

## YOU MAKE MISSION CRITICAL SERVICES POSSIBLE

On Thursday, March 11, 2020, Vita Living leadership saw the writing on the wall about the threat of the coronavirus. After all, we have weathered threats of serious influenza and other viruses, flooding, and hurricanes. We immediately suspended our day program, quarantined our residents to their group homes, and restricted visits from volunteers and family members.

Our nursing department trained group home staff in the areas of COVID-19 precautions—COVID-19 symptoms, temperature monitoring, handwashing, use of personal protective equipment, gloves, and hand sanitizer. They continue to monitor the health of all those in our care. We are proud of our dedicated staff who continue to care for our clients at their own personal health risks. We know that group home residents and employees can test positive for Covid-19 at any time.



*“They have greatly enjoyed being outside during this time of isolation, and some are eating every meal outdoors!”*

So many donors and volunteers have reached out and offered their support—whether through donations of masks and coloring books or through unexpected monetary gifts. Vita Living is blessed by our community, and we cannot thank you enough for your continued concern and care for the clients.

A few years ago, our good friends at The Guild Shop provided a generous award to construct a patio area for our most elderly group home residents. We saw a marked improvement in their quality of life and decided we needed to enhance the outside patios for all our group home residents. They have greatly enjoyed being outside during this time of isolation, and some are eating every meal outdoors!

Your generous support means so much to our clients. In a world where they sometimes feel separate from the community, you have made a huge effort to care for and include them in your concerns through gifts, prayer, and encouragement. *We are so grateful.*





# HOUSING INITIATIVE

## Serve More, Better Moves Forward

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our foundation donors and board leadership are working to ensure that the capital campaign is a success. We are on track to welcome 12 adults with disabilities to their lifelong home in 2021! The new homes are located on recently purchased property in the Spring Branch district of Houston, near several other Vita Living group homes. At this time, we have completed site preparation, including demolition, grading, drainage, and other necessary steps to move forward with groundbreaking.

We have received many generous gifts, and we are still actively fundraising. We hope you will consider being a part of the Housing Initiative. In January 2020, Vita Living was honored to accept a challenge grant of \$275,000 from The J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation. To receive these funds, we must raise the entire project budget of \$1,384,181. Once this goal has been reached, Vita Living will receive an additional \$50,000 matching grant from The Medallion Foundation. If you are able, you can make a gift today toward *A Vita Living Housing Initiative* at [www.vitaliving.org/donate](http://www.vitaliving.org/donate), and your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar!

THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS HAVE MADE THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE BY HELPING US RAISE OVER \$1 MILLION:

- Architectural Floors
- Baxter Trust
- David and Nancy Bishop Family Foundation
- The Brown Foundation, Inc.
- Naomi Dempsey
- Hildebrand Fund
- The J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation
- Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation
- Medallion Foundation
- Paula and Irving Pozmantier Fund
- Rawley Foundation
- Rod Desroches
- Rusty Sewell
- The Vivian L. Smith Foundation
- Wayne & JoAnn Moore Charitable Foundation
- William Stamps Farish Fund
- Windsor United Memorial Church





# REFLECTIONS FROM OUR FOUNDER

**Vita Living has been my life for the past four decades. As I approach my 95th birthday, I find myself looking back and reflecting**

**on the growth of the organization.**

I retired as Executive Director when I turned 80 but have stayed connected to the organization and to my son, Ricky, one of the original residents who came to live here in 1987. Over the years, I have seen many

changes as to how our society takes care of our most vulnerable citizens, and the COVID-19 pandemic is testing all of us to continue to do what is right and what is needed.

*“Over the years, I have seen many changes as to how our society takes care of our most vulnerable citizens, and the COVID-19 pandemic is testing all of us to continue to do what is right and what is needed.”*

Seven years ago, Vita Living, Inc. was in dire financial straits, and I was extremely concerned about our future. There was some

doubt in my mind that we could continue our program. It makes me very happy to see how the Board of Directors and CEO Joe Cooper have brought stability to Vita Living through efficient practices and excellent fundraising. Of course,

we will continually need the generosity and support of the corporations, foundations, and individuals who have become the backbone of our organization, but we are in a good place. I am so grateful to our leaders for their vision and skilled management.

Renée and her son Ricky



**Renée Wallace,**  
Founder

# GROUP HOMES GIVE FAMILIES BALANCE AND SUPPORT

The Wiesepape family has been a part of Vita Living for 26 years, since their daughter Stacey joined a group home in 1994. Stacey's family noticed her challenges when she was still an infant. Born in 1971, it was difficult to know how to help her. They took Stacey to several specialists but didn't get a lot of answers. Even though they didn't have a diagnoses, Charles and Mary Ann vowed to give Stacey a full, happy life. In high school, Stacey was very involved in the Special Olympics swim team and her family took the team to many of the meets. When she graduated, the Wiesepapes enrolled her in local day programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Unfortunately, many programs were not equipped to work with Stacey.



Charles and Mary Ann were referred to Renée Wallace after it became clear that she needed more support and structure outside the home. "Vita Living has offered us all stability and consistency. As parents, Vita Living encourages us to be involved with our child but also helps her to remain independent and help us to have boundaries regarding her care. She is still part of our family, but she's not the main focus. She can be a member of our family like everyone else; she is involved with us and still has her own life," says Charles.

## FOR INFORMATION ABOUT PLACING A LOVED ONE AT VITA LIVING, CONTACT

♥ | [Lorrie Chretien, Chief Program Officer, at lchretien@vitaliving.org](mailto:Lchretien@vitaliving.org)



*"She can be a member of our family like everyone else; she is involved with us and still has her own life"*

—Charles Wiesepape

Stacey's staff, Indiana, says that Stacey loves to be hands-on and enjoys art, bingo, and trying new things. "I always acknowledge when she wants something and ask her to trust me that I have her best interests. Stacey understands she can't go home right now because of sickness. She has been very patient, and we communicate well. She's doing great!" Stacey goes home nearly every weekend when she can and is very devoted to her dog, Bandit.

Charles has a message for other donors: "You should know that there is an organization that cares about people with IDD. They are doing the hard work to make their lives better and to give them a sense of self-worth and normalcy. Because I see the operation firsthand, I feel good knowing my donations go to supporting those kids. Vita Living is doing some wonderful things, like the new housing initiative that is tailored to our children. When I walk into the day center and have several clients say hello and come shake my hand, it's just incredible. The caring environment makes a huge difference. They are doing a very good job."

# GROWING FOUNDATION FRIENDSHIPS

**Your support helps Vita Living to go beyond group homes and day program services to provide Community Living and Support Services (CLASS) to over 330 people, the largest case management program in our state.** The George Foundation has been a loyal supporter of Vita Living's CLASS program since 2014. Vita Living had been operating CLASS in Ft. Bend for some time and the foundation stepped in to support our work in the community. Since the George Foundation got involved, we have seen great success! Last year, Vita Living received a 99% satisfaction rating in our annual client survey.

CLASS participants are people with developmental disabilities who live in the community either with familial support or independently. A dedicated team of

ten caseworkers keep up with their clients and support them in securing necessary services like speech therapy, home modifications, respite care, and more, so that our clients can live meaningful lives.

Donors like The George Foundation allow us to maintain services beyond our Houston neighborhood. Because of our success with this focused foundation, we reached out to Moody Permanent Endowment Fund, and they support our work in all seven counties where we provide case management services: Harris, Ft. Bend, Galveston, Brazoria, Austin, Montgomery, and Waller. We are blessed to have these niche partners who value our services in their specific communities. Vita Living is seeking partnerships in other counties to support our work.

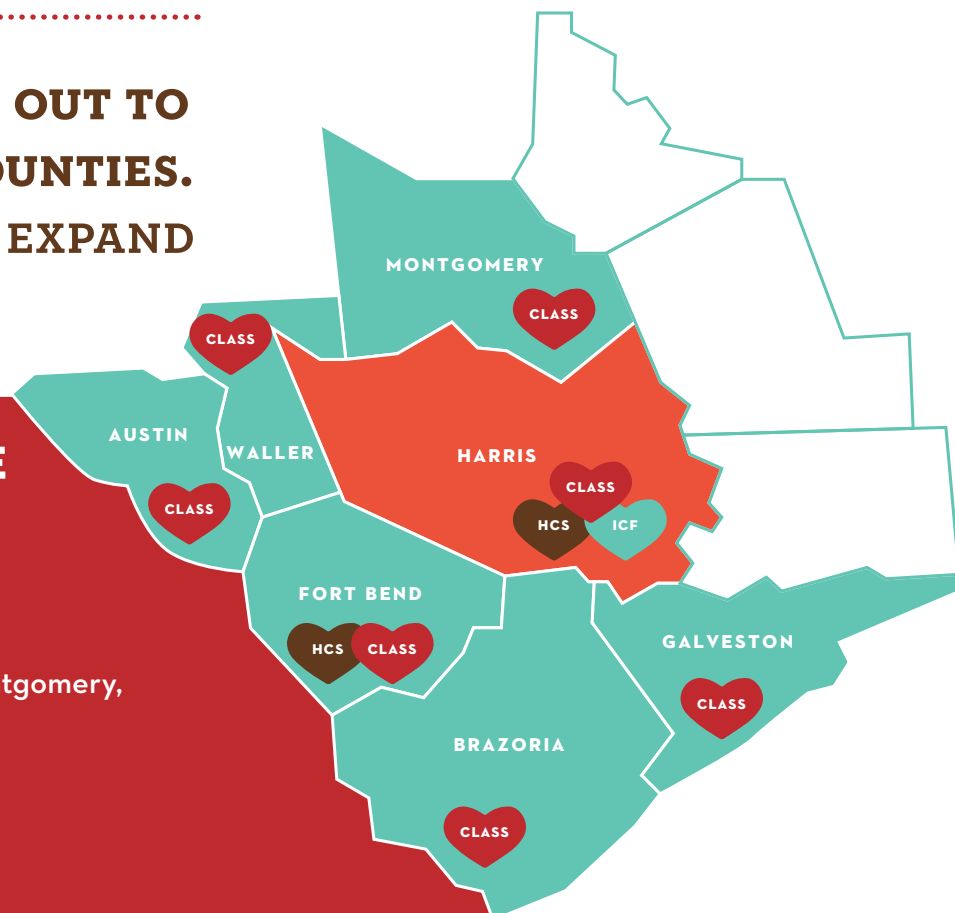
**OUR HEARTS REACH OUT TO HOMES IN SEVEN COUNTIES. WON'T YOU HELP US EXPAND THAT REACH?**

## WHERE WE SERVE

**HCS SERVICES**  
Harris & Ft. Bend

**CLASS SERVICES**  
Harris, Ft. Bend, Brazoria, Montgomery, Galveston, Austin, and Waller

**ICF SERVICES**  
Harris



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



**Polly Alam has been part of the Vita Living family for over 20 years.** She became involved when her sister, Rose, joined our original Beechnut group home. Polly continues to volunteer at the Vita Living Day Center, bringing refreshments to our dance parties, Bingo nights, and helping in any way that she can. She feels that she is “part of a large, long lasting circle of love and friendship at Vita Living.”

*“For Polly, one of the most rewarding parts of volunteering is seeing the clients who have been her friends for over 15 years.”*

For Polly, one of the most rewarding parts of volunteering is seeing the clients who have been her friends for over 15 years. “Every time I go, I question are they going to remember me, are they going to recognize me, and when I get there they always do, even the non-verbal clients when I see them I can tell they connect with me, they know who I am.” Volunteers like Polly bring joy, smiles, and warmth to our day center every time they stop by for a visit.

For someone thinking of volunteering with this population, Polly says, “There is no greater feeling and satisfaction than what you get from helping someone who can't repay you.” While we have put our volunteer program on pause during the global pandemic, there are still ways to help our day center. Check out our wish list at [www.vitaliving.org/donate](http://www.vitaliving.org/donate).



## SAVE THE DATE

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2020**

**AT AMERICAN SHOOTING CENTERS**

**TEAM OF 4 STARTING AT \$1,000**

**REGISTER AT  
[VITALIVING.ORG/EVENTS](http://VITALIVING.ORG/EVENTS)**

**BENEFITING VITA LIVING AND OUR MISSION**

**CHRIS MEHLING**

Principal of  
Architectural Floors

**RANDY O'DONNELL**

Co-President of  
O'Donnell/Snider  
Construction

**JASON TRAMONTE**

Principal of Tramonte  
Design Studio





Ryan Douat, Jayson Hatfield,  
Megan Kowalik, and Shannon Rosette



# RUN FOR A REASON DONORS MAKE AN IMPACT

On Sunday, January 19 2020, Vita Living donors and volunteers ran in the Chevron Houston Marathon's Run for a Reason program. 17 runners and their friends and family raised over \$21,000 to support our mission. We are also grateful to event chairs Jodi and Jeff Bishop for hosting our carb loading dinner and motivating our participants!



**INTERESTED IN JOINING TEAM VITA LIVING FOR THE 2021 RACE? FOR MORE INFO AND TO SIGN UP, VISIT**

♥ [vitaliving.org/events/run-for-a-reason](https://vitaliving.org/events/run-for-a-reason)

# SAVE THE DATE PEARLS *of* WISDOM

WEDNESDAY,  
MAY 5, 2021

6:00 PM | RIVER OAKS COUNTRY CLUB

[VITALIVING.ORG/EVENTS/PEARLS-OF-WISDOM](https://vitaliving.org/events/pearls-of-wisdom)



Margot Hogan, Katie Wynn, Jill Case, Lindsay Love

Due to the ongoing threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pearls of Wisdom will not take place until 2021. We are grateful to our chairs, Kristen and Drew Perrin, and our sponsors for their generous support. Pearls helps us raise significant dollars to support the Vita Living clients and we hope you will consider making a donation to help us with the event loss. We look forward to a fun event with you on Cinco de Mayo next year!

#### CONTACT



Liz Bear, Development Director, at 713.292.1835  
or by email at [lbear@vitaliving.org](mailto:lbear@vitaliving.org)

# VITAVISTAS



CREATIVE CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SUMMER 2020

no.61

*Vita Living's mission is to provide lifelong services and supports for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to promote personal growth toward a safe, satisfying, and meaningful life in their community.*

## VITA LIVING FOUNDATION

David Bishop  
Naomi Dempsey  
Irving Pozmantier  
Michael Rubenstein  
Melanie Wallace

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Gregory Kutka, Treasurer  
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Renée Wallace  
*Founder*

Forrest Wynn  
*Hicks Davis Wynn, PC*




## LEADERSHIP TEAM

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*Chief Administrative Officer*

Lorrie Chretien, MBA  
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