

# Setting Sails



A Special Edition For Friends And Consumers of San Antonio Independent Living Services

Summer and Fall 2020

## SAILS Story During COVID-19 Pandemic



Dr. Kitty L. Brietzke,  
CEO/Development Officer of SAILS

San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) along with everyone in our nation and world-wide have been facing extreme challenges during these unprecedented times with the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic.

This horrible virus is an invisible killer attacking human lives dear to us all. It is still a scary time for so many of us. Our families, friends, neighbors and the entire community fights to stay safe and well. Most of us care about others and are doing a great job.

SAILS has been fortunate to stay in business and keep our employees working. We maintain excellent COVID-19 policies and practices and follow CDC guidelines by temperature checks, wearing our masks, social distancing, washing our hands frequently and sanitizing every day. These safety measures allow SAILS staff continue to serve our consumers with significant disabilities by providing our core services such as advocacy, independent living plans, information and resources and peer support. SAILS provides ZOOM meetings for access and communication services for our consumers. American sign language interpreters can use the ZOOM meetings or come in person in our lobby and provide services to our consumers who are Deaf. However, many of our consumers are choosing to stay home due to the risks of them getting COVID. In these cases, staff will work with them over the phone.

I am honored to be the Chief Executive Officer of SAILS for 17 years September 1, 2020, especially during these challenging times. I have learned how important and essential it is to have plans in place to sustain SAILS during this pandemic while protecting the staff. The safety and health of the staff is the utmost priority. I want to personally thank all SAILS staff for continuing to do such a tremendous job during these tough times.



A Thermo Scanner system has been installed at SAILS. During COVID-19 time, all staff, visitors, prior to entering in office work place, body temperature, and mask wearing requirement are checked

## Our Mission:

To advocate for the rights and empowerment of the people with disabilities and to provide needed services to people with disabilities in order to increase their self-determination and independence.

## San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) receives CARES Act funds for persons with Disabilities

By Kitty L. Brietzke, J.D.

San Antonio Independent Living Services (SAILS) was awarded mandatory COVID-19 Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act of 2020 (CARES Act) Funding from the federal government's Administration for Community Living (ACL). Allowable expenses can be paid through September 30, 2021.

SAILS, along with all federally-designated Centers for Independent Living received the CARES Act funding to provide consumers with disabilities with food, hand sanitizer, masks, gloves, rental and utility assistance other personal care products. SAILS is currently partnering with the San Antonio Food Bank to provide food benefits to our consumers with disabilities. CARES Act funding may also be used for expanding technology for staff and consumers and assist in other budgeted costs that are allowable.

Staff at SAILS dedicate themselves to serving their consumers with disabilities and to the overall mission of our organization. SAILS mission is to advocate for the rights and empowerment of the people with disabilities and to provide needed services to people with disabilities in order to increase their self-determination and independence. Please contact SAILS at 210-281-1878 for further information on how to request assistance for these services. Please also stay safe and well!

## SAILS Participates In Big Give San Antonio 2020

By Kitty L. Brietzke, J.D.

SAILS is participating once again in The BIG GIVE SA! It is an annual one day of giving event. This year the fundraising was opened up early and started on September 3, 2020. SAILS has set a goal of \$5,000 this year. With the help of our LOGO sponsors listed below and all our friends of SAILS we surely will be a great success!



Dr. Kitty Brietzke, CEO,  
and Mr. Rodney Harris, Secretary of SAILS Board of Directors  
attend a meeting and planning session by Big Give SA 2020

**Thank you to SAILS LOGO Sponsors!**



**Cano and Company**



**Secure Online Donations to SAILS**

<http://sailstx.org>

**Click link tab "Donate"**



## May 2020

- 1- Support Group Meeting-canceled due to COVID 19
- 2- Charles Villarreal/CFO 9th SAILS Anniversary
- 4- COVID-Staff Meeting
- 8- ADA Planning Meeting/canceled due to COVID 19
- 11- COVID 19
- 15- SAILS Phase I COVID Opening Policy Begins In-Service Training for Staff
- 19- Staff Meeting
- 25- Memorial Day Holiday!

## June 2020

- 1- Staff Meeting
- 5- Support Group Meeting-canceled due to COVID 19
- 10- SAILS Board Meeting
- 23- SAILS Staff Meeting

## July 2020

- 3- Holiday for Independence Day
- 14- SAILS staff meeting
- 17- Internal ADA meeting-canceled due to COVID 19
- 25- ADA Annual Celebration canceled due to COVID 19

## August 2020

- 7- Support Group Meeting-canceled due to COVID 19
- 11- SAILS Staff Meeting
- 25- SAILS Staff Meeting
- 31- Final Purchases for Outsourcing Contract

## September 2020

- 1- SAILS CEO's 17th Work Anniversary
- 4- Support Group Meeting canceled-COVID 19
- 7- Labor day Holiday
- 8- SAILS CEO's Birthday/Staff Meeting
- 10- THE BIG GIVE SA!
- 16- COVID 19 Committee Meeting at SAILS

- 25- Cheers to 10 Years Morgan's Wonderland
- 29- SAILS Staff Meeting

## October 2020

- 2- Support Group Meeting Canceled
- 6- SAILS Staff Meeting
- 20- SAILS Staff Meeting
- 30- SAILS In-Service and Sanitizing Offices

## SAILS Welcomes Our New Staff Member

### Robert King

Human Resource/Executive Support Specialist



SAILS welcomes Robert King as our new Human Resources/Executive Administrative Assistant. He was hired in early March. He has a Bachelor's of Business Administration in Management with a concentration in Human Resources from Texas A & M University and a Master's in Business Administration (M.B.A.) in Management from North Central University.

He has previous experience working at Hertz Corporation where he oversaw fleet management. He also has experience in sales and loan processing at Carlotz, Inc in San Antonio. Again, welcome to SAILS!

## Mr. Marcos De La Garza: SAILS Got the Ball Rolling to Help with my Housing

by Juan Tristan, IL Outreach Specialist

Mr. De La Garza had a goal of living independently as possible. He had previously worked for many years and was accustomed to taking care of his family. He became very ill which affected his vision. Mr. De La Garza said, "since I became sick nothing has been going right for me."

Mr. De La Garza contacted SAILS for assistance with obtaining accessible housing. He told me "I thought that the process would take two or more years. When I called SAILS, you really got the ball rolling!"

Mr. De La Garza is now successfully living in his new accessible housing. He now lives close to his medical doctors and treatment centers. He told me that he is extremely happy with his new apartment. SAILS congratulates Mr. De La Garza!



With assistance from SAILS, Mr. Marco De La Garza gets housing in no time

## Ms. Dolores Gomez Enjoys Greater Mobility With A Stairlift

by Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

Ms. Dolores Gomez needed a stairlift for her two-bedroom home so she could easily access her bedroom. There were many times when she just stayed upstairs because she could not navigate downstairs because her hip hurt too much. It also took too much time for her to get downstairs if someone was coming over to her house to see her. Often she had to reschedule her appointments.

Now that Ms. Gomez has received her stairlift she has a much easier time moving about her home. She safely moves up and down the steps with her stairlift without any pain or risk of getting hurt. She said, "thank you for all the help." She is thankful for this program which provided her a way to be more independent.



This stairlift helps a lot for the mobility of Ms. Dolores Gomez

**Online Request For Services, SAILS Consumers:**  
<http://sailstx.org>  
Click link tab "Contact",  
and then "Request For Services"



# Why Do I Wear A Mask?

## Working During the Coronavirus Time at SAILS, Here, Staff Members Expalin Why They Are Wearing Mask:



**Dr. Kitty Brietzke, CEO:**  
"because I care about my family,  
staff and my community's health"



**Charles Villarreal, CFO:**  
"I wear a mask because I care  
about my family and community"



**Robert King,  
HR/Executive Support Specialist:**  
"no harm in a piece of cloth when  
you could be saving lives"



**Abel Zamora,  
Program Director:**  
"because proven science shows  
that doing so helps to save lives"



**Megan Zambo,  
IL Outreach Specialist:**  
"I wear a mask to keep those  
around me safe!"



**Shawanna Marshall,  
IL/Volunteer Coordinator:**  
"to protect my family and the  
community I serve"



**Theresa Hernandez,  
IL Outreach Specialist:**  
"because it saves lives"



**Janie Whiteley,  
Intake/IL Outreach Specialist:**  
"I want to watch my grandchildren  
grow to be successful adults!!"



**Juan Tristan,  
IL Outreach Specialist:**  
"You never know who's  
contagious, and to stop the  
spread of COVID"



**Laura Johnson,  
IL Outreach Specialist:**  
"because it keeps my sons and  
parents safe"



**Cythia Contreras,  
Receptionist:**  
"I wear the mask to stay safe"



## Ms. Minerva Banda Moves Around Her House Much Safer With A Stairlift

by Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

Minerva Banda needed a stairlift so she would be able to move safely from the living area of her house to the bedrooms. The stairs leading into the kitchen are narrow with tile. Ms. Banda had fallen going into her kitchen. She uses a walker around her house because of her bad knees. Her daughter, Mary contacted SAILS seeking assistance in obtaining a stairlift.

“She is incredibly happy with getting the new stairlift.” Mary said. “You should have seen her expression!” Ms. Banda can easily get up and down safely. She is no longer afraid of falling down the stairs. Her children even feel she is much safer now if she is alone.

Ms. Banda says, “it is a blessing; it makes my life so much easier!” Ms. Banda is very grateful for all the help she received in obtaining her stairlift.



Ms. Minerva Banda moves around her house much safer with a stairlift

## Mr. Santiago Villalobos: One SMART Goal

by Juan Tristan, IL Outreach Specialist

Mr. Villalobos was very SMART about his goal to obtain his own housing. He was also being realistic about his situation too. He applied for public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher. The waiting list for housing assistance can be anywhere from two to five years. He had already been waiting for over a year for housing. He would often call to check on the status of his application and ensure his information was current.

IL Specialist, Juan Tristan contacted Mr. Villalobos to inform him about the Housing Choice Voucher program available through the Alamo Area Council of Government. This is a voucher program that assists non-elderly persons with disabilities with housing. IL Specialist provided some advocacy and helped Mr. Villalobos to successfully locate and obtain housing in less than six months. Mr. Villalobos stated, “I am incredibly pleased with the fast service that I received from SAILS staff.”



Mr. Santiago Villalobos: One SMART goal



## Eric Escobar Is Much Safer Moving Around The House And The Yard

by Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

Eric Escobar is a young man that due to an accident gets around his house by using a powerchair. He lived in a single-story house that needed a ramp for him to get in and out of his house. IL Specialist, Megan Zambo discovered that Eric's family had built a "home-made" ramp that was unsafe for the powerchair to travel on. There weren't even any railings.

Eric's family members were so happy and relieved when he received his ramp from SAILS program. They know he is much safer coming and going for his various trips out and appointments. Ms. Escobar happily said, "It's wonderful and so much better than what we had before!"



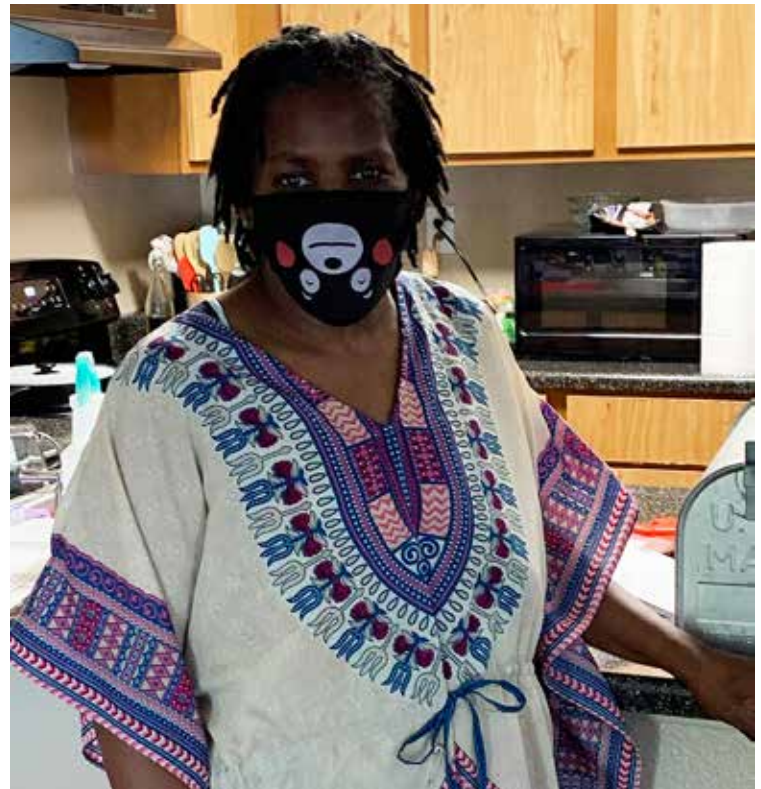
Eric Escobar is much safer moving around the house and the yard

## Ms. Janice Houston: Help During Times of COVID

by Juan Tristan, IL Outreach Specialist

Ms. Houston was facing eviction in the beginning of the year. She was frustrated because she has a significant disability and was in crisis. She reached out to SAILS for help. IL Specialist advocated on her behalf with her family members who she was residing with at the time. Eventually, her family understood that IL Specialist, Juan Tristan was assisting Ms. Houston with obtaining housing through the Mainstream Voucher Choice and explained everything. In a few short months Ms. Houston was in her own apartment!

Ms. Houston later needed assistance with her rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SAILS was able to provide her with help through a special grant awarded from Superior HealthPlan. Ms. Houston is a success story living on her own independently.



Help during time of COVID

# SAILS Consumer's Success Stories

## Ms. Rita Castro Gets A Ramp For Her House Accessibility

by Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

SAILS consumer Ms. Rita Castro requested help with getting a ramp installed and replacing her concrete stairs. Going in and out of her home was getting more and more difficult. In order to leave her home she used a rollator or scooter. The scooter had to be disassembled each time and carried down piece by piece and reassembled, making the Via Trans pick up for her difficult and painful. The other method was using the rollator. Her small porch made it impossible to hold the walker to lock her door. The walker would tumble down the stairs when she set it behind her to shut the door.

Ms. Castro said, "the process of the ramp installation couldn't have been easier. Rehab Engineering worked around my schedule." The whole process was explained thoroughly to Ms. Castro with good communication throughout every step. This made it easy for her to understand what was going on. She told me, "I know the ramp is made of good material." She added that the vendor was very knowledgeable. She has no concerns about falling at all anymore. "It is like boarding a cruise ship," she said happily. Ms. Castro can get in and out of her house so much easier now. She feels so much more independent and can glide in and out of her scooter to pick up her mail or go to her doctor. She said, "I can even get my 100 steps of therapy done by using the handrail for support. It truly is a life-changing experience for me!"



With assistance from SAILS, Ms. Rita Castro gets a ramp for her house

## Ms. Tracy Jordan: The Mainstream Housing Voucher

by Juan Tristan, IL Outreach Specialist

Ms. Jordan had a goal to find accessible affordable housing. IL Specialist let Ms. Jordan know that she is a good candidate for the Mainstream Housing Voucher. The Mainstream Housing Voucher is a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) for non-elderly persons with disabilities. IL Specialist assisted consumer with applying for the voucher.

The Mainstream Voucher has three requirements. First, you must be the ages of 18-61. Second, you must have proof of disability. Third, you must be homeless or at risk of being homeless. Ms. Jordan qualified for the voucher in February and four months later she found an apartment.



Ms. Tracy Jordan applies and qualifies for the Main Stream Housing Voucher

**SAILS Participates In  
Big Give San Antonio 2020**

**DONATE NOW**





# SAILS Is For Consumers



## Ms. Lila Cotton: A Ramp For Better Accessibility Around Her House

Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

Lila Cotton had an extremely hard time getting out of her house and down her steps outside with her rollator. The walker would get stuck on the steps outside. She was worried about falling all the time. Finally, she reached out to SAILS for help in getting ramp.

After receiving her ramp she told IL Specialist, Megan Zambo, "It is a big help. I couldn't have done this without SAILS help." It is much easier and safer these days for Ms. Cotton. Her new ramp makes life less painful too as she doesn't struggle maneuvering in and out of her house anymore.



Ms. Lila Cotton can access in and out her house much better and safer now with a ramp

## Mr. Eddie Vasquez: Knocking Down Barriers to Housing

by Juan Tristan, IL Outreach Specialist

Mr. Eddie Vasquez is pleased to accomplish his goal of obtaining housing. He had been managing his health and was at risk of becoming homeless. He requested services from SAILS for housing assistance. IL Specialist Juan Tristan discussed his independent living plan with his goal and coordinated assistance in obtaining housing through the Mainstream Housing Choice voucher.

During Mr. Vasquez' application period he faced many barriers. He was originally denied housing by the San Antonio Housing Authority. He requested an appeal and won. He received his voucher but services shut down due to COVID-19. Upon reopening he applied to many apartment complexes. He paid his application fees but was denied several times. He became very frustrated.

Finally, Mr. Vasquez found a nice one-bedroom apartment and successfully moved in. With his persistence and determination he knocked down the barriers to obtaining housing. IL Specialist said, "it was a joy to advocate for Mr. Vasquez and to see him succeed!"



Eddie Vasquez is knocking down barriers to housing



## Mr. Jesus Bernal Gets A Ramp For Mobility Around His House

by Abel Zamora, Program Director

Mr. Jesus Bernal is a resident of Jackson County, Texas who received a ramp through our Outsourcing Program. Mr. Bernal approached SAILS to request the ramp due to having significant difficulties accessing his back yard and the many flowers, plants, and trees that he and his wife enjoy due to significant physical disabilities. Mr. Bernal expressed gratitude to SAILS for the ramp that was constructed on his behalf.

Mr. Bernal remarked, "You all really saved us by getting this ramp for me and you are a great resource that many more people need to know about. I thank you and SAILS for everything you have done for me. I can go up and down my stairs now using the ramp."



Mr. Jesus Bernal gets a ramp for mobility around his house

## Remember Peter Watson, A Long Time Consumer of SAILS

By Kitty L. Brietzke, J.D.



Peter Watson was a huge part of SAILS. He participated in all the Support Group meetings and attended numerous events. He loved attending SAILS Fiesta Resource Fairs, picnics, appreciation luncheons and Annual Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration. He also loved fishing and attended all the Door in the Wall's (nonprofit organization) annual fishing events. He will be sorely missed by us all but not forgotten.

Peter was born in England. His father was in the United States Air Force and when he retired the family moved to Lacoste, Texas. Peter graduated from Medina Valley High School and then Palo Alto College. He later earned a BS in mathematics from the University of Texas in San Antonio. Sadly, Peter died unexpectedly on December 8, 2019 from arterial bleeding from a diabetic ulcer he had. His cause of death was a result of uncontrolled blood loss. Peter was a person who had autism and his disability added to this most unfortunate circumstance because it prevented him from waking his parents up for immediate help. Peter's parents would like to educate the community on the seriousness of arterial bleeding and the importance of seeking help under these or similar circumstances.

SAILS will always have fond memories of Peter!

SAILS Office Hours  
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sailstx.org



## Isabel Ehrlich And Her New Walker

by Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist



Megan Zambo, IL Outreach Specialist

Isabel Ehrlich who resides in Bexar county came to SAILS for help with getting a walker. Ms. Ehrlich has limited mobility and needed a walker to help her get around her house and go out of her home. She also needed to be able to see her doctor and run errands.

Ms. Ehrlich said, "my walker is marvelous. I don't have to hobble around the house anymore." Ms. Ehrlich is now much more comfortable leaving her home to pick up her prescriptions and see her doctors. She expressed how incredibly happy she is now with her new walker and with the help that she received from SAILS!

## Mr. Melecio Burciaga: A Van With Mobility Modification

by Abel Zamora, Program Director

Mr. Melecio Burciaga is a resident of Bexar County, Texas. Faced with challenges resulting from physical disabilities, Mr. Burciaga's ability to go anywhere outside his home was a daunting task. He and his wife approached SAILS for assistance with a request for a vehicle modification.

Thanks to the work of SAILS and Mobility Works, Mr. Burciaga is now able to go out and about to enjoy the simple everyday pleasures of life outside his home due to having a scooter lift installed in the family vehicle. Simple tasks such as going to the grocery store, appointments and other things are more possible due to the assistance he received from SAILS.



With assistance from SAILS, Mr. Melecio Burciaga gets his vehicle modified for mobility with his powerchair

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## OTHER FORMATS ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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Juan Tristan	IL/Outreach Specialist
Laura Johnson	IL/Outreach Specialist
Theresa Hernandez	IL/Outreach Specialist
Janie Whiteley	Intake/IL Outreach Specialist
Cynthia Contreras	Receptionist

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