



# Happy Independence Day

## Mission Road Ministries

Helping people with intellectual &  
developmental disabilities  
achieve their full potential for

**Independence**

Productivity  
and Inclusion in the community.



Mission Road Ministries

**Celebrating Independence since 1947**



July 2021



# Building Independence. Creating a joyful noise.

"Our little family is rarely quiet," said Vanessa Starbuck, northwest area supervisor, smiling broadly and throwing her head back when asked about the people living and working in the Mission Road community homes under her watchful eye. "Meals are the best. All of us gathered together around our tables with happy conversations - laughter flowing over and between us - creating a joyful noise. This is happiness."

As in our own lives, a happy home fosters feelings of security, calm and belonging. This peaceful environment encourages everyone in our homes to work together as well as work toward individual **independence**. This is our overarching and shared goal at Mission Road; *helping the people in our care reach their greatest, individual potential for independence.*

Vanessa and her team oversee six homes, surrounded by green lawns and vivid flower gardens, tucked in familiar and comfortable neighborhoods on the northwest side of San Antonio. These are six of the 20 total "group homes" owned and managed by Mission Road Developmental Center located in all four corners of the city. The homes are certified, surveyed and monitored within the Home and Community Services (HCS) program of the Texas Health and Human Services Agency.

Guadalupe "Lupe" is one of four people residing at Mission Road's Sandpiper home. Lupe, a delicate and small framed 47-year-old woman, lives with a diagnosis of severe IDD. Like all the people in the care of Mission Road, Lupe's condition is defined as an IDD (intellectual developmental disability), a lifelong condition, which affects her ability to live safely and successfully on her own. Her needs are extensive. She depends on the kindness and patience of caregivers like Vanessa for 100% of her needs.

"Her family had neither the resources nor the skills to provide her the all-encompassing, 24-hour care Lupe requires," Vanessa said. Her family initially placed Lupe in a nursing home. "It wasn't long before her family became really

concerned. She wasn't doing much of anything. She was sitting in a chair, alone, the majority of the day and she regressed rapidly. She lost eye contact and lost even the simplest connections with others. That's when her family reached out to Mission Road," Vanessa said.

When Lupe came through the door of her new Mission Road home in 2019, she was non-verbal and completely immobile. "We were doing absolutely everything for her," Vanessa said. Venus Legler, Vanessa's teammate, provided much of the one-on-one care for Lupe. Venus moved Lupe between her bed and her wheelchair and back again. Venus helped Lupe with toileting, bathing, changing her adult diapers, changing her clothes as well as fixing her hair and adding delicate touches of make-up and simple jewelry - encouraging Lupe to look at herself in the mirror.

Vanessa, Venus and their colleagues shared the responsibility to make sure Lupe stayed hydrated and well fed with nutritious meals carefully pulverized so she could safely eat one spoonful at a time. Their care plan was specific and intentional. They provided Lupe's every need yet keeping an eye on the prize - encouraging her to re-engage with the world and participate actively in her own life. It didn't take long for Lupe to blossom.

"Lupe's progress is exceptional! Now she is doing things for herself. She can get herself out of her chair into her very own bean bag - inserting herself into the center of the action in our game room and even on our patio," Vanessa said. "She actively partners with us as we get her dressed. She has the strength now to lift up her bottom when we change her. She is even bathing herself and brushing her own teeth."

The independence that Lupe is experiencing is right on target. She is communicating and reveling in this new and vitally important human interaction. In fact, Lupe is learning sign language. "She is talking - a lot! Before she would grunt and point. Now she knows the word

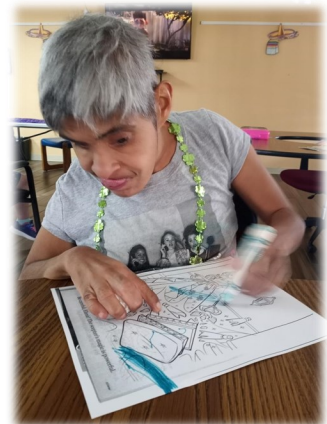
'snack,' and she can say 'thank you' and even sign 'thank you' at the same time," Vanessa said.

Lupe has definitely come a long way. Vanessa attributes her progress to the dedicated staff caring for Lupe and nearly 900 other people just like her who count on the team at Mission Road every day. Empty or isolating experiences are never allowed. "Our staff really interacts with our people. We all sit down and eat together as a family. We turn off the TV. We say Grace. We gather around bowls, baskets and plates of hot, delicious food and share our stories. We are very intentional about creating engaging conversations. We ask meaningful, open-ended questions that encourage them to tell stories about their day, sharing what made them laugh and what was frustrating. We are careful to avoid yes or no questions," Vanessa said.

Mission Road's goal is to have the people in our care **live as independently as possible**. Keeping people quiet and still, well, that's completely unacceptable. We eat together. We play games together. We get messy together. And with COVID nearly in the rearview mirror, we are able to get out in the community again. Like all the people in our care, we engage Lupe every waking moment, from the time she wakes until she puts her head on her pillow and falls asleep again.

"We are literally building families," Vanessa said. Our Mission Road family is a colorful, active and healthy collection of people living their best lives - **living as independently as possible**.

**We are helping people with IDD reach their greatest, God-given potential.**





# Glad we stayed safe. Good to be back!







8706 Mission Road  
San Antonio, Texas  
78214

PRSRT  
FIRST CLASS  
UP POSTAGE PAID  
San Antonio, TX  
PERMIT NO. 1001



**Save the Date: 42nd Annual Grand Western Shindig**  
**We're Back! In person & online.**

**Thursday, November 11, 2021 ☆ Witte Museum, Mays Family Center**  
**Contact Lynette Farrimond ☆ (210) 334-2455 ☆ [info@mrmsat.org](mailto:info@mrmsat.org)**

## Mission Road: People Caring for People – If we can hire them!

In a nutshell, **we employ people** - loving, patient and generous people - **to care for people** - fragile, vulnerable and grateful people. **That's it!!** And right now, we are significantly restricted in the number of people we can actively serve – due in part to health and safety measures but even more so due to the difficulty in recruiting and hiring the people we need to fulfill our mission.

The pace of reopening our programs is dictated by our ability to hire people.

**We are dealing with a severe shortage of direct care manpower.** Comparing June 1, 2020 to June 1, 2021, **we are short 44 total caregivers**: *essential personal* required to do our job. Did you know that 57.50% (\$10,293,169) of our total annual budget is restricted to salaries, taxes and benefits? **We are in the business of people caring for people.**

We experienced some improvement in December and January but continue to struggle. We have

been successful in changing our approach from one that focuses on **getting applicants to come to us** to a strategy where **we go to connect with potential employees** where they live and shop.

Traditionally, we receive 100-120 job applications per month, which have dwindled to 40-50 per month. The causes of our labor shortages appear to include concerns about personal safety, child-care problems, accelerated retirements, and potential distortions due to enhanced unemployment benefits of COVID. What are we doing different, better, smarter?...

- We have sent two employees into the surrounding neighborhoods to hand out flyers and post signs seeking employees at apartment complexes, churches, laundromats, etc.
- We have “wrapped” our Med-run vehicle with Mission Road colors, logo and contact information. We drive the car to doctor appointments and meetings during the week and each week-end one person takes the vehicle

home and drives it - to H-E-B, Walmart, their kids' soccer games - to get additional exposure.

- We have placed flyers in the food bags distributed by the SA Food Bank.
- Our new Direct Care Salary Track Range Adjustment is directed at retaining tenured employees.
- We have lowered the minimum age of employment from 21 to 19 for programs other than the Children's Program, which requires a minimum age of 21.

**How can YOU HELP? Help us recruit! Share our story.** Who do you know who is kind, patient, gentle, loving, funny, brave and intelligent? Who do you know who has time to share and who has a servant's heart? Send these folks our way! Visit us at [missionroadministries.org/employment/](https://missionroadministries.org/employment/)

**Visit: [mrmsat.org](https://mrmsat.org)**  
**Email: [info@mrmsat.org](mailto:info@mrmsat.org)**  
**Call: 210.924.9265**  
**Mail: 8706 Mission Road,  
SA, TX 78214**