

ABLE 2022

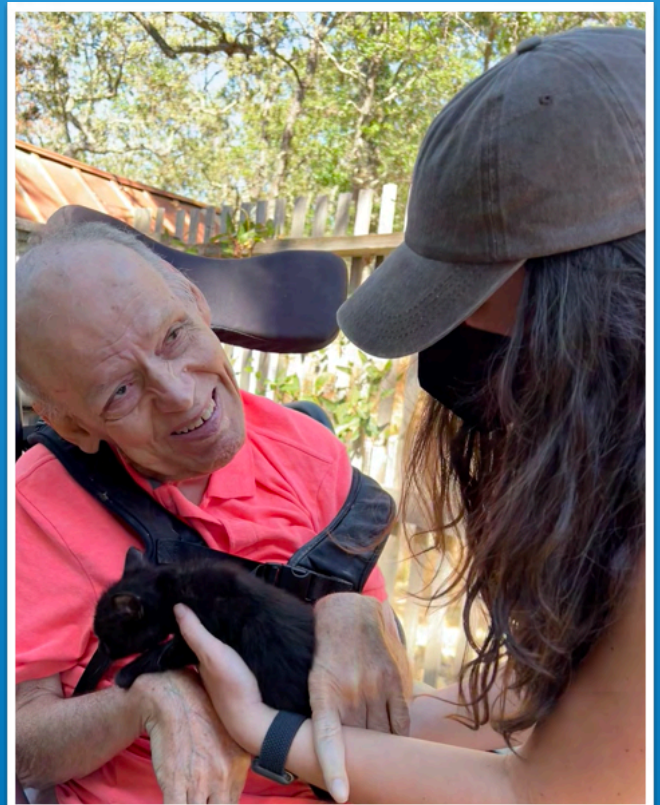


Top left, clockwise: Beth plays music with Occupational Therapy (OT) Fieldwork student, Isabelle Pisano. Elena practices rock painting in a OT pilot program with Dominican University. Hillside Church visited ABLE for pumpkin painting and pizza on a beautiful fall day.





Top, clockwise: Adam, Beth, Yolanda, Tom, ABLE Staff David Mardy, and Clara play bag toss with Hillside Church during a summer BBQ day. ABLE employee and OT student, Amie Smith, brings kittens from the Humane Society for a visit with Mike and other ABLE residents. RN Clinical student, Jan Escosio, works with Kathleen during an art therapy exercise.





Top left, clockwise: Kathleen Greene—our newest resident—with her mother Mary. Imelda and Sandra enjoy our redesigned garden space. Adam joyfully plays a drum set courtesy of a Dominican University Occupational Therapy Fieldwork student, Lauren Carmichael. The Dominican University Women's Soccer Team participated in a work-party day, in which they painted the living room, recreation room, and office bathroom, reorganized and culled our outdoor sheds, and washed both ABLE vans—WOW!





Top left, clockwise: Tom playing soccer in a nearby park. Clara with Alice and Joey Martin (of Hillside) for pumpkin painting. Elena, Sandra, and Clara hanging out (look at those newly painted walls!). Yolanda soaks in the sun on a fall day at McNears Beach. Celebrating our first student employee graduates! Julia, Tulsi, Angelina, and Ronnie (D.U. RN Program).





ABLE residents getting into the holiday spirit with costumes and pumpkin painting.





ABLE Staff / RN Student Julia Miller with Yolanda and Mike



ABLE Staff Imelda Becerra with Mike



Left to right: ABLE Staff (AS) Rosalind N., Elena, AS Sunny S., Sam, Tom, Mike, AS Larry B., Adam, Sandra, Clara, AS Alice W., AS Julia M., Yolanda

This year, we had multiple visits to Stafford Lake Park in Novato—one of the ABLE community's favorite getaways.

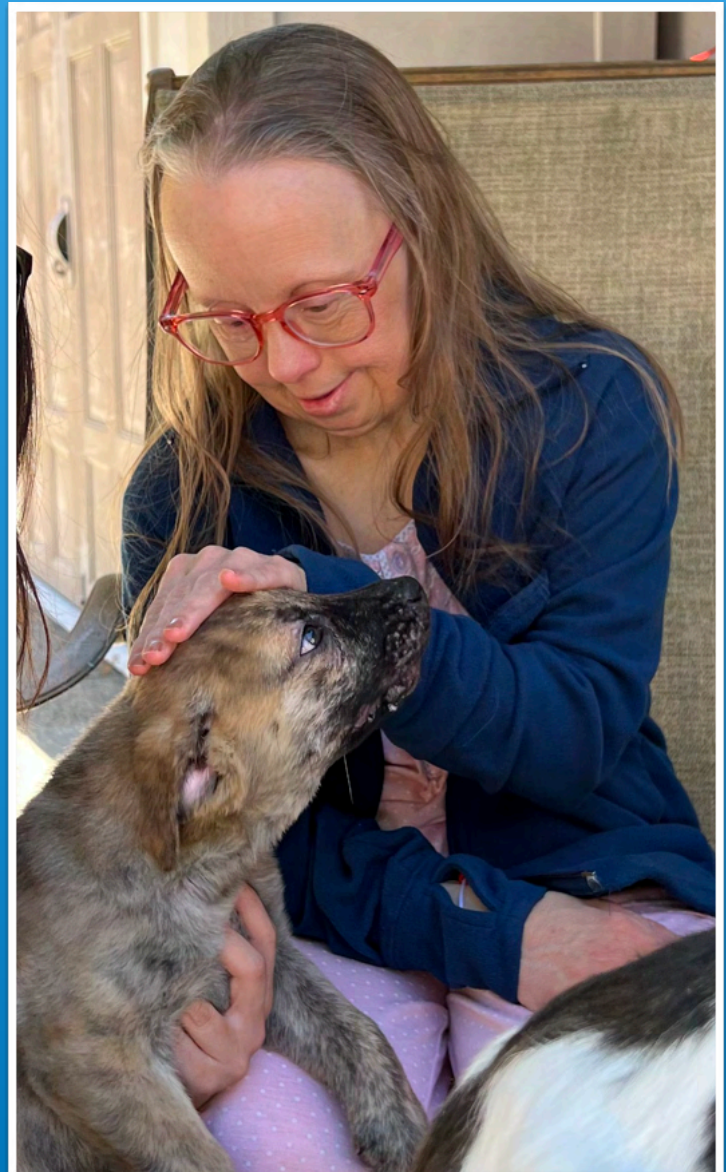




ABLE Staff / RN Student Larry Bui with Beth



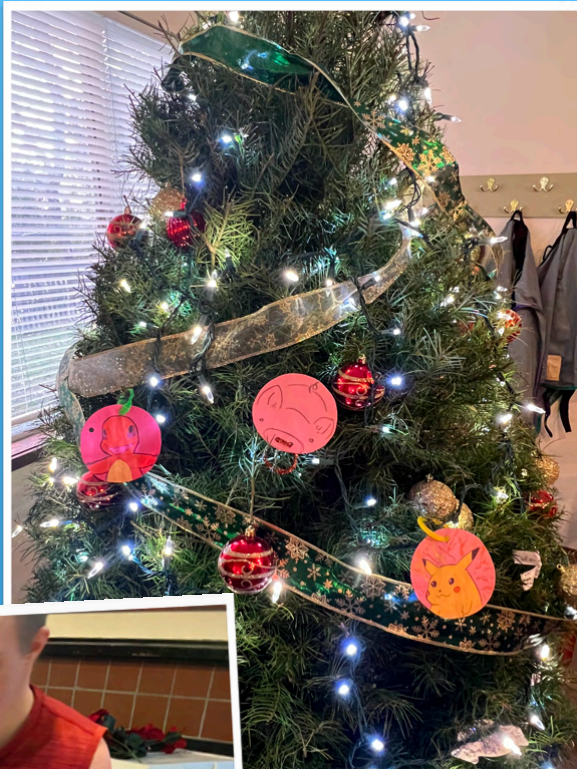
Fun times
outside with
friendly
(and
sometimes
furry)
visitors.



Yolanda, Sandra, Kathleen, and Clara with Hillside Youth group



Tom, Sandra,
Clara, Adam, and
Beth decorate the
Christmas tree.
Ornaments with
photos created by
Hillside Church
Youth group.



Best
Ornaments
Ever!



Dear ABLE Friends and Family,

What a full year it has been.... we have so many exciting stories to share with you.

This year, we welcomed Kathleen Greene to the ABLE community. Her mother Mary and extended family of siblings, nieces and nephews helped us get to know her and ease her transition. Beth Hunstock celebrated her one year anniversary at ABLE this June. She and Kathleen have naturally become part of the community, as if they have been with us for years. This November, we grieved the one year anniversary of the loss of Nicole Prager. We miss her dearly and carry her loving memory in our hearts.

I feel compelled to recognize the ABLE staff for their hard work and amazing support of our residents. We have a foundation of core staff who have been with us for a long time—up to 30 years in the case of Dave Kato, while Danny McLane is fast approaching his 10 year anniversary with us. That kind of commitment is rare and makes possible a quality of connection with the residents that is unimaginable in any other circumstances. No matter how long their time with us, our core staff demonstrate the best qualities of ABLE. They understand that the highest quality of care comes from a quality of presence, which requires trust, patience, and self-awareness. It also requires teamwork and a culture built on support, communication, belonging, and generosity. Over the past few years, they have elevated the quality of care and team cohesion to new levels. All of this directly benefits the residents and their quality of life. I am so proud of this team and of the work they do every day. Our core team consists of Imelda Becerra, Josh Becker, Michelle Colvin, Joi Graham, Dave Kato, David Mardy, Danny McLane, and Alice Wolfgramm, Assistant Manager.

We have an all-star Nursing team at ABLE. Jordan Stevens, LVN manages organization and logistics of care including medication administration elements, COVID-19 testing reports, resident appointment scheduling, and more. Valeriy “Larry” Shichkov, RN oversees resident health issues including practical and preventative care. His specialties in wound care and podiatry have guided the staff with precision in maintaining optimal health for all our residents. Kelsey Strand, NP joined the team this year, bringing physician-level oversight and guidance which is essential for our classification of facility. The combination of this team’s skills delivers a quality of medical care that is truly exceptional. ABLE residents are in caring, competent, and capable hands.

The core staff are supported by an impressive group of student employees and students gaining academic credit from Dominican University (DU). ABLE’s relationship with DU continues to grow and yield more mutually beneficial results for students, ABLE residents, and staff.

Evin Wallus, MS, OTR/L, AFWC, who is the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, and Assistant Professor at DU crafted a sophisticated training structure for our staff on resident care, including detailed descriptions, training processes, and instructional videos. All of this comes after hours of careful observation and work with our staff with each resident. She has also worked directly with our staff to assist with on-boarding, boosting confidence in new team members and teaching some of our veterans helpful techniques as well.

This proved indispensable, as we added six new DU student employees this year, including Arianna Inouye (OT), Reanna Felix (RN), Emma Leamon (RN), Jenna Ingram (RN), Bella Romani (RN), and Crystal Yi (RN). They join the team of students who previously came aboard, including Larry Bui (RN), Gillian Day (RN), Erica Fong (RN), Rosalind Nolde (OT), Sunny Seto (RN), and Amie Smith (OT). Our first group of students, all from the RN program, graduated this spring. We congratulated Angelina Marcelino, Julia Miller, Tulsi Patel, and Veronica Wagner. Now, we acknowledge Gillian Day, Jenna Ingram, and Emma Leamon, three RN students who graduated this fall. While it is hard to say goodbye to students who move away in pursuit of their careers in healthcare, we celebrate their accomplishments and cheer them on as they seek to share their gifts with the world. We also hope that students will take what they learned at ABLE with them into their professions, including awareness of and support for the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

One graduate, Tulsi Patel, wrote her thesis on a topic related to our community and dedicated the work to ABLE. [See her thesis and dedication here.](#) Another graduate, speaking of her time at ABLE, wrote “You have all helped me to grow as a team member, healthcare worker, and overall as an individual. I have cherished every moment with you all and the residents. ABLE will forever have a piece of my heart...” [Click here to watch a video with DU students speaking about their experiences at ABLE.](#)

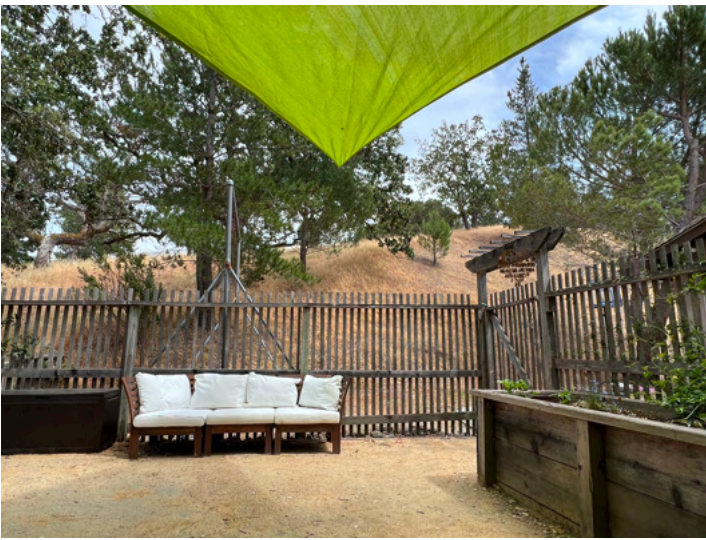
This year, we expanded the RN Clinical program with DU. Jenna Ingram was our first clinical student, who completed a Community Health Clinical program with us over several weeks in the spring, working directly with our residents. This fall, we expanded to four students, and plan to expand even more this coming spring. We had four OT students join us for a Fieldwork program this spring, involving direct engagement with our residents in all kinds of activities including music therapy, sports recreation, scavenger hunts and more. Their work was featured in a news article on the DU website. [Read the article here.](#) Then this fall, Dominican brought us a group of OT students in a Program Development course. Their objective was to do a needs analysis at ABLE, design an OT program solution, pilot that program, write a grant proposal, and identify potential grantors that might fund such an initiative. It was impressive!

In each program with DU, we hear students describe their experiences at ABLE as a standout—unique from what they hear their fellow students describe. They share that they learned much more than they anticipated they would have along with surprise in how much they enjoyed the experience. Each one speaks about how meaningful it was to get to know the residents and to establish quality connection with them. It is also evident that this student presence enriches the lives of the residents and brings support to the dedicated, hardworking staff at ABLE. We plan to continue or expand each program, as we see the mutual benefits so clearly for everyone involved.

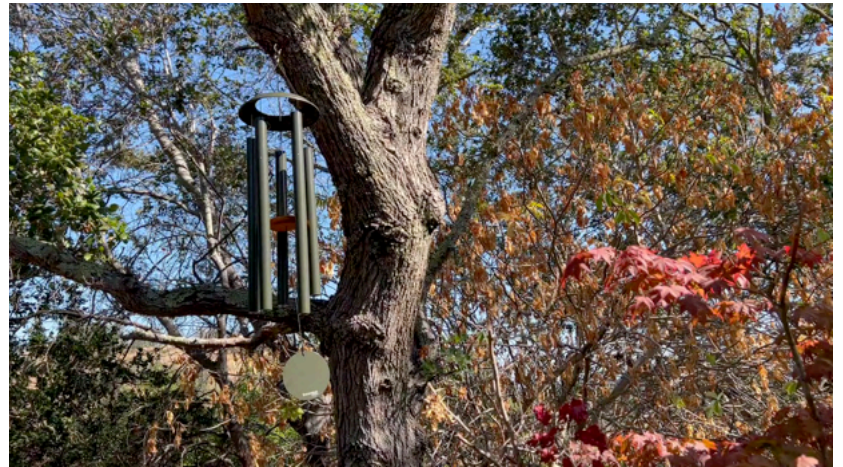
As the pandemic continues, ABLE perseveres without a single, in-house positive COVID-19 case. This is becoming an increasingly rare situation. This is certainly a team effort, with much thanks to the conscientious communication and transparency from staff around exposures and symptoms. We have also benefitted from utilizing several free testing resources and implementing disciplined testing and in-house safety protocols. This approach was motivated by the knowledge that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at higher risk of severe illness and death linked to COVID-19. But there are costs associated with this conservative approach. One such cost is that our residents have not returned to in-person Day Program services, but continue remote connections through Zoom and receiving care packages from Marin Ventures. This, of course, does not work for all of our residents and limits all of them in terms of social and activity opportunities. We are currently working with Marin Ventures to explore safe options in which our residents may get these important needs met.

Joey Martin of Hillside Church reached out to us expressing a desire for his church to connect with our residents and “share the love.” In our first Hillside visit this summer, Joey and the Youth group brought and grilled hamburgers and hot dogs over a fun afternoon, spending time with and getting to know our residents and staff. Then in the fall, they brought pizza and pumpkins for painting, visiting on a beautiful fall day. They offered to play Santa Claus, buying, wrapping, and delivering presents from a wish list we created for the residents. They also made Christmas tree ornaments with the faces of the residents on them, which our residents proudly placed on our tree this year. We have been astounded by Hillside’s kindness, generosity, and genuine care for this community. It seems to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship between the Hillside and ABLE communities.

On the grounds at 25 De Anza Way, we renovated our outdoor garden space. It’s an area that is safe for our residents to be and allows them access to the beauty of nature. The rearranged raised beds create a space where the residents enjoy spending time. Finding free items on Nextdoor.com, we furnished the area with couches and chairs, then added a shade sail our bookkeeper and Board member Kathy Terlicher donated. We planted flowering vines and tended to our geraniums, all of which are thriving. The finishing touch was a magnificent wind chime, donated by Norma Yukich, Beth Hunstock’s sister. The result is a beautiful space where residents and staff alike enjoy relaxation...



...and soaking in beauty. One of our student staff members, Amie Smith, brought foster puppies and kittens to visit the residents and the garden was the perfect place for this fun and playful excursion.



It is hard to believe that all of this happened in just one year. It feels as if we are seeing this community thrive in many ways. To continue that trajectory and sustain the quality of care that this team is providing, we need help. In 2023, ABLE plans to seek financial support in of grants and donor support. As this year comes to a close, if you are considering giving to places of need, I ask that you consider the ABLE community. If you wish to contribute financially, you can do so easily on our website or simply by [clicking here](#).

Finally, I want to share with you a personal story from our RN Consultant Valeriy Shichkov. Leri has family both in Russia and Ukraine. He lost contact with nearly all of them until recently. His second cousin Anna made contact with him through WhatsApp. He and his family decided to submit an application to host Anna and her two children in their home. They created a GoFundMe website with a video which tells their story and are welcoming support from anyone who wishes to offer it. [Click here to see it](#).

Thank you for being part of this community. We hope this Holiday Season you will be graced with gratitude for the gift of life. We send you our warmest wishes for a healthy holiday and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Sam Yates'.

Sam Yates, Director