

All the News Worth  
Chirping About from  
Villa Esperanza Services  
Spring 2022 Newsletter



Providing Love, Care  
and Hope for Individuals  
with Intellectual/  
Developmental Disabilities  
and their Families since 1961



**Claudia smiles brightly as she waits for her peers at Dimensions Adult Day Program to go on their community walk.**

## Claudia's Charisma Shines Through!

*Article By Lindsey Harrison, Villa Esperanza Services Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator*

**O**n a cool spring day at Dimensions Adult Day Program, Villa Esperanza participant Claudia is hard at work doing her "paperwork." In front of her is a coloring book for adults, with a series of steady lines on each page in every color imaginable.

"She likes to do what she sees me doing," Claudia's skill instructor Angelica explains. "If I'm doing paperwork and updating files, we'll bring her book out so that she can do her 'paperwork,' too."

Claudia glances up from her page and points out the window where a group is forming outside for a community walk.

"Not yet," Angelica tells her. "We have to wait until everyone is ready to go." Claudia frowns, but accepts the redirection when Angelica brings her attention back to the page she has been working on. After a minute of adding additional lines, Claudia glances up again, frustration at the delay all but forgotten as she shows off her work with a sunny smile.

Interactions like this are great signs of growth for Claudia. "She can get upset and have outbursts. Before, she'd have behaviors two times a week," Claudia Cortez, Dimensions Program Manager, shared. "Of course there would be a reason



**Mimicking her skills instructor, Angelica, Claudia does her "paperwork" in bright, bold colors.**

for an outburst, but sometimes we wouldn't know what was upsetting her."

Instead of communicating what was frustrating her, Claudia would become argumentative and bossy. If her peers were working on an activity, Claudia would need to be in control and dictate how it was done. If someone at the day program was making too much noise, Claudia herself would become aggravated and short tempered. Teaching patience and stronger communication skills became a high priority.

With time and patience, Claudia has improved. As her relationship with the Dimensions staff grew, the easier it became to help redirect her. While still strong-willed and opinionated, Claudia also became more patient. Cortez shared, "We're seeing more communication and fewer behaviors. Claudia has improved a lot."

The more Claudia improved, the more her sweet and loving personality came to the forefront. Everyone around her agrees it's impossible not to love her. "Claudia is very

gentle, very happy, very lovable," Claudia's sister, Angie, described. "She loves to be around people, music, dance, and she likes to sing. She is also very kind to children. When my grandchildren are around, she likes to hold them, kiss them, and comfort them when they cry."

Claudia's lovable nature is the first thing her family and staff will point out about her. From her sunny smile to her sweet disposition, it is hard not to find Claudia charismatic and engaging. She bonded quickly with the team at Dimensions working with her, opening up and starting to share her hobbies.

Community walks are a particular favorite. When at Dimensions, Claudia will be pushed in her wheelchair with music playing softly in the background. With her family, she often takes walks at a local mall. Claudia engages with the world around and is friendly with everyone she meets.

"She's very intelligent and very kind," Angie said with a small laugh. "When she goes to the mall, the people that work in the stores know her and they all say hello. She is super friendly."

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Claudia continues to grow and charm the team at Dimension's Day Program and has found a supportive community that helps her sunny nature to thrive.

"She is very happy at Villa," Angie noted. A sentiment which is echoed almost word for word by Cortez, who shared, "We are very happy that she is at Villa."

## Villa is Hiring!



If you are looking for a meaningful job that makes a difference in the lives of others, we want to hear from you! Villa Esperanza Services is hiring for multiple positions across our organization. Eligible Villa employees enjoy multiple benefits, and we are looking to fill full-time, part-time, and weekend positions. On the job training is offered for many positions, no prior experience needed! Visit our Career page to learn more! [Careers.VillaES.org](https://careers.villaes.org)



# The Fong Twins Back in Action

Article By Lindsey Harrison, Villa Esperanza Services Volunteer and Special Events Coordinator



**Twin brothers, Tyler (left) and Noah (right) Fong, both attend Villa Esperanza School. After a year of receiving school services over Zoom, they had a chance to meet some of their staff face to face for the first time.**

Villa Esperanza School has returned to in-person instruction, and our teachers, aides, and therapists are enjoying having students back on campus. It's particularly exciting to see students who they have known mostly through remote school services, like twin brothers Tyler and Noah.

Although both brothers have been at Villa School for many years, Occupational Therapy Assistant Laurie McEnery became their treating clinician in 2020 when the pandemic moved Occupational Therapy (OT) services to online teletherapy sessions and caseloads had to be shifted.

"Not the easiest way to get to know students," Laurie acknowledged. "However, Mom and Dad were a great help. They were big in teaching me about what the boys were accustomed to and how to understand what they needed."

"The twins are very different," Laurie continued. "Tyler consistently has a higher level of energy, while Noah can have a lower level of energy." During their OT sessions, Laurie provides appropriate activities to help each of the boys stay calm and focused to support them in accessing academics and other classroom and campus experiences. Noah and Tyler receive individual OT sessions to address their unique sensory and emotional needs.

Returning to in-person OT services is a welcome return to normal, but has its own set of challenges. To start with, many OT sessions are now provided outside to minimize risk to both the students and their therapists.

"It can be visually distracting to a student with sensory needs," Laurie said. "But there are benefits to the change in scenery. The kids have more open space to provide regulating movement breaks and we have access to the playground equipment during sessions."

Noah is working on his environmental awareness and how to maneuver himself to stay safe, and Laurie uses the active playground swings to present real-time opportunities for Noah to practice. By priming Noah with picture flashcards and by providing verbal cues for "safe" and "not safe," she supports Noah to become more aware of his body and potential obstacles.

For Tyler, Laurie addresses his typing skills while seated at an outdoor table after first having him engage in "heavy work" activities requiring his muscles and joints to work against resistance. After completing bounce passes with a weighted ball, Tyler is able to focus on the iPad screen. As Laurie winds down Tyler's OT session, he listens as she gives careful instructions on how to type out two simple sentences. When he is done, she reads off what Tyler typed.

"My name is Tyler. My picture will be in the Chirp."

## VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES DIRECTORY

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#### Villa Esperanza School

626-449-2919, ext. 119

#### Hjelte-Phillips

#### Speech & Language Center

626-449-2919, ext. 176

#### Occupational Therapy Clinic

626-449-2919, ext. 140

#### Community Integration

#### Program (CIP)

626-449-2919, ext. 172

#### Employment Services

626-449-2919, ext. 161

#### Adult Residential Program

626-449-2919, ext. 113

#### Independent Living Skills (ILS)

626-449-2919, ext. 108

#### Dimensions Adult Day Program

1990 E. Walnut St.  
Pasadena, CA 91107  
626-346-9109, ext. 103

#### Adult Day Program (ADP)

1757 N. Lake Ave.  
Pasadena, Ca 91104  
626-398-4435, ext. 106

### WEST REGION

Community Conscience  
Human Services Center  
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Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

#### Main Number

805-446-1939

#### Community Integration

#### Program (CIP)

805-446-1939, ext. 129

#### Employment Services

805-446-1939, ext. 126

#### Independent Living Skills (ILS)

805-446-1939, ext. 129

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## VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES

*Where Hope is Hard at Work for Individuals  
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2116 East Villa Street  
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[www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org](http://www.VillaEsperanzaServices.org)



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May is Better Speech and Hearing Month! Villa's Hjelte-Phillips Speech and Language Center is celebrating this month by sharing what their students love to "taco" about. Students like Andrew, who is learning how to talk about his favorite subjects with friends. "In speech sessions, Andrew has made great progress in his ability to overcome the anxiety of being near people, and traveling to new places," Speech Therapist Ariel shares. "Now he is able to travel many places on campus and with support of his therapist he can talk to students and staff about his interests."



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