FOCUS

Finding new ways to thrive
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
Bruce Hearey, President

Hattie Larlham Board of Directors
Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors
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.
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 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

United Way Portage County

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 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.

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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!

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 connalal Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease are never able to walk, and many are not able to purposefully use their arms.

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.

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

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.
Register for the 34th Annual Sugar Bush Golf 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 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.

“‘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.”

OneDigital’s relationship with Hattie Larlham extends well beyond financial support. Principal John Wain was the honoree at the 2020 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.

OneDigital

The Alpha Group

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 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.

DONATE ONLINE: WWW.HATTIELARLHAM.ORG

CORPORATE PARTNER PROFILE

HATTIE LARLHAM

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

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 teaches 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 use of the 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’s proof that it’s never too late to find something that speaks to you.”

The Power of Music

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 Wil, that lets Eric know he’s making a difference. “I 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.

Thank you, Laura
Run, Walk, or Roll

to support Hattie Larlham

Saturday, September 12 • Sunny Lake Park, Aurora

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.

Run, Walk, or Roll

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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