

June 2020



Dear Unity House Friend:

You are in our thoughts. As we round the corner into summer, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the past few months. As a steadfast supporter of our mission, I especially want to keep you updated on how the agency is doing and share some of the remarkable things that are happening at Unity House during the pandemic:

- The **agency was deemed essential** in March by New York State because we assist a large number of adults with disabilities around the clock. We are open and operating.
- Our **day programs are suspended** until it is safe to again have large gatherings. Most employees in those programs have been redeployed and are now working in our residential programs, providing much-needed relief to staff already stretched thin.
- We received the **Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan** through the CARES Act, allowing us to pay all of our employees during this time. With so many unemployed across the nation, this felt like a particular blessing. The PPP also enables us to temporarily pay our frontline workers more per hour, and offer hazard pay should anyone test positive for coronavirus.
- We posted a request on social media for **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to keep our staff safe, and the community's response has been heartwarming**. More than 600 homemade face masks have been donated to date, in addition to gowns, face shields, thermometers, and more. We couldn't be more grateful for this show of support from the public, collaborative agencies, and our own staff!



- We've been supporting our housing programs with **activities to help our folks stay busy and have some fun** during the lockdown. We've hosted a sidewalk chalk decorating contest, provided activity bags and puzzles, sponsored a karaoke competition, and encouraged sites to decorate their windows.

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- The agency received a **\$700 grant from the Cayuga Community Fund** and United Way of Cayuga County to purchase pre-paid phone cards so individuals in recovery and with mental illnesses can participate in free telehealth calls with practitioners, Zoom meetings and classes, and stay connected to others during this isolation period.
- Unity House is **supporting local restaurants** by buying a take-out meal once a week for each of its 50+ sites across six counties. Service recipients and staff alike enjoy this communal meal, and we are helping our regional economy in a small way.

Through it all, **our dedicated employees have been miracle workers**, and I brag about them every chance I get. Our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) work one-on-one with our service recipients every day, potentially risking their lives to help others. Support staff have been rotating working from home to keep numbers down in the offices as we do our part to flatten the curve. Managers, team leaders, and directors have stepped up to the plate to keep the agency moving forward in a safe and efficient manner. And our internal nursing department has really ramped up their efforts to manage PPE distribution across the agency, and keep our workers and clients safe every day.

**Unity House remains strong in the face of COVID-19, and we invite you to engage with us as we slowly move together down the road to a new normal. If you have ideas or uplifting stories to share with us, or if you'd like to help in any way, please reach out to us. Your support and input builds us up at this time of global need, and it means the world to us.**

I wish you peace and good health. Please be well, pull together as we stay safely apart, and find joy in each day. These are difficult, strange times. Only as a community joined in solidarity can we beat this pandemic and emerge proud and strong on the other end.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your care and support of Unity House.

Yours Most Sincerely,



Liz Smith  
Executive Director

