

ENGAGING NEW COPING STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUTH SUCCEED

The Vista Maria Senior Leadership Team has been working on implementing the Six Core Strategies Model for Reducing Risk and Preventing Violence, Trauma and the use of Seclusion and Restraint. A subcommittee within the group focused on strategies that support self-soothing and self-regulation. Self-soothing techniques can help individuals calm and relax themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed both physically and emotionally. They help to “self-regulate” those emotional highs and lows. This past fall, the subcommittee launched the “Calming Boxes” pilot program to use the 5 senses. Using your 5 senses is a fast way to bring one out of their thoughts or intense emotions into the present moment. These “Calming Boxes” will help both youth and staff self-regulate to improve treatment outcomes.

The Calming Boxes are assembled and created with the youth as the first step in the process. A Vista Maria therapist works with the youth to build their own customized Calming Box with

sensory items that are selected specifically for each youth. Staff encourage the youth to use their boxes regularly and especially during times of stressful events. The Calming Boxes help youth learn and engage coping strategies for self-care, self-regulation and self-soothing.

Given the initial success of the pilot program the Integrated Behavioral Health team plans to roll out this program to all programs across campus as well as to family members and support staff within the first quarter of next year.



6 CORE STRATEGIES



Thank you for continuing to support Vista Maria through a crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of how we interact with one another and the ways we are able to plan ahead. As an organization, Vista Maria adapted in order to provide for the needs of our clients and fearless direct care staff. These adaptations were supported by committed partners.

We are profoundly humbled by all of our partners—particularly those who have given to support the needs of the agency throughout the pandemic:

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- The Vera and Joseph Dresner Foundation

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It is December 2021 and when this year started my ideas and plans for Vista Maria, the team, the youth and our families were so different from what I look around and see. The pandemic has taken its toll on many parts of your mission, Vista Maria.

Our staff who are mighty, resilient and courageous are tired of covering multiple double shifts. They are tired of turnover and overtime. Our youth are tired of restrictions, rules and testing. We are struggling yet we are not giving up. Why? Because every person no matter the role or circumstance is worth the world. We believe in the value and importance of one person. Maybe there are many trials and failures, but the one success is invaluable.

Featured here in this photo is a success story, or maybe two. Alice came to Vista Maria as a very young eleven year old who lived through disappointment and rejection. Her trauma resulted in anger and the need to fight. Basically, fighting is how she survived. Because of her past, she felt unworthy of love and abandoned. Over time, the Vista Maria team built the supportive and caring relationships Alice needed. There were many support people on Alice's team, but one person was Pura Strong (pictured to my left). Due to the pandemic, in person graduate school was delayed for Pura so she stayed in the Detroit area and worked at Vista Maria as a Youth Counselor. She was able to be a special support person for Alice and to provide evidence to Alice that life isn't about what has happened, but is about what we can do.

The Vista Maria team was able to help Alice to ignite the spark of self-worth and love. She stopped fighting with her peers and began fighting for her dreams. Sometimes it is the smallest things that we do that have the biggest impact on the youth (a spark). Small things matter so much. For Alice, it was someone listening to her concerns and desire to have hair and feel like every other teenage girl. Once she was able to feel the pampering and love through the process of a personally selected wig, her spark was ignited. She beamed as she showed many of us her new look. Alice shared how the experience made her feel special and loved. Now, months later, I haven't seen Alice wear her wig because she knows that she is amazingly beautiful without it.

It is the small things that build into amazing results here at Vista Maria. Small sparks resulting in small flames of ambition and hope. Alice is now 15 and recently left our care to join a Vista Maria foster family! Alice is experiencing the love of a family. Pura is in Atlanta finishing up a Masters in Social Work. Due to her experiences and healing, she wants to help other youth to move past their trauma through supportive relationships and healing. Pura also shares the value of building big dreams, planning, seeking support when needed and living a life full of possibilities.

Through your time, prayers and support, the Vista Maria team is able to create sparks of hope and healing. Due to the ever increasing costs of care, we need your financial support more than ever. You are part of the Vista Maria family that ignites a life of possibilities one youth, one family at a time. Thank you and I wish you a very safe, healthy and joy filled holiday season.

All the best,



JOIN US IN BRINGING AWARENESS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month and it is a key time for us all as individuals to educate ourselves about human trafficking and to learn to spot the signs of trafficking. It is also a time for us to take these messages to our workplaces, our churches, our schools, our representatives and everyone elsewhere. Organizations across the state like Vista Maria and The Michigan Abolitionist Project are working daily to enhance awareness, increase prevention efforts and offer wraparound care for survivors of human trafficking.

Join us this January in helping spread awareness by supporting our campaign here: www.vistamaria.org/donate.



AN ALL OUTDOOR EVENT SEASON – A SUCCESS

The 2021 event season was an uncertain one, but with the help of our dedicated sponsors and loyal supporters, we were able to have a safe and successful year!

Our golf outings were a huge success with all selling out! Our 22nd Annual Celebrating Women event was the highlight of our event season. Held at the beautiful Meadowbrook Hall the evening was filled with inspiring stories, fearless acts of support, and heartfelt gratitude for those who chose to join us on this journey of healing youth and families.

The Empowerment Breakfast held outdoors at the Detroit Athletic Club was filled with education about our Shepherd Hall Transitional Living Program and a feeling of hope for the future. Our 11th Annual Dolly Drive event raised funds to support our Foster Care and Adoption programs. We also received more than 100 dolls, action figures and games for the youth we serve at Vista Maria.

Even in an ever-changing pandemic, we were able to safely raise funds and friends in support youth and families served by Vista Maria. Our uphill climb is made possible because of our partners:

CELEBRATING WOMEN



GEORGE BLAHA'S HIGH HOPES INVITATIONAL



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LAST MONTH YOU RECEIVED THIS CARD FROM US. WE HOPE YOU CONSIDER MAKING A GIFT.

“During those times when you feel you have so little to offer, don’t act small. Let your light shine.” Sister Mary Euphrasia

Love lights the spark which nurtured over time ignites a future of unlimited possibilities. At Vista Maria, we are driven by our boundless compassion for our young people and their families. Every day, the Vista Maria team brings strength and caring enough for everyone, so that one day each person can do the same for themselves and others. With your support, we keep youth and families safe, help them become strong, and shepherd them on their journey from trauma to triumph. We invite you to join us during this time of giving and ignite a life of possibility. Your generous gift today creates a brighter future for those in need. Make a gift to Vista Maria today and let your voice be as loud as your heart. Visit us online at www.vistamaria.org/donate.



20651 West Warren Avenue
Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

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, x 118
- **Ganelle Lesnew**, Donor Engagement Coordinator, x 400

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