

children's beach house
Children | Families | Communities

A message from the Executive Director

Beacon Society Update: May 2020

As I sit to write this first Beacon Update I am realizing how I am over the word “unprecedented” because it’s been used so often to describe the various negative impacts of COVID 19. It’s true the breadth and depth of these impacts hit the healthcare, economic and emergency response systems, and even food production and delivery systems. No sector has been left unscathed. And no person has been left unscathed either.

However, there have been many powerful examples of strength and heroism that are also “unprecedented!”



Like everyone else, our team at Children's Beach House is learning how can we support our kids and families who we are used to being close enough to put a hand on their shoulder or to see first-hand their challenges and successes.

The events of the last six weeks have highlighted the vulnerabilities of under-resourced communities. A few of our parents are on the front lines in the health care arena, but most are essential employees of other, less visible and less protected industries. The risks are real and the anxiety is amplified throughout families and communities. It's a very difficult world we are now in. Leadership demands have changed. Old ways of doing things are gone – like it or not. We need new models that are flexible for rapidly changing situations but at the same time light pathways, and most importantly, give hope.

In the midst of these trying times, CBH must keep our focus on the mission and vision of the organization and move forward in ways that foster our core values. What has emerged for us at CBH is a combination of Mr. Rogers meets the US military. Let me explain...

First and foremost, we know that our primary responsibility is to show up for kids and families and to simplify messages that support them and help them to find their pathways. This is what I call the "Mr. Rogers Approach." We encourage kids to be safe. Notwithstanding the challenges our world faces, we face them together and find ways to support one another. We can help them to "find the helpers" and to trust their own strength and inner wisdom.

We can help our kids and families, and even our staff and donors when we remember Fred Roger's teaching.

"All of us, at some time or other, need help. Whether we're giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world. That's the one thing that connects us as neighbors – in our own way, each of us is a giver and a receiver."

At the same time, we need to be careful planners and strategists as we contemplate the goals that are set for physical, mental and economic safety. Our mantra has become Adapt, Improvise and Overcome. We know our work to support kids and families is more important now than ever. And our staff are our front line soldiers. They are quickly adapting, improvising and overcoming!

Our preschool teachers rose immediately to the challenge. They took their lessons online – using Google classrooms, Zoom and Facebook Live. They have story-time. They do activities, and sing songs. The students' reactions to these efforts are priceless. It's clear that they miss their teachers and classmates. That's a very important indicator of the quality of relationships that exist between kids and staff and among kids. It's truly moving.



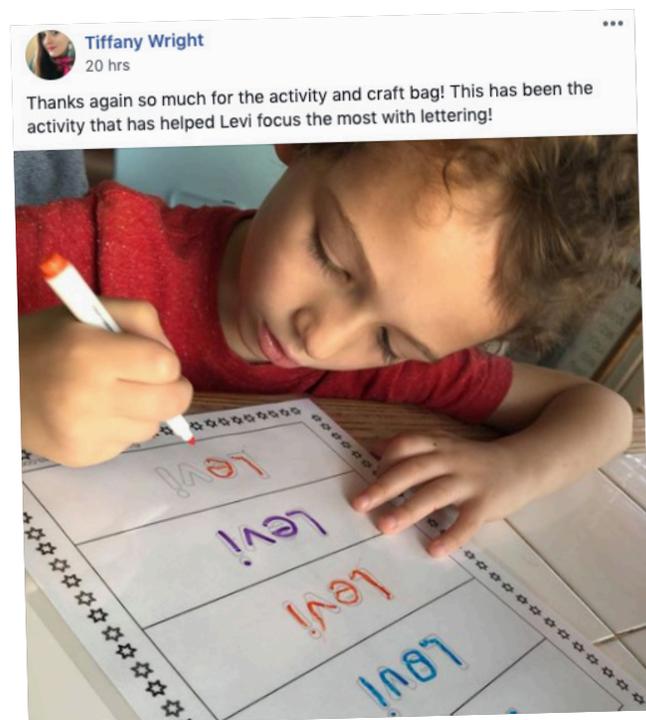
Later this morning the two Head Teachers will be visiting every family to drop off grocery bags of supplies, books and even a few snacks. Within the bags are a few items the kids will need to participate in the online activities of the next few weeks. We are videoing the reaction of the kids to seeing the teachers so we can share their expressions of surprise with our donors and friends.

In the school-age initiative, The Youth Development Program, where CBH serves children 7 – 18 and their families, the response has been much the same. The Case Managers, Camp Director and Counselors have connected with kids and families through all sorts of virtual means. They are doing general check-ins, sharing resources, and planning events around the interests of the youth including art, cooking, trivia, and even karaoke. We had to share the news last week that our summer residential camps have been canceled, so these activities are the saving grace that connects the kids to each other.

Planning for these activities give the staff reason to work one-on-one with each child/youth, providing the context for important conversations about their own responses, challenges and successes. At this point, we are challenged to think about what's going right and trying to find opportunities in our current situation.

As we continue to grow into these new ways of providing resources and connections for our kids and families, it's clear to all of us that these new pathways for outreach are going to be part of our program going forward. All of the quality research around the Positive Youth Development Theory recommends increasing youth exposure to programing to increase results. Here is an effective and efficient way of doing just that!

As most of our employees are working from home, you might think that it's quiet around Children's Beach House. In reality it feels like we are busier than ever. We are gearing up to replace our HVAC systems – and using this quiet time to complete the project faster. We are responding to every special funding opportunity that comes along, and we are planning for ways of reaching out virtually and figuring out how to recruit new friends and donors to our ranks.



All that is being accomplished is due to the support of our many donors and friends, and especially that of our Beacon Society. Thank you for being part of this group of donors who believe so strongly in our mission and who provide such critical, ongoing support. Thank you for being GIVERS! Without this group which started to assemble in November 2019, we could not have had such an immediate and effective response to the COVID 19 challenges.

I am reminded of anthropologist Margaret Mead's response when she was asked what was the most significant indicator to demonstrate a society was becoming "civilized?" She said it wasn't group agriculture, or the use of tools, or even the understanding of how to leverage fire. She said it was finding the skeletal remains of an individual who had recovered from a broken leg. To her, the ability of people to care for those who were challenged and most in need and to support them through a long healing process was the most important indicator of "civilization."

Our Beacon Society members do just that. You care for those who are challenged and most in need and your support brings them through periods of healing and growth. Your support has never meant so much. Thank you!

My very best regards,

Richard T. Garrett
Executive Director

Thank you to the Beacon Society!



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