



*Serving Children and Adults with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities for 70 Years*

June 12, 2020

**PAUL TORRES**  
Executive Director

Dear AHRC Suffolk Individuals, Families and Staff:

As I sit here writing to you, the sun is shining and I can hear birds chirping from their perches in the trees. I imagine many of us have been enjoying the beautiful weather perhaps more than ever lately, as many have been cooped up inside for months, our busy lives screeching to a halt and perhaps giving us more time to enjoy nature’s beauty and calming powers. Conversely, many of us are instead busier than ever, with work and other responsibilities growing instead of slowing. I hope those with added demands are able to get out for a brisk walk on a nice day, or sit outside for a few moments to clear your head. It really can help recharge and cleanse the mind, and I’m certain we can all use that right now.

**OFFICERS**  
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Joseph Zifchock  
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**DIRECTORS**  
Deborah Pflieger

By now I’m sure you’re all used to seeing me mention it week after week, but cleaning, washing, protecting—those are the key things keeping people safe and healthy, and they are working! Cleaning our homes and work spaces, washing our hands and wearing our masks and other PPE, it’s all working. We are now in week six of no new positive COVID-19 cases for individuals, and week five of no new cases for our staff, as we and Suffolk County continue to flatten the curve. AHRC Suffolk’s efforts and effectiveness of response to COVID-19 have not gone unnoticed. In a recent conversation between NYSARC and Dr. Ted Kastner, Commissioner of OPWDD, discussing statewide impact related to the Coronavirus, Dr. Kastner singled out AHRC Suffolk and the relative success we have had in staving off the virus. Kudos to everyone in our “family” that has played a part in our efforts from our front line heroes, to our individuals and families who have had to adapt to such extreme change, to everyone else who has supported them in the background to achieve what we have accomplished so far. We are *#InItTogether*. Keep up the good work, stay aware and proactive, and stay the course!

As inspired as we are with our progress, we remember that AHRC Suffolk has suffered some devastating losses of yours and our loved ones from our residential and day programs and we await the day when we can safely and respectfully come together to celebrate their lives and mourn their departure. I know there are so many stories and memories to share together while remembering these incredibly special people, and we look forward to hearing them all.

Just last week, Governor Cuomo offered that schools like our Saul & Elaine Seiff Educare Center are allowed to open for the summer, however school districts have not finalized whether they will support this. Parents join us with concerns regarding the short timeframe to prepare to open safely. There is a lot to consider with classroom sizes, rigorous health and safety guidelines, and transportation. Some families may be hoping dearly that we are able to open safely and use this opportunity to return on a smaller scale. Other families may feel that regardless of whether Educare opens for the summer, this may still not be a safe time for their child to return to school. We will continue to update our school families as we make further progress in these discussions and evaluations.

In closing I would like to reaffirm AHRC Suffolk’s commitment to social justice and equality. We know that an *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere*. In Malcolm Gladwell’s *David and Goliath*, he states that the principles of legitimacy are threefold.

- People who are asked to obey authority have to feel they have a voice; that if they speak up, they will be heard.
- The law has to be predictable; there has to be a reasonable expectation that rules tomorrow are going to be roughly the same rules as today.
- That authority has to be fair; it cannot treat one group differently from another.

We at AHRC Suffolk, in our longstanding dedication to ensuring social justice for people with disabilities, are devoted to social justice for all people who are marginalized by society. We express our allegiance to those from black and brown communities and commit to supporting an AHRC Suffolk community that listens, is consistent and predictable, and is viewed as just and fair.

Stay well, stay safe and thank you for all you do.

Paul H. Torres  
Executive Director



Your gift to our COVID-19 Relief Fund helps us purchase personal protective equipment, provide expanded medical and mental health services, increase our technology, and so much more. To donate, visit [www.ahrcsuffolk.org/covidrelief](http://www.ahrcsuffolk.org/covidrelief) (donations, marked COVID-19 Relief Fund, can also be mailed to the address at the top of this page)