

April 1, 2020

Dear St. Mary's Donor,

I want to wish you well and hope that your family and friends are safe during this unprecedented time. Please know that we are thinking of you, and you have the best wishes of the entire St. Mary's family during this time.

For nearly 144 years, St. Mary's has been a champion of helping the most vulnerable children, families and adults. Our humble beginnings were formed as an orphanage to now being recognized as a trauma-informed expert agency providing residential services, a K-12 specialized school and outpatient services. Our commitment to our mission has never wavered, and it will always remain steady and focused.

On the back of this letter, you will read of the many ways that we are continuing to fulfill our mission and meeting client needs safely in light of the Covid-19 epidemic.

It is through challenging times like these that we are reminded of the important relationship we have with our clients, community partners and you. We thank you for your partnership to advance our mission and for your investment. You are important to us, and we can't do our work without you.

We have been working differently—with half of our staff working remotely and only essential staff on campus. I applaud our dedicated team for their work and sacrifices which they have made thus far. It takes people to take care of people. There are many lessons we have learned thus far—ranging from the need for an expanded pool of gift cards to serve the basic human needs of our most vulnerable children and family to the need to expand technology.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our Spring 2020 edition of *The Door*. This newsletter has a refreshed look and content providing you with articles illustrating impact and keeping you apprised of achievements and milestones. Thank you for believing in us and the work we do each day and for our hope that we may instill a future filled with great hope and promise to those whom seek our services.

You may ask how you can help. Please continue to invest in our mission by making a donation today. Every penny counts allowing us to provide a journey of hope and healing. Thank you.

Wishing you peace and health,



Carlene Casciano-McCann
Executive Director

Fulfilling our mission, meeting client needs safely

The Mission

As you can imagine, this pandemic is impacting our operations in profound ways. We are grateful for our caring and compassionate team here at St. Mary's. They are your family, friends and neighbors who are dedicated to lifting our children and clients out of despair despite the difficulties caused by the coronavirus. Here are ways we continue to meet our mission along with the realities of today's circumstances:

GETTING CREATIVE WITH OUR SERVICES

To help our residential children deal with being isolated, many new art projects have been developed, taking the kids out of their homes and into a different room on campus to use inspirational sayings to make driftwood or canvas paintings. One of our nurses is an expert in yoga and mindfulness and is doing sessions with the kids. We are also taking children in small groups to isolated places to hike and explore. This is turning into learning time as well as the kids have the opportunity to take actions such as examining tide pools for signs of life.

KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE

We currently have 30 children living on campus among five houses and approximately 90 staff coming onto the campus. This is about one-half of the normal amount of staff. Employees that are still on campus include maintenance, residential staffing and managers, kitchen staff, and at least one senior administrator. The rest are working remotely. Each staff person is self-monitoring themselves, including taking their temperature each day and staying home if any sign of sickness arises. We are continually reminding our kids about social distancing and keeping hands and faces clean. Our maintenance staff is cleaning and disinfecting throughout our campus.

MAKING DISTANCE LEARNING WORK

The George N. Hunt School has 20 students who live on campus, and 16 day students who normally travel to the school each day. When the school closed, students received a packet of work that covers 30 days. Teachers, who are working from home, are in daily contact with all students to support them. School administrators are investigating supplemental learning such as Zoos who are doing YouTube sessions on animals. We are also looking at how to best use Chromebooks which were donated to the school as not all students have internet.

UTILIZING NEW METHODS TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO CLIENTS

In addition to our residential children, we serve hundreds of children and adults through outpatient and community-based programs. These include in-office therapy and in-home visits for a variety of types of trauma from childhood sexual abuse to survivors of sex trafficking. We have switched from face-to-face meetings to using telehealth (video conferencing) or the telephone to work with clients. We are still able to provide the high level of services we always have--for instance, one of our clinicians has been doing play therapy with children through FaceTime.

HELPING CLIENTS WITH NEW NEEDS

Our clients are feeling isolated and anxious. They are trying to help their children with distance learning while also facing issues around the need to satisfy basic human needs such as groceries and medicine – some have been laid off from their jobs. Feedback from clients is that being able to continue therapy and other programs is helping them feel less alone. Because we are assessing basic needs and providing some assistance such as gift cards and cab rides to grocery stores, our clients are getting through the coronavirus isolation in a more balanced way.
