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

September 18, 2020

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Dear Individuals, Families, and AHRC Suffolk Team Members:

This week marks six months since COVID-19 caused the shutdown of our site-based programs. It is remarkable to look back on the overwhelming challenges that our Chapter has faced and overcome this year. It is a testament to our collective resiliency, one I particularly attribute to and am sincerely and deeply humbled by the heroics of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Working together, we have surmounted many obstacles, even when the weight of it all made things seem nearly impossible. Adapting procedures and layouts to keep individuals and staff safe, we seamlessly and instantly continued to provide meaningful programs for all, which forced us all to remain creative, be proactive and assist and lean on one another. We should all be proud and we are reminded daily that there remains a steep climb ahead of us.

The challenges brought on by COVID-19 have given us the challenge to adapt at our Saul & Elaine Seiff Educare Center. Since March, we have expanded our use of and our expertise in the Google Classroom platform and would be ready to move to fully remote instruction at a moment's notice. Many students have returned for in-person instruction and are adjusting to new schedules, making new friends and learning new skills. Our enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices have become routine and we are off to a tremendous start to the 2020-2021 school year.

Participation in adult day services is gradually expanding week to week. In addition to the continuing Day Hab services being provided in our residences, we have nearly 200 individuals receiving day services either in-person at one of our program sites or via our MY Choice Virtual Day Hab. We had 35 individuals join us virtually this week from the comfort of their homes. We still look to welcome back even more individuals on-site or virtually, to engage in vital programming and services. The benefits are immeasurable to those who have already been able to rejoin us, and the social and emotional connections that are being made after these long months are invaluable. If you or your loved one are not yet back to attending day program, please reach out to your day program staff and let them detail the options for both on-site and digital returns. Our staff is happy to assist you in figuring out your best options and to provide technology assistance if needed. It is imperative that we continue growing our daily participation, as it helps ensure that these programs will remain available to those who need them.

In closing, I want to take another moment to recognize our DSPs at the conclusion of Direct Support Professionals Week. Their work every day with our individuals and their families helps each and every person best define their quality of life. We are so grateful to each and every one of our DSPs, and we look forward to seeing what each new day brings, with their dedication, creativity and support.

John F. Kennedy famously said in his Moon speech, *we do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard*. AHRC Suffolk staff that provide direct services and supports are our greatest asset and during the pandemic your greatness is magnified. You do this work not because it is easy, but because it is hard, and you keep doing it until you are successful. For that I salute your generous spirit, your commitment to our organization, and to people with disabilities.

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

Paul H. Torres
Executive Director



Are you a member of AHRC Suffolk? An active, strong membership provides our chapter with a louder voice to our elected officials when advocating for policies and services that directly impact and benefit individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Become a member [HERE](#).

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 (donations, marked **COVID-19 Relief Fund**, can also be mailed to the address at the top of this page)