



**“Act as
if what
you do
makes a
difference.
It does.”**

— William James

This year we will be highlighting some special people and organizations who are making a difference in the lives of those with disabilities 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.

hope is a wonderful thing

Real hope isn't just a wish for the future, it's an active pursuit of a desired outcome that optimistically believes things will come to pass. The inspiring story of **Benjamin's Hope**, located in Holland Michigan, is no different. Benjamin's Hope began with a realization that every parent of a child with developmental differences has to face: "One day, the school bus is going to stop coming." One day, the structure that helps my child connect, learn, and grow will no longer exist. When that day comes, every family wants their son or daughter to find a continuing sense of safety, purpose, and joy while also participating as a valued member of their greater community.

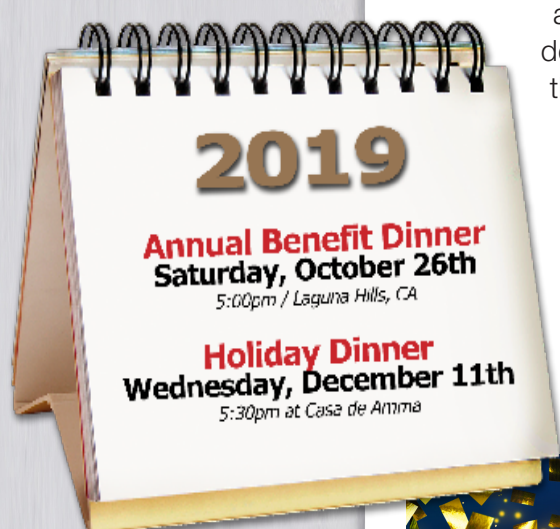
Krista Mason and her husband Dave found themselves starting to ponder this reality around the time their son Ben was ten years old. Ben had a diagnosis of autism that included nonverbal communication as his primary form of engaging the world. As Ben grew, the Masons recognized a need for their son and those like him to have a place to thrive as adults. What ensued was years of research, education, awareness building and development. Krista visited organizations around the nation that offered different care models for adults with diverse abilities. She met with experts in the medical, psychological, community health, legal and social work fields to determine the best path forward for opening an adult foster care nonprofit organization. Krista also spent a lot of time caring for Ben, witnessing what brought him delight and helped him access a sense of empowerment.

Krista explains, "Benjamin's Hope was built around a simple question: what makes life wonderful? We believe life is richer when all people share access to a safe home, purposeful work, a community they enjoy, and a church where every expression of worship is recognized and all participants are affirmed as vital." In her research, Krista learned there is no one-size-fits-all model for offering care, inspiring the person-centered approach of Benjamin's Hope. She also realized that among different care approaches, a farmstead model offered unique flourishing for autistic adults with pronounced sensory sensitivities.

Krista launched the "Live, Learn, Play, Worship" model to inspire the creation of Benjamin's Hope. While many organizations like Ben's Hope embrace a "Live, Learn, Play" model of care, she also wanted to ensure those with developmental differences seeking a home in the church could experience the full joy of participation in a faith community without judgement, isolation or a curriculum that removes them from the larger community.

Today, Benjamin's Hope serves as a debt-free 501 (c3) organization that not only offers a thriving neighborhood cherished as home by 30 adults with developmental differences, but also a community for Christ followers of all abilities, now 400 members strong. In addition, the 40 acres of Ben's Hope serve as a central gathering for the larger community – all to help ensure individuals of every ability can live, learn, play and worship in the ways that fit them best.

BENJAMIN'S HOPE



UPDATED
CasaU Schedule

SUNDAY

1:30pm – Fun in the Sun!
w/ Andrew
(Garden and walking)
3pm – Book Club
w/ Casey (Media Lounge)
7:30pm – Sports Talk
w/ Paula H. (Media Lounge)

MONDAY

10am – CasaGrows Club
w/ Anne from GoinNative
(Garden)
4:30pm – Casa Fit
w/ Hilary M. (Gym)
7pm – Pen Pals
w/ Paula L. (Media Lounge)

TUESDAY

4:30pm – Casa Fit
w/ Hilary M. (Gym)
6:30pm – Meditation
& Mindfulness
w/ Hilary M. (Basement)
7pm – Casa Creations
w/ Javi (Art Room)
8pm – Tech Time
w/ Andrew (Media Lounge)

WEDNESDAY

3pm – Improv Group
w/ Therese & Carol (Gym)
**3:30pm – CasaGrows
Club w/ Anne from
GoinNative (Garden)**
5pm – Spanish Class
w/ Javi (Media Lounge)
6:30pm – After Dinner Walk
& Talk w/ Therese

THURSDAY

4:30pm – Casa Fit
w/ Hilary M. (Gym)
6:30pm – Special
Projects Class w/ Hilary
(Media Lounge)

FRIDAY

10am – CasaGrows Club
w/ Anne from GoinNative
(Garden)

casaU grows by leaps and bounds!

It's nearly four years since **CasaU** was established and it has been a resounding success! This unique program provides a variety of educational opportunities so residents can become lifelong learners, stimulate their intellectual growth and further their social relationships. The curriculum includes classes, sessions and groups taught by Casa staff and outside professionals on a quarterly basis in the following categories: Life Skills, Education, Creative Arts, Health & Wellness. The teachers meet on a regular basis with Casa's Activities Coordinator to review the attendees progress.

Since CasaU began there has been an average of (16) classes offered each quarter and each class has averaged 6-10 attendees. That means on an average week CasaU offers over (100) resident hours, furthering lifelong education and social opportunities! This quarter some of the new classes such as **Tech-Time with Andrew** (receive one-on-one help with tech questions), **Sports Talk with Paula** (discuss the weeks football games and various sports), **Book Club with Casey** (listen to the audiobook Forest Gump), **Meditation & Mindfulness with Hilary** (learn mindfulness and anxiety reducing techniques), **Improv Group with Carol/Therese** (show off acting skills with fun skits) and **Spanish Class with Javi** (learn Espanol).

CasaU has benefitted our staff as well. Classes taught by existing full time staff has provided an additional source of expression for them, enhancing their customary roles. This has increased job satisfaction and created an additional connection with other staff members and our residents. CasaU has proven to be a great addition to our program and a way to focus on learning while fostering social opportunities.

For a list of the UPDATED schedule check out all the classes on the left:



www.casadeamma.org