

the casa Connection



resident profile

Caitlin Northrup has lived at Casa de Amma for four years. If you come to visit you will often see her sitting in the lobby talking with friends or waiting for a staff member. If you talk to Caitlin you will quickly realize she has two great loves – being with her family and acting.

Caitlin was raised in San Diego and she visits her mom, brother and the rest of the family often. Caitlin's mom travels often for work so she heads to her old home to watch the family dogs every couple of months. When asked about it Caitlin said, "I like being at my home alone. I walk the dogs every day and visit my grandparents. But after a while I miss my friends at Casa." Caitlin has become very independent with taking the hour long train ride from San Juan Capistrano to San Diego and is proud that she can do it on her own now.

At Casa, Caitlin can often be found helping her friends with a variety of tasks such as with their laundry or talking to them if they are upset. When applicant visitors come she is the first to volunteer to take them to Starbucks or help with their schedule. Caitlin is also the official resident tour guide for all people interested in Casa. She proudly shows them her apartment (which is always tidy) and explains how life at Casa works.

Caitlin has been an actress for many years and even has a SAG card. Most notably she was an extra in the TV show Veronica Mars. She often tells stories of what it is like to be on set and rub elbows with the stars! Whether on a TV set or sitting around the living room at Casa Caitlin's infectious smile and kind heart make her quick friends anywhere she goes. We all hope she calls Casa her home for many years to come!



dreams really do come true!

by Executive Director Aaron Vorell

It was about two weeks ago that Lisa came running into the office and loudly exclaimed, "My dream has come true!" I asked her what she meant and she said, "Living at Casa de Amma- It was my dream and it came true!" Her smile was covering her face and she let out a loud laugh. Lisa moved into Casa

about six months ago. She had been living with her parents but she has also been in other programs that serve adults with disabilities. I asked Lisa to explain more about what she likes about Casa.

Lisa responded by saying, "Living in my own apartment was my dream. Now it's come true." Lisa explained that Casa was better than all the other programs she had lived in. She said, "Casa is better because I have my own apartment and I have good friends. I also have a good job and I get money."

Since Lisa has moved in she has quickly made many friends, including her roommate Rachel. They quickly began calling each other "Best Friends" and doing most activities together. When they each return from work they are there to greet each other with a smile and high five. Both ladies said this is the first time they have had a roommate they liked and they often can be found hanging out together in their apartment listening to music or watching TV.

Lisa recalled her experience of visiting Casa for the first time by saying, "After I visited I loved it. I told my mom and dad I really liked it and I wanted to move in." Because Casa had a waiting list Lisa had to wait over a year but eventually a spot opened up. We are all glad it did because Lisa is a great addition to the Casa community! No one is happier though than Lisa and as she will tell you, her dream has now come true!



did you know?

Did you know that Casa de Amma draws residents from around the United States, even from around the world? Even though many of our residents are from California, about half come from the East Coast, Midwest and even a few residents from Mexico and Columbia. If you ask the families why they chose to have their kids live so far away they will quickly tell you because there is no place like Casa de Amma. It's true, you can look throughout the country and even the world and you will find that Casa de Amma is a unique model program for adults with special needs. These adults with disabilities often fall through the cracks of traditional services and all too often end up isolated, vulnerable and lonely. But at Casa de Amma it's different!

Did you know... that Casa de Amma's program relies on both the generosity of individuals and the community?

Please consider making an end-of-the-year (tax deductible) donation so we may continue to offer support services to our very special population!

2012 Wish List

Please consider these items for an end-of-the-year donation!

Kurig Coffee machine (Model B3000SE or B150) for our "Casa Coffee Shop".

We need a commercial model as it will be used daily.

Flat Screen TV to display pictures and videos at Casa's entrance.

Digital photo frames.

Raised bed / supplies to grow vegetables in the grotto.

Three-wheel bike(s) for residents who are unable to ride two-wheel models.

heartfelt holidays!

The Holidays are special to me because we celebrate the Lord's birthday, open gifts, go to church and sing Christmas songs. (Meghan)

MEGHAN

We make latkas and open gifts. (Rachel)

RACHEL

I love eating the good food! (Lisa)

LISA

My wish for the Holidays is ... No more war and no more bad weather. (Meghan)

For the poor to get better. (Krista)
For myself and my family to be healthy. (Lisa)

I am most thankful for ...
All my friends at Casa! (Rachel)
My parents loving me. (Krista)
My friends. (Lisa)

KRISTA

when they can't live alone but want a life of their own

a home is more than just a house

What is the true reflection of a home? by Matt O'Hara

More than just four walls that provide shelter, a home provides an environment of safety, support, care, and friends. Casa supplies these to our residents in a way that is indescribable until you walk through the doors on any given evening. Upon entrance you will find friends chatting in the lobby about their day, planning for the upcoming weekend, and even at times enjoying the pastime of gossip and getting into disagreements—after all, this is a home. As a typical evening progresses 35 different personalities shine. As in any home, each individual contributes: preparing utensils for dinner, assisting with Happy Hour snack, entertaining in the lobby by singing or telling jokes, or simply asking how another's day was. All of these aspects combine to provide a loving and caring environment; a home. This loving and caring environment has allowed many of our residents to flourish socially as well as interpersonally. Residents who once may have had difficulty advocating for themselves find this home a safe environment to test the waters in regards to their abilities, and with time, do so more often and more easily. With the encouragement of their friends (fellow Casa residents) and staff each resident is given support in any and all areas that require it. With this unconditional support each resident has the opportunity to excel and increase both ability and independence.

Matt O'Hara has been working at Casa de Amma for over five years. He has held many positions including Residential Coordinator and Medical Coordinator. Two years ago he was promoted to Program Manager and has become a lead supervisor and key figure in Casa's success. Matt is skilled at resident interactions and regularly helps them work through their many social issues. Matt is a great team player and has shown a willingness to help Casa in many ways. Daily he displays the "Casa Way" by patiently and attentively providing individualized support to all the residents. It's a common sight to see a resident or two in his office, working through a problem they have. Inevitably when they leave they have a smile on their face and they feel as though Matt has listened, cared, and helped them solve their issue in a meaningful and individualized manner. Matt is a shining example of the quality staff at Casa de Amma as he works tirelessly to promote independence for each resident.



music to our ears!

Last year we requested donations for a Music Therapist to come to Casa to offer music classes for our residents.

Violet Dorner read the request and stepped up, offering us a donation that allowed us to hire a Music Therapist for a limited time.



Since then we found a qualified Music Therapist and she began two months ago. The residents have enjoyed learning more about music. Many of them requested the group focus on lyric writing and writing a song of their own. Each week they have been practicing writing lyrics that are a personal expression and reflect their own thoughts and beliefs. Just two weeks ago they each made a demo video and are working on making a finished recording they can give to friends and family. The benefits of Music Club have been many including a new appreciation for music, the ability to express themselves in a unique manner, and furthering their friendships with each other just to name a few. But most of all each participant has benefitted by increasing their self-esteem as they see they are capable of writing their own song.

As each of them recalls their experience they smile and their pride in their effort is evident. And that is music to our ears! *We need donations to help fund our music and art therapists so our residents can continue to benefit from these programs. Please send your (tax deductible) contributions to Casa de Amma and designate music-art therapist on your check. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 which will keep these programs alive!*

Casa de Amma is a unique apartment community, fostering growth and independence in adults with special needs. We provide a broad spectrum of vocational, residential and educational opportunities in a responsive and caring environment. Our programs are designed to meet the needs of each resident and provide a fulfilling experience for the entire family — because we understand families are happier when their member with special needs is living the best life possible. We host programs for parents, siblings and others whose lives are touched by a person with special needs and encourage families to remain supportive and involved. Our staff includes highly skilled professionals who provide responsive and effective support services to our very special population.

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