



Communiqué

from the parent's perspective / 2004 to 2009

Can you imagine having your son / daughter move out, maybe for the 1st or 2nd time, and move across the country, to live with strangers? That was the feeling for 5 of our first residents' parents. In April of 2004 they signed up to have their son / daughter move in to Casa de Amma, a brand new program in San Juan Capistrano where young adults with special needs would live in their own apartment!

Checking in with those very same parents, who put their faith and trust in Casa de Amma 5 years ago, we thought you might enjoy hearing their perspective! "Ground was broken and our son, a Midwesterner at heart – took the very brave step of coming to California to live in his own apartment, to make new **friends**, to have a steady, responsible **job** and to have a **social life** all of his own. For us, we could not have let go, three thousand miles away, without being confident in the founders' principles, in the staff's **compassion**, and in the other families' warmth and caring toward all residents. This is a wonderful experience and our son now lives in the kind of community we always **dreamed of**."

"Casa de Amma was my **hope** for a community that would assist and allow our daughter to thrive as an independent, compassionate and contributing young lady. She could not have matured under my wing like she has at Casa. We have seen a young girl grow into a wonderful young woman. We say thank you Casa de Amma, you are a **blessing**." "My daughter moved in – it will be 5 years in September. That was the first night I slept like a rock – the first night of my daughter at Casa. I knew that I didn't have to worry anymore – that the front door would be locked, guests would be screened, **friends** would abound and healthy food and great counselors would be available. I have never regretted this decision nor has our daughter. **Thank you** God for these wonderful people and this wonderful place that our daughter truly calls **home**."

"When we brought our daughter to California, it was with the hope that though, limited in life skills, she would have an opportunity to gain a level of self-sufficiency. Over the past 5 years we have seen our daughter develop a strong sense of self, become a good self-advocate and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment attaining a life that was only a dream before. Before Casa de Amma, we were our daughter's entire family; with Casa de Amma, we are all part of a **larger family**."

then & now

2004

Staff at Casa de Amma - 9
Residents at Casa de Amma - 5
Casa de Amma Program Goal -
To Provide Individual Support
In A Caring Community!

2009

Staff at Casa de Amma - 23
Residents at Casa de Amma - 32
Casa de Amma Program Goal -
To Provide Individual Support
In A Caring Community!

build it and they will come!

Casa de Amma started out as an idea formed by a few families who were looking for a home for their young adult with special needs. At first the idea seemed too good to be true. Then step by step the Leatherby family began to make the idea a reality. By 2003 an empty lot in San Juan Capistrano was purchased and plans began for Casa de Amma. Throughout all the meetings with builders, architects and developers one theme emerged from the Leatherby family - they wanted Casa de Amma to be a home. A home for adults with disabilities where they could have friends, receive support in all areas of life, and belong to a larger community that valued and respected them.

In April, 2004, Casa de Amma opened its doors to the first 5 residents. Excitement and hope abounded as everyone began to realize this dream come true. A home where adults with special needs could live, work, learn important life skills, form valued relationships, and create a life they are proud of. In 5 years Casa de Amma has grown to capacity with 32 residents. Much has changed in the last 5 years. There are more staff, more program options and many more families directly affected by Casa de Amma. However, the mission of Casa de Amma has remained the same- to provide support to adults with disabilities in an individual manner as they live their lives.

There is much to be excited about in the future including constant improvements and new ideas of how to better serve and support each resident. With time the residents and staff continue to get to know each other better, making it easier to work through any difficulty or struggle. New friendships are formed while others are strengthened. Residents enjoy new accomplishments such as anniversaries at their jobs, paying their bills independently, and learning to ride the bus with friends. The dream that began 8 years ago is very much alive and well- it has gone from dream to reality!



in the beginning

Casa's First Residents Answer The Question:

What Do You Like About Casa?



Melinda Dorner

"I like the opportunity to have the most independence possible and holding on to my job at Pet Suites for three years."



Katie Quagliata

"Some friends have moved away, but new ones have moved in."



Meghan Finn

"I love having the freedom, making friends, and learning new things."



Saphoura Nourafchan

"It's different. I like the activities and grocery shopping."



Doug Leatherby

"Everything! The friends I've made mean a lot to me!"



Will Cowan

"I like playing basketball and hanging out with my friends."

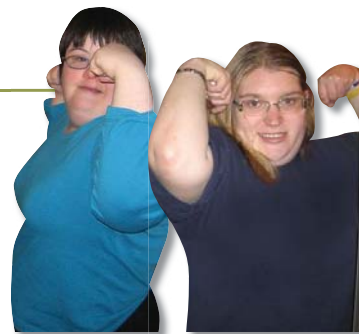


Kathryn Crowley

"I love paying bills on my own, Thursday night book club, and going out with my friends on the weekend activities. I have so many friends that I can't even count them all!"

casa fit is a hit!


We were surprised, maybe even stunned. It was a Thursday and the first week of Casa Fit, our new exercise and nutrition program at Casa de Amma. We were trying to round up some residents to participate in the hour long workout session led by personal trainer Hillary Mann. Like most exercise groups, we figured it would take a bit of coaxing and motivation to get people down in the gym.



The group started at 4:30pm and it was now 4:20pm. No one was around. Could everyone be hiding from us? A bit frustrated, another staff and I went down to the gym to tell the trainer we hadn't gotten anyone yet. Then we saw it - the gym was full of 12 residents, already working out, laughing, and having a great time. We didn't have to remind, encourage or pressure. We were stunned!

What has caused the excitement for Casa Fit? I am sure it has something to do with our wonderful trainer, Hillary Mann. It could also be that the residents are having fun when they work out together. The Fit Buck tokens they earn for each workout, which can be redeemed for various gifts, don't hurt either. Whatever it is, one thing is for sure - Casa Fit is a hit!

Each week we offer 3-4 workout sessions led by our certified personal trainer, Hillary Mann. In addition, we offer a weekly nutrition support group. This group focuses on supporting residents in making healthy choices and learning more about how nutrition affects their lives. Please consider supporting this important program by contributing a tax deductible gift to Casa de Amma.



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

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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through the doors

by jessica anderson

With anxious anticipation, like someone on their birthday, staring wide-eyed at the myriad of wrapped presents, we await Casa de Amma's five year anniversary. It is hard to believe that what started as an aspiration for adults with special needs has evolved into a reality that has brought with it immense purpose, bountiful opportunities, and intangible value. Casa de Amma is more than just an exquisite building, it is a home, and even more, it is a family. Through the catalyst I am blessed to call my desk, I daily see our nuclear bond growing stronger. Whether it is **Steve** assisting **Guy** with his luggage onto the ACCESS bus, **Sabrina** conveying how she pays her bills, **Nathan** complementing **Shari**, the art class making a welcome home **Jorge** banner, or **Doug** articulating to **Leslie** that she has touched his heart, Casa is rooted in relationships. Each resident, united with staff, molds Casa into the unique entity it is, consistently radiating grounded character, hope, and unwavering determination. After the helium escapes the balloons, the decorations are stored, and the fireworks wane, we are left to ponder what the future will bring. Over the months that have flown by, I've learned of what has come before, from the initial ground-breaking and five residents to a developed program with 32 residents. Life is like a teeter-totter, it brings with it a multitude of ups and downs, but one thing is for certain, Casa de Amma is a community, which offers independence, encouragement, and quality. It is all about heart!

