



Our COVID-19 Response

The current COVID-19 crisis has led us to change the way we are providing services. We have been fortunate to date not to have any staff or clients test positive for the virus. If someone does test positive, we have created back up strategies to respond quickly. We have established a COVID Quick Response Team of nursing staff, managers and others who will help determine appropriate responses. This team will also provide staff with additional PPE and training to ensure that everyone is kept as safe as possible. We do have alternative living arrangement options within our agency if needed. We also have options/resources outside of Choices to help us minimize the impact of the virus while providing the best care possible.

We expect that many of these changes will stay in place for months. It has not been easy so far and may not get any easier for a while, but we are grateful for the work that is being done by our staff and the way our clients are adapting to changes in their homes and lives.

Some of the other changes and safety features we have implemented include:

- Residential Services is an **essential** service and all our homes continue to operate, due to the commitment of our Direct Support Professionals and management teams. **HEROES!**
- As part of the Stay At Home order, we have a no visitor and no home visit policy for our homes. We understand the concern and pain this causes, but we feel the risk of exposure must be our first concern. We will lift this policy as soon as we receive professional advice as to the safety in doing so.
- We are not doing activities that may increase exposure, but we are finding ways to help fight 'Cabin Fever,' such as taking walks, visiting parks, creating activity kits for the homes, and engaging those we serve with virtual experiences using tools such as Zoom and others.
- All Fun-Fit programs at recreation centers and YMCAs are closed during the Stay At Home order. A few day programs are serving individuals in small groups.
- Most of our Non-Medical Transportation Services are closed. Only a few isolated trips are active to support people who must get to work as essential employees.
- In all homes, offices and any place we have people coming together, we have implemented temperature checks for everyone upon arrival, ask questions to check to see if they may have been exposed to the virus and then immediately have them go wash their hands. In addition, all staff must wear face masks in homes and other community areas. Face masks were difficult to obtain initially, but we have secured a large supply and are able to provide every employee, as well as clients if they choose, with a mask. We have provided each location with an ample supply of gloves, masks, cleaning supplies and sanitizer.

Thank you for your understanding and patience as we continue to focus on the people we serve and the people who serve them. We may not be together in the ways we wish we could be, but we are united as one Choices' family. **Together!**



Random Acts of Kindness

"A random act of kindness can change someone's life ... choose to be kind always." – Kemi Sogunle

Over all our years since we began services in 1985 we have been witness to so many acts of kindness. Each one has left us with a memory, and, yes, has changed someone's life. During this time we have again been witness to the power of kindness. We are deeply grateful to those who have shared their acts of kindness with us.

How does kindness show itself in the midst of COVID-19? It gets in a car dressed as the Easter Bunny and drives to our Huntsview home, where Cheryl, Gisela and Rose were facing another day at home following Stay At Home orders. Their day became much brighter when that car drove up with the Easter Bunny (aka – a friend of the daughter of Program Administrator Leab Byrd) in the driver's seat, there to deliver an Easter treat to each lady.

While they couldn't go out and touch him, there was that kiss blown to one lady from the big-eared driver and the joy for each of them that reminded us all that in the most difficult times, kindness can change someone's life.

Continued on page 2

ESSENTIAL *by Tom Weaver, Executive Director*

It's been a little less than one year since we entered into crisis mode with the Memorial Day tornadoes that caused so much destruction and disruption. With our efforts focused on getting whole home generators so we can be prepared for those kinds of emergencies should they occur again and just when we thought we might be able to breathe again, we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic.

We thought we were back to 'normal' following the tornadoes, even better prepared since we discovered our strengths and areas for improvement last May. Now we are in what seems like will be a 'new normal.' We have been and continue to listen very closely to the people we serve, our staff, families and community to assure we are addressing needs in our homes. The outpouring of exceptional leadership from the state, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) and County Boards continues to guide us in working on key issues.

Just like during the tornadoes and the aftermath, true heroes are among us, our direct care staff, managers and administrative staff. If we thought they made personal sacrifices during the tornadoes (**and they did**), that pales in comparison to what they are doing now with our clients at home most of the time, and with new requirements on how to keep clients and themselves healthy.

We've put many of our services on hold, such as our Fun-Fit program, so that people will not be in crowds and in the community exposed to greater risk. We are making sure people are still safely served in their homes. Our administrative team is working within strict health guidelines while they continue documentation, billing, tech support and other support critical to the well-being of those we serve and to those providing direct care.

We've had to cancel our events that always signal to us that we have made it through another winter and the newness and promise of Spring is all around us. Our Fish Fry was cancelled, as was our 13th annual **Art & Soul** juried art exhibit. We're celebrating our artists and their work with an online exhibit this year. We had to find creative (*digital*) ways to let people know about the autographed UD Flyers basketball we have as a fundraiser. We're still trying to raise funds for generators and our other needs. We still need additional staff and are always accepting applications. Go to cicljobs.com for more information.

So far we are all well and there is that sense of a 'new normal' for now. We remain flexible, ready to adapt to changes as needed. No one ever said it was going to be easy. No one ever said it could be this bad. No one will ever say that our staff and our Board at Choices gave it anything but our very best. That's why I know we will make it through this. Be safe and well at home until we can be together again, knowing you have a team of heroes surrounding you and those you love.

Our HR community partnership

The number one goal of our Human Resources Department is to meet Choices' mission by assuring that there are staff to provide quality services. As part of that effort, our HR department is part of a community partnership with the Dayton Job Corp Center that provides the Center job opportunities for their students, while providing Choices with trained and certified employees in the health care field who are ready to go to work.

Our HR staff, including Tara Walker and Shelley Harman, attend job fairs at the Center. They share Choices' story and employment opportunities and take applications from potential new employees. The applications are filled out while they are at the job fair, speeding up the hiring process. We have the advantage that these new employees come with credentials. They can earn a bonus by signing up with Choices.

Following is a story from one of employees hired as a result of the Dayton Job Corp Center partnership.



My name is Shamené Jackson. I currently work at Dayton Job Corps as 1st cook. I also work for Choices. Both places give me the opportunity to grow within the company and provide training to help me continue to learn, because something in the world is continually changing. They help give me the tools to prepare

me with needed job skills, as well as independent living training. I'm happy to be part of two great teams that provide great services to our community. I like this quote: *"You learn more from failure than from success. Don't let it stop you. Failure builds character."*

Random Acts of Kindness *continued from page 1*

We honor the acts of kindness from Brenda Marcotte and Pam Roustio for making and donating handmade face masks in support of their brother, David Roustio, and all those working alongside him. David serves as our Chief Program Officer.

We honor Board Member Larry Hansgen for the autographed UD Flyers basketball in support of our fundraising efforts.

Congratulations, Tim

Tim Hughes has given us all at Choices a reason to celebrate this Spring. Not only was he once again selected to be an artist in the **Art & Soul** juried art exhibit, his piece, Love, won 7th place in the Exhibit, which included a cash award. Tim is supported in his ongoing art experiences by the I Am Boundless Studio, who also submitted his entry for judging this year.





Civitan throws a party

It was a **super** time at our Super Bowl party for almost 90 partiers from Choices and Resident Home. The party was planned and coordinated by the Civitan Club of Dayton and hosted by Elks Lodge #58. Guests enjoyed football talk, bingo, winning prizes, and, most of all, enjoying UNO's pizza. According to Civitan member Tony Massoud, some guests shared that it was the best pizza they've ever had. This is the latest event hosted by Civitan, which has included picnics and cook-outs in partnership with the welcoming Elks Lodge.

Civitan also served as a sponsor at the Self-Advocates annual conference at Wright State University in March. They had a table at the conference to share information about the ongoing service mission of Civitan – *making community inclusion happen*.

Supporting people with intellectual/developmental disabilities is the work of Civitan internationally, as well as right here in our community.

Civitan Club of Dayton welcomes new members at any time to join them in activities like the Super Bowl party and Self-Advocates conference. Contact Al Harmon at alharmon@allmail.net for member information.



Thank you, Andy

Executive Director Tom Weaver (*r*) was among those honoring Andy Horstman for his service as a member of Choices' Board of Directors. Andy began



his service as a client representative in 2016 and completed his term in 2019. He served on the Program and Services Committee. "Andy was always dependable and seldom missed meetings," says Tom. "He brought a personal perspective of both a self-advocate and advocate, helping us look at our mission and our services in a way that was responsive to those we serve. He had a gift for recognizing the hard work of staff and of sharing ideas on how to make improvements. His insights and his warmth kept us always focused on outcomes, not just processes. He will be missed."

Some of those leadership skills that Andy shared as part of the Choices Board were developed and supported through his role as a member of the self-advocacy group, Voices of Greene County, where he served as their first president. Under his leadership, Voices has been recognized at the local and state levels for their innovative efforts, including their induction into the Developmental Disabilities Hall of Fame. He has been instrumental in the planning of an annual Self-Advocacy and Community Provider Fair at Wright State University, as well as the development of a disability awareness and safety program with the Beavercreek Police Department that has been shared statewide, with Andy as one of the presenters. He is also a director with the Greenemont Optimist Club.

"Voices of Greene County would not be the success they are today without Andy," says Self-Advocate Advisor David Gleason. "In just a few short years he went from learning about self-advocacy to using his leadership skills to mentor and support others, whether that's helping a presenter use a microphone, helping someone pronounce words, solving problems or planning for an important conference. Andy is a voice and a lifeline for people with disabilities."



Still missing Mary ... by Marvin Lewis

Mary Ridenour was 75 when she died in March. She lived in our Pepper Hill home for the last nine years of her life. She loved to watch Perry Mason every morning. Bob Evans was her favorite restaurant, where she had to go at least once a month if not more.

She was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2019 and fought the good fight. She woke up on the morning of March 22 and wasn't feeling well. She had been weak the last two days, with staff doing everything they could to keep her comfortable. She also suffered from dementia and so doctors were not sure what caused her to pass away.

As we continue to miss her, we have such good memories of how she loved going to the movies, especially animated movies. She loved to read and then discuss what she read. She loved collecting Elvis Presley items and went to Graceland twice. She was kind and loved to laugh. Her best friend was her housemate Carolyn Clark. She was a sweet, sweet soul and we will always miss her.

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Our holiday act of kindness

Christmas is always stressful. Life doesn't get put on hold because there are gifts to buy, meals to cook and so much more. Direct Support Professional Roxanna Zinkhon (*Clark County*) had taken one of the three men in her home, Chris Whittington, to a doctor's appointment. As so often happens, they started chatting with a man in the waiting room. He asked questions about Choices and what we do, what she liked about her job, what Chris liked about his home. He asked Roxanna for a business card.

Later that day she received a phone call from the man asking if he and his wife could be Secret Santa for the men at the Yorkshire home, asking to remain anonymous. They provided more than \$500 in gifts for the men, showering them with clothes, games, remote control helicopters, electric blankets and more, even a ham for Christmas dinner. All they wanted in return was for the three men to have a fabulous holiday, which, judging by their photos, they did!

