

Spring/Summer
2021

The Royer-Greaves COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Vol. 5, No. 1

HOPE

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about Royer-Greaves.

Dear Royer-Greaves Community,

Spring has always been a hopeful season of new growth and promise, but never have we felt such hope – or needed hope so much – as we do this year.

Who could forget what was happening a year ago: Last spring marked the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our campus, like others across the nation, closed, and learning shifted to home. Some of our parents and guardians who were now working from home became teaching assistants, as did siblings. Some members of the Royer-Greaves family lost jobs. Others had it far worse. So many of us worried when someone we love became sick. Some of us even lost family and friends.

Things look very different in Spring 2021: The Royer-Greaves family is a remarkable 85% vaccinated. Many students are younger than the vaccination age; the rate among our staff and adults alone is even higher, about 95%.

Our teachers, therapists, and direct support staff have returned to campus, and many of our students and adults have also returned. Careful planning and adherence to safety guidelines enable us

to protect those who are on campus. Equally important, new technologies and the expertise in using them that all of us have gained enable students and adults who remain at home to participate with their peers in real time. They have even allowed our friends and partners to virtually join us in dance and song – thank you, Musicopia and Dancing Classrooms Philly!

Just as the tulips and daffodils on campus are the first of many beautiful flowers, these joyful milestones are the earliest blooms of reopening. In months to come, as more and more members of the greater community become vaccinated, we hope to re-open our campus to visitors and volunteers. We will have so much to celebrate together!

Appreciatively,

Executive
Director
VICKY MAYER



Deputy
Director
DEBRA JEROME



A High Vaccination Rate Brings Royer-Greaves Together

More than 85% of Royer-Greaves' faculty, staff, adults and students were vaccinated against COVID-19 by April 20 – even though many of our students were not yet old enough to receive the vaccine.

Through an organized effort, everyone from Royer-Greaves was vaccinated at one of two community vaccination clinics. "We could have waited longer and the vaccine would have been brought to Royer-Greaves, but it had already been such a long journey and we didn't want to wait," said Campus Nurse Keli Henderson. Keli estimates it would have been an additional three weeks before shots were in Royer-Greaves' arms.

Information was given before the shots were, Keli said. Vaccines are voluntary and "At the beginning, we heard a lot of 'No,'" she said. "So we had open question and answer sessions in very small groups and at various times to accommodate all shifts. We spent these sessions educating about how mRNA vaccines work, and then a lot of

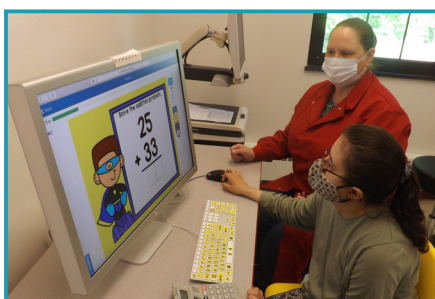
those strong noes turned into yeses."

The administrative team, including Deputy Director Debra Jerome, Lifesharing Director Marcia Debes, and Supervisor of Education Dr. Carol Muller, took on the vital role of providing staff with information about the vaccine.

"It really was a big team effort," Keli said.

The effort was well worth it. "We're dealing with not just the disease itself, but our mental health, too," Keli said. "For example, speaking to our families (of adults living in Royer-Greaves group homes), it was very hard for them not to be able to visit with their loved ones. The vaccinations meant we could have visitors at our group homes again."

The vaccines have made a difference for staff and their families, too, said Keli. "I don't go home and keep myself separate from my kids anymore," she said. "And I went to see my parents, who are vaccinated, too."



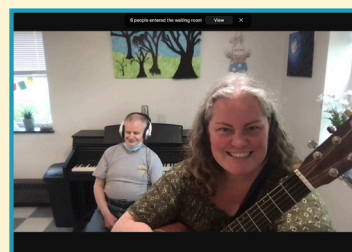
Royer-Greaves student Josie M. with teacher Cynthia Zimmerman.

Created for COVID Safety, New Music Studio Allows More Opportunities for Expression and Performance

What was once empty space in the lower level of the classroom building is now a music studio, designed and equipped to bring music therapy and education to Royer-Greaves students and adults on and off campus.

Since some Royer-Greaves adults and students are non-verbal, music is an absolutely essential means of expression and communication. When the pandemic closed the Royer-Greaves campus, a new and urgent need arose: Music Therapist Suzanne Kane-Filshill and volunteer assistant Ron Curry needed a way to reach students and adults at home. The new studio was designed with Zoom sessions in mind.

Even after many students and adults returned to campus, there was a need to keep them isolated within separate groups as part



Suzanne holding a Zoom music session.

of Royer-Greaves' efforts to limit the chances for exposure to the virus. If all students came to the former music room, or if Suzanne and Ron traveled to every classroom, the chances for exposure would have been increased.

Luckily, the new music studio allowed Suzanne and Ron in their own space while also being present in all school and ATF classrooms by video simulcast. And adults and students who remained at home could participate, too – everyone could safely interact with Suzanne and Ron in real time!

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Created for COVID Safety, New Music Studio Allows More Opportunities for Expression and Performance

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Royer-Greaves’ new tech coupled with the generosity of some of our great community partners has allowed students and adults to watch and participate in the arts. Thanks to People’s Light, Royer-Greaves students and adults to enjoy the musical magnificence of Zonya Love’s Spiritual Uprising. “We can’t go to People’s Light together as a group right now, but everyone was virtually able to attend this performance,” Suzanne said. “They loved it.”

Royer-Greaves has also rejoined with Dancing Classrooms Philly and Musicopia. “We have been ballroom dancing and drumming within the safety of our formed pods,” Suzanne said. “Those not yet on campus participate through Zoom.”

Some of the new technologies and techniques adopted for remote instruction will remain part of the music program even after face-to-face instruction returns, Suzanne said.

“I’ve learned through necessity how to be pretty creative with iMovie and record students playing and creating their own music. I edit these into YouTube videos, and everyone loves hearing themselves on YouTube performing something they created,

and knowing their music is being shared,” she said. Technology also allows students to hear and learn to identify any musical instrument from any part of the world.



New Zoom-friendly Music Studio.

Donor Spotlight: Thomas Jefferson University



Pallet filled with PPE donations.

Earlier this year, Royer-Greaves received an entire pallet full of Personal Protective Equipment and other medical supplies, thanks to Thomas Jefferson University.

Jefferson made the generous donation on behalf of the Pennsylvania State Regional Response Health Collaborative (RRHC) Program. “The pallet was filled with gloves, surgical masks, n-95 masks, face shields, wipes, lotion, gowns – it felt like Christmas!” said Royer-Greaves Executive Director Vicky Mayer. “The donation was received at a very critical time and helped Royer-Greaves protect our community and prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are so grateful.”

To Donate:

- Visit [Royer-Greaves.org](https://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
- If you have items you would like to donate, or if you are interested in volunteering in a COVID-safe way, please call Royer-Greaves at 610-644-1810.

Thank you!

Meet Dr. Bill, Royer-Greaves’ New Medical Director

Dr. William L. Carroll, M.D., a local family doctor who has worked with adults and children with intellectual and physical disabilities for three decades, has joined Royer-Greaves as our Medical Director.

Soon after the 1992 founding of his first practice in Edgemont, Dr. Bill and his partners began serving children and adults with disabilities at several school and residential programs. While the doctors’ office is now located in West Chester and is part of the Gateway Medical Associates group, they continue to serve those children and adults.

“I just love – and I think it’s a privilege – to be able to take care of folks with disabilities, so when Royer-Greaves called, I couldn’t say no,” said Dr. Bill. “Then when I met the folks who I would be caring for at Royer-Greaves, that just sealed the deal.”

Similarly, Dr. Bill’s experience is what first led Royer-Greaves to approach him about the new medical director role, but it was seeing him with people on campus that showed what a perfect fit he is for Royer, said Executive Director Vicky Mayer. “We got all masked and gowned up and walked through the ATF, and people started gravitating to him and he to them,” she said. “One person hugged him. Another held his hand. And he clearly enjoyed talking to them.”

Since joining Royer-Greaves in March, Dr. Bill has provided medical oversight and guidance for COVID testing, vaccination, and prevention efforts. He comes to campus each Wednesday and, along with Royer’s nursing staff, provides any needed medical care. Some Royer-Greaves students and adults cannot

tolerate wearing masks and as a result cannot go to their general practitioner’s office, so they are now seeing Dr. Bill, who shares his notes with their primary physicians. He is also available by phone every day.

Dr. Bill, 70, is a graduate of St. Joseph’s University and what is now Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. He and his wife, Susie, have three children and five grandchildren.



Royer Greaves Medical Director William L. Carroll with Royer Greaves Nurse Keli Henderson.