



REGISTERED NURSES (LEFT TO RIGHT): Sharniece Walker, Diana Nguyen, and Bernice Atkinson



INVESTING IN CLINICAL SERVICES

People with IDD are enjoying longer, fuller lives and need quality clinical support to maintain their quality of life. Even so, there remains significant increases in diagnoses of dementia, decrease in mobility, increased injuries, and other complications due to the aging process. An important way in which Vita Living staff ensure clients are safe and stable is through Clinical Services within the Residential Program. Because of regular monitoring, Vita Living clients' medical needs are addressed quickly, making for fewer clients requiring skilled nursing or acute clinical care.

A team of three nurses, supervised by the Chief Operating Officer, see their clients daily at the Vita Living Activity Center. Nurses provide daily medical assessments, minor medical interventions, medication oversight, appointments management, transportation, medical charting, and support to the residential teams. Important to note that clients have secondary diagnoses and underlying conditions in tandem with their intellectual and/or developmental disability.

Vita Living receives Medicaid reimbursements for only 30% of its programming, which is over \$300,000 annually. The expectation is that organizations serving people with IDD can manage the same caseload with fewer nursing staff. Vita Living endorses a higher standard of care toward providing clients with the best care possible. The expanded care of the Clinical Services staff is attributed to Vita Living clients not having Covid-related hospitalizations, complications, or deaths.

A RECORD TURNOUT AT THE 2023 PEARLS OF WISDOM FIESTA 🌸

Over 280 guests helped to raise a record \$206,000 for Houston-area citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the Pearls of Wisdom Fiesta benefiting Vita Living. Event Chairs, Pamela and Marc Perilloux and Kristen and Drew Perrin did a tremendous job chairing the event. We are also especially grateful to all our donors, Emcee Kip Altstaetter, Rev. Kathy Pfister, Amegy Bank volunteers, Memorial Credit Union volunteers, and the NCL Houston Hearts Chapter volunteers!

The inspiring program featured Lisa Eicher, who spoke on behalf of her daughter, internationally renowned artist, and special guest, Sevy Marie Eicher, born with down syndrome. Sevy's story is one of courage, perseverance, and boundless creativity, and though she is nonverbal, she expresses herself through her one-of-a-kind and mesmerizing art pieces. With an extensive waiting list for her pieces, Pearls of Wisdom attendees had the unique opportunity to bid on two of Sevy's pieces featured in the auction and together garnered winning bids over \$16,000 for Vita Living!



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Lisa Eicher, Sevy Marie Eicher, and Ace Eicher



Sevy with auction winners



Sevy with emcee Kip Altstaetter

A MAN ON A MISSION



Meet Jeff Bishop, a man dedicated to making a difference. Since joining the Vita Living board of directors in 2010, Jeff has been an invaluable asset to the organization's growth and impact. His involvement began when his father transitioned off the board to serve on the Vita Living Foundation board, leaving Jeff eager to continue the family's commitment to the cause. Although Jeff and his wife, Jodi, do not have a direct connection to any clients at Vita Living, they wholeheartedly appreciate the mission and life-changing work carried out by the organization.

When asked about Vita Living's approach, Jeff emphasizes the organization's exceptional financial focus and commitment to ensuring the best life possible for its clients. He recognizes the importance of managing resources effectively to ensure Vita Living's long-term sustainability.

Jeff vividly remembers a special day in 2016 when CEO, Joe Cooper, introduced the Day Program. On that occasion, Jeff had the opportunity to interact with Vita Living's clients firsthand. He recalls the experience as "a fun day," witnessing the joy and transformation that Vita Living brings to the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Jeff headed into burning oil field

Jeff's commitment to making a difference extends beyond his role on the board. As a former Marine Corps light armored reconnaissance combat veteran, he understands the importance of service and selflessness. Jeff's pursuit of excellence is evident in his academic achievements, having graduated from both Texas A&M and the University of Houston. In addition, he has undertaken an impressive feat as a marathon runner,

completing a remarkable 16 marathons in 10 states. Jeff's goal is to run a marathon in all 50 states, a testament to his determination and commitment.

Through his remarkable journey and varied accomplishments, Jeff Bishop exemplifies what it means to be a hero on multiple fronts. During his tenure as a board member, Jeff has demonstrated his unwavering commitment to Vita Living through generous financial support. His personal contributions to the organization have totaled \$100,000 and Jeff's remarkable generosity is a testament to his belief in the transformative power of Vita Living's programs and services.

Jeff will again be participating in the Chevron Houston Marathon's Run For A Reason January 13-14, 2024, in support of Vita Living.



Jeff and wife Jodi, at the Disney Marathon 2023

Thank you, Jeff, for your exceptional dedication and for being a true hero in the Vita Living family.

TO GET INVOLVED IN VITA LIVING'S MARATHON ACTIVITIES, PLEASE CONTACT

♥ [Danielle Malloy, Development Manager](mailto:dmalloy@vitaliving.org)
at 713-292-1784 or dmalloy@vitaliving.org

MEET ARDON ARMSTRONG

Resolute Volunteer And Advocate



As a home run hitter, Phin fulfilled his commitment to his team and to his community each year by participating in the annual Switch-a-thon, a community service charity event, allowing students with limited interaction skills and limited opportunities to participate in and contribute to the community. He and his fellow teammates joined the Houston Astros for the Harvey relief fund, raising more than \$1000 for those in the community affected by Harvey.

Ardon Armstrong is a compassionate and dedicated member of the Vita Living board, serving as a representative of the volunteer community. Ardon's involvement with Vita Living began when her son, Phineas, (Phin) was accepted into the Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) program. Phin, a vibrant 20-year-old with IDD, had been a source of joy and inspiration to their family. Initially, Ardon faced challenges finding the right case management agency for Phin's unique needs. After changing agencies twice, a friend and classmate recommended Vita Living, which became a transformative turning point for their family.

Ardon's journey with Vita Living is deeply personal and driven by her unwavering commitment to supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The impact that Joe Cooper, the CEO of Vita Living, and the community he has cultivated had on Ardon and her family was profound. Recognizing the invaluable role Vita Living played in her son's life, Ardon felt compelled to give back and contribute to the organization's mission.

Through her involvement with Vita Living, Ardon channels her love for Phin and her desire to create a better world for individuals with IDD. Today, as a board member, Ardon brings her firsthand experience as a parent and caregiver, providing invaluable insights into the needs and challenges faced by families like hers. Her dedication and advocacy contribute to shaping Vita Living's programs and services, ensuring they remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

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Tragically, the Armstrong's experienced the untimely loss of their beloved son, Phin, in 2017. In honor of her late son, Ardon strives to make a lasting impact on the lives of others. Through her involvement with Vita Living, Ardon has found solace and a sense of purpose, helping to build a brighter future for individuals with IDD.

“From aiding shelters for the homeless to supporting educational initiatives for underprivileged children, the fund stands as a pillar of hope for those in need.”



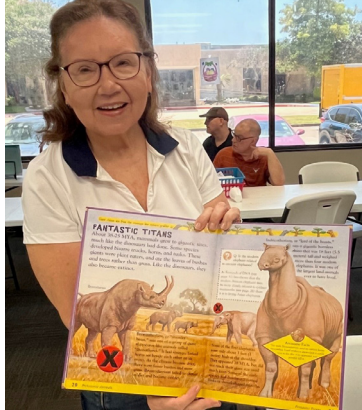
LIBBIE SHEARN MOODY
1869-1943

**MOODY METHODIST CHURCH'S
ENDOWMENT FUND:**

A BEACON OF GENEROSITY FOR CHARITIES NATIONWIDE

Libbie Shearn Moody, (1869-1943) wife of W. L. Moody, Jr., was an active member of the First Methodist Church of Galveston. In her will, she designated 25% of her estate to the church. The Moody Methodist Church has long been an unwavering source of compassion and support in the heart of the Galveston community. Central to the Church's mission is the Permanent Endowment Fund (PEF), established in 1980, as a remarkable initiative that embodies the spirit of selfless giving to countless charities both locally and nationally. Earlier in 2023, the fund made a profound impact on Vita Living with a generous gift of \$25,000. Moody Methodist Church's PEF has been steadfastly supporting Vita Living, contributing nearly \$100,000 since 2014.

With unwavering commitment, and beyond the confines of their local community, Moody Methodist Church's PEF acts a financial stronghold and extends its benevolent touch to a myriad of charities throughout the nation. From aiding shelters for the homeless to supporting educational initiatives for underprivileged children, the fund stands as a pillar of hope for those in need. Vita Living is grateful for the continued support of the PEF of Moody Methodist Church and its work in Galveston County.



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Paula Alam, also known as Polly, is a Houston native and retired banker who has been volunteering at Vita Living for 20 years. Polly's passion for volunteering began in high school when she would help at her church and at the West Gray Recreation Center in Houston's midtown area. What deeply fueled her dedication to volunteering in her community was wanting to support her oldest sister who had special needs. Polly recalls enjoying volunteering at her sister's events, seasonal parties, and dance recitals that were held for the intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) community. The spirit of service followed Polly throughout her time in college and in her career as she endeavored to become a mentor and an academic volunteer for high-risk students.

“For many volunteers, the benefit of interacting with the clients at Vita Living is gaining understanding and familiarity with the IDD community.”

Polly was introduced to Vita Living when her sister became a client 20 years ago. Since then, she has seen a lot of positive change in the programs and resources offered to the clients at Vita Living. One of the biggest changes that Polly recalls is when

Vita Living opened its activity center in 2016. She says, “The day center was and continues to be an amazing program where the clients have someplace to go daily and have a full calendar of activities like arts and crafts, fitness sessions, games, field trips, and birthday parties and seasonal celebrations.” She also mentioned how much she appreciates the rise in volunteers and guests who've come to visit the activity center to interact with the clients over the years.

Polly's favorite part about volunteering with Vita Living clients is the friendly and welcoming attitude they have each time she visits the activity center. She emphasizes that “even the clients that are not verbal, can still make a connection and express their friendship, humor, and feelings. I know they genuinely look forward to my visit and the books I read to them.” Earlier this year, Polly donated over 100 books to Vita Living's Activity Center and continues to make a significant impact on clients' increased interest in reading and writing.

Since volunteering with the clients, Polly has learned that most people are compassionate and glad to get introduced to the IDD community. She states, “For many volunteers, the benefit of interacting with the clients at Vita Living is gaining understanding and familiarity with the IDD community. Another benefit is the response and appreciation you get from the clients.” No matter what one's work life balance is, she loves that Vita Living offers numerous opportunities for various types of volunteers to get involved in the IDD community. At some point, Polly worked full-time and couldn't visit the activity center as often as she'd like, but she made time to volunteer for major events and holidays. Polly was fortunate to have a family and job that supported her volunteer interests and understood how beneficial her volunteer work is to the IDD community. Polly emphasizes, “All of us thrive with friendship and companionship—the special needs clients at Vita Living are just like all of us.”

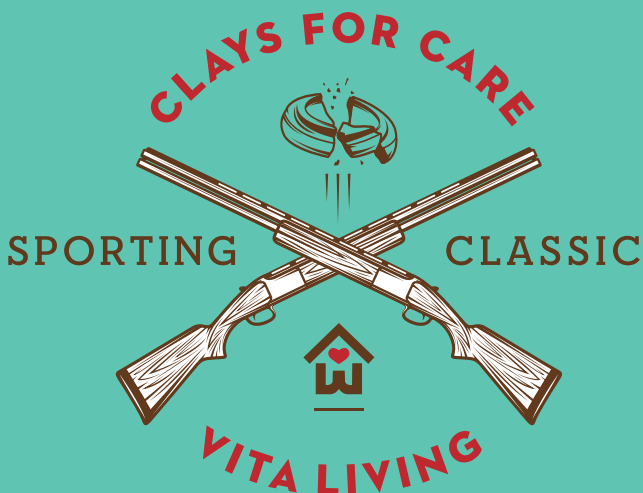
♥ **FOR INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT VITA LIVING VISIT**
vitaliving.org/volunteer

♥ **OR CONTACT**
[Danielle Malloy, Development Manager,](mailto:dmalloy@vitaliving.org)
[at dmalloy@vitaliving.org or 713-292-1748](mailto:dmalloy@vitaliving.org)

SAVE THE DATE
THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2024



PEARLS of WISDOM
FIESTA



SAVE THE DATE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2023

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VITAVISTAS



CREATIVE CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SUMMER 2023

no.64

Vita Living provides 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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