

## VITA LIVING INVESTS \$750,000

### IN INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENHANCE IDD OPERATIONS AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION



Vita Living is proud to announce a substantial investment of approximately \$750,000 in critical infrastructure and system improvements for its Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) operations in Houston, Texas. This investment is strategically aimed at building capacity, implementing innovative solutions, and enhancing the overall service delivery in line with the Federal Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) regulations, which emphasize full community access for individuals with IDD.

In response to these regulations, Vita Living is significantly upgrading its Day Program to incorporate the state-mandated Individual Skills and Socialization (ISS) modifications. These enhancements, made possible through the support of Vita Living's generous philanthropic partners and donors, will transform the Day Center by increasing community integration and lowering the client-to-staff ratios, ensuring more personalized attention and support for each individual.

Key modifications to the Day Program space include extensive demolition work, advanced security and fire alarm systems, new flooring materials, and the installation of windows, doors, and a patio.

Additionally, Vita Living has implemented Paycor, an all-in-one HR solution suite designed to streamline and manage all aspects of the agency's HR needs. This innovative tool will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of managing Vita Living's workforce, ensuring that staff can focus more on delivering high-quality care.

To further support the growing demand for services, Vita Living is also enhancing its investment in Task Master Pro (TMP). This IDD-specific software offers effortless reporting, intuitive workflows, and automated billing, tailored to meet the unique needs of IDD providers. By leveraging TMP, Vita Living aims to propel its services to the next level, ensuring better management and delivery of care.

These strategic investments underscore Vita Living's commitment to improving the quality of life for individuals with IDD, fostering greater community integration, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of its operations.

*These upgrades will create a more secure, accessible, and engaging environment, facilitating a broader range of personalized activities and community interactions for clients.*

# A FABULOUS TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

At The 2024 Pearls of Wisdom Fiesta 

Over 300 guests attended this year's event, raising over \$195,000 for Houston-area citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the Pearls of Wisdom Fiesta benefiting Vita Living. This year's Event Chairs, Pamela and Marc Perilloux and Bryan P. Smith, were outstanding chairing the event. Grateful thanks to our Board Member and Emcee Kip Alstaetter, and CEO, Joseph Cooper for leading the Invocation, Amegy Bank volunteers, and the National Charity League (Houston Hearts Chapter) volunteers!

The exciting program featured the opportunity to meet and learn about Mr. Chris Saddler, Executive Director of Operations, Harris County Precinct 2. Chris leads a team of over 180 staff members in the planning, operations, and day-to-day maintenance of twelve community centers, fifty-seven parks, and over 3,500 acres of park property as well as several trails. Chris was able to bring to life a new and inclusive gathering place - a park accessible to individuals of all ages and abilities, created to help residents with health and wellbeing. Chris and his team have also recently introduced new innovative programs such as Eden Grow Towers, a system that uses aeroponics to ensure optimal uptake and faster growth of fruits, vegetables, and flowers, as well as Agents of Discover, an augmented reality game designed to get people active and outside.

The silent auction was very exciting and Emcee, Kip Alstaetter, led the room full of enthusiastic bidders to purchase items from an Alex Bergman's Official Astros baseball cap worn in the 2022 World Series, to tickets to the Houston Zoo, and many pieces of fine jewelry! **We are profoundly grateful to our donors, who, because of their willingness to give, paved the way for Vita Living to provide services and support to our clients.**



Kristen Perrin and Chris Saddler



Pamela Perilloux,  
Bryan P. Smith &  
Kristen Perrin



Photography by Andy Phan



# RUSTY SEWELL

Rusty Sewell, a distinguished Shareholder in Winstead PC's Business Litigation group in The Woodlands, Texas, has been a valued board member of Vita Living since 2017. Rusty's personal connection to the mission of supporting the intellectually and developmentally disabled (IDD) stems from his Aunt Penny. As a child, Rusty frequently visited his aunt in a state-run facility in Lubbock, Texas. Later in life, Penny was fortunate to move to a group home in Amarillo, like those provided through Vita Living's residential program. This change allowed Rusty to spend more time with her, shaping his perception of the IDD community.

Rusty fondly recalls visiting Aunt Penny with his mother, taking her to lunch, and shopping for clothes. Despite Penny being non-verbal, Rusty's mother always treated and communicated with her as if no barriers existed, a philosophy mirrored by Vita Living. **This deep personal connection has fueled Rusty's dedication to the organization's mission.**

Leveraging his extensive community contacts, Rusty recently introduced Vita Living to the Megara Foundation, a Houston-based organization supporting arts therapy for individuals with behavior,



***His dedication as a board member and community ambassador significantly advances the organization's mission.***

neurocognitive, and genetic disorders. This connection enabled Vita Living to secure funding for an arts therapy pilot program in collaboration with Hope Stone, Inc., founded by dance veteran Jane Weiner. The program, with a vision of "Art for All," commenced in early 2024 at the Institute of Contemporary Dance Houston. Ten Vita Living participants enjoyed weekly 1-hour dance sessions, experiencing the supportive and inspirational power of music and movement. The pilot culminated in a May showcase, featuring performances by the clients and the resident professional dance company, leading to a second session scheduled for the fall.

Throughout his tenure, Rusty has actively supported Vita Living's annual Clays for Care clay shoot event and the Pearls of Wisdom Fiesta each May. Beyond his professional and board commitments, Rusty enjoys a fulfilling family life with his lovely wife and their two young boys.

Vita Living is deeply grateful for Rusty's unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions. Thank you, Rusty, for your exceptional support!

# JOEY'S JOURNEY



Meet Joey, a remarkable individual who has autism, OCD, and seizure disorders along with other behavioral challenges. Joey's path to finding the support he needed began when he discovered the CLASS services program (Community Living Assistance and Support Services). While the services were beneficial for Joey, it was apparent he needed additional support and residential services.

*Joey's father expressed his immense gratitude for the Vita Living staff, highlighting how they guided him through the challenging process with compassion and professionalism.*

Once Joey became eligible for HCS (Home and Community-Based Services), Joey's father embarked on a thorough search for the best possible home for Joey, visiting several facilities before Vita Living emerged as the standout choice. After careful consideration, Joey was able to secure residential services at Vita Living.

Since moving to Vita Living, Joey has flourished. The dedicated staff helped him establish productive routines and develop essential skills, significantly stabilizing his behavior. Joey now considers Vita Living his home, enjoying quality time with his family on weekends. His father shared that by the end of their weekend together, Joey eagerly looks forward to returning "home" to his Vita Living family.

A significant part of Joey's progress is attributed to the exceptional Clinical Services at Vita Living. The nursing staff played a crucial role in fine-tuning and regimenting Joey's medication schedule, leading to remarkable improvements in his overall well-being.

**Over the past year, Joey's progress has been nothing short of inspiring.** He recently attended and participated in his father's wedding ceremony, a milestone that showcases his incredible journey. Joey's story is a testament to how Vita Living meets each client where they are and promotes personal growth toward a safe, satisfying, and meaningful life in the community.

# HURRICANE BERYL

## AFTERMATH

Hurricane season poses significant dangers, especially for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. After many hours without power after the wrath of Hurricane Beryl on July 8th, all twenty of our group homes were re-energized and fully operational within a few short days. Even so, Vita Living was not spared from the devastating effects of Beryl, as evidenced by the photos.

Our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to restore normalcy to our residential and day programs. Due to the prolonged power outage and significant wind damage, we faced the challenging task of repairing damage to our homes and replenishing supplies.



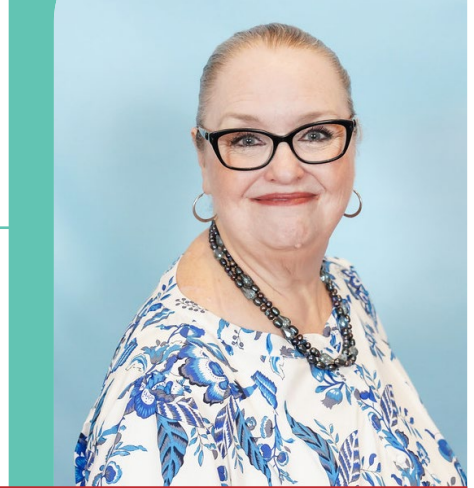
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# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Laura Wilmesmeier, our new Development Manager, has been with the company since May. She comes from a marketing/advertising background and did a four-year stint during the pandemic as an activity director in an assisted living facility...two jobs she discovered she has a passion for. Little did she know that when she interviewed for this position, all her favorite jobs and her family would all come together while working for Vita Living, Inc.

Laura just so happens to have a sister, Karen Wilmesmeier, who also is IDD. Laura has been her family's advocate for Karen since her parents passed away in 2018. Karen is 59 years old and is one of the most happy and positive people you will ever know and much beloved.



## Everything Comes Together Through Volunteering!

Part of Laura's position with Vita Living acts as the liaison between our Daycare's Activity Director and individuals and groups interested in volunteering which ultimately lead to her having the opportunity to also volunteer.

Laura has stepped in and is able to read to our Day Program participants once a week and has absolutely fallen in love with them.

## IN MEMORIAM

# RENÉE WALLACE

Renée had a long and distinguished career as a visionary leader in the field of intellectual developmental disabilities. She founded Vita Living, Inc in 1982 to create a community-based residence program in Houston for adults with intellectual disabilities, like her son Ricky Wallace. Since then, she was fortunate to see Vita Living blossom into the organization it is today.



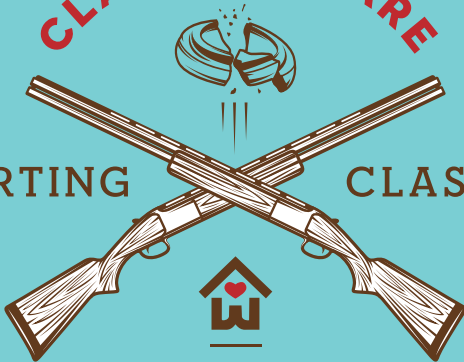
FOR THOSE DESIRING, MEMORIAL  
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RENÉE'S MEMORY AT [VITALIVING.ORG](https://www.vitaliving.org)

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# SAVE THE DATE

## PEARLS *of* WISDOM

# FIESTA

EVENT CHAIRS

Kristen and Drew Perrin, Pamela and  
Marc Perilloux and Bryan P. Smith

**THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2025**



# VITAVISTAS



CREATIVE CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

SUMMER 2024

no.65

*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 the community.*

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