



**“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”**

— Zig Ziglar



*This year we will be highlighting some special people and organizations who are making a difference in the lives of the disabled and their supportive families. We hope you make use of these connections as it is our hope that they will link our Special Needs Community in a more personal and supportive way.*

**build it and they will come!**

There is a new housing and support option coming soon for adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)! **Villa de Vida**, a 54-unit affordable housing project in Poway, California is two years away from opening it’s door and it can’t come soon enough for 54 adults with I/DD and their families. Like so many places in the country, San Diego County is desperate for more housing and support options for adults who want support, independence and community. Villa de Vida plans to offer this and more.

Villa de Vida was founded in response to the growing demand for permanent housing for adults with developmental disabilities, of which the majority are under the care of aging parents. Co-founder and Board Chair Ted Merchant knows this well as he is the father of an adult son with special needs. Ted says his dream for Villa de Vida is that an adult living there “can be comfortable in his or her own skin and have a rewarding life, a life with relationships both within Villa de Vida and within the surrounding community. We want the surrounding community to respect the people of Villa de Vida.” Ted has tirelessly guided this dream, along with Executive Director Hunter Christian, and the exciting announcement was made in October that the funding had come through from the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee for the credits necessary to build this wonderful community.

When Hunter was asked what she is most excited about she said, “I am most excited about having an affordable, apartment community for adults with developmental disabilities to live independently. I think that it is good for anyone to get out of their comfort zone and push themselves to the next level.



Moving into your own place is just that sort of step that can create a whole new and expansive life. This is a great gift that so many different groups are contributing to (City of Poway, County of San Diego, State of California and Villa de Vida, Inc.) and hopefully the start of a housing trend for our special needs community. I see a beautiful community of individuals that are having similar experiences being able to genuinely share their lives with each other.”

Though construction will take about two years Villa de Vida isn’t waiting to start making a difference in the Poway community. Currently they are looking to hire a Director of Services. This position will be in charge of development and delivery of a socialization/ activity program to clients in the Poway area prior to housing project opening. It’s this type of commitment and future thinking that gives Villa de Vida every opportunity to make the most impact possible! For more information please visit: [www.villadevida.org](http://www.villadevida.org).

**casa’s community education**

The men and women who call Casa de Amma home are some of the most inspiring people you will ever meet, and their stories of overcoming difficulty and discrimination abound. Many of our residents love an opportunity to talk about their experiences and as the result, have inspired others in the process. Unfortunately there are many stereotypes and stigmas surrounding adults with disabilities and many in our local communities have had very little interaction with this special population because often they are segregated and live in isolation. We want to give our residents the opportunity to showcase their abilities, unique insights and experiences in our efforts to help bridge that gap.

Casa’s Community Education program offers FREE presentations to schools, churches, organizations and the workplace and are facilitated by staff members and Casa residents — as they bring to light the realities of living with a disability. We allow people with disabilities to explain for themselves what their life is like and how they see themselves integrated into the community and allow community members to challenge their perceptions while providing an open forum for ongoing education and relationship building with the public regarding those with disabilities. Their stories and perspectives are sure to inspire and impact all who hear them.

Our presentation includes information on the difference between Intellectual and Developmental disabilities facilitated by Casa’s staff, followed by personal stories and discussions with our residents and an always informative question and answer session. Presentations can also be formatted to fit your organization’s specific needs and are designed to provide insight into how to best communicate and integrate special need adults into the community and workplace.



**Please consider hosting a Community Education Session at you school, church, organization or workplace.**

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[www.casadeamma.org](http://www.casadeamma.org)