

FAMILY-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT MODEL

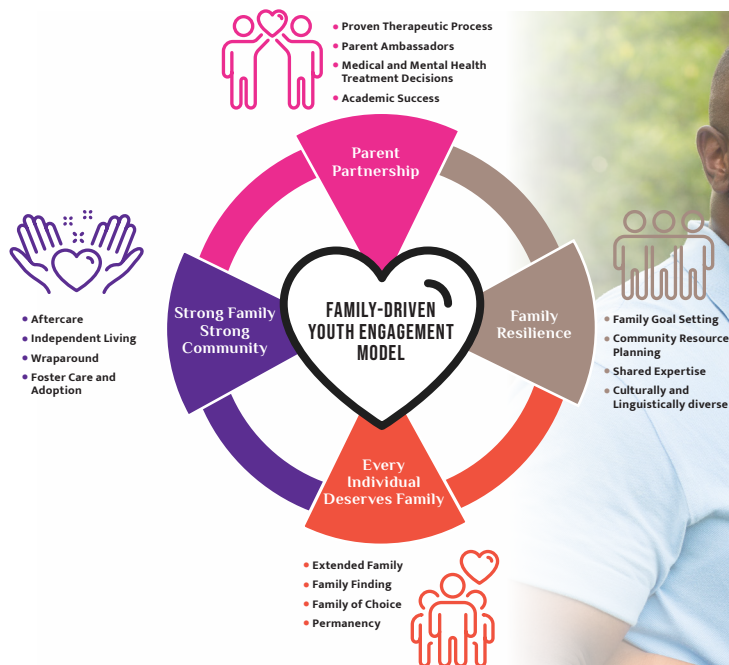
Life can throw many challenges at parents navigating the complex child welfare system. Most children in foster care are placed with relatives or individual foster families, but some youth, like Brenda, are placed in a group residential setting, like Vista Maria. At age 16, Brenda was placed at Vista Maria. Like many youth, Brenda needed support and love to help her heal from the trauma she sustained. Her initial treatment plan did not include her father, Steve, yet this connection was very important to Brenda. With her therapist's support, and Steve's determination to advocate for Brenda, Steve not only completed the parent agency treatment plans, but sought out his own trauma courses to attend.

Focused on reuniting his family, Steve worked closely with our team. With their support Steve received more training, never missed a court date, attended every therapy session, and always participated in family engagement days. Steve worked with Brenda's therapist to suggest items to be added to her treatment plan. Many times, he discussed his concerns on how difficult it can be for family members to navigate the child welfare system. Steve realized that the relationship with Vista Maria was different and that he had a resource and partner in Vista Maria. Brenda's therapist advocated for him; she gave him the chance to get his life back on track and provided

Steve with resources to wraparound him in the community.

When Brenda completed her treatment and returned to Steve's care, he continued to advocate for parents and children needing support. Steve is now a Parent Partner with Vista Maria to help other family members feel empowered on their journey in the child welfare system.

Family reunification is at the core of what we do and we strive to protect and embolden the family unit. True healing comes from the collective actions and efforts of each of us taking the first step to care for one another and this begins through the belief and understanding that everyone deserves a family. Our goal is help identify family, like Steve and to build a great parent partnership. We empower and support the family's resilience because it leads to strong families which builds strong communities.



January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Every year, thousands of young people suffer the horrors of being sexually exploited. 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. Human Trafficking Prevention Month is a time for us to educate ourselves, our friends, family and colleagues to ensure that more people are aware of the issues around human trafficking because awareness is key for prevention. If you see something, speak up and contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888. Your call could save a life. Join us this January in helping spread awareness by supporting our campaign or seeing how you can get involved by heading over to www.michiganabolitionistproject.org/.

Scan me to Donate!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

The holiday season is upon us and many of us will gather with those that we love to celebrate together. It is a time to gather with family whether biological, or chosen, to enjoy various traditions. My family enjoys sharing special ethnic foods, singing, playing games and sharing stories of the past. It is a time of laughter and love. My hope for this holiday season is that all people in all places can experience the sense of connectedness and belonging that a family can provide.



For us at Vista Maria, family is an important part of the healing process. Engaging and uniting families are key to lasting permanency for youth who have experienced severe trauma. We focused our learning and brainstorming on how to bring happiness and hope to each youth and their family. When we bring family together, we bring love and healing to the child. Hence, the team at Vista Maria has developed a Family Engagement Model to provide a vision and guide for employees, youth, and families to describe what Family Driven Care means to us. We are committed to find and build family connections for youth and to engage family in the process of treatment, healing and caring for their child. Our goal is to reunify each youth with family and to provide them with the tools and resources for lasting permanency and success.

To achieve our goal, we bring parents into our planning processes, and we are transforming our services and physical spaces. During my tenure at Vista Maria, we have focused on the individualized care and treatment of the child and focused on family to prepare them to receive the youth back into the home. Although this was good work, we have realized that we can improve. We need to place parents and family at the center of everything we do. So, throughout the upcoming weeks, months, and year, we will refocus our care and processes. We recently launched our Parent Advisory Board and will be hiring Parent Ambassadors to help us improve programming, hiring practices, training staff and parents as well as guiding our board and leadership decisions.

Not only will the way we interact with families be transformed, so will our campus settings. Our 37-acre campus will be a hub for family focused activities with multiple spaces to promote family bonding and healing. Visualize a movie theatre, a mini gym, a video game room, a rock-climbing wall and possibly a mini golf course housed within a family and employee activity center. Imagine two- and three-bedroom homes on our campus so that families can spend the weekend with their youth any time that their schedule allows.

Our wish is that every child feels safe, supported and loved by family. Where there is a sense of love, there is hope and then there is healing. While traumatic events can pull a family apart, we seek through our Vista Maria supporters, volunteers and staff to provide the opportunities and tools so that a family can build lasting bonds and fulfillment.

“The problem with our world is that we draw the circle of family too small.” – Mother Teresa

During this holiday season, we hope that you will support our transformation to family driven, youth engaged care so that each child can achieve a sense of belonging and build a lifetime of family holiday memories and traditions. Together, we can bring healing and belonging to children in need.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season filled with lasting memories.



HELP US BRING HEART TO THE HOLIDAYS!

Last month you received this card from us. We hope you consider making a gift! Families bring safety and acceptance so that a child feels worthy and loved.

Help Vista Maria bring heart to the holidays. Your generosity opens the door for young people to form meaningful connections with their families; helping them to move from trauma to triumph.

You are part of the Vista Maria family and we hope you will continue to support youth in search of family connection. Your generous gift 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 or scan this QR code





SENSORY ROOM IN FREEDOM CENTER

At the beginning of September, we opened the second dedicated sensory room on campus in The Aaron and Helen L. DeRoy Freedom Center. A sensory room is a space designed to help individuals use their 5 (or up to 7) senses to de-escalate intense emotions and thoughts through self-regulating techniques. Sensory rooms typically use light, sound, color, and other sensory cues to calm and engage the individual. The sensory rooms help youth learn and engage coping strategies for self-care, self-regulation and self-soothing. With two rooms fully constructed, we are looking forward to continuing to add these sensory rooms throughout campus in 2023.

THE 2022 EVENT SEASON – A SUCCESS

The 2022 event season was a great victory and, 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 hit with all three selling out! Our 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 23rd Annual Celebrating Women event was the highlight of our event season. Held at the beautiful Meadowbrook Hall, the evening was filled with moving stories, fearless acts of support, and heartfelt gratitude for those who chose to join us on this journey of healing youth and families.

At our 11th Annual Dolly Drive event, we made lots of new friends and raised funds to support our Foster to Adopt program. We also received over 100 dolls, action figures and games for the youth we serve at Vista Maria.

CELEBRATING WOMEN



GEORGE BLAHA'S HIGH HOPES INVITATIONAL



WOMEN FORE WOMEN GOLF OUTING



EMPOWERMENT BREAKFAST



DOLLY DRIVE



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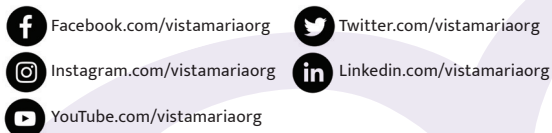


EMPOWERING YOUTH BY PARTNERING WITH LACE UP DETROIT

Who doesn't love shopping for new shoes? The volunteers of Lace Up Detroit have been sharing the joy of friendship and shoe shopping with our youth since 2015. Founded by five caring women, driven to translate their love for shoes into community service, Lace Up Detroit provides new shoes to children and women in need. Each spring and fall, Lace Up Detroit donates stylish and seasonal shoes for every young person in our care. With their annual fall gift, volunteers also come to campus to host "Boots & Bites," a shopping event with music, food, and of course, lots of shoes! This year, shearling boots and Crocs-style clogs were the most popular requests and Lace Up Detroit delivered in a big way! Every youth on campus received shoes to keep them warm and comfy all season long. We are so grateful to Lace Up Detroit for everything they do to help our young people rebuild their self-confidence!



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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**, Senior Community Engagement Manager, x 118
- **Connie Farlow**, Donor Engagement Coordinator, x 400

Donate Today:

Every day, your donation helps to ignite a life of possibilities in each of our young people. Scan the QR code today:



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