

"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dear Royer-Greaves Community,

Since March, our classrooms have been quiet. Nobody's singing in the music room, or swimming in the pool, or swinging at the playground. But while COVID-19 closed our physical campus, it has not stopped our students, adults, teachers, staff, and parents from learning, teaching, supporting, and caring for each other. In other words, this virus did not keep Royer-Greaves from being Royer-Greaves.

In these pages, you will learn more about the extraordinary efforts our teachers and staff have made to translate their usually hands-on instruction and therapy services into a virtual language. You will read about some members of the larger community who provided protective equipment for the staff and individuals at our group homes and Lifesharing homes. You'll learn about

grants awarded to us by philanthropic organizations who wanted to support what we do, and about opportunities for you to help, too.

As we write this letter, we do not know whether our campus will reopen for summer programs or even in the fall. But whether we are able to be in the same space together, or if we must continue to creatively bridge the distance between us, we will learn, and teach, and support, and care for each other. As this difficult time has reminded us, Royer-Greaves is not a group of buildings; it is a group of people.

Sincerely,

Executive
Director
VICKY MAYER



Deputy
Director
DEBRA JEROME



Creativity and Technology Allow Royer-Greaves Students and Adults to Learn and Grow During Closure

Teacher Diane Lomax asked her Royer-Greaves School for Blind students to touch the raised and textured images of Native American dwellings. Could they feel the triangle shape of the teepee? If they put their knees together, and their feet apart, they could make the same shape, she said.



Diane Lomax

On a typical school day, Ms. Diane would walk around the classroom, close to her students and their direct support professionals, sometimes touching a small hand to guide a child. But on this day, Ms. Diane was at her house, recording herself teaching the social studies lesson that students would follow at their homes, with help from a parent or sibling and the illustrations of

Native American dwellings that were mailed.

Since March, the Royer-Greaves School and Adult Training Facility campus is closed due to COVID-19. Royer-Greaves teachers, therapists, and staff have found creative ways to make sure students and adults, who all have some combination of visual, intellectual, and physical disabilities, continue to receive

the education, services and support they need.

Physical Education Teacher Ryan Mason uses Zoom, YouTube, and the assistance of parents or siblings to guide students and adults in movement-based classes that focus on increasing coordination, flexibility, spatial awareness, and body awareness. A split screen allows him to share some videos with exercises set to music while watching what's happening and providing live guidance to the student or adult, or the person who is helping them.



Ryan Mason

Mr. Ryan said he and the parents of the Royer-Greaves students and adults he works with have strengthened their bonds through this experience. "It's one thing to communicate through calls or text, but to have this face-to-face (video) communication where someone can ask a question and the other person can respond in real time, this has really increased understanding," he said. "We are a stronger team now."

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Creativity and Technology Allow Royer-Greaves Students and Adults to Learn and Grow During Closure *continued*

Every school day, music therapist and teacher Suzanne Kane-Filshill both uses Zoom for live interaction and provides a video



Suzanne Kane-Filshill

version of her Royer-Greaves classroom for both students and adults to use as their schedules allow. She delivers the videos to parents and caretakers through email and the Royer-Greaves Facebook page, where every post remains. There's always a theme – songs about moms, or spring, or friendship. The messages are always uplifting, and just like in her classroom, she encourages participants to sing or dance along. “Music was already a big communication

bridge between us,” she said, noting that some of the students and adults are non-verbal.

Most days, it's Ms. Suzanne's voice they hear. Many Royer-Greaves students and adults relish routine and love the familiar. “They know me, and they know my voice, and I think that my

voice itself is a hand reaching out to remind everyone that we're still here together, even though we can't be in the music room together,” she said. “That's me, reaching out to them.”

Royer-Greaves Supervisor of Education Dr. Carolyn Muller said Zoom has allowed teachers and speech, occupational, and physical therapists to directly teach parents how to support goals at home. Teachers and therapists help the family find ways to help a child succeed at home, by helping the family practice skills, such as brushing teeth, making a snack, or placing pillows or other supports so the child can sit upright.



Dr. Carolyn Muller

Everyone has had to think differently about the way they teach and it hasn't been easy, but it's been a great opportunity, Muller said. “There's not an educator who isn't going to be a better educator because of this,” she said.

The supply chain fell short, but our community came through

Donated Masks Help Royer-Greaves Services Protect Individuals and Staff from Coronavirus

Earlier this spring, Royer-Greaves School for Blind and Royer-Greaves Services needed face masks for individuals and staff, but administrators could not find any for purchase. That's when the community stepped in.

- John Cappelli of [Cappelli Tailors](#) in Wayne donated 40 he made himself. Cappelli has donated masks to others as well.
- Rep. Melissa Shusterman delivered 60 more masks made by the [Phoenixville Area Covid-19 Makers](#), a group of volunteers making masks for health care providers and first responders.
- The Easton, PA-based Fanatics factory that usually makes Phillies and Yankees baseball uniforms donated masks to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Developmental Programs, which provided 48 more masks to Royer-Greaves.

“Everyone knows that first responders and health care providers who work in medical settings need to wear masks, but not as many realize that the direct support professionals, who work with

adults with disabilities are also essential workers who must be in close physical contact with those they help,” Executive Director Vicky Mayer said. “We are so grateful that Mr. Cappelli, the Phoenixville COVID-19 Makers, Rep. Shusterman, the Fanatics company and the state offices we work with recognized our need.”

The washable cloth masks were distributed to adults in our community-based residential programs and those who support and care for them.

“We will never forget the community that rallied to provide us and other organizations with these beautifully made cloth masks,” Mayer said.



Grants Allow Royer-Greaves to Repair Kitchen and Upgrade Security

Royer-Greaves has recently received two grants that will benefit everyone on our campus every day.

Philadelphia Foundation's Edward M. Story Memorial Fund Grant Keeps Kitchen Open

A portion of a \$25,000 donation from the Philadelphia Foundation's Edward M. Story Memorial Fund has already been used to pay for urgent repairs and improvements in Royer-Greaves' kitchen.

An issue in the kitchen earlier this year required Royer-Greaves to make emergency repairs, which included removing and replacing specific plumbing and drainage lines along with minor renovations to related support space. This was prior to the COVID-19 school closure. "We had no choice but to get the kitchen running again immediately – our students' and adults' nutritional needs are such that outsourcing preparation, even for a short time, would be incredibly difficult," said Executive Director Vicky Mayer.

The grant, which Royer-Greaves received at the end of 2019, is given in memory of Mr. Story's parents, Samuel Story and Mary Grosvenor.



Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Grant to Update Campus Security

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, a commonwealth agency whose broad mission includes advocating for safe schools, recently awarded Royer-Greaves a \$26,000 School Safety and Security Grant.

The grant was awarded specifically to allow Royer-Greaves to enhance security on all campus buildings, said Grant Writer Tasha Hillery.

"The PCCD grant will pay for a state-of-the-art security upgrade, and nothing is more important than safety," Mayer said.



Unprecedented Needs in Unusual Times: Please Support Royer-Greaves During the Pandemic

Although our campus is closed due to the pandemic, most of the usual costs of running Royer-Greaves remain because we are still serving students and adults remotely and we still have campus buildings and group homes to maintain. COVID-19 has also resulted in new, unanticipated costs. We have purchased iPads for student and adult use, a professional Zoom membership, and many gowns, booties, face shields and disinfectants, for example.

Meanwhile, a significant portion of our revenue stream is gone. While we are still providing support and enrichment for the adults in our day program, we do not receive funding unless the adults are on campus. Some state leaders are working to solve this problem, but we cannot count on a solution before it happens. We are postponing projects and putting off routine maintenance where possible. We continue to apply for grants.

If you have the means and desire, any donation would help.

Visit www.Royer-Greaves.org and click "Donate & Volunteer."

Thank you.