Providing direct support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities sometimes involves personal sacrifice. When there’s a snowstorm, these essential employees leave their families and hope that their loved ones don’t have to deal with things like power outages and falling trees in their absence. During a pandemic, however, the sacrifice is much greater. For some of our staff, it meant staying in a hotel room for weeks at a time to limit their contact with other people...even family members. In a quarantine situation, direct support staff are called on to stay in a home, 24 hours a day for 14 days...or longer if necessary. Though all who volunteered for these assignments knew they were sacrificing time with loved ones and friends, for one manager it meant never getting to say one last goodbye to a grandmother and an uncle.

Ann Carroll, Program Manager at House 3, volunteered to quarantine with residents and staff after somebody who worked in the home tested positive for COVID-19. She knew that she would be away from family and friends for at least two weeks and though she was concerned about her mother and sister, both who have chronic health conditions, she stepped forward.

“I am the manager of House 3. I’m not just responsible for oversight of other people, I need to be there to help them hold everything together,” she said.

As hard as it was to be away from family, it was even harder when she learned that her grandmother and uncle both died of coronavirus-related disease while she was quarantining.

“It was very difficult not to be with my family at that time,” she said.

Ironically, it was Ann’s grandmother who taught her the value of self-sacrifice and inspired in her a passion for working in the human services industry.

“My grandmother instilled in all our family members two things:

Continued on page 11
Message from Mike

When I joined New England Village as President and CEO in mid-January, no one could have anticipated the crisis that would unfold within six weeks of my arrival. The emergence of COVID-19 dramatically and quickly altered our mission. Our NEV community pulled together to keep our extremely vulnerable residents as safe from this virus as humanly possible. Responding to this pandemic required us to ask even more of our incredible staff, especially those working on the front lines. And I am pleased to say that, together, we have risen to the occasion.

The past three months have driven us to think outside the box. We invented methods to deliver services remotely to both our residents and day program participants. We nimbly kept our shelves stocked with all the necessary supplies, particularly personal protective equipment and hand sanitizers. We had to assume the worst, then put plans in place to address all possible scenarios. It’s called preparedness and I believe our team has done an admirable job.

When I walk our property, I am proud of and impressed by what I see. Individuals have created beautiful messages of gratitude, hope, and optimism which adorn the front doors and windows of the homes and other buildings. I’ve had the honor of delivering lunch, dinner and breakfast to our direct care staff – NEV’s everyday heroes. I see staff members putting aside their own personal concerns, leaving their families for days or weeks at a time, all to provide the highest level of support our individuals need and deserve.

I won’t deny that there has been stress—uncertainty can do that. But we have managed it well. It’s not what happens to us in life that defines the outcome, but how rather how we respond to the unforeseen.

I wish to thank everyone who has supported us over these past three months—whether by donating masks, hand sanitizers, cleaners, and other personal protective equipment or giving generously to our Direct Support Professionals Appreciation Fund, or just cheering us on with messages of appreciation and optimism as we navigated these uncharted waters. Your support is essential and it means the world to our NEV community. I want to thank family members as well for their patience and understanding as we worked, innovated, invented and implemented new support methods. Finally, I thank staff for their commitment and dedication to their jobs and to New England Village. They are truly what sets us apart from any other organization.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and safe summer.

Michael A. Rodrigues
President and CEO

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Scoops is written by Mary Stanley and edited by Dolores Rezendes
When we put out a call at the end of March asking for donations of Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves and masks, we were absolutely overwhelmed by the immediate response and the generosity of so many people. From friends and family members of the people who live or work here to local police and fire departments to private citizens living in the community who saw our request on Facebook, we were humbled by the outpouring of kindness. Over the past few months, we have received nearly 1,000 homemade masks, 19 gallons of hand sanitizer and boxes of nitrile gloves!!! Even girl scouts who didn’t have supplies to donate, instead created cards and messages of hope that they sent to the individuals we support. In times of crisis, it is not unusual for people to cope with the uncertainty of the situation by doing for others and we have witnessed so much of that these past few months. The people we support have also reached out to staff and the community, by making signs and other artwork, as a way of saying thank you to the staff who work here as well as their neighbors in the community. Kindness can be contagious and it has been rewarding to see so many people “spreading the love and not the germs.”

Mike Rodrigues accepts a donation from Sergeant Ryan Botto of the Pembroke Police Department

Cadence and Avery Nickerson of Girl Scout Troops 62458 and 67850 show off the cards they made for NEV individuals.
Thanks to the generosity of so many people, our DSP Appreciation Fund campaign was a huge success. In an attempt to express our appreciation to the direct support professionals who were giving so much of themselves at the height of this pandemic, we held a campaign to raise money so that we could provide these extraordinary workers with a bonus. Our goal was to raise $50,000 and New England Village’s Family Association helped to kick-start the campaign with a very generous $10,000 donation. Within just three short weeks, we had met—and exceeded—our goal and by the time we went to press with this publication, we raised $62,800!!! Every penny raised will be paid out in June to the men and women who have been working the front lines during this pandemic. We are extremely grateful to them for what they did and what they continue to do and we are so appreciative to everyone who donated.

Thank You!!!

With Deepest Gratitude

Bob Smith of Tri-Town Rotary Club of Hanover, Norwell, and Pembroke presented a check for $500 to Vice President of External Relations Dolores Rezendes in March. The club selected New England Village as one of its beneficiaries. Our sincere thanks and appreciation to Tri-Town Rotary!
This is the last article I will write for Scoops and I want to say how much I value the many wonderful people I have worked with over the years. It has been a great blessing in my life.

Last year I had some neurological testing done and was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. The prognosis was advancing dementia with an average of 7 – 9 years to live.

I want to begin by thanking Sharon Chevalier in our HR department who helped me through the process of applying for SSDI and so much more. Her kindness and empathy were so appreciated. She even sent some beautiful cards to help me feel better. Perhaps a little thing, but to me, a much needed expression of concern.

One of my biggest regrets was that I never had a chance to say goodbye to staff or coworkers. But, in December when I officially retired, Akari Hayashi, Keith Escandel, Matt Stone, Lan Baker and many more people put on the most thoughtful, loving retirement party anyone could imagine. It is one of my most cherished memories. When my memory eventually fails, I’m sure it will be one of the last things to leave.

My colleagues knew that I had problems with remembering names so they came up with an incredible solution—a cruise-themed party. I wore the captain’s hat and welcomed everyone aboard. They all wore name tags in case I couldn’t remember. I put mine on upside down so if I forgot my own name, I could look down and read it. Everyone formed a line to board the ship and I welcomed each person aboard.

I really wanted to see all the individuals I worked with, so Lan drove me to CCEC. When I walked into the rooms, celebrations broke out. Peter grabbed me and started jumping so high I thought we might hit the roof. I was shown such kindness and care that I was always on the brink of tears. Never had I been shown so much love by so many.

We returned to TLC for the party and it was without a doubt the best retirement party I have ever seen. People said such wonderful things about me but the compliment I appreciated the most was that I made the program fun for the individuals I supported and that I treated them with dignity.

I received retirement gifts which I look at every day. But the gift that brought me to tears was a carefully prepared scrap book containing all the articles I had written for Scoops, cards with beautiful notes from people, photos with names attached so I won’t forget them.

As I was going home from my party, I realized something very important. I did make a difference and I’m writing this to make sure that everyone knows that they too are making a difference. Don’t wait until your retirement to realize that what you do and how you do it can make the life of another person better and happier, and that you leave a lasting impression in your life’s journey.
In Memoriam

Peter Burden

Last fall, New England Village lost long-time resident and cherished friend, Peter Burden. He lived at New England Village for 23 years. Peter loved his annual visits to Laconia, New Hampshire with his mother, Rosemary. TLC Program Manager Lan Baker said those trips allowed Peter to relax and be free of his anxiety. But when his mother died 11 years ago, she said it left a huge void in Peter’s life and created a lot of loneliness. After that, New England Village became his family and staff ensured that he still got to make his annual pilgrimages to New Hampshire and to do the things that brought such joy to his life.

He loved Chewy Chips Ahoy cookies, chocolate munchkin donuts and Coca Cola. Peter took great pride in his appearance, and had a very specific style of dress—pastel golf shirts, jeans, and a hat. He made sure that his shoes were shined and his home always looked neat. It wasn’t unusual to see him sweeping outside and cleaning up. His housemates at Apartment 5 appreciated Peter’s zest for cleanliness, as he often did their laundry for them!

“He was one of the most kindhearted people and was loved by everybody. He was a good person and fun to be with,” Lan said.

Peter really enjoyed Scoops, often stopping by the Marketing Department to inquire about when the next edition would be ready for him to read. And so, in his honor, we would just like to say, “this one’s for you, Pete!”

Leave a Lasting Legacy

Remember New England Village in your will or estate plan.

Your gift can help ensure that New England Village will always be a place where people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities can thrive and grow.

For more information about bequests or other planned giving opportunities, please contact Dolores Rezendes at (781) 293-5461 x107 or by email at drezendes@newenglandvillage.org
Shortly after Governor Charlie Baker issued a State of Emergency Declaration, New England Village suspended normal day program operations. The Efron Center for Enrichment, SWC Day Enrichment Program and the Community and Career Exploration Center temporarily closed their buildings for programming. Program staff never missed a beat though, and quickly adapted to their new routine.

“Initially, we implemented the process we have in place for inclement weather. Our day programming staff headed over to the homes to deliver day services there,” said Director Amy Downing.

However, when it appeared that the order would last for a while, other strategies and accommodations had to be considered. “The challenge was the long term nature of this stay at home order. Running day activities in the home felt a little awkward, especially for the people we support,” said Downing.

“Eventually, we found our rhythm.”

But the team also had to find a way to reach the individuals-served who are not residents at New England Village. “We set up a zoom account so that we could provide remote offerings. There was a learning curve with that, with parents and caregivers learning how to navigate the platform,” she said.

But after a while, they worked the kinks out with that, as well. “We set up a schedule with a variety of topics. Some of the more popular are Chair Yoga, Bingo, and Health topics.”

Still, for some people, she said, the zoom platform did not match their learning style. “In those cases, we have nurses and case managers, reaching out by phone, to address concerns or other issues.”

“It’s pretty much been a variety of solutions in terms of the processes that were implemented to continue day programming for all participants,” Downing says.

The program has also used this down time at ECE to freshen up the interior. “We gave the building a good cleaning; the art room got a face lift and the facilities department gave it a fresh coat of paint,” she said.

All of the people involved—staff, individuals, caregivers—have been very patient and understanding. “People have been so amazingly gracious and patient as we figured things out—from logistics to technology. They are so appreciative of the efforts. It’s been a nice journey—this pandemic and stay at home order certainly isn’t what we wanted, but it has forced us to think outside of the box and it has resulted in positive outcomes and a focus on different styles of learning.”

Michael and Rob Halverson Zoom chair yoga.

Hillary Semel out for a bike ride.
When the COVID-19 outbreak forced the closure of day programs, specialists at the Sollar Wellness Center immediately began brainstorming alternative ways to safely deliver their services. Under ordinary circumstances, the specialists would have gone into the homes to teach a wellness class or hold a music session. But these are not ordinary times and they needed to create a plan for providing programs that would enrich individuals’ lives without jeopardizing their health and well-being.

“We really had to reinvent our programming,” said Wellness Manager Kim Lowman.

She pointed out that the programs at the wellness center were more necessary than ever during this stay at home order. “Disrupted routines raise stress and anxiety levels for most people, but especially for the individuals we support. The classes we teach—art, music, fitness, and water safety all help to reduce stress and it was important to keep those stress relievers in place during this time.”

To reduce the risk of contracting or spreading the virus, it was decided that the specialists would teach their classes from outside of the homes. March and April’s weather wasn’t always cooperative, presenting a bit of a challenge.

“My goal was really to break up the monotony and try to get individuals out into the fresh air as much as possible,” said Kim.

“Even if it was overcast, I encouraged them to get out for a walk,” she said.

She implemented a number of activities that add interest to the walking path, including some themed challenges along the way. An “African Safari” provided some trivia about an African animal at each challenge along with an exercise to go with the fun fact. “The Great American Adventure” provided facts about various parts of the country at each challenge spot along with an exercise that tied into that information. “Wellness is about moving the body and keeping the brain active,” Kim said.

She also created an obstacle course outside of the SWC and brought out cornhole boards. “We usually have themed activities each week,” she said.

With no day or evening programs running in the SWC, the pool was also closed. Aquatics Coordinator Patrick Raymond had to change his program altogether, taking his water class out into the woods. As a nature lover, Patrick decided to teach a botany class where he takes individuals—one or two at a time—out for walks in nature and teaches them about different species of plant life.

The new program achieved two goals: encouraging individuals to get
Program Happenings

some fresh air and exercise as well as learning a little something about nature at the same time. But Patrick still found ways to inject some water instruction whenever possible. “During water safety week, we talked about different ways to stay safe in the pool or at the beach as we walked along the path, identifying plants,” he said.

Music Instructor Sean Carr took his music program on the road. With guitar in hand, he visits the homes—sitting outside, playing individuals’ favorite songs. “Music is such an important part of reducing stress,” he said.

“Initially, I was making up packets with songs for the staff in the homes to sing with the individuals, but then I thought that process might not work, especially if staff wasn’t comfortable with leading a music session,” said Sean.

“I threw the lesson plans out the window and it’s just me, my guitar, and the requests I get from the individuals,” he said.

And though he is not a fan of Tom Jones, he forced himself to learn a few songs to appease Eli B. “That’s always her request,” he said.

When the weather cooperates, he said the new approach to his music lessons works very well. But early on, when it was cold and rainy and he was playing outside the homes while individuals listened from inside, the situation was not ideal.

Art Director Melanie Zagwyn has been putting together themed art-based kits which she sends to the homes once a week. Designed to appeal to all skill levels, the kits contain a variety of techniques to reinforce, challenge, or encourage new skills.

As weather improved in April and May, she began offering pop up art activities that could be done outdoors in small groups that allow for social distancing. As a way to include day program participants, Melanie also offered activity ideas and planners as well as making the occasional visit via Zoom.

There were also some collaborative projects, including painting hearts on wood fencing. The “artwork” was then placed at the edge of the property on School Street, as a message to the community. “We had a neighbor from Kennie Lane tell me when she saw the hearts, she was encouraged to do the same,” said Melanie.

All the specialists also share creative ideas on the NEVweb—New England Village’s intranet site.

On any given day, residents and staff can find a song of the day, video meditations and art projects. Kim said the wellness programs—music, art, fitness—help to bring back some routine for the individuals and, therefore, restore some normalcy.

“Wellness is critically important right now for everyone,” she said.

Photos from top left: Jess Bogese paints a heart. Kindness hearts outside of the Red Cape. Peyton Hatfield, Mark Milton and Michele Rubin work on a collaborative mural. Sean Carr delivers a music lesson.
In the face of a pandemic, preparation is critical to a successful outcome. It is always better to have something and not need it, than to need something and not have it.

And one of the things that senior residential staff determined could be needed here at New England Village was an alternative care site—a place where individuals who do not have the skills to self-quarantine could go if they should test positive with COVID-19.

The Sollar Wellness Center was immediately selected for such a site. With no day programming going on in the building, it seemed the ideal spot. “Because of the agency’s foresight years ago to build this center, we didn’t have to look too far to find a space that could accommodate our folks. The SWC has everything we need. It’s accessible to everyone, whether they are in a wheelchair, have visual issues, or other physical limitations. It has a kitchen, washer, dryer, accessible bathrooms and showers. It even has an indoor walking track to offer recreation and exercise,” Residential Director Beth von Staats said.

Because the pool is completely shut down, with the cover on and the doors locked, there is no risk of individuals wandering in there.

The center’s fitness room, which typically hosts yoga and other classes, was transformed into sleeping quarters, complete with partitions and curtains to allow for distancing and isolation. The room can accommodate up to eight beds if necessary. “When we were creating this ‘bedroom,’ I just thought about the kinds of things my son has in his dormitory at school and filled it with those necessities,” von Staats said.

It didn’t take long to repurpose the room. “I give full credit to Facilities Manager John Esterbrooks. He did the magic in transforming a fitness room into a dormitory. He was the key to this success,” von Staats said.

Meanwhile the cardio room was repurposed into a game room and living room, offering any individuals who may have to quarantine there another space for relaxation and recreation. The massage room will be turned into a medication administration room, if necessary.

Von Staats said she needed the okay from several government boards and agencies before officially declaring the SWC an alternative site. “I had to get approval from the Pembroke Board of Health, Pembroke Fire Department, Building Inspector and the State Department of Developmental Services (DDS).”

She pointed out that it was very important to have this “infirmary” in place before it was needed, so that staff wouldn’t be scrambling to put it together. “I hope we don’t have to use it. But, if we do, we’re prepared.”
nothing in this world worth having or doing comes without hard work and sacrifice, and no one in this life or the next will make it through alone.

The men and women who work in this industry understand and appreciate that when their services are needed, regardless of their title, they step up to the plate.

It has been a while since Aquatics Coordinator Patrick Raymond worked as a direct support professional but when the call came asking for volunteers to quarantine in Fuller House for 14 days, Raymond offered his services.

“I started at New England Village working as a paraprofessional seven years ago, so I was already familiar with two of the women in the home. And as the Aquatics Coordinator at Sollar Wellness Center, I knew the other people living in Fuller,” he said.

He entered the home at 9 am on April 21 and remained there until May 4.

His girlfriend Maura and their two dogs would have to get along without him while he provided support services to the residents of Fuller.

Though being away from them was difficult, Patrick said the weather—which included cold rainy days—made things really difficult.

“Days 7 through 9 were the toughest. Day 9, I was really feeling homesick, missing Maura and the dogs. Typically, I like to walk in the woods with the dogs to reduce stress, but quarantining meant I could only walk the pathway outside of Fuller House and with the cold rainy days, I didn’t even have that,” he said.

When he finally did return home on the fourth of May, he said, the dogs were ecstatic to see him. “It’s like I had come back from the dead.”

In an effort to reduce the potential for contracting COVID-19, NEV asked some direct support staff to volunteer to isolate at a nearby hotel and not go into public when not working at the Village. In the event that a home had to quarantine, these staff members would then work at that home. As volunteers for isolation, they understood that they could potentially be away from loved ones for a month or more.

Jim Scott was one of several staff who agreed to make this sacrifice. “I got the full support of my family,” he said.

He started his isolation shift on April 4 and after 12 days, he was asked to quarantine at House 3 for 14 days. At the end of that quarantine, after being away from his own family for 26 days, he went home for 2 ½ days, before returning to the hotel for isolation between shifts at NEV.

“During my quarantine and isolation, I missed Easter with my family, I missed my wife’s birthday and Mother’s Day,” he said.

But, he said, he doesn’t for one minute regret his decision.

“During my quarantine at House 3, two parents contacted me by phone to personally thank me for taking care of their child; one parent was crying. As a parent, I cannot imagine how difficult this must be for the families of the individuals we support, to be away from their child or sibling, unable to visit, to hug them, to see them in person. To know that I am giving these families a little comfort is an incredible feeling,” he said.

And he said the response he received from New England Village has been equally remarkable. “The support and appreciation I received from the administration and other staff members has been astonishing.”

Direct Support Professionals have always been the heart of this organization but their personal sacrifices have never been more evident than during this pandemic. We are so grateful to these unsung heroes for their selfless service to others.

New England Village gratefully acknowledges the sacrifices made by the following people who worked in a quarantined home during the pandemic.

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<td>Neal Beckenstein</td>
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<td>Tim Kennedy</td>
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The Unsung Heroes

There’s no doubt that we value our Direct Support Professionals, the people who have always delivered premier services to the men and women we so proudly support. However, when this pandemic hit, their work became even more meaningful to us, so we tried our best to express our appreciation for all that they do. At the beginning of April, we provided them with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. President and CEO Mike Rodrigues delivered lunches to staff working the day shift in each of the homes. He then brought dinners to staff working the night shift. A table with an array of breakfast offerings was set up under a tent for the heroes working the overnight shift and Mike greeted them as they stopped by before heading home. A few weeks later, Director of Enrichment and Community Services Ginger Comeau delivered sweets from The Candy Jar in Pembroke to all NEV staff working on the premises, because after all…we have the sweetest staff. These deliveries were just small tokens of NEV’s appreciation for the very large contributions these employees make in supporting the individuals entrusted to our care.

1. Boxes of candy for staff.
2. DSP Promise Solo checks out the breakfast offerings.
3. Leigh Ann Taylor grabs some breakfast after her night shift
4. Mike Rodrigues delivers dinners to Deolinda Andrade and Chris Burdge
5. Ginger Comeau hands off a bag filled with candy to Kim Derosier and Monica West
7. Jacqueline Lopez proves that eyes really do smile.