I and Donna is such a sweet, hardworking young lady. I can't wait to begin our life as a family."

Since it is multi-state adoption, the process can take three to six months. Vista Maria is working with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Human

Services to bring the new family together by the New Year.

Recently, Donna's birth Mom passed away and the Smiths came from Wisconsin to Michigan to console Donna through this difficult time in her life. Her new family and her Vista Maria family wrapped around her and helped her begin the difficult grieving process. The days ahead for Donna and her new family are destined to be a welcome, fresh start for all.

To learn how to become a foster parent, please contact fosterparents@vistamaria.org.

Vista Maria Begins Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Treatment Center Construction This Spring

Vista Maria has broken ground on a new human trafficking stabilization center to improve and expand services for young female victims. The Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Treatment Center will be a one-stop, victim-centered facility where care is centralized for the survivors of human trafficking.

To date, Vista Maria has raised more than \$2.4 million, half the money needed to bring the building to life through our RESTORE capital campaign. The DeRoy Testamentary Foundation is the lead funder with a \$750,000 gift and the McGregor Fund announced a \$500,000 donation in January. A series of additional major pledges have also included significant lead gifts from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis, the Abhi Shah Foundation, the SEED Foundation, the Carls Foundation and Northridge Church Love Runs Program.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery involving forced labor or sexual exploitation. One of the most vulnerable and sought-after populations by sex traffickers is adolescent females. Many traffickers prey on the vulnerabilities of girls, and they entrap them through coercion, false promises and threats.

Scheduled to open in early 2020, the new \$4.8 million stabilization center will be located on Vista Maria's 37-acre Dearborn campus with the Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Hall, Vista Maria's existing 16-bed treatment housing for female victims of human trafficking.



The new Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Stabilization Treatment Center will provide residential treatment housing for up to 16 girls, doubling Vista Maria's current capacity, and a first-of-its-kind emergency intake wing to provide services for up to three rescued adolescent girls.

The small-scale trauma response center will provide physical and mental health care to young victims, with best practices gleaned from child advocacy centers and input from staff, clinical practitioners, human trafficking survivors and law enforcement.

The nearly 14,000-square-foot center will also include 16 residential beds, expanding Vista Maria's ability to provide

longer-term, victim-centered treatment for victims. Without a bed to return to, many of the rescued girls would end up in a shelter.

Beyond increased capacity, the new center will improve overall quality of care. Law enforcement, medical providers and psychiatry will all come to the new Center where these girls are, instead of them having to travel to multiple locations for services and care after being rescued. 🌈



From the President and CEO

Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* writes, "...in order to create one contagious movement, you often have to create many small movements first."

Beginning May 1, it is time for me to engage in better self-care, improved learning, and deeper reflection that may lead to a major movement. The Eugene Miller Fellowship, sponsored by The McGregor Fund, enables selected nonprofit executive leaders to take time for respite and development while the agency improves succession planning. McGregor selects, on a competitive basis, up to three nonprofit executives to take time away from their day-to-day responsibilities for a fellowship leave. The Vista Maria Board of Directors and I are excited that Meredith Reese will serve as interim president while I am gone. Over the years, Meredith continued her educational and executive leadership development, and she is ready for the expanded role. She will do a great job with the support of our executive leadership team.

It is surreal to begin the sabbatical. One of the components of the fellowship is

to take time to rejuvenate. I have always struggled to learn how to make and take time focused on my health. Gene Miller and others know this is a fact for many nonprofit leaders. Those drawn to help others rarely take time to care for themselves. During May, I will dedicate time for travel and self-care.

It has been a dream to dedicate time to learn how to best improve the supportive services to survivors of human trafficking so that they can heal and fulfill their potential. During June, July and early August, I will be meeting with a variety of leaders from across the United States who are advocates, abolitionists, service providers and survivors.

Following the travel and learning, I will work with an executive coach to develop a multi-year advocacy plan to improve awareness, legal structure and service platform within the State



of Michigan. It is our hope that we can create a tipping point that aids the restoration of lives stolen by sexual exploitation and begin the steps necessary to eradicate all forms of trafficking in Michigan.

I will keep Meredith, the Vista Maria team and all of those that we serve in my thoughts and prayers as I embark on this one-of-a-kind opportunity to create a tipping point for Vista Maria and those that we are called to serve. 🌟

Angela Aufdemberge
President & CEO, Vista Maria



Meredith Reese To Serve As Interim President

Chief Integrated Behavioral Health Officer Meredith Reese has been with Vista Maria since July 2003. In her current role, she is responsible for the integration of mental health and physical health services on campus serving all youth in care.

"It will be an honor to serve as interim president during Angela's sabbatical," said Meredith. "We have an amazing executive team that works together really well. I see this as an opportunity for all of us to grow and strengthen in our responsibilities."

Meredith has 20 years of extensive knowledge in areas of mental health, trauma and adolescent development.

Meredith holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling with an emphasis in marriage and family therapy and is a Licensed Professional Counselor. In addition, she is a featured speaker, presenter, and trainer relating to human trafficking and trauma. She is an active member of the Michigan Human Trafficking Taskforce and is chair of the Southeastern division. Meredith

raises awareness to stand against human trafficking through community advocacy and presentations.

In 2014, Meredith was the recipient of the Department of Health and Human Services–Best Practice Award for her work and dedication to the anti-trafficking movement. 🌟

20th Annual Celebrating Women Event Attracts Record Crowd

At the 20th annual Celebrating Women event at The Henry on April 25, Vista Maria honored Nicole Claudin as the Heart of Vista recipient and three Girls of Achievement: Zadalynn, Zaria and Zeinab. All four shared stories of their journey. The event was emceed by WDIV Anchor Rhonda Walker and raised nearly \$300,000 for the life-saving programming at Vista Maria.



Mission and Vision

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

OUR MISSION: We deliver innovative care, treatment, and education focused on restorative relationships so that vulnerable youth believe in their worth, heal and build the skills for success.

Thank you to all our sponsors!

In 2018, we had a record 1,500 people support our events. We are looking forward to even more success in 2019, with your support. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the sponsors of our recent events:



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Upcoming Vista Maria Events

- ▶ **August 8:** Women Fore! Women Golf Outing
- ▶ **August 21:** Dolly Drive
- ▶ **September 20:** Empowerment Breakfast

To learn more about our events, visit vistamaria.org.



George Blaha's foursome is ready to hit the links at the High Hopes event.

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