



Villa Advocacy: The Fight for Intellectual/Developmental Disability Rights Continues

Article By Thalia Stoffers, Villa Esperanza Services Special Events Coordinator

Hundreds of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) chanted “Keep the promise!” and “Give us funding!”; their goal – demanding funds they were already promised. On May 31st, over 15 Villa adult day services individuals and staff joined the rally that lined over two street blocks in front of Senator Susan Rubio’s West Covina office. The rally came as a response to Governor Gavin Newsom’s May Revise Budget proposal – a proposal that aimed to delay \$1 billion in funding for services that support people with I/DD and their families.

“Government funding cuts for our programs can have several direct impacts on the services provided and the individuals who rely on them,” said Villa’s Director of Adult Day Services, Michelle Lam. “The delay of this needed funding can lead to diminished service availability, lower quality of care, increased burdens on staff/ families, and significant setbacks in the health, well-being, and independence of individuals we serve.”

Frustrations about the proposed funding cuts were exacerbated by California’s history of funding I/DD services and previous promises put in place. In 1969, California passed the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act which entitled any person with a developmental disability and their families to services that would help them live an inclusive life. In 2021, the Lanterman Coalition pushed for higher reimbursement rates for said service providers and the state of California agreed to implement them in 2024. Now, Governor Newsom’s proposed funding delay jeopardizes the stability of California’s I/DD service system as a whole.

The funding in question would be applied to the over 400,000 Californians with I/DD who rely on services like Villa



Frederick J., Villa individual served participates in the West Covina rally.

to live enriching lives. For several Villa participants, this means adult day programs where they are able to gain real life experiences. Despite the seriousness of the issue, the rally gave many of Villa's adult day program participants an opportunity to participate in local politics. "I enjoyed going [to the rally] because it was a way for me to support my community," said Community Integration Program (CIP) participant Carolina D. "CIP increased my confidence and helped give me a better life. The staff are my support; they help me when I need them."

In order for Villa to upkeep its valued programs, the proper funding must be in place. "An increase in government funding for our services can bring substantial positive changes to the programs and the individuals who rely on them," said Lam. "It would allow for hiring more quality staff, reducing caseloads, and enabling more personalized and attentive care. Overall, the funding would support a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals we serve."

The Final Results

In the month of June, over 20,000 Californians took to attending local protests, emailing, posting on social media, and contacting legislators and the Governor directly to demand the promised funding. After weeks of consistent advocacy from providers, individuals served, and their families, a final budget decision was made. A week before the Governor's decision deadline of July 1st, California legislators and Governor Newsom reached a budget deal agreeing to delay funding by 6 months instead of one year, with the full amount of funding to be instituted.

While the 6-month delay will impact service providers' ability to maintain staff and provide for their programs, this result is a triumphant marker of the impact of advocacy efforts. The final budget deal signifies the importance of advocating for change and how impactful



Villa adult day program individuals served and staff chanting at the West Covina rally.

Villa's voice can be. A notion not unfamiliar to Villa's history - the founding of Villa was rooted in advocacy. In 1961, a group of Pasadena mothers joined together and were vocal in their community about how their special needs children deserved quality care and education and

"CIP increased my confidence and helped give me a better life."

together, they founded one of the first schools in Los Angeles County for children with Down syndrome.

Over 60 years later, Villa's advocacy work continues to be proven successful in driving change. This victory would not have been made possible without the efforts and unwavering support from Villa's community who helped us demand change. As time goes on and other advocacy issues present themselves, we encourage each and every member of the Villa community to join us in using our voices to fulfill Villa's steadfast mission of providing love, care, and hope for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families.



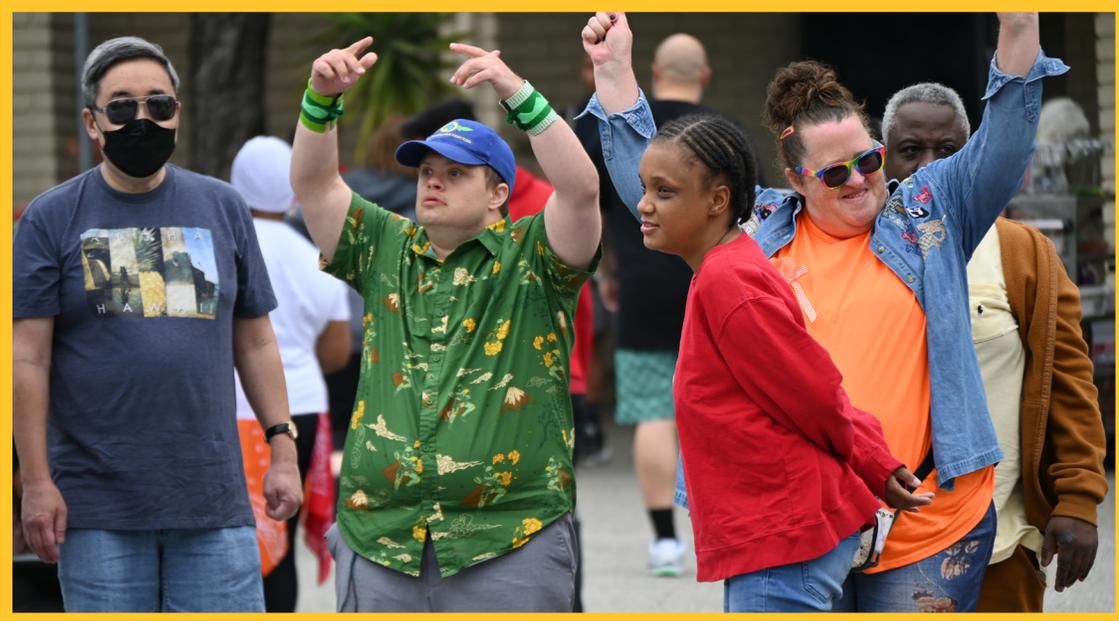
GET INVOLVED - ADVOCATE!

If you are interested in finding out general advocacy information or ways to support Villa please visit: advocacy.VillaES.org

To join Villa's advocacy emailing list, please message Thalia at tstoffers@VillaES.org.

Adult Programs Bring Color on a Cloudy Day!

Article By Jordan Paggett, Villa Esperanza Services Community Engagement Coordinator



Adult day services individuals from our three programs lining up for the next activity at the Color Team Games.

Get ready to kick off summer with a bang! In late May, the Pasadena adult day services programs hit it out of the park with an epic Color Team Games. Despite the overcast weather, everyone's spirits were high as they brightened the day with laughter and engagement. Villa's Adult Day Program (ADP) pulled out all the stops as the host at their Westminster Church location, the perfect place for a large gathering, bringing together folks from our Community Integration Program and Dimensions Day Program for a day of fun and friendship. It was all about mixing and mingling, meeting new faces, and expanding your social circle. The games were the perfect chance for our adult persons-served to get together and have fun.

Getting together has been an annual tradition for our day programs before the pandemic. The event, which once saw kickball games or basketball games between programs, had a unique and vibrant transformation this year. Montrey, Program Coordinator for ADP shared, "We decided to do something different by mixing up the staff members and persons served from each program and teaming up in primary colors."

The Color Team Games featured a variety of colorful team-based activities, including relay races, three color hops, Move You Lose dancing, and a friendly game of musical chairs. Each team was assigned a color - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, or purple - and participants wore outfits matching the team color to show their team spirit. The competition was close as teams battled it out in each event, with cheers and laughter filling the air. One individual, Jacinto from our Community Integration Program, told his staff, "This is more fun than the L.A. County Fair!" High praise that was definitely felt throughout the event as others asked for more occasions like this one.

In addition to the games, the BBQ spread was a labor of love from the staff, with delicious burgers, hot dogs, and cooling beverages to go around. A few ADP persons served were heard raving about the food and said the games were a lot of fun. The event provided a great opportunity for not only those we serve to meet other program participants but also for our staff, who were grouped together for different roles. From set up to game duties they came together to make the day perfect. Overall, the Color Team Games were a huge success and showcased the importance of social interaction and teamwork in creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all involved.

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"It's About To Get Wild" Prom 2024



The Villa School prom was a roaring success this year! The "It's About to get Wild" theme brought the jungle to life in our S. Mark Taper Foundation Multipurpose Room, thanks to the creative efforts of our students and staff. The room was transformed into a vibrant party space with colorful animal cutouts that the students helped color and plenty of photo backdrops for capturing memories. The dance floor was packed, with a talented DJ spinning all the latest hits. It was a night to remember for everyone who attended!