



The New Landscape of Child Welfare

About Vista Del Mar

Mission

Vista Del Mar provides a trauma-responsive continuum of services to empower children, youth, and families in Southern California to lead fulfilling lives.

Commitment to Equity

Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services takes great pride in providing exceptional programs and services for children and families throughout LA County. We serve the most vulnerable in Los Angeles, many of whom have faced multi-generational inequities.

Vista Del Mar believes in the equality of BIPOC. We recognize the struggles of injustice and inequity and stand in the breach to fight them. We will continue to strongly advocate to change

racist systems that oppress members of our community. We will work collaboratively to expand programs and curricula that address social injustice while providing our community the tools to contribute to the ongoing movement towards equity and inclusion for all in our society.

Our actions will be louder than our words. Vista Del Mar commits to meeting these moments.



Values

Vista Del Mar is guided by core values of empowerment, equity, and excellence.

1. We consider the youth and families we work with to be equal partners in pursuing improved wellbeing and individual, family, and community equity and empowerment.
2. We provide services and facilitate opportunities without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender expression, sexual orientation, religious preferences, or physical ability. Vista Del Mar actively advances equal opportunity, equitable access, mutual respect, collaboration, and teamwork.
3. We are committed to excellence in all aspects of our work. Our goal is to deliver innovative, best-in-class services and build a sustainable organization that consistently improves wellbeing among our clients, their families, and their respective communities.

Vision

VDM envisions a community where all children and families are equipped and prepared to live productive, fulfilling lives.

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VISTA DEL MAR

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Entered as 2nd Class matter at Los Angeles, California and at additional mailing offices.

The View is a publication of Vista Del Mar. Vista Del Mar is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, the Western Association of Schools & Colleges, and a member of California Alliance of Child and Family Services. Vista is a beneficiary of The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles and the American Association of Children's Residential Centers.

Magazine Design & Layout
by Wildhirt | Fowlkes Graphics, Inc.
For more information go to:
www.wildhirtfowlkesgraphics.com
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A Message from Our President & CEO



Dear Vista Del Mar Community,

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of children's mental health services, one truth remains constant: the need for compassionate, accessible, and effective care has never been greater. Across the country, we are witnessing a dramatic increase in children and adolescents experiencing anxiety, depression, trauma-related disorders, and substance use challenges. The demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment has surged, yet systemic challenges continue to create barriers to care.

In March 2024, California voters approved Proposition 1, a measure designed to enhance the state's behavioral health system. This proposition authorizes the issuance of up to \$6.38 billion in bonds to fund housing for veterans and individuals experiencing homelessness. Additionally, it reallocates approximately \$140 million annually from existing county mental health, drug, and alcohol treatment funds to state control. This shift aims to allow counties to focus more on housing and personalized support services.

It's important to note that while Proposition 1 aims to address critical housing needs for vulnerable populations, the reallocation of funds may impact existing mental health services, including those for children. Counties will need to navigate these changes to ensure that essential services continue to be provided to all residents in need. Consequently, counties may need to adjust their budgets and seek alternative funding sources to maintain current levels of mental health services for children and other populations.

At Vista Del Mar, we are committed to being part of the solution. Our work with system-involved youth, children with complex trauma, and families in need is more critical than ever. As policies, funding structures, and best practices shift, we are embracing innovation—expanding telehealth services, integrating trauma-informed care models, and forging new partnerships to enhance our continuum of care.

One of the most significant shifts in the mental health field is the movement toward early intervention and community-based services. Research confirms that timely support can change the trajectory of a child's life. That is why we are deepening our commitment to school-based mental health programs, outpatient therapy, substance use disorder treatment, and wraparound services that provide holistic support for both children and families.

We also recognize the need to break down stigma and address disparities in access to care. Mental health and substance use disorders do not discriminate, yet marginalized communities often face the greatest obstacles to receiving support. Vista Del Mar is dedicated to ensuring that every child—regardless of background, socioeconomic status, or past experiences—has the opportunity to heal, grow, and thrive.

Our strength lies in our community, and we are grateful for your continued support. Whether you are a clinician, educator, advocate, donor, or partner, your involvement makes a difference. Together, we can reimagine a future where mental health and substance use disorder services are not just reactive but proactive, where healing is not a privilege but a right, and where every child has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

With gratitude,

Lena Wilson, J.D.
President/CEO

AROUND *Vista*

► LAB Sports Day

Another annual Leadership Advisory Board (LAB) Sports Day in the books at Vista Del Mar! This annual event continues to be a huge success in bringing our LAB and Board Members, Vista youth and staff, and our amazing supporters together to enjoy fitness and connecting on Vista's beautiful field. "Seeing the kids smile and experience joy while doing various sporting activities is so great!" says long time Vista School educator, Lisa Jaques. LABers and our other volunteers set up various fitness stations for the kids to rotate and enjoy different kinds of confidence building sporting activities. A HUGE thank you to our vendors who either returned this year or participated for the first time. We had stations for soccer (Adam Butler and Josh Figueroa - LA Breakers), Boxing (Aaron Bryant, Jordan Bahat, Ashley Rochester, and Ben Sharony), Obstacle Course (Ryan Swasey -Magnus Gym, JR Davidson, Matt Kornberg), Volleyball (Jim Perry and Jamie Dunchick), Dryvebox golf simulator (Charles Bryant -The Los Angeles Golf Club), soccer goal (LA Galaxy Start Squad), and Art (Lauren Forkner w/ Vista Staff Schelsey Muhammadie-Sabet). All enjoyed lunch together provided by @CheetahsTacos. We couldn't do this without everyone's help including our other volunteers in LAB and our Board of Directors: Dario Svidler, Ariel Anson, Kira Bahat, Christopher Laughter, Beth Sands, Jayme Bolden, Jessica Robinson, Bob Debelina, and Allison Kornberg.





AROUND *Vista*

► Willkie Event

Willkie Los Angeles Foundation was welcomed to the Vista family. The partnership with the Willkie Los Angeles Foundation will help establish a new substance abuse disorder treatment center for children ages 12-17. The project will begin by converting one of our existing buildings into a state-of-the-art facility that will address the devastating impacts of the drug abuse crisis plaguing our country. In addition to the monetary donation, Willkie lawyers and professional staff engaged in volunteer activities with our students.

Lena Wilson states: “This partnership marks an exceptional opportunity to further our mission of uplifting the lives of children and families. With Willkie’s generous support, we will continue to expand and enhance our services, including the launch of the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) program, while also deepening our impact across the entire organization. Together, we will make a lasting difference within the community.”





AROUND *Vista* ► Project LEGO®

We are so grateful for our continuing partnership with The LEGO Group, who was initially brought to us by LAB Member, Rick Castaneda over three years ago and it's been growing ever since. Because of this partnership, we launched and have maintained the LEGO Sun Project at Vista Del Mar for 2 years now funded by The LEGO Group. The Sun Project is a play – based therapy program designed for clinicians to use LEGO pieces through play and therapy to help youth use their creativity to cope with their emotions, express themselves, and connect with others while building and exploring with the pieces. “The kids really enjoy this program and it’s helping them. They always ask when the next LEGO group will be.” Said Kerri Blackstone, one of Vista’s clinicians, who designed this program. LEGO volunteers, LAB and Board Members, and Vista staff join the youth each year for the launch and year end celebrations that includes LEGO free play, presentations, and of course food!





AROUND *Vista* ► Fire Relief Distribution

In response to the devastating fires that left areas of our communities in ruin, we partnered with several other non-profits to host a 'Disaster Relief Distribution Event' on our campus.

Throughout the day, we distributed new toys, food, water, gift cards, diapers, hygiene products, pet supplies, batteries and much more to families affected by the fires. A hot meal was also provided to those who came through.

Vista is always committed to doing its part. Helping members of our community is one of the things that we do best.





Leadership Advisory Board Turns 10:

*Elite Program Gives Young,
Diverse Professionals a Greater Voice
in Guiding and Supporting Vista*



Theodore Roosevelt once said “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.” And that is what Vista’s Chief Development and Marketing, Craig Prizant had in mind when he envisioned what a leadership program at Vista could look like. From there, several things went into motion to turn this vision into a reality. Initially, it started with Prizant asking Naomi Salamon, who’d been a program manager for Vista since 2006, to spearhead the development of LAB and serve as its founding director. Simultaneously, long-time supporter and volunteer Michael Polier had been advocating for Vista to develop something robust; something he and his peers could become a part of that was both dynamic and impactful.



Salamon reached out to Polier, who in turn enlisted his friend Viranda Tantula. Together they collaborated on the early stages of creating a structure that brought this collective vision to life. “Vista’s Leadership Advisory Board (LAB) is designed to take individuals who are shining stars in their own spaces who are looking to have an impact philanthropically and provide them with the tools to become leaders within the organization.” said Salamon. With the help of Polier and Tantula the first fellowship class was recruited. “We were proud to build a recruiting pipeline for future LAB Fellows that focused on all forms of diversity — professional and beyond. It’s been a bonus to have made some amazing friendships along the way,” said Tantula, who went on to become the first LAB Member to join the Board of Directors.

After much collaboration and workshopping, the structure of the LAB Fellowship and Membership took shape. The first 10 months of the Fellowship consists of a curriculum built on four comprehensive pillars that include learning about Vista’s programs and services, connecting with the youth, philanthropy around board service, fundraising and advocacy as well as media training. Upon completion of those first 10 months, the Fellows then culminate at Vista’s annual retreat and transition into being a LAB Member where they are required to make financial contributions,



fundraise, volunteer, advocate, and find ways to utilize what they learned thus far. Some members go on to chair a committee, an event, or LAB itself, and some apply to join the Vista Board of Directors. The expectation is that these individuals will serve as LAB members for at least three years after their fellowship. “Through LAB’s incredible leadership program, I have learned a holistic approach to philanthropy that has included invaluable skills I will forever carry with me,” said Jayme Bolden, LAB CoChair, who is CoFounder of the public relations firm June Collective.

As it enters its second decade, LAB has become an indispensable part of Vista’s success as this group of leaders who have infused new energy into Vista fundraising, developed scores of new activities and initiatives for Vista’s youth (75-80 activities per year) and increased visibility of the organization’s critical work among a new generation of well-connected Angelenos. “We started as a small group with big aspirations, and we hoped to draw an increasingly larger influx of applicants over the years, but we didn’t really know what that would look like,” said Polier, who went on to chair LAB and now serves on Vista’s Board of Directors.

Aiming to always attract talented individuals, Salamon also ensures the curriculum continues to evolve and expand to keep things relevant and meaningful in new ways. Gregory Sayer, MD, DFAACAP, a child and adolescent psychiatrist said his experience as a current LAB fellow has been more rewarding and inspiring than he could have imagined. “This isn’t a cookie-cutter program that simply designates tasks; rather, it encourages us to grow, collaborate, and take ownership of initiatives,” he explained. One such initiative was the recent Halloween party for the residential youth on campus. “With Naomi’s guidance and encouragement, we brainstormed, formed subgroups, held planning meetings, and pooled together our collective strengths and passions to plan and host an amazing event,” he says. “Giving us the tools to transition from training as a fellow to action and leadership as a member is at the heart of this LAB fellowship and I am excited about what’s yet to come.”

Vista’s goals for the next ten years will be focused on program sustainability, expansion, and growth in a variety of ways. From empowering our members to create even more impactful youth activities, to developing fundraising tactics that will maximize their efforts, to increasing diversity to creating new leadership paths, there is much to be done. Vista would also love to see more corporate partnerships around LAB and explore how this program can benefit companies to spread more philanthropic leadership throughout the community and beyond. It’s been ten years, but it seems Vista’s LAB program is just getting warmed up.

What makes LAB special, Polier believes, is that beyond learning about philanthropy, board governance, leadership and the like, members have the opportunity to see their impact through the work they do with Vista youth. “The people who go through the fellowship get a hands-on introduction to working with this population, and it’s life changing,” Polier says. “Getting to make a difference in these kids’ lives is magical.”



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Helene Feuerstein

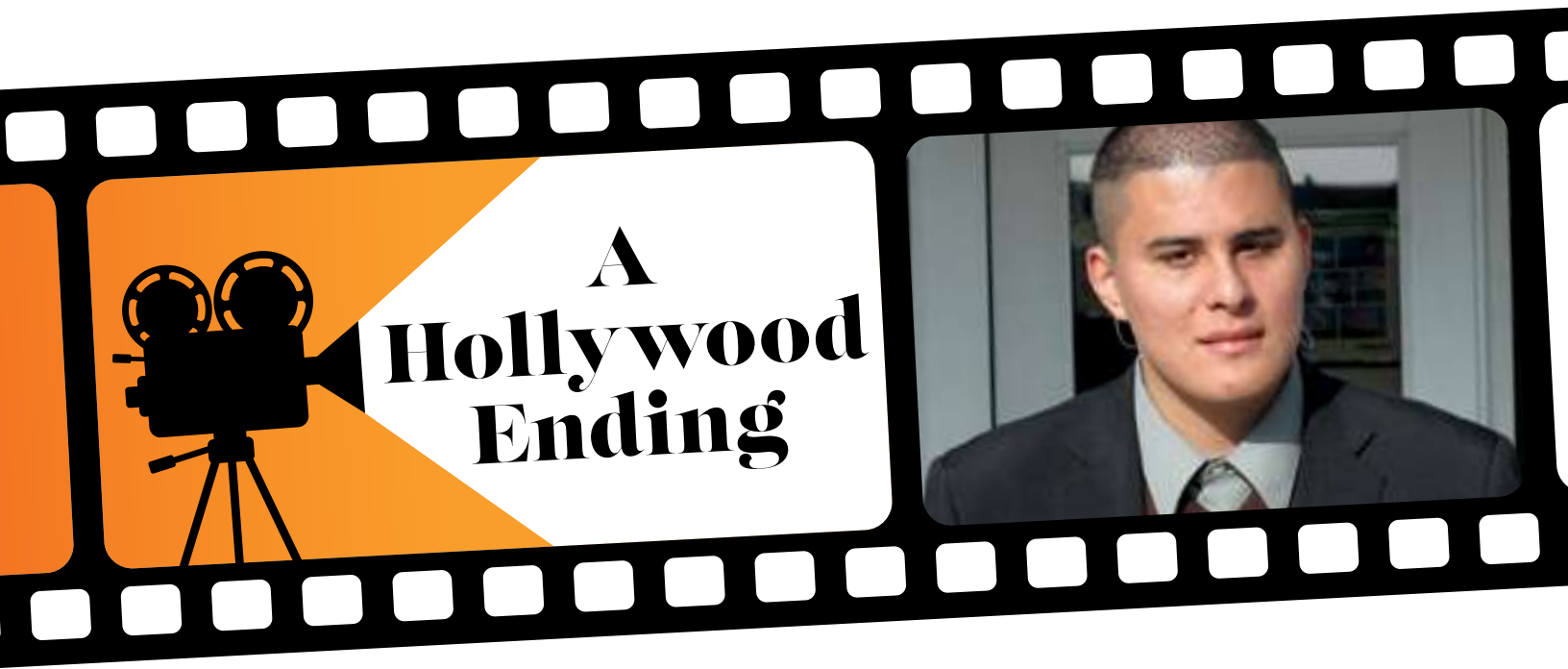
A Life Long Lived and A Lasting Legacy

In 2024, Vista lost another luminary upon whose shoulders we sat. Helene Feuerstein was part of cadre of women that gave decades of their time, support, and resources to the children and families of Vista Del Mar.

Helene's number 1 passion was her family. She enjoyed spending time with her husband James, her son Lewis and her beloved granddaughter Rochelle and grandson Danny. Another passion was volunteering at Vista Del Mar. Helene spent decades using her time, talent and treasure supporting Vista. Through the Associates and Friends auxiliary volunteer support groups (where Helene served as president, event chair), Helene took Vista kids to lunch, supported prom, and was one of the biggest fundraiser for the Theater Party events. When you come on to Vista's main campus you will see the Feuerstein Residential Plaza sign. This is a reminder of the imprint and depth of the legacy Helene and her husband James left on us.

We will always remember Helene's bright smile, humble demeanor, the boxes of See's Candy she would bring us, and the generosity of her spirit. At 104, it may have been time for Helene to let go; not sure if we were all ready to let go of her.





After receiving his Certificate of Completion from the Vista School, Anthony Polanco's dream of being part of the movie industry has come true thanks to the 22-year-old's talents, his family's perseverance, and the support and advocacy of Vista staff.

To say that Anthony Polanco loves movies is an understatement. The 22-year-old recent graduate of the Vista School's Alternative Track Program is a longtime collector who keeps a running tally of his prized possessions — 969 at last count, he says. He especially loves action and comedy films, but regardless of the genre, Anthony immerses himself in the details of each, memorizing the dialogue through repeated viewings.

"He can narrate the whole movie for you, and when he's watching, he's acting it out," says Anthony's mother, Rosa. "He can tell you the names of the actors, how many years it took to make the movie, and what year it came out."

Anthony's face lights up and he smiles from ear to ear listening to his mother describe his innate talent. Watching his favorites over and over again has therapeutic value, he explains. "I feel calm and happy."

After graduating in December from the Vista School with a Certificate of Completion, Anthony is embarking on a new chapter and the fulfillment of a lifelong dream to be part of the movie industry. He's learning about the world he loves as part of Performing Arts Studio West (PASW), which since 1998 has provided hands-on individualized training, career management, and on-location support for performers with intellectual disabilities working in film, television, and commercials.

But Anthony's acceptance into PASW was far from a certainty. It was made possible by a combination of his enthusiasm and talent, his parents' dedication to supporting their son, and the determination of Vista School staff to

find the right placements for students like Anthony and advocate on their behalf.

Anthony was 16 when his parents enrolled him at Vista, his primary eligibility being intellectual disability. He wears a hearing aid and has a pronounced stutter. While those who know him describe a kind young man who is quick to support his peers and possesses a heart of gold, Anthony arrived at Vista with significant behavioral challenges, resulting in part from his difficulty communicating. "Anthony would become very frustrated when others couldn't understand what he was saying and he couldn't verbalize his needs," explains Edie Bartnof, the school's assistant principal. On multiple occasions, that frustration would lead him to become physically aggressive at home.

"We found Vista at a crucial time, when Anthony's behavior was out of control, and the staff put me at ease," Rosa Polanco says. "One time I called Ms. Edie in tears, worried about Anthony's future. And she said, 'Don't worry, Rosa, we will guide you every step of the way. Our goal is for our kids to leave Vista and be successful.' That was huge for me."



Vista immediately took steps to provide Anthony with the services he needed beyond academics, including speech and language therapy, deaf and hard-of-hearing support, and individual counseling sessions where he learned social-emotional skills. “Anthony has made amazing progress,” says Lloyd Bronstein, LMFT, the Vista School clinician who counseled Anthony throughout his time at the school. “He now has the tools to calm himself when he gets upset, and the ability to be his own advocate, such as asking for time alone when he becomes frustrated.”

“I listen to music, take walks, take deep breaths,” Anthony says of his coping strategies. “I learned to be confident in myself.”

That confidence helped Anthony become a leader among his peers. “I’ve been in Anthony’s class where another student performs and Anthony will tell him how fantastic he did,” Bronstein says. “He has a way of making everyone around him feel good.”

From the start, Anthony’s passion for the performing arts was clear to his teachers and other Vista staff. “He loves being on stage — loves the attention,” Bartnof says. “Our performing arts coordinators have emphasized different types of productions, and whether it was theater, dance, or music, Anthony showed an ability to take directions and follow through. It’s an environment where he really thrives.”

*“He had the courage
to stand up in front of
all of these strangers
and participate in an
improvisation”*

As Anthony’s time at Vista was winding down, the school’s staff began to collaborate with his parents and regional center — part of the statewide network of nonprofit agencies that oversee the coordination and delivery of services for Californians with developmental disabilities — on the next chapter in Anthony’s life.

Bartnof notes that the majority of students in Vista’s Alternative Track Program stay until they are 22, after which the regional center takes over for the school as the primary provider of their service needs. “What we



don't want is for our students to be sitting on the couch watching television all day after they leave us," Bartnof says. As part of the effort to identify the best placement, a transition teacher works closely with Vista's Alternative Track Program students. A job fair brings in potential employers from the community, and field trips take the Vista students to various sites and programs where they can gauge their interest.

One of those field trips was to PASW. Channa Shriki, the Vista School's career counselor, knew of the program and went with Anthony, Anthony's teacher, two other former Vista students, and Bronstein for a visit in early 2024. Funded by the California Department of Developmental Services through the Los Angeles-area regional centers, PASW has a curriculum that includes acting, music, dance, theater and new media production, recording, studio engineering, digital illustration, animation, and more. The nonprofit organization also provides talent management services and on-set coaching for actors with disabilities appearing in film, television, commercials, theater, and music video. PASW actors have appeared in more than 2,000 roles since the studio's inception.

"It's an amazing environment," Bronstein recalls. "You see posters of movies on the walls, and for the ones that are framed, people from the program were in the movie."

Anthony was captivated. "He had the courage to stand up in front of all of these strangers and participate in an improvisation," Bronstein says. "Anthony loved the program, and the people there loved his energy."

But during the application process, a problem arose.

Like many Vista students, Anthony had struggled several years earlier when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the school to move to virtual learning. "Kids with special needs thrive on routine and consistency," Rosa Polanco says. "Anthony is very social, and he felt isolated being away from his friends." It was a setback during which Anthony at times lashed out. Once in-person learning resumed, he fared much better.

Unfortunately, the report sent to PASW by Anthony's regional center coordinator was from an assessment that took place during Anthony's home confinement. Because it mentioned aggressive behavior toward his parents, PASW was reluctant to accept him.

Anthony's mother describes herself as devastated by the rejection. But Bronstein, Bartnof and others on the Vista team insisted she not give up. "I called Mr. Lloyd, and he said, 'Don't worry, we will help you every step of the way,'" Rosa Polanco says. "He said he believes in Anthony, and those words filled my heart."

"PASW was basing their decision on an old report that described behavior during the pandemic Anthony no

longer displayed," Bronstein says. "I strongly encouraged Rosa to ask the regional center for a new assessment, then contacted the regional center to explain that their report wasn't representative of Anthony's current behavior."

Rosa Polanco requested the new assessment, and this one was more reflective of who Anthony is today. PASW read the new report, then saw Anthony again, with his 22-year-old sister accompanying him to vouch for his character, before ultimately accepting him. "When I received the call saying they had reconsidered my son for the program, I literally screamed," Rosa says.

During the time when it appeared Anthony might not be accepted into PASW, his mother had come up with a backup plan — something to ensure her son would have structure and purpose after leaving Vista. But she never gave up on Anthony's dream: "I said if it takes me 100 years, my son is going to be in the movie industry."

"Ms. Polanco is an incredible advocate for her son," Bartnof says. "She always worked closely with our team and the regional center to make sure his needs were being met, and that has made all the difference in Anthony's progress."

"Anthony earned a great reputation here through his positive energy and caring nature," Bronstein adds. "I am sad to see him leave Vista, but I can't wait to hear about all of the wonderful things he will do. It's not just that Performing Arts Studio West will help him — he will also be an asset for them."

Rosa Polanco couldn't be more pleased for her son. "He is so enthusiastic about starting this program," she says. "It's been a long journey, but Vista has been there with us all the way. They care about our kids. They believe that they are smart, have talents, and just need the right support and advocacy. Vista gave Anthony the tools to be successful, and seeing his happiness now is like a pot of gold. I can't ask for a winning lottery ticket — I've won already."



Hugo Rosenstein

A Life Well Lived

We lost another great one...Hugo Rosenstein. Hugo spent decades of his time, talent, and support on the children and families of Vista Del Mar.

Hugo is one of the founders of the then men's auxiliary group, The Presidents Club. The club was formed in the 1970's by a group of local businessmen. The President's Club funded activities for the kids including dinners, fishing outings and sports days. The President's Club continued until 2013 when all of Vista's auxiliary groups were combined. Hugo passed the baton to his daughter Cathy Rosenstein Strull who, along with her husband Roger Strull, served as co-presidents of the club.

Hugo will be remembered as a fun-loving, generous gentleman, who gave of himself to the children and families of Vista.



BROKER Challenge

The Beach Club of Santa Monica was buzzing with energy on Monday, September 16th as the Los Angeles Broker Challenge brought together members of the Los Angeles Commercial Realty Association (LACRA) for an all-day sports competition in support of Vista Del Mar. This highly anticipated annual event raised over \$100,000 for Vista's Outpatient Mental Health Services through Family Service of Santa Monica, further solidifying LACRA's 30+ years of commitment to the cause. Congratulations to the CBRE team for winning the trophy and we look forward to them defending their title at the next Broker Challenge.

With breakfast sponsored by Bristol Farms and Viktor Benes, and a delicious lunch from Coral Tree Café, the event kept approximately 300 guests and participants fueled for a day of community and friendly competition. The evening concluded with a lively cocktail party featuring a performance by the industry's own Force Majeure Band, creating the perfect finale to a meaningful day. Special thanks to event sponsors RAM, Newmark U.S. Capital Markets, Worth Real Estate Group, HLW, J.T. Magen & Company, and all the teams and contributors who made the 2024 Broker Challenge an incredible success.





VISTA ROCKS VIII

Vista Del Mar's 8th Annual Vista Rocks lit up the iconic Avalon Hollywood on November 23, 2024, for an unforgettable evening of music, laughter, and philanthropy. Headlined by legendary singer-songwriter Jackson Browne and featuring the witty humor of actress and comedienne Caroline Rhea, the night was a true celebration of community spirit. Sponsored by Eden Alpert on behalf of the Alesia Family Foundation, as well as Michele and Bob Poletti, the event brought over 400 guests together in support of Vista Del Mar's vital mission.

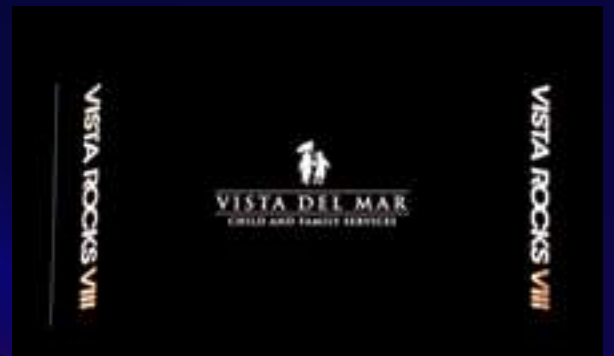
Chaired by a dynamic group of leaders, including Eden Alpert, Jayme Bolden, Stacie Cohen, Jessie Flesh, Anna Forkner, Jill Friedman, Emily Hakim, Marla Kantor, Matt Kornberg, Robert Roig, and Beth & Michael Sands, Vista Rocks struck all the right chords. The evening featured a soulful performance of Jackson Browne's iconic hits, heartfelt contributions from Vista Kids, and a shared sense of purpose that moved attendees to laughter and tears. With music, passion, and community at its core, Vista Rocks proved once again that when people come together, the impact is nothing short of extraordinary.





VISTA ROCKS

VIII





GOLF *Classic*



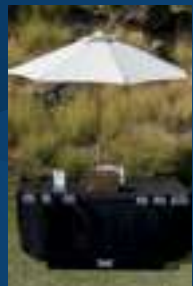
On October 28, 2024, Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services hosted its 2nd Annual Golf Classic at the prestigious Sherwood Country Club, uniting over 100 passionate golfers for a day of sportsmanship, camaraderie, and generosity. Presented by the Boxenbaum Family Foundation and generously sponsored by Libby & Arthur Jacobson, this extraordinary event was a showcase of community spirit and support for Vista Del Mar's vital mission.

Under the leadership of Co-Chairs Scott Boxenbaum, Arthur Jacobson, Dan Palmer, Jim Perry, and Phil Stein, participants enjoyed a day packed with memorable experiences. Against the stunning backdrop of Sherwood's pristine fairways, golfers were treated to gifting stations featuring Olukai shoes, PXG wedges, on-course spirits, a hearty breakfast, a BBQ lunch, and a delightful dinner. The event culminated in an electrifying live auction and other exciting prizes, leaving attendees inspired and engaged. The Golf Classic was more than just a tournament—it was a celebration of the power of community to drive meaningful change.





GOLF *Classic*







VISTA DEL MAR

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Calendar of Events

September 2025

Broker Challenge

October 27, 2025

Golf Classic

November–December 2025

Holiday Toy Drive

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