

## SHARING STORIES OF SUPPORT FROM THE FRONTLINES

### Art at Home Allows People to Thrive in the Face of Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely transformed life as we know it. Students of all ages moved toward distance learning and businesses around the world have adapted to new methods of communication. People Inc. has made significant changes, too, as we strive to continue providing the highest quality care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

For many people we support, a fundamental outlet for learning and self-expression is our Day Habilitation Programs. When the pandemic started, People Inc. temporarily closed its Day Habilitation Programs to ensure the safety of everyone. In the face of this uncertainty, however, People Inc. found alternative ways to keep its programming thriving. One example is “Art at Home,” an initiative created by People Inc. Arts Experience, a fine arts day habilitation program.

“We started ‘Art at Home’ as a way to engage our Day Program participants when the programs were closed,” shared Amy Jakiel, senior day supervisor of the People Inc. Arts Experience Program. “We wanted to be sure there were still creative outlets available to all the people we support. We provided projects that fostered reflection and positivity to give people a means of expression in a challenging time.”

The initiative has been a success with staff and participants alike. Virtual programming has allowed participants to use technology along with safe, limited in-person support. The virtual program schedule was adjusted weekly to keep activities fun and engaging. Through applications like Zoom and other internet resources, free-flowing drawing sessions, book clubs, art gallery tours, dance, yoga, meditation, theatre, art classes and more have been enjoyed!

cont’d on page 4



From left to right: Joshua and Robert, who live in a People Inc. group home in Rochester, NY, pose with their “quarantine quilt” artwork.



Cheerful chalk drawings from people living at one of our group homes in Williamsville, NY.



Festive Cinco de Mayo shakers, created by people from one of our group homes in West Seneca, NY.

*“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” ~ Desmond Tutu*

## A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

If anyone were to question our staff being frontline heroes, this edition of *Faces of the Foundation* should put that question to a rest with a resounding "Absolutely!" No one could've predicted the circumstances we've all found ourselves in this past year. In the

midst of uncertainty, confusion and even fear, staff rallied together in a unified commitment focused on the safety and well-being of the people we support.

New practices were put into place with amazing speed, hundreds of messages were communicated on a daily basis, unconventional and creative approaches were generated and everything was run through the singular lens of "what is safest?" You'll see just some of the stories from our frontlines in this newsletter and I'm sure many of you could add even more.

Today, well over \$2 million in just COVID-related expenses continues to mount – we appreciate your help in supporting our very-real needs through participating in our COVID-19 Relief Fund campaign. And, if you know someone else who can help, please share this newsletter with them! Thank you so much for your partnership as we continue to deliver on our mission, despite the challenges!

Best,

Denise M. Bienko, MPL, Executive Director

**Please share your thoughts or questions with me directly at [dbienko@people-inc.org](mailto:dbienko@people-inc.org) or at 716.817.7470.**



## Telling the People Inc. Story

The People Inc. story began on August 14, 1970, with just a small group of parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities joining with professionals to address their needs, forming what would grow to become People Inc. That was 50 years ago, and today, People Inc. makes an impact on over 10,000 people a year with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families and older adults throughout Western New York and the Greater Rochester region. You and your family are an important part of People Inc. and we want to hear from you! As we celebrate throughout the year and prepare for our 50-year Time Capsule, please share your story to [foundation@people-inc.org](mailto:foundation@people-inc.org).

**Learn more about our history and milestones: [people-inc.org/tellingourstory](https://people-inc.org/tellingourstory)**



On Friday, August 14, 2020, several local landmarks were illuminated blue in honor of the 50th anniversary of People Inc., including Niagara Falls, NY. Photo credit: Roxane Albond-Buchner

Being away from family and friends during the COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis has been very difficult, including for parents of loved ones with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Advocate and longtime supporter Vickie Rubin, whose daughter is supported by People Inc. in a group home, shared a blog article that she happily wrote after seeing her daughter, Jessica, through a safe social distancing visit.

The following is from Vickie's Views, "short essays that will leave you with a smile."

## *Finally Seeing our Daughter Jessica*

By Vickie Rubin

Today was our first time seeing Jessica after 54 days – I was not sure how this was going to play out. Jess enjoys Face-timing with us, but I was concerned that she would not understand why we were unable to touch her even though we were visibly in front of her. My husband, Mitch, insisted that we needed to visually look at Jess and he wanted Jess to know that we are here, not just on her iPad or iPhone.

I desperately wanted to see Jess, but was concerned that it may frustrate her more than comfort. Would Jess understand that we were unable to give a hug or hold her hand? Were we doing more harm than good? It was a risk we needed to take because there is no telling when we will be able to embrace Jessica without fear of unknowingly spreading COVID-19. Jess is vulnerable, as are her housemates.

We drove up her driveway and saw Jess and her companions waiting on the porch. Three dedicated staff members were also waiting to say hello.

Mitch and I got out of the car and walked on the grass while Jess remained on her porch. We were a solid 20 feet away, but we were there in-person – seeing each other face-to-face!

Jessica's reaction was one we were hoping for – she clapped her hands and screamed with glee. Jess did not try to move her chair, nor did she seem frustrated by the proximity. She was thrilled to see us, which gave all of us a lift during this dark time. Mitch and I hummed a few tunes and Jess replied with the second verse: our special communication. We brought our therapy dog Daniel, who also sang a few tunes and made the ladies and staff smile and laugh.

Jessica's group home is administered by People Inc. ([people-inc.org](http://people-inc.org)). The organization has risen to the task during the pandemic. More importantly, or as importantly, the manager of Jessica's house, Kelly, has ensured that Jessica and her housemates are as safe as possible.

The devoted staff have overwhelmed us with their commitment, love and dedication to keep our daughter as protected as possible. Mitch and I know that Jess is just one exposure away from devastation and we are forever grateful for the care she is receiving and continue to pray, wish and hope that this continues.

We have all lost a lot of control of our day-to-day "normal" lives during the pandemic. Slowly we are trying to regain our footing and although things may be different, that does not mean we will be worse off. I hope the lessons learned from this scary and unprecedented experience will lead us to a better tomorrow. I look forward to holding Jessica's hands, receiving huge hugs and I will even tolerate Jess playfully pulling my messy, out of control hair!

Thank you, Kelly, Tony, Areyania, Michelle, Christian, Caira and Amara – you are making a difference every single day as an essential frontline worker to our daughter and her housemates.

**Visitation with safety restrictions has resumed at our group homes.**



## Art at Home Allows People to Thrive in the Face of Pandemic, cont'd

One exciting project is the "Quarantine Quilt." People living in numerous group homes each created a 6"x 6" art piece using materials that were readily available to them. Eventually, the squares will be pieced together as a collaborative display.

"The Virtual Program and Art at Home activities give all of us – direct support professionals included – something to do, look forward to, and help us through these uncertain times," said Melissa Levin, primary instructor for the People Inc. Arts Experience Program, who safely visited group homes to guide participants with projects. "I am very grateful to help out and assist people with these new tools."

Norman, who lives at one of our group homes in West Seneca, NY, had a lot to say about his experiences: "I love

doing art stuff. It's fun and I like trying different things, like sign language classes. It relaxes me and keeps me calm, too. When people see my artwork, it makes me feel happy." Norman also expressed that sign language classes through "Art at Home" have allowed him to help interpret for a housemate who has difficulty communicating.

Patrick, who also lives at the house, added, "I want to go back to work, but I like writing and art. I like the Zoom classes and meeting new friends."

Although the changes the pandemic has brought have been an adjustment for all of us, opportunities like "Art at Home" have allowed people to try new things, expand their creativity and – above all – persevere.



*A "distance doodle" by Jonnathan Mercado, who takes part in the People Inc. Arts Experience Program. "Distance doodles" are free-flowing art sessions run through Zoom.*



*From left to right: Norman and Patrick participate in a virtual book club, part of the "Art at Home" initiative. The group is reading a version of "Peter Pan," by J.M. Barrie.*

## Protect what Matters Most, Now and Always

With so much uncertainty at the moment, our work to ensure that people receive the services needed is of vital importance. Creating a planned gift is a powerful way to make a lasting impact and legacy with us that won't cost you anything today.

We hope you will join the many people who have included People Inc. in their will, trust or beneficiary designations. Writing a will is one of the most important steps to take, though understandably scary or uncomfortable given the current crisis. But now more than ever, it's important to protect what matters most to you and have a plan in place.

For more information regarding planned gifts and bequests, contact Christine Mathieu, Legacy officer, at [cmathieu@people-inc.org](mailto:cmathieu@people-inc.org) or 716.817.7256.



## Meet the People We Support: Nyitrai Family



During the first couple years after high school, Jacob Nyitrai spent most of his time at home playing video games. His mother, Lynn was working from home at that time and was concerned that her son, who has intellectual and developmental disabilities, didn't have much contact with other people.

When the People Inc. Iris Afternoon Respite, one of the agency's Hourly Respite Programs, opened in February 2018, Jacob was one of the first people to sign up. Located in Blasdell, NY, the program was a great opportunity for Jacob to spend time outside of the house and get some much-needed social interaction. This was beneficial for the mother-son relationship, plus Jacob opened up so much more than ever before.

When we temporarily closed Afternoon Hourly Respite Programs, staff became even more creative to help bridge the gap.

Recently, for Jacob's 25th birthday, People Inc. staff members Jillian Pulvino and Lindsey McKee decorated their cars in Jacob's favorite colors, drove by his home, honking their horns and wishing him a "Happy Birthday!" They even safely stood out by their cars and talked to him for a while, which made his day.

"Jacob was so disappointed when our program temporarily closed, so it was nice to see him happy and excited when we drove by for his birthday," said Jillian, People Inc. senior respite supervisor.

The use of Zoom video conference calls has provided a new way of communicating that has helped Jacob feel better and stay connected with the rest of the people who attend the program.

Before the COVID-19 situation, the group would socialize from 2 to 6 p.m. where Jacob had been a "big brother" to

fellow program participants. During their time together, he would teach some of the others how to play video games. They also spent time at outings like going to the movies, aquarium and even enjoyed a martial arts program. Now, Jacob looks forward to the weekly Zoom call. It is a welcome opportunity for Jacob and his friends – many of whom have been together since they were five years old. They love seeing everyone, even if it is just on the screen.

"It's amazing to see all of them together on the call," said Lynn. "Jillian makes sure that each gets their turn to talk, so they can all share what's going on in their lives. What they are doing in this program is truly wonderful!"



# #PeopleIncStrong #WeArePeopleInc

In these challenging times, things are changing daily and social distancing continues. Check out these examples of dedication, commitment and empathy. At People Inc., we are getting through this together.

## Putting Paint and Brushes to Good Use

Being creative is important during this time of crisis. People who live in one of the Amherst, NY, residences put paint and brushes to good use! Jennifer, Matthew and Stacie kept busy, creating a beautiful mural in their basement.



## Zooming and Smiling

All across our agency, we prioritized keeping in touch during these challenging times. A group from one of our Community Active People Programs (CAPP) have had meetings via Zoom that bring lots of smiles!



## Tutoring Services Provide Support through Distance Learning

As part of People Inc. Family Advocacy Services, a team of special educators have risen to the challenges presented by the pandemic. Using applications like Facebook Video Messenger and Zoom, special educators continue to provide tutoring services, while also assisting parents with home schooling challenges. Showcasing their innovation and commitment, special educators have developed unique materials and lessons to assist people in promoting skill growth and assignment completion.



## Senior Companion Volunteers Reach Out

Many people are sheltering in place, including older adults. Thankfully, some of the People Inc. Senior Companion volunteers continue to reach out with old-fashioned telephone calls and virtual visits. Senior Companion Volunteer Shirley Duncan (pictured right, in top corner) talks with Essie Scales, who is supported by the program. Essie misses getting out of the house and the comfort of talking with someone helps. They are happy to visit virtually!



# Staying Creative

At a group home in Angola, NY, everyone danced along to a Wii game.

Taking advantage of a sunny day, people at a group home in Lancaster, NY, added some colorful shades to their neighborhood. Bob and Jim, who live at the house, posed with their artwork, which is dedicated to essential workers.

People living at a residence in Silver Creek, NY, and staff, worked on their landscaping and safely enjoyed an outdoor dinner together.

People living in a group home in Hamburg, NY, painted colorful eggs.



Diane, who is part of our Contract Manufacturing, is keeping busy by creating beautiful paint-by-number artwork. Check out this awesome lion!

Cortney, who receives People Inc. Self-Directed Services, is helping health care workers by assembling care packages for them. Laura Wilcox, self-determination assistant, coordinated item donations. Cortney assembled each package with a Tupperware container, a can of soup and other snacks. Cortney added a personal touch with decorative paper and ribbons, along with a thank you note. Ten packages were delivered to Rochester General Hospital.



People living at our group home residence in Silver Creek, NY, had fun together making bird feeders for backyard feathered friends!

# Supported Employment Program Continues During Coronavirus Pandemic

Many people with developmental disabilities are eager to continue working through the Coronavirus pandemic. Christopher Chase is a perfect example of that. A resident of Williamsville, NY, Chase is employed at the Len-Co Lumber in Clarence, NY, as a lumber yard worker and is assisted through the People Inc. Supported Employment Program. Throughout this pandemic, he has continued to assist customers safely with carry out and loading vehicles, as well as other duties. Christopher shared, "I enjoy being part of the team here and learning new things. My favorite job is driving the forklift!"

Bob Drodz of Len-Co Lumber remarked: "I am extremely proud of all Chris' accomplishments in the last eight years of him being onboard with us. Chris takes initiative and continues to be a respected, reliable employee. His positive attitude makes our other employees better workers by improving their moods, too."

As part of the program, an employment specialist works as the liaison between the employer and the employee, focusing on job-readiness and addressing any concerns. "People Inc. Employment Specialist Kristen Pautler adds a level of support that creates additional accountability, not just for Chris, but for our management team, as well. I would absolutely recommend this quality service to other businesses," added Bob.

Our Supported Employment Program serves a large spectrum of people with disabilities throughout the region. This program promotes individualized job carving. We use an individual placement model, providing assessment of employment interest and choice, job development, job training, stabilization and long-term follow along. All placements are community-based in an integrated setting. Participants are employees of the businesses and are paid the prevailing wage for their work. To qualify, participants must be 18 years or older with a disability and aging out of a school system.

People Inc. is seeking new businesses throughout the community to employ people with disabilities year-round. The agency assists companies to create jobs around a person's talents and interests. Hiring a qualified person with a disability brings greater benefits beyond just filling an open job.

To learn more about how to get employed through the People Inc. Supported Employment Program or to become a business partner, contact James Scutt at [jscutt@people-inc.org](mailto:jscutt@people-inc.org) or call 716.817.5750.



# Amanda and Thousands of Others Need Your Help



Amanda DiCarlo is one of the many people supported through our Respite Services. Amanda receives in-home assistance for daily living skills, such as cooking, budgeting and grocery shopping. She also participates in social groups that provide her an opportunity to meet new people and experience fun activities like going to the movies, sporting

events and trips to Niagara Falls, NY.

Thanks to Amanda's Respite staff, she is able to learn skills that she needs to help her become more independent. Her mother, Dawn DiCarlo, says the COVID-19 crisis has made it challenging for Amanda to continue

developing her independence and social skills without in-person support interrupted by the covid crisis.

Dawn is one of our many family, community donors that have contributed to our People Inc. Foundation COVID-19 Emergency Fund. The fund helps offset expenses related to the crisis to protect our frontline staff and support the agency's Telemedicine Program, as well as assist people residing in homes to stay connected with family and friends through technology.

You too, can help fill the gap of nearly \$2 million in Covid-related expenses by contributing to the People Inc. Foundation COVID-19 Emergency Fund! Donate now at [people-inc.org/covidrelief](http://people-inc.org/covidrelief) or use the enclosed remittance envelope. For more information, contact Jennifer Robinson at [jrobinson@people-inc.org](mailto:jrobinson@people-inc.org) or 716.817.7269.



## People Inc



### COVID-19 Relief Fund

Help bridge the gap of extra expenses incurred by the Coronavirus pandemic.



Donate \$20 or more and receive a People Inc. Heroes Awareness Wristband. Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated.

## Your Support is Needed During this Critical Time

Help support the mission of People Inc. Your donation of any amount will benefit the People Inc. Foundation COVID-19 Relief Fund. Your donation will help bridge the gap of extra expenses for Personal Protective Equipment, enhanced cleaning and frontline worker costs, as well as technology to help people provide remote support and stay connected with their family and friends. Donations are greatly appreciated, especially during this critical time. To make an online donation, go to [people-inc.org/covidrelief](http://people-inc.org/covidrelief) or use the enclosed remittance envelope. For more information, contact Jennifer Robinson at [jrobinson@people-inc.org](mailto:jrobinson@people-inc.org) or 716.817.7269. Thank you for your support.

*We're grateful to all of our  
"PeopleCart" shoppers!*

Thanks to our  
People Inc. Senior  
Leadership Team who  
donated over \$6,000 in  
groceries for families in  
the first weeks of  
the pandemic.

Melanie Brown,  
Advancement coordinator  
for the People Inc. Foundation, temporarily  
reassigned to our PeopleCart team.

## All Hands on Deck

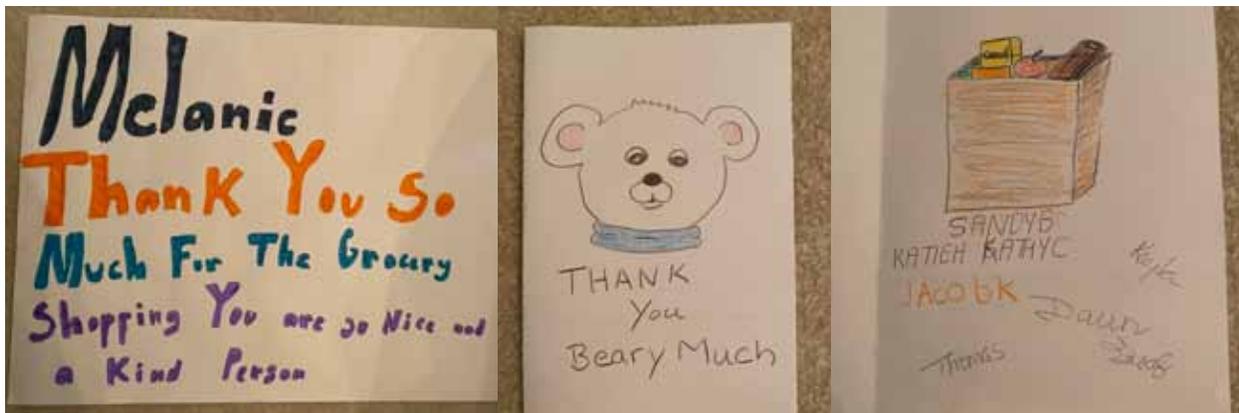
To help minimize community contact, People Inc. created "PeopleCart" to support residential staff with grocery shopping. A group of designated grocery shoppers safely purchased items based on lists provided by the sites. With no entry, they deliver to doors of People Inc. residences. This has also helped direct support professionals to focus on the well-being of people living in our agency group homes.

One of those shoppers was Melanie Brown, who had been shopping for Southtowns homes since the end of March. She shares her perspective:

"An opportunity arose when my main job function of fundraising and planning events was put on halt. I was asked if I would like to grocery shop as a way to help bring less exposure into the group homes during the pandemic. My immediate response was YES! Within a

few days, I was given Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and had a schedule of homes to shop for on a weekly basis." Melanie developed great relationships with the staff that work at the group homes.

Melanie continued: "I have also developed positive relationships with the grocery stores, in particular the Tops in the Village of Hamburg. I am at that Tops four days a week and sometimes twice a day. Store associates have been so accommodating when I shop, it's been a true relief. Since taking on this temporary role, I have learned so much more than I was expecting – this experience has taught me to not take life for granted and to appreciate the small things. I have gained even more respect for those working in our group homes, along with a few muscles!"



## Words of Gratitude

"Our shopper is efficient, helpful and very understanding when problems arise with our grocery lists. She is prompt and does her best to shop cost-effectively and quickly. The biggest positive of having a shopper is that staff get to spend more time with the people we support. We truly appreciate our shopper."

- Amanda Roush, Acting Senior Residential Supervisor, People Inc.

"Having a shopper is a great safety feature, as direct support professionals do not need to go to a large store and interact with a lot of people. This lessens the risk to all at the site. Our shopper has a great personality and she really tries to be precise with everything we ask her to buy. She calls if she has a question and does a great job for us. We are lucky to have her!"

- Mary Scanlon, Senior Residential Supervisor, People Inc.

# Thank You 2020 COVID-19 Campaign In-Kind Donors

Thank you for being a part of the People Inc. Foundation COVID-19 Relief Fund! We are extremely grateful to our community of families, employees and organizations that donated gifts to help cover the expenses for crisis equipment, provide Telemedicine services and critical care to support to people on a daily basis.

We appreciate organizations like Operation Sewing Squad for donating 1,900 cloth masks and to all our individual sewers and organizations that combined, delivered 10,303 masks to protect our frontline staff. Restaurants and

organizations, such as Kevin's Catering and Out of the Blue, who delivered meals to people we assist and to staff, OTG Management supplied 100 residences with iPads to help families stay connected during isolation, bringing many smiles to those we support. We are also thankful to the organizations who have supported our efforts through COVID support grants.

## Cloth Masks

### Organizations:

Buffalo Jewish Foundation  
Buffalo Scrubs  
Chinese American Club  
Colvin Cleaners  
Golden Age Center  
Maid to Aid  
Niagara County  
Niagara Office of Aging  
Operation Sewing Squad  
Out of the Blue  
PharMerica  
Tieks Shoes  
United Way Greater Rochester  
Walsh Duffield

### Foundations:

Millennium Collaborative Care  
Mother Cabrini Health Foundation  
Federal Communications Commission  
WNY Responds, a local foundations collaborative  
Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Fund  
B. Thomas Golisano Foundation  
Rochester Community Crisis Fund

### Individuals

Courtney Moskal  
Carolyn McNamara  
Albany ASG Member

Abigal Browngoehl & Family  
Alissa Yax  
Amy Johnson  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Becky Watts  
Ciarra Eaton  
Colleen Kraatz  
Dawn Stewart  
Deborah Godwin  
Denise Gerhard  
Deborah Hilton  
Diane Klein  
Dr. Susan Wright  
Ed Rath,  
Erie County Legislator  
Jamie Miller  
Jennifer Ball  
Jeanne Vinal,  
Erie County Legislator  
John J. Mills,  
Erie County Legislator  
John Rupert Malones  
Judith Rackovitch  
Kadence Hirschey  
Kathleen Rockey  
Kendyl Glana  
Lisa Chimera,  
Erie County Legislator  
Maggie Buckley  
Marie and Bruno Bruni  
Mary Shelia  
Maureen Couche  
Mayor of Lackwanna,  
Annette Lafallo  
Michael Meyers



1. 2,000 patient masks and 5 boxes of gloves from the Chinese American Club. 2. Colvin Cleaners donated 1,000! 3. Maid to Aid donated 600 masks with clips. 4. Frontline staff with protective masks making cards with residents. 5. Participants of Supported Employment enjoyed a pizza donated by M&T Bank. 6. Friends keep in touch through video platforms via donated iPads.

## Misty Moshier

Kevin Hardwick,  
Erie County Legislator  
Patricia Sharkey  
Paula Colangelo  
Rebecca Baker-Gillman  
Sarah Ford  
Sheena Weed  
Sherry Sojka, empl  
Susan Lanigan  
Susan Marsden  
Yvonne Caternolo

## Food

Assemblyman Sean Ryan  
Amherst Meal on Wheels  
Chubby Chix Cakery  
JP Fitzgeralds Restautant  
Kevin's Catering  
M&T Bank  
Mulberry Italian Ristorante  
Out of the Blue  
Perk Me Up  
Pesci's Pizza  
PharMerica  
The Thurman  
Thomas Foundation

## Flowers

Senior Wishes

## Ipads

OTG Management

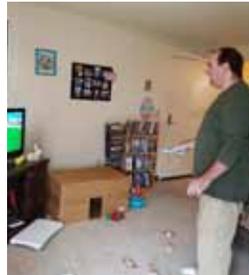


## Continuing Independence

The People Inc. Community Habilitation Program is designed to promote independence and community integration by offering skills training and other supports to people with various disabilities. This vital support includes assistance with grocery shopping, budgeting, mobility training and guidance in pursuing social interests. Although activities in the community have lessened during the COVID-19 pandemic, our Community Habilitation Program is active as ever! Here are some examples of how participants are finding ways to focus on their independence.



Regina loves nature and enjoys walking – she and her community-based instructor have combined these interests by taking regular walks in a park in Regina’s neighborhood.



George enjoys walking in his neighborhood with staff. When the weather is not good, staff encourages him to set up his Wii to play some sports games, which has been a lot of fun!



Michelle appreciates the assistance her staff provides at the laundromat, carrying and folding clothes. She is happy to have services at this time, as she can complete errands and feel so much better by just getting out of her apartment.



Juan is currently out of work, so he is spending a lot of time at home. He feels comfort in knowing that his community-based instructor can still meet with him weekly. As a result, Juan has also been stepping up at home, which is greatly appreciated by his mom. Juan is helping more with taking care of his pets, and assisting with household tasks, like taking out the garbage and doing laundry.

**Community Habilitation continues to accept new enrollees.**  
To learn more, contact People Inc. Admissions at 716.880.3700.

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## *The Bright Side for the People Inc. Foundation and Donors from the CARES Act*

- **\$300 Above-the-Line Deduction for non-itemizers**
  - › For many, a worthwhile incentive to support the important work of our agency during this crisis
- **60% of AGI Limit Waived**
  - › Itemizers can deduct more of their charitable cash donations this year
- **Corporate and Business Limits increase as well**
  - › This year, corporations can save more in federal income tax because of the increased annual deduction for eligible charitable contributions

**These are just a few of the potential benefits for donors looking to continue or increase their level of support of our mission. And where there is an opportunity to give or increase giving, there is an added assurance that our mission will remain alive and well, regardless of uncertain times.**



# Community Generosity

Many local businesses and people have come together to provide help and brighten spirits. We're so grateful for the support.

## Assemblyman Sean Ryan Thanks Essential Workers

Thank you to Assemblyman Sean Ryan for delivering pizza to residents and staff of a People Inc. group home in Buffalo, NY. On his Twitter, Assemblyman Ryan thanked all essential workers who are providing care during this difficult time.



## Pesci's Pizza & Wings Delivers to Two People Inc. Group Homes

Thank you to Pesci's Pizza & Wings for doing their part to help others during the pandemic. They delivered over 70 free pizzas to local organizations, including staff and residents at two of People Inc. group homes in Clarence and East Amherst, NY.



## Flowers to Brighten the Day

Senior Wishes, a nonprofit organization that enriches the lives of qualifying seniors throughout Western New York, donated plants to tenants of People Inc. Iris Senior Living in Hamburg, NY, to celebrate Mother's Day! The plants were safely distributed to tenants.



## Perk Me Up

Out of the Blue WNY, a local nonprofit that teams up with organizations like People Inc. and enhances the quality of life for adults with disabilities throughout Western New York, donated Tim Hortons coffee to direct support professionals working in our group homes. A big thank you to Out of the Blue for their tasty generosity!



## Local Restaurants Donate Food

Mulberry Italian Ristorante in Lackawanna, NY, wanted to do something nice for people who live at People Inc. Sunflower Senior Living in Lackawanna. They donated a delicious lunch of pasta, meatballs, salad and rolls for all of the tenants! Everything was packaged in to-go containers and safely distributed. Delicious gourmet cupcakes were also donated by Chubby Chix Cakery in Orchard Park, NY. Even though the tenants were unable to eat the meal together, it was wonderful to see how hard times can bring out the good in people.



## #StriveForSeniors

We're thankful to former Buffalo Bills running back and member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Thurman Thomas, for his generous donation of snacks to benefit tenants at People Inc. Carnation Senior Living in West Seneca and People Inc. Sunflower Senior Living in Lackawanna, NY. The Thurman Thomas Family Foundation and John Corto of Buffalo Strive Vending partnered for the #StriveForSeniors challenge to provide food to seniors in need. The snacks were safely dropped off with no contact to tenants.



THE PEOPLE INC. FOUNDATION EXISTS TO INSPIRE AND EMPOWER OUR SUPPORTERS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

# Dynamic Duo Keeps People Connected

Since COVID-19, social distancing has become part of a “new normal.” Stay-at-home guidelines can make it easy to feel disconnected from the people we care about.

Thankfully, there are proactive ways that can help people feel less separated, while remaining safe at home. That was the goal of Michelle Logiudice, a People Inc. Brighton Park Day Services employee who temporarily worked at one of our group homes in Grand Island, NY, and Sylvia Turner, one of the people who lives there. What do you get when you put two super friendly, chatty people like Michelle and Sylvia, together? You get the desire to reach out and chat with even more people!

And that was the motivation for Michelle and Sylvia to share communication via phone or FaceTime with friends that remain close at heart, but are living apart. The miles between residences and the inability to spend quality time together due to social distancing during these tough times may seem like huge challenges, but to Michelle and Sylvia, they are only small bumps in the road.

This dynamic duo used FaceTime and regular phone calls

to chat with friends from Grand Island to East Aurora and other towns in between! They were originally asked to make occasional calls, but, in some cases, they reached out on a regular basis, so they did not miss anybody who wanted to chat.



“Sylvia is delighted to keep in touch with some of her dear friends, but those that she contacts are absolutely thrilled,” shared Jacqueline Shapiro, senior day supervisor. Jacqueline also proudly proclaimed that Michelle, the humble and thoughtful project facilitator, continually demonstrates her genuine care and concern for the people our agency supports. “Michelle has a desire to enhance lives and it gives me great joy and satisfaction to see this once-small project growing and bringing so much happiness to others, in spite of the serious pandemic that has turned our world upside down.”

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## Staff Share their Perspectives

“I wanted to share how proud I am of People Inc. We are always thinking outside the box and holistically looking at what services are needed to assist those we support. I feel gratitude for our proactive planning and Emergency Preparedness Team’s efforts.

As an agency, we have shined in so many areas: nursing supports, addressing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issues, training and sharing information robustly, as well as emotional supports to family and people supported.

I have had the pleasure of participating in People Inc. Advocacy meetings a few times per week – they are meeting much needed social and advocacy essentials for people in this time of great uncertainty. The silver lining of this pandemic is that we are coming together in many ways, as there are people participating in these meetings

from all over the state, including Long Island, Hudson Valley area, Jamestown, Batavia and Rochester. I’m glad the Advocacy Department quickly provided this support through the Advocacy phone line and Zoom meetings.

Recently, I hosted a meditation group and two advocacy meetings to support people with coping skills for stress and learning how to meditate. The feedback from advocates is insightful and positive – they have an opportunity to ask questions and talk about how they are feeling.

I’m thankful we are considering emotional needs during this time. These acts of emotional support and kindness are what put us a step above and show why we are the provider of choice, even in a pandemic situation. Be well.”

– Noel Schmitt, assistant director, People Inc. Quality Improvement

Advocates can stay connected with each other for friendly phone calls and information. An Advocacy Phone Line is available for people our agency supports to ask non-emergency questions, share what is on their minds and receive support. It can be reached at 716.322.7070. Messages are monitored from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. To learn more about video conferencing and virtual activities, contact Rick Banner, director of Advocacy and Person-Centered Services, at [rbanner@people-inc.org](mailto:rbanner@people-inc.org).

### Shop for a Gift that Sparkles

If you are looking for a beautiful piece of jewelry for someone special this holiday season, look no further than the new Embrace the Difference® wrap bracelets with a silver tone butterfly charm. Styles to choose from include black, crystal or a dark purple, teal and fuchsia jewel toned seed bead design on a silver wire to add a bit of dazzle.

**Bracelets are \$30.00 each and can be ordered at: [people-inc.org/shop](http://people-inc.org/shop)**

### Purchase Holiday Cards to Support People Inc.

People Inc. Foundation holiday cards are a nice way to brighten one's day, like family, friends and customers during this festive season! There are three designs to choose from, all created by people we support! Proceeds from the sale benefit programs and services provided by People Inc.

**Choose your design and purchase packs of eight cards with envelopes for \$9.99 each: [people-inc.org/holidaycards](http://people-inc.org/holidaycards)**

**Order your bracelets and holidays cards now! Limited supplies available, bracelets and cards can be shipped for an additional cost per item. For more information or to schedule a pickup, contact Melanie Brown at [mbrown@people-inc.org](mailto:mbrown@people-inc.org) or call 716.817.7450.**



Snowmen in Pink



Country Snowman



Snowman