

Winter 2020

The Royer-Greaves COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Vol. 4, No. 2

CLIMBING MOUNTAINS TOGETHER

Dear Royer-Greaves Community,

In January, none of us knew how many mountains we would have to climb this year, or how many mountains we were capable of climbing.

COVID-19 forced us to creatively rethink just about everything at home, work, and school. For part of this year, our students learned at home and our adults stayed at home. Teachers developed new ways of teaching and parents and siblings became teachers, too. Our adults couldn't come to the Adult Training Facility, so our Direct Support Professionals went to their Group Homes instead, working with them so their growth continued. Our Lifesharing families received wellness visits and COVID-testing from our nurses, and we also provided them with masks and other personal protective equipment.

This fall, thanks to an incredible amount of work from teachers, therapists, DSPs, nurses and staff members, we welcomed students back to our classrooms and the adults who live in our Group Homes back to our Day Program this fall.

We have always known how strong this Royer-Greaves community is, and that together, we could support our students and adults through anything. But since January, each of you has

proven this time and time again.

Even though COVID-19 has made all of our lives more challenging, many of you have emailed or called to ask how you can help. Especially now, a financial gift of whatever amount fits your budget would make an incredible difference and help us cover the cost of the innovations and safeguards that have allowed us to keep providing education, training and support to our students and adults. Please visit Royer-Greaves.org and click the "Donate" tab.

As news about a potential COVID-19 vaccine fills us with hope for the future, let's take this moment to look back over this challenging year and appreciate the many mountains we were able to climb because we climbed together.

Appreciatively,

Executive Director
VICKY MAYER



Deputy Director
DEBRA JEROME



A Careful Return to Royer-Greaves School and Day Program

Most Royer-Greaves students and many adult day program participants have returned to our Paoli campus.

"Everyone is so happy to be back," said Adult Training Facility Director Domnic Odida.

"It's been great to get people back into their routines and back to activities they love, like swimming," said Director of Licensing/Lifesharing Marcia Debes.

"It took a tremendous amount of planning, but this is really working!" said Supervisor of Education Dr. Carolyn Muller.

That planning included wiring additional spaces for internet connectivity, creating a new music studio with video capabilities, and finding ways to keep students and adults within isolated groups while on campus.

All Royer-Greaves School students and the adults who are living in Royer-Greaves' group homes may now come to campus.



Mary works safely behind a protective plexiglass shield in her ATF classroom.

Temperature checks and symptom screenings are given daily to everyone. Teachers and staff and all students and adults who are physically able to wear face masks do so. Students and adults are at least six feet apart in their classrooms. Plexiglass dividers provide another means of containing droplets for those who cannot physically tolerate masks.



Student Gavin participates in music therapy via video feed

Both in the school and the ATF, COVID bubbles have been created.

School students were assigned to one of four classrooms based on age and other educational and physical needs. They remain in that classroom with one teacher and any direct support professionals for all academic instruction.

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Please Donate to Help Cover more than \$150,000 in COVID-related Expenses

Royer-Greaves has continued to successfully and safely serve our students and adults throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Doing so has resulted in more than \$150,000 of unexpected expenses for items including:

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies.
- Additional educational materials for students learning at home and so that students learning on campus do not have the risks associated with sharing.
- Technology, including additional devices for at-home use and adding internet access to more spaces on campus.
- Plexiglass partitions

Your tax-deductible donation, needed more this year than ever, will help us cover these costs.

To Donate:

- Visit Royer-Greaves.org and click on the **DONATE** button to give via PayPal.

- Mail a check made out to Royer-Greaves School for Blind to:

Royer-Greaves School for Blind
ATTN: Controller's Office
118 South Valley Road
Paoli, PA 19301

- Please write "2020 Annual Appeal" in the memo line. Thank you!

A Careful Return to Royer-Greaves School and Day Program *continued*

In the ATF program, each group home has its own assigned classroom, so that adults who live together also spend the day only with each other and their direct support professionals.

Students and adults eat meals in their classrooms, which both helps to keep them from mingling with people outside of their group and also frees up the cafeteria as classroom space.

Music therapy is also delivered to each classroom - via video feed from Music Therapist Suzanne Kane-Filshill, who provides instruction from her studio.

Warm weather days allowed students and adults to use the campus grounds. Within their COVID bubbles and with social distancing, students and adults continue to take physical education and aqua therapy with teacher Ryan Mason.

The students and adults who continue to learn off campus are able to learn and participate in music and other therapies through Zoom. They are able to experience what is happening in either a classroom or the music therapy studio in real time.

The investments in technology that allow campus classrooms and learning spaces to be virtually connected to each other as well as the homes of students and adults will serve the Royer-Greaves community very well if COVID-19 positivity rates were to require a full- or partial return to distance learning, but the goal is to safely



Music Therapist Suzanne Kane-Filshill and music therapy intern Bruce provide therapy to students and adults using technology in the new music studio.

accommodate more students and adults on campus.

A future reopening phase will bring adults who live with their families and in group homes not affiliated with Royer-Greaves back to the ATF, Domnic said.

Several new students are in the process of enrolling at Royer-Greaves, Carolyn said, as demand for in-person classes that accommodate children with multiple disabilities is great.



Ron Curry's Annual Salvation Army Kettle Drive Goes Virtual

Every November and December, Royer-Greaves' Volunteer Assistant Music Therapist Rockin' Ron Curry has become Ringing Ron Curry to raise money for the Salvation Army. It just wouldn't be the holidays without Ron donning his Santa hat and ringing a bell to entice passersby to drop a donation into his bright red bucket.

This year, due to the pandemic, there are many fewer passersby on campus, so with the help of some friends, Ron took his ringing campaign onto the Royer-Greaves' Facebook page and website, where those who wish may contribute electronically via the West Chester branch of the Salvation Army.

Rockin' Ron Curry rings his bell to raise money for the Salvation Army.

Appreciating Our Lifesharers & DSPs

Royer-Greaves spent a week in September celebrating the incredible and integral contributions our Direct Support Professionals and Lifesharer host families make every day.

During the September 13 to 19 DSP Recognition week, we gathered through Zoom to thank these remarkable men and women for giving so much of themselves to support and advocate for their adults. We had goodies and gifts delivered to their group homes and residences, where we also posted signs of appreciation. We created a [thank you video](#), and so did [Rep. Melissa Shusterman!](#) (If you missed them, both are posted on our [Facebook page](#).)

DSPs and Lifesharers, we can't say it enough: You make what we do possible! Thank you!



Susie, center, with DSPs Evelyn, Letecia, Donna, and Mavis.



Toby (center) with Lifesharing hosts Moses and Tennie.

Do You Have the Heart to Be a Royer-Greaves DSP or Lifesharer?

Lifesharing is a residential option that places adults with special needs in the homes of other community adults and families who share their lives with them. Lifesharers receive training, ongoing support, and a stipend. Visit [Royer-Greaves.org/lifesharing](#) to learn more, or Contact the Director of Lifesharing at 610-644-1810.

Direct Support Professionals Work directly with adults or children with special needs, providing the assistance needed so that the adult or child can live and learn as independently as possible. Visit [Royer-Greaves.org/employment](#) to fill out an application today!