

FOCUS

a Hattie Larlham publication | July 2020

**Finding new ways
to thrive**

a message from our LEADERS



Stephen Colecchi



Michael Weinhardt



Bruce Hearey

DEAR FRIENDS OF HATTIE LARLHAM,

During the past few months, Hattie Larlham has navigated new challenges in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this time has been difficult, we are humbled by an outpouring of community support and we are grateful to our employees, donors, families, community partners and volunteers for their unwavering dedication and encouragement.

Throughout the last several months, our direct care, medical and support staff have gone above and beyond to ensure the children and adults in their care continue to thrive. We are so grateful to these compassionate individuals for their hard work and dedication to those we serve. Many have worked long hours, taken extra shifts and made personal sacrifices to ensure our residents continue to receive the highest quality of care. We are extremely thankful to have received donations to help recognize and thank Hattie Larlham employees for their continued hard work and dedication. These donations provided catered meals and treats for staff, which were a welcomed and appreciated gesture during long and challenging shifts.

Also helping keep our employees and residents safe are the “stitching heroes.” This dedicated group of volunteers made and donated more than 2,500 fabric masks to help protect our staff and residents. Many of these volunteers were family members and employees, and we are so thankful for their efforts.

Generous support from community heroes, like the Akron Community Foundation and the Summit County Developmental Disabilities Board, made it possible for Hattie Larlham to obtain additional personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer. These contributions are critical tools in helping Hattie Larlham prevent the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.

Finally, we are thankful to all the family members and guardians who reached out to thank our employees, provided words of encouragement, and adapted to the virtual-only visitation policies with grace and understanding. We look forward to the day when we can say “thank you” in person as you visit your loved ones in our care.

To all those mentioned above, and the countless others within our support network, thank you for all that you have done for us during this pandemic. With your help, Hattie Larlham remains a vital and reliable resource for those who rely on us. We are honored to share these uplifting stories of “Hattie Heroes” throughout this edition of FOCUS and we hope that they encourage and inspire you. We look forward to seeing you all again soon, and in the meantime we wish you and your families all the best, and send you our heartfelt gratitude for your enduring support.

Sincerely,

Stephen Colecchi, CEO

Michael Weinhardt, President
Hattie Larlham Board of Directors

Bruce Hearey, President
Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors


Foundations' Support Strengthens Programs at Hattie Larlham

With generous support from the Akron Community Foundation and the GPD Group Employees' Foundation, Hattie Larlham is able to grow an important youth program that prepares middle school and high school students with disabilities for life after graduation. Using a collaborative approach with families, schools, and community businesses, the Pre-Employment Transition Services program offers specialized guidance in areas such as self-advocacy, post-secondary opportunities, job exploration, workplace readiness training, and work-based learning to provide students with skills they will need to transition into the workplace. With these additional funds, Hattie Larlham is able to help more students with intellectual and developmental disabilities overcome barriers and develop successful pathways to gainful employment. Additional grant funding from the Target Community Engagement Fund will provide training opportunities specific to this new program for our staff.

Akron Community Foundation awarded an "On the Table" grant to support a disability awareness project conceived by adults with developmental disabilities in the Hattie Larlham Constant Companions program. Using GoPro technology, participants from the Barberton Constant Companions site will film their visits to public places to create a short awareness campaign demonstrating the many barriers that people who depend on wheelchairs face when accessing community.

Critical equipment and enrichment programs at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities received much-needed funding from the Charles R. Jelm Foundation, JAH Foundation, and the Sandra L. and Dennis B. Haslinger Family Foundation. Those generous contributions provide Center residents with continued opportunities to thrive at home.

Children need many things to perform their best in school and one of those is an environment that is comfortably climate controlled. With generous grant funding from the Harry C. Moores Foundation and the CareSource Foundation, Hattie Larlham's Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center (DGLC) was able to purchase a much-needed new boiler. This new addition is safer, quieter and more energy efficient than its predecessor, allowing for fewer interruptions and distractions throughout the school day. Now, DGLC is an even healthier place for students to learn, play, and thrive.



Located in Columbus, Ohio, Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center is an intervention program for infants, toddlers and preschool-age children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Using early intervention strategies, peer play models and play-based curriculum to foster student learning and growth, this program prepares children for success in school.

Coming together to make a

These Hattie Heroes went above and beyond to show their support when we needed it most.



Hattie Larlham was honored to receive a COVID-19 relief grant from the Akron Community Foundation and donations of essential items from Summit DD. These generous gifts provided critical assistance in the wake of state-wide shortages of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies.

United Way Portage County recently awarded a grant to Hattie Larlham's Employment Services program for the purchase of iPads. Stay-at-home orders and public gathering restrictions in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic created additional barriers to job seekers receiving assistance through Hattie Larlham. These iPads allow them to maintain contact with their Hattie Larlham job developers, as well as apply for jobs and participate in virtual interviews and job trainings.



"Summit DD recognizes that it is our service providers who are on the front line during this pandemic, and that they have stepped up to meet this challenge by every measure. The supports that we have put in place are simply our way to recognize and support their critical efforts."

-Joe DiFranco, Senior Manager of Community Supports and Development



"We know that PPE is critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives. We are proud to support organizations like Hattie Larlham who are working hard to ensure the health of people with disabilities during these challenging times."

-John Garafolo, Vice President of Community Investment



United Way of Portage County

"United Way of Portage County hopes this grant helps to increase the knowledge and skills of those seeking employment. Thank you to the team at Hattie Larlham for their community support and leadership. I am grateful to those in our community who supported the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to help support projects like this."

-Bill Childers, President and CEO

difference

Heroes Helping Heroes

Words of Support

In April, the Hattie Larlham communications team asked our community of supporters to send in words of appreciation and encouragement that could be shared with our staff. We anticipated receiving a few heart-warming messages, but never expected the dozens that came in. Each and every social media comment, email, and photo was a touching reminder of the impact Hattie Larlham employees make. Your words brought countless smiles to faces and made the difficult days a little bit brighter. *Thank you!*



Acts of Kindness

Hattie Larlham was graciously awarded grant funds from Summit DD to help provide our staff with special appreciation gifts. These funds, in addition to generous gifts from donors, allowed us to provide catered meals and treats to our employees who continued to go above and beyond despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Little Good Goes a Long Way

In March, the Hattie Larlham Foundation began an online fundraising campaign called "Five Dollar Friday." On the final Friday of each month, Hattie Larlham friends and supporters who want help our Hattie Heroes are given the opportunity to make a \$5 donation and are encouraged to make their gift in honor of an employee. Thanks to your generosity, the campaign has already raised over \$5,000, which directly supports the important work our staff does every day. Gifts of all sizes are truly appreciated and demonstrate that a little good goes a long way.

A Stitch in Time

As the initial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic rippled throughout Ohio, Hattie Larlham Volunteer Coordinator Lauri Molnar worked quickly to coordinate donations of homemade fabric masks for medical and direct care staff at Hattie Larlham. These donations from current volunteers and community members allowed Hattie Larlham to preserve its supply of personal protective equipment during increasing shortages throughout the state.

Following a call for assistance posted on Hattie Larlham's social media accounts, thirty five generous people rushed to volunteer as mask makers. By mid-June, the Hattie Larlham "Stitching Heroes", as they've come to be called, contributed more than 375 hours of labor, \$4,000 worth of supplies and donated more than 2,500 masks. Their generosity saved Hattie Larlham over \$15,000 in PPE costs and has been an uplifting reminder of the importance of community support. Some of the volunteers added an inspirational tag to their masks or included a personal note as a small way to spread joy and gratitude to the employees who would receive them.

For Jennifer Johnson and her daughter, Alice, this was a unique and meaningful opportunity to continue their volunteerism during the suspension of in-person volunteer activities at Hattie Larlham. Jennifer said, "We saw an article online about homemade masks helping stop the spread of the virus, and Alice said, 'We should do that. We can sew, and I can help.' It gives us something to do that feels productive and connected to the community." Jennifer and Alice are regular visitors at Constant Companions in Twinsburg and they miss their friends there dearly.

"We both enjoy helping others, and at Hattie Larlham we can help others by doing things we enjoy anyway--making new friends, playing games and doing crafts together. Having something we can do to help the situation, even in a small way, from a distance, makes us feel less lonely, helpless and anxious," Jennifer added.



The Spirit of Giving

For the past 19 years, the employees of Saint-Gobain Crystals have been steadfast supporters of Hattie Larlham. Located in Hiram, Ohio, this local branch of the internationally-based Saint-Gobain company is a shining example of the power of community fundraising.

Each year, Saint-Gobain Crystals hosts a holiday party and, in the true spirit of the season, the focus of the event is the charity raffle. Gathered together in December, employees purchase raffle tickets for the chance to win thoughtfully curated gift baskets. There's something for everyone at this raffle with uniquely themed baskets across a wide range of interests and tastes. At the 2019 celebration, one gentleman had the fortune of winning two of the most

coveted baskets: a basket of cheer and a margarita mixer basket – making for a very jolly holiday indeed. All proceeds from the raffle are donated evenly to Hattie Larlham and The Leprechaun Society. Throughout nearly two decades of support, the employees of Saint-Gobain Crystals have generously donated more than \$30,000 to benefit the vital services and programs Hattie Larlham provides to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are so grateful for their continued commitment to supporting our mission!



If you feel inspired by the generosity of Saint-Gobain Crystals, Hattie Larlham would be honored to have your support. Hosting a fundraising event for Hattie Larlham can be as simple as planning a donation-supported "dress down day" at work, hosting a youth bake sale, or even a video game-a-thon. The possibilities are endless!

For more information, please contact the Development Department at 330-840-6842.

Event Update

Circle of Caring

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated risks of mass indoor gatherings, Hattie Larlham leadership has made the difficult decision to postpone this year's Circle of Caring gala to 2021.

This decision was made with thoughtful consideration of many factors, keeping the health and safety of our guests as the top priority. We will continue to fundraise via alternative means throughout this year and look forward to hosting the 20th Circle of Caring honoring Bob and Mary Madden in the fall of 2021.

Even though we cannot gather together this year, we hope you will consider making a charitable donation in support of the critical work the heroes at Hattie Larlham do every day. Your generosity ensures that, despite the challenges this year has presented, the children and adults with disabilities Hattie Larlham serves will continue to thrive.

For more information or to make a gift, please visit www.hattielarlham.org or call (330) 840-6840.



HONORING A MEMORY, ONE STEP AT A TIME

The Gift of Life 5K is not only a fun way to support people with disabilities, but also an opportunity to honor those who received their care at Hattie Larlham. The Pagano family in particular found great comfort through their participation in 2019. "Team Nick" was formed in honor of their beloved son and brother, a resident of the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities, who passed away in 2018.

Nick moved to the Center when he was 9 years old, when the effects of a yet-undiagnosed disease made it difficult for his parents, Dr. Ron and Karla Pagano, to care for him on their own. Karla and Ron decided that Hattie Larlham was the right place for Nick to live because of the high-quality medical care and opportunities provided for him in the compassionate home-like environment of the Center. Nick was eventually diagnosed with Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease, which is an inherited condition that affects the central nervous system. Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease reduces overall neurological function, and can cause people to develop spasticity leading to joint deformities that restrict movement. Individuals with congenital Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease are never able to walk, and many are not able to purposefully use their arms.



Nick was beloved by the Hattie Larlham staff who cared for him.



The Pagano family proudly sported their "Team Nick" shirts at the 2019 Gift of Life 5K.

Nick lived at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities for 29 years, and passed away just four days shy of his 38th birthday. The Pagano family continues to support Hattie Larlham, and Dr. Pagano serves on the Hattie Larlham Board of Directors.

In 2019, Karla and Ron's eldest daughter, Carrie, saw the email announcing the date of the Gift of Life 5K and rallied the family together to register. They created a family team and had custom "Team Nick" t-shirts printed. A total of nine Pagano family members participated in the event – walking, running and cheering from the sidelines. Three Pagano family members even placed first in their age groups! The Pagano family will be participating again in the 2020 event, and have already registered their team. Their goal is to raise funds in support of the Hattie Larlham programs that were so beneficial to Nick during his life.

"Nick was a blessing in our lives. We are grateful for the care that Nick received at Hattie Larlham, and the staff became our family," Karla shared. "That's what made Hattie Larlham so special to us. We feel strongly that all residents of Hattie Larlham deserve every opportunity that Nick had, and that's why we continue to support Hattie Larlham."

The Gift of Life 5K will take place on Saturday, September 12 at Sunny Lake Park in Aurora. Please see additional event details on the back cover.

New Date, Same Mission

for 34th Annual Sugar Bush Golf Classic

presented by Middlefield Bank

A tradition of giving that began in 1986 will continue on Monday, August 17 at the Sugar Bush Golf Club in Garrettsville, where golfers will once again gather to “tee up” to support Hattie Larlham. Usually held in May, the 2020 Sugar Bush Golf Classic was postponed due to public gathering restrictions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Hattie Larlham leadership and the Sugar Bush Golf Classic Committee are grateful to the Koval family at the Sugar Bush Golf Club for their flexibility in rescheduling this event, and to the event sponsors and participants for their support of the new date.

“The Sugar Bush Golf Classic is an opportunity to raise both funds and awareness to support Hattie Larlham’s mission. Middlefield Bank takes great pride in our sponsorship of the Sugar Bush Golf Outing, as proceeds raised benefit valuable programs that otherwise may not be available.”

-Tom Caldwell, President and CEO, Middlefield Bank

We are pleased to once again have The Middlefield Banking Company (Middlefield Bank) as the Presenting Sponsor of the event. Since 2001, Middlefield Bank has contributed more than \$75,000 to enhance the lives of people with disabilities and their families through its support of the Sugar Bush Golf Classic.



Register for the 34th Annual Sugar Bush Golf



Tom Caldwell has been a proud member of the Hattie Larlham Board of Directors since 2000, and we are grateful for his 20 years of leadership.

“As a lifelong Portage County resident, I was familiar with the services that Hattie Larlham provided to our community, which made for an easy decision to join the Board,” he said. “I have had the privilege to work alongside knowledgeable and experienced professionals-both staff and fellow board members. Collectively, we have achieved our objectives and expanded our services to reach a greater number of children and adults with I disabilities. It is my strong belief that the work of Hattie Larlham and our partners is critical, and even more so in today’s circumstances.”

Middlefield Bank, and every member of our support network, plays a vital role in helping Hattie Larlham fulfill our mission. This amazing network helped the event reach a significant milestone in 2019, having raised more than \$1 Million in funding for critical services, equipment, and programs at the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities in Mantua, Ohio. This year’s event will help fund the ongoing need to replace the specialty beds residents rely on for safe and comfortable sleep.

Keeping the health and safety of our guests as our top priority, this year’s golf outing will feature scheduled tee times instead of a shotgun start. This change, along with added sanitation and social distancing procedures during the event, will ensure the safety of all golfers, staff and volunteers. Be sure to register soon, tee times are filling up quickly! To reserve your time slot, please contact Kairsten Nitsch at (330) 840-6842 or kairsten.nitsch@hattielarlham.org.



Tom Caldwell, left, poses with his Middlefield Bank foursome at the 2019 Sugar Bush Golf Classic.

By attending fundraising events, volunteering, or providing sponsorship, you, too, can help us provide comfort, joy and achievement to people with disabilities. Sponsorships and foursomes, as well as many volunteer opportunities, are still available for the 34th Annual Sugar Bush Golf Classic. And even if you don’t golf, you can support the event by purchasing raffle tickets or making a donation.



Classic at www.hattielarlham.org



A valued Hattie Larlham Corporate Partner since 2003.

Hattie Larlham’s fundraising events play a critical role in ensuring that we are able to provide the best possible care and programming to the people we serve. Historically, these events have funded critical equipment, programs, and projects, including therapy and sensory equipment, the transitional ventilator program, customized beds for residents, community inclusion and recreation programs, and respite programs for families. These important projects would not be possible without the contributions of generous corporate partners.

One such partner, OneDigital (formerly The Alpha Group), has a demonstrated history of support that spans decades. OneDigital first became involved with Hattie Larlham in 1997. As our corporate benefits provider, OneDigital helps Hattie Larlham manage its employee insurance benefits and provide affordable solutions for our employees and their families, playing an important role in the overall success and health of the organization.

Recognizing the value in the critical work that Hattie Larlham does, OneDigital first invested as an event sponsor in 2003 and has sponsored the annual Circle of Caring gala for the past 12 years. Since sponsoring that first event in 2003, the company has invested over \$325,000 in Hattie Larlham’s fund raising efforts and their employees are always in attendance at Hattie Larlham events.

“Our strong commitment to Hattie Larlham stems from the great need in the community for the scope of services that Hattie Larlham provides to children and families in need. That is why we are honored and privileged to work with and support the Hattie Larlham Foundation’s Circle of Caring event each year.”

One Digital’s relationship with Hattie Larlham extends well beyond financial support. Principal John Wain was the honoree at the 2010 Circle of Caring gala, where he was recognized for his service to our organization. Principal Adrienne Vichill served on the Sugar Bush Golf Classic Committee for many years, and many others within OneDigital have supported events as attendees and volunteers.

As OneDigital demonstrates, corporate partnership is more than attending an event or displaying a logo; it’s an investment in the people Hattie Larlham serves. Hattie Larlham’s corporate partners help shape the future of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities we serve. If you would like to learn more about corporate partnership, contact Wendy Voelker, Development Officer, at wendy.voelker@hattielarlham.org or 330-840-6845. More information is also available at www.hattielarlham.org.



Adrienne Vichill, Principal



John Wain, Principal

The Alpha Group Agency was established in 1988, and provides Insurance Products and Consulting Services to over 1,000 businesses in Ohio. In 2019, The Alpha Group became part of OneDigital Health and Benefits. The organization, which continues to serve its area clients from its office in Independence, serves its clients with a broad range of services, including employee benefits, agency support for independent insurance brokers, and human resource solutions for small- to medium-sized businesses.



Thank you, Laura

Hattie Larlham extends sincere thanks to Laura Skidmore for sixteen years of service to our organization as Director of Dahlberg Gibson Learning Center. We wish her joy and relaxation as she embarks on retirement this summer.

- During her tenure, Laura made many significant contributions to Dahlberg, including:
- Ensuring that Dahlberg is a 5-Star rated Step Up To Quality program
 - Implementing Trauma Informed Practice
 - Partnering with the Child Development Council of Franklin County (Head Start Programs)
 - Establishing one of the first programs in the county to serve young toddlers in a blended center-based program

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Music

After spending nearly twenty years in the corporate world and five years as a cafe owner, Eric Ahlteen decided that he needed a change. He parted ways with his career in sales and embarked on a year of self re-discovery; he wanted to find a new path that would allow him to work while also doing something that he loved.

Where did the path lead him? Sharing his gift of music with others. "I'm 63 and my kids - who are in their thirties now- always enjoyed music and it was something that we enjoyed together. Something about it just felt special."

Now, Eric is using his talents to make special connections with participants at Addventures, Hattie Larlham's adult day program in Central Ohio. "I wouldn't call myself an instructor, necessarily. It's more freeform than that; I'm just the catalyst," he said. "I set up the microphones and we have instruments, but a lot of it is just playing songs that the participants might know and giving them the opportunity to participate with the song, either by singing, or dancing, swaying, clapping. It's all part of the freedom of expression, which is the most important focus of the class."

"Music is a powerful thing and a really important tool for expression. You don't have to be a skilled musician to create or enjoy music. It's complete freedom."

Eric went on to say that the joy he finds in his job comes from seeing people approach the microphone for the first time and experience that freedom. Something inside of them clicks, and they remember the words to the songs. He said that in the beginning weeks of the class, some of the participants would seem down, disengaged, and hesitant to participate at all. But then something would spark, sometimes immediately, and for others it was a longer process of weeks or months. "Music is a powerful thing and a really important tool for expression. You don't have to be a skilled musician to create or enjoy music. It's complete freedom."



Eric and Wilhemina enjoyed performing their favorite songs together.

After seeing the impact of the music program, Eric decided there was more he could do to bring enrichment to Addventures members. About three years ago, Eric pitched the idea of starting a gardening class - something he's also passionate about. "After a few years, and becoming friends with the members, I saw the opportunity to add something new to the class curriculum at Addventures," he said. "Already, there was a wide variety of classes available, but something that was missing was gardening." The class is held on Eric's own property, where he has many raised beds and gardens. It's seeing the impact the class has on participants, like Will, that lets Eric know he's making a difference. "Will had never planted anything before - had done nothing close. But after a few weeks of planting and learning, you could see a switch flip. It changed his demeanor and the connection was so obvious. It's something he really enjoys and finds comfort in, and it's also a useful life skill."

Eric's ability to perceive those moments, and to make deep, meaningful connections with people, is one of the many things that make him such an important part of the Addventures team. Laura Gregory, the Quality and Compliance Manager of the program, shared that Eric isn't just teaching; he builds true and lasting friendships, and that makes all the difference. "Recently, an Addventures member, Wilhelmina, passed away. She truly loved Eric's music class, and it formed a special bond between them. Eric wanted to make sure that Wilhelmina received a proper send-off at her funeral, so he asked her family if he could come and play some music that he knew she would like. They of course said yes, and it was just such a powerful demonstration of the connections he makes with everyone. He is truly special."

Eric perfectly described the intention and impact of the classes he leads when he said, "I think that discovering gardening or music, or really any hobby or interest, is a form of breakthrough, like opening a door. You know, I'm at a later stage in my life and I've found a way to make a living doing things that I love, and for so many of my friends at Addventures, the program is providing them with that same 'ah-ha' moment. It is proof that it's never too late to find something that speaks to you."



Run, Walk, or Roll

to support Hattie Larlham

The Gift of Life 5K event is family-friendly, as well as stroller and wheelchair accessible. All are welcome, including kids and four-legged friends!

We're excited to debut the new Gift of Life 5K website, which allows participants to form and coordinate teams, and create their own shareable pages with the opportunity to fundraise on behalf of Hattie Larlham. All funds raised will help provide recreation activities and community outings for people with disabilities served by Hattie Larlham.

Saturday, September 12 • Sunny Lake Park, Aurora



Learn More & Register: p2p.onecause.com/giftoflife

SAVE THE DATES

August 17

Sugar Bush Golf Classic

September 12

Gift of Life 5K

December 3

Friendship Celebration

ABOUT THE AGENCY: Hattie Larlham is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities, advancing the community and influencing change for nearly 1,600 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Your contributions allow Hattie Larlham to provide medical, recreational, work training and residential services to children and adults with developmental disabilities in Northeast and Central Ohio.

ABOUT THE COVER: Connie works as a Direct Support Professional at Hattie Larlham's Boettler group home in Green, Ohio. Connie plays an important role in helping Julia and the seven other Boettler residents thrive at home.



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