

PROGRESS

A PUBLICATION OF UNIFIED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES
TO LIFE'S
POSSIBILITIES

SUMMER 2020

WHILE THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, OUR MISSION REMAINS THE SAME

The coronavirus has brought many changes to life as we know it. As we navigate this uncharted territory, Unified Community Connections remains dedicated to our mission to support individuals with disabilities. It has not been easy. To mitigate the risks to the individuals we support, we have had to close our Day Programs and Delrey School, implement strict social distancing in our offices, increase teleworking when possible and provide a daily supply of sanitation products, face masks and other personal protective equipment for our staff.

"We have met these challenges head on and cannot thank our staff enough for their commitment during the pandemic," says Unified's President and CEO Diane Coughlin. "Across the agency, Unified's staff has demonstrated extraordinary solidarity. They have not been afraid to roll up their sleeves, be on the front lines and repeatedly put the needs of others before their own. They have gone above and beyond to ensure our individuals receive the same level of support as usual."

Learning Online

Delrey students and staff quickly transitioned to virtual online learning. The staff found many creative ways to engage students and make them feel bonded. For example, this spring Delrey celebrated the graduation of two of its students.

Supplies were sent to students'



Individuals are keeping busy with a variety of games.

homes, and they made posters to congratulate their classmates. Pictures of the posters were shared on Facebook to commemorate the special occasion.

Staying Safe

To protect the 140 individuals in our residential homes, Unified has developed plans specific to COVID-19 for rapid identification and management of infected individuals along with adjustments to how the residential homes are staffed, cleaned and managed. Mrs. Coughlin says, "Initially no visitors were allowed, and the inability for families to visit their loved ones was one of the most difficult of all the new procedures. We are now allowing limited outdoor visits with safety protocols in place."

continued inside ▶

THANK YOU

Unified is grateful to everyone who has volunteered to help us during the pandemic. We extend a special thank you to the following people who have generously made, purchased and donated supplies to protect our individuals and staff:

Face Masks

- Amber Baer and family members
- Sue Clapsadle
- Kim Fitz
- Ginny Hendershot and family members
- Barbie Jones, friend of Unified employee Deb Foltz
- Elaine Jordan
- Christine Joyner
- Amy Kreitz, Unified employee
- Tara Moon
- Becky Olsen Bequette of Fairfield Facemasks
- Darla Shaw
- Sandy Snyder of RE/MAX in Hagerstown
- Diane Willoughby, Unified employee
- Women's Mission of Waxhaw-Baptist Church

Supplies

- Dennis Brechbiel helped locate rolls of elastic for use in PPE
- Community neighbor Connie donated bleach, hand sanitizer and activity supplies to individuals in our Montgomery County home.



OUR MISSION:

TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE THEY SEEK.



Day Program staff Jose Hernandez and Ciera Brown are now working at our home in Frederick. They pose with a "Heroes Work Here" sign sponsored by Unified's board of directors.

Staying Connected

To help families stay in touch, Unified has outfitted homes with technology that allows for virtual communication via Zoom, FaceTime and Skype. "Our IT vendor, Metro Data, was very helpful in explaining how to do all of this, and Unified's staff took the information and ran with it," says Mrs. Coughlin.

Unified is providing structured activities every day via the internet and Zoom to individuals in our residential homes as well as to individuals who live with their families and attend one of our Day Programs. Our administrative staff organize the activities, purchase the supplies and leave them outside the homes each day. We also facilitate smaller social groups online so that individuals who would normally see each other in Day Programs are able to connect.

Keeping Healthy

Our primary job is to keep individuals safe and healthy. Our staff are asked to stay home if they feel sick. They take their temperature at the start of each shift and wear a mask while on duty. Staff no longer work in multiple homes. Instead, the same staff work at the same home every day. To further reduce exposure, mid-level management has taken over the shopping responsibilities previously done by home managers.

Cleanliness has always been a high priority within the residential homes, but now the cleaning regiment has become more stringent on a daily basis. Should a staff member test positive for COVID-19, a thorough deep-cleaning procedure is mandated in the home where the staff member works.

"Everyone's on heightened alert for any symptoms related to coronavirus infection," says Mrs. Coughlin. Individuals have their temperatures taken and oxygen levels checked three times a day. Several individuals have been tested for COVID-19 when they experienced spikes in fever; but to date, none of the individuals in our residential homes have become infected. Unified is also utilizing telemedicine appointments when possible and conducting nursing reviews and training via telemedicine. This has helped mitigate some of the risks involved with face-to-face appointments and alleviated the rigors involved with transportation.

Mrs. Coughlin says, "The hardest part of managing Unified's response to the coronavirus is coping with the worry of what we might have missed. Given the many variables outside of our control, I think we have done a really good job."

We're All in This Together

As our staff continues to work selflessly to care for the individuals we support, we have been humbled by the support Unified has received from past and present employees, family and friends, neighbors and people from all walks of life. Your donations of personal protective equipment, sanitation products, cleaning supplies and more are proof of the generosity inherent in our community and a daily reminder that we are all human and in this together.



Saturday, October 17, 2020
Event headliner: Roses n Rust

Get ready to **ROCK Online!!** To ensure the safety of our guests and staff, this year's Hoodstock will be virtual. We are looking forward to announcing our plans soon. Please visit www.unified.org for updates.

AROUND THE AGENCY



◀ Individuals in our Frederick residential home celebrated Easter by making crafts with their housemates.

DELREY NEWS



▲ Mary Anne O'Brien, a speech language pathologist with Delrey, congratulates Delrey's graduates. Supplies were sent to students' homes so they could create their own congratulatory posters and share with their classmates on Facebook.

▲ Conner, a Delrey student, completes his virtual schoolwork with help from his sisters.



▲ The Frederick Day Program held a Valentine's Day party (pre-quarantine).



▲ Prior to "sheltering in place" individuals from our Hagerstown region went swimming at the local YMCA.

WE ARE MOVING

We are excited to announce Unified is moving its headquarters just up the road to Sparks, Maryland. Our phone number stays the same, and effective August 24, our new address will be:

Highlands Corporate Center One
952 Ridgebrook Rd., Unit #1000
Sparks, MD 21152
410-484-4540



DEVELOPMENT NEWS

We thank our generous donors whose contributions have helped us through these challenging COVID-19 times and made life better for our individuals and staff.

- **The Arc of Maryland** donated **\$1,292** to allow each individual in our residential program to spend \$10 on an item that would promote socialization and increase positive shared experiences during the quarantine. Residents purchased items they could share with their housemates such as DVDs, arts and crafts supplies, board games, nail polish and music.
- Two grants were received for the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE) for our direct care staff. Our loyal partner and vendor of 14 years, **Dimensional Health Care Associates**, awarded us **\$2,500**. Dimensional Health Care is also the longstanding Presenting Sponsor of our Golf Classic. Longtime donors **Nancy and Snowden Stanley, Jr.**, generously gifted us **\$5,000**. The Stanleys are also the supporters of our mentor program, which was established in memory of their son John Stanley, III, who received supports from Unified during his life.
- **A \$3,335 grant was received from The Community Foundation of Frederick County's COVID Collaboration** to purchase nine iPads and the necessary hardware to create virtual engagement opportunities for the individuals in our western region residential program. The iPads allow the individuals to participate in virtual group activity sessions, interact and communicate with family members and have virtual nursing appointments.
- **A \$3,250 grant was received by the Washington County Together We Serve Grant Program** to purchase a body temperature screening device for our Hagerstown Day Program that uses feevr technology to detect elevated body temperatures in a crowd.

ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Thank you to our sponsors for their dedicated support despite the cancellation of this year's Golf Classic.



Presenting Sponsor



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WORKPLACE GIVING . . .

Did you know that if your workplace participates in the United Way Campaign, another federated appeal or has an in-house program, you can designate your support for Unified Community Connections through payroll deduction?

Agency numbers for Unified Community Connections are:

- United Way of Central Maryland #024
- Combined Federal Campaign #70735
- Maryland Charities Campaign #52-0696384
- Combined Charities Campaign #8024
- Frederick County/City #0522
- Frederick Private, Cecil County, Allegany County and other areas in Maryland #53

Unified Community Connections is a proud member of Community Health Charities of Maryland.