

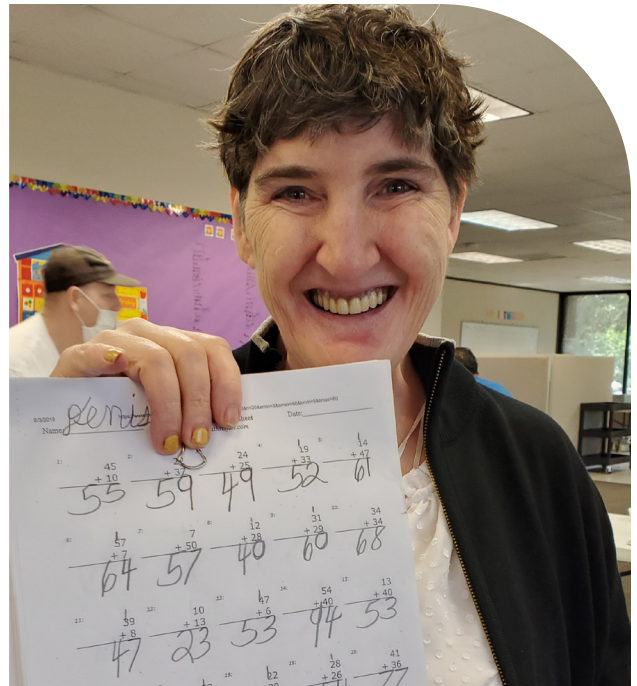
## SUMMER OF GRATITUDE

Everyone at Vita Living is riding a wave of gratitude. We are grateful that our clients are safe and healthy, grateful we did not have to downsize our staff, and grateful to be back together again. We would not be here today without so many wonderful donors, leadership, and volunteers supporting our mission!

At this time, our residents have received both doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, and we welcomed them all back to our day program in June! Both residents and staff are thrilled to be reunited at the Vita Living Center. It's a special feeling to walk into our Day Center and see the energy of our clients; they are making the most of this summer.

Our staff has been working hard to keep the activities interesting and engaging, including field trips to enjoy everything summer has to offer. Some clients are going to a local swimming pool and we are planning evening bingo and dance parties for July. We have held both a Memorial Day and Juneteenth barbeque for our clients. They enjoyed delicious food and outdoor activities like a water balloon fight and bubble machine. Jason W. has loved coming back to the Day Center: "My summer has been good, I like talking to and seeing all my friends."

The mission to provide "a safe, satisfying, and meaningful life" for people with IDD is always urgent, and we especially felt it over this past year. Donors and community partners have committed to giving our clients the very best lives they can have. It's a joy to experience the laughter and smiles of our clients as they reunite. *Thank you for sticking with us this past year—it's worth it!*





WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE  
MANY GENEROUS DONORS  
WHO MADE THE HOUSING  
INITIATIVE A REALITY.

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# VITA LIVING HOUSING INITIATIVE COMPLETE!

**Thanks to the support of our loyal donors, we raised over \$1.3 Million and completed our capital campaign, A Vita Living Housing Initiative: Serve More, Better, in spring 2021. The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was held on March 23 and our lead gift donors, Nancy and David Bishop, cut the ribbon.**

Two new homes will provide state-of-the-art, lifelong housing for 12 individuals with disabilities who have been on a waitlist for residential services for numerous years. Currently in Texas, people experience a 12-14 year wait for group home placement. The operation of these two new residences will be sustained by the Medicaid waivers of group home residents. 100% of Vita Living residents are low-income and Medicaid eligible.

This replicable group home prototype will be integrated into the community, and it will be fully accessible for a vulnerable group of aging adults. We are excited to welcome our new residential clients this summer and provide them with safe, comfortable, lifelong homes with 24/7 dedicated staff to care for them.

# CLASS CLIENT SHARES SUCCESS STORY

**The 2021 Pearls of Wisdom Dinner was such a special evening. It was inspiring to be back together with our donors and friends to support the Vita Living mission.** We were especially proud of our speaker, one of our own CLASS clients, Wade Washington. Wade lives with cerebral palsy and scoliosis. He has worked for many years to earn professional status as an adaptive athlete in 2016. Wade was joined on stage by his wife Bobbi Jo aka “BJ” and his devoted trainers, Tina Chandler and Carl DuCena. Together, the four of them founded “Normal to Be Fit,” an organization that helps people with disabilities to gain strength and confidence in their bodies.

Wade and BJ met when they were students at Houston Community College. At the time, Wade was living in a group home setting. When Wade received his Medicaid waiver, his Vita Living case manager was able to help him become more independent and move into his own apartment. He and BJ have been married for over 25 years. They have one daughter and three grandchildren.

When Wade’s grandmother passed away, he felt the need to do something more and started pursuing body building in earnest with Tina’s help.

Tina shared her admiration for Wade, saying, “His courage sparked a journey that has taken on a life of its own... Wade continues to serve our community by helping others get fit and healthy and to raise awareness about people with different abilities. He inspires everyone to be their very best!”

Their beautiful story brought the crowd to their feet for a standing ovation and many guests were wiping away tears. Vita Living is honored to have played a part in Wade’s success and perseverance.



*“...Wade continues to serve our community by helping others get fit and healthy and to raise awareness about people with different abilities. He inspires everyone to be their very best!”*

— Tina Chandler, Trainer



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WADE AND TEAM NORMAL TO BE FIT, VISIT**

♥ | [normaltobefit.com](http://normaltobefit.com)

# HOME AWAY FROM HOME



**Georgia would have kept Billy at home forever. He is the baby of the family and was doted on by his parents and three big sisters.** Billy loves music—especially when his dad, “EJ,” would practice the drums for his band. Despite his intellectual and other developmental disabilities, Billy was able to attend public school at T.H. Rogers until he was 21.

“Billy is so easygoing. And he is very affectionate, he wants to be touched and have his head rubbed. He knows what he likes and doesn’t like—when my girls would bring boyfriends over to the house, he wouldn’t sit next to them! He can be very mischievous,” says

*“It’s wonderful that Vita Living is here to help families like ours. I’m so grateful.”*

—Georgia



Georgia. “He took the place of two children for me. I was with him all day long, feeding, walking, taking him to appointments. I devoted all my time to Billy.”

Billy continued to live at home with his parents until he was 39. When his dad got sick and Georgia had heart surgery that would require extensive recovery, Billy came to live at Vita Living full time. His family already used Vita Living for respite care on the weekends, so they were familiar with the organization.

“Going to Vita Living has been very good for my son. The house he lives in is similar in layout to our home, so he can find his way around. Everything is accessible. The staff are good with him. Barbara is his House Supervisor and she does a great job and is very communicative with me.”

Georgia still likes to take Billy home on Saturday or Sunday for the day so he can spend time with the family. His sisters often come over and bring their kids. “It’s wonderful that Vita Living is here to help families like ours. I’m so grateful.”



# FOUNDATION FRIENDSHIPS SUPPORTS ELDERLY CLIENTS

The Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust is committed to supporting compassionate care for our older residents. Since 2015, the Friendship Trust has donated over \$250,000 to Vita Living, which has helped us expand our clinical program to help monitor medical needs, as well as complete group home modifications for ultimate accessibility. People with disabilities are living longer because of improved medical care and community integration. As they age, we have noted a significant increase in diagnoses of dementia, an overall decrease in client mobility, more client injuries, and other complications.

Their funding directly impacts 13 residents who are aged 60 or older. Frieda, one of our oldest residents, is in her 70s and has lived at Vita Living for many years. She now uses a walker to help her get around. Because of the Friendship Trust’s funding, we were able to renovate a group home to be fully accessible to Frieda, and as she told us, “I love my home. I’m happier than ever before!”

.....

*“Mrs. Isla Carroll Sterling Turner in 1956 established the Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust to originally support 13 friends of Mrs. Turner and to benefit the needy elderly in Harris County. In 1982 the geographic support area was expanded from only Harris County Texas to the entire State of Texas but only to benefit the elderly. With her vision, The Friendship Trust is happy to extend support for the Vita Living elderly residents.”*



Frieda, resident



Walter, resident

# VOLUNTEERS WELCOME!

We have missed our volunteers so much over the past year, and we are excited to finally welcome them back to our Day Program! Because our clients are still vulnerable to severe illness, we are taking additional safety precautions. Volunteers will have their temperatures taken and fill out a short symptom survey before starting their shift, and they will also be required wear masks.

If you would like to volunteer with us, we would love to have you help with Day Center activities. These activities range from art projects to games to group exercise. Activities are designed to encourage socialization and

creativity and help clients with motor skills and life skills. Shifts for groups and individuals are available Monday-Friday, 10:00 am-11:30 am or 1:00pm-2:30 pm.

The fun doesn't stop there! We also offer clients two Friday evening parties per month from 6:00pm-8:00pm. Whether it's a Bingo Night, a holiday celebration, or a dance party, these evenings never disappoint. Come with your group and sponsor the evening with snacks, decorations, and/or prizes, or come as an individual to join in on the fun!

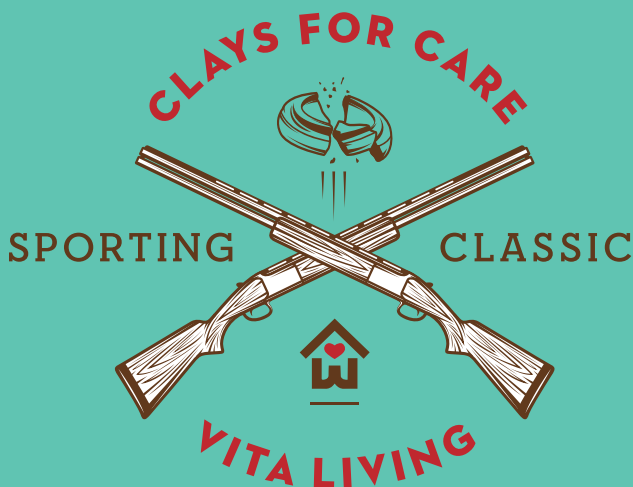
**FOR INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT**

♥ | [vitaliving.org/volunteer](https://vitaliving.org/volunteer)

**OR CONTACT**

♥ | Rachel LaRocca, Events Manager, at [rlarocca@vitaliving.org](mailto:rlarocca@vitaliving.org) or 713-292-1748.

*We hope to see you soon!*



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**AT AMERICAN SHOOTING CENTERS**

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Reservation Today!**

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# SAVE THE DATE

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# VITAVISTAS



CREATIVE CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SUMMER 2021

no.62

*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.*

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