



April 17, 2020

Dear Pathfinder Families,

**Day 5, Week 5...**A challenging week as the NY Metro area continues to experience high rates of new cases and we have our first confirmed COVID 19 case in the local Edmeston community. Pathfinder Village remains COVID 19 FREE.

We continue to focus on COVID 19 compliance. As the weeks go by, we do not want complacency to settle in. As such, front line supervisors have been hypervigilant in monitoring staff compliance and the nursing department is circulating several new educational video,s including one from our Medical Director, Dr. David Haswell. Staff wearing masks helps residents understand the seriousness of this virus. You may want to reinforce this when video-chatting with your loved one by showing off your mask. Due to the high utilization of cloth masks, ***we need to replenish our supply.*** In addition to masks, we would like to acquire a full PPE inventory in case the need presents itself. We need washable gowns, scrubs or mesh coveralls. Scrubs and washable gowns would be for staff to change into upon arrival for a shift and they can be laundered at Pathfinder after the shift. The mesh coveralls can be worn over clothing. **We are grateful for the many donations to date! Keep them coming!**

As Pathfinder continues to take precautions, we also continue to follow our Federal Government's suggestions and protocols. On April 16, President Trump unveiled some broad guidelines, to be regulated on the state level, for the U.S. to relax some of its strict social distancing measures. The "Opening Up of America Again Plan" has three phases and is aimed at guiding areas of the country towards loosened restrictions on businesses and individuals (phase 1 being most restrictive, to phase 3, the least restrictive). Following this plan would puts Pathfinder in the phase 1 level: being a high-risk population in a high-risk region with high positive COVID-19 numbers. I would like to resume family visitations; they are vital to our well-being, existence, and they are what makes the Pathfinder way of life so meaningful! I believe we can begin discussions with our local health department and Bassett Healthcare about the likelihood of this. I also think we need to conduct campus-wide testing before we consider any form of family visitation. I take comfort knowing we have direct access to a very well-respected regional healthcare network in our community and ultimately the proper decision will be made in due time.

We are talking and watching our neighbors, community partners and other businesses to help us gauge some of our summer programs. We are seeing many large-scale regional events being postponed or canceled; one such event is the Utica Boilermaker Road Race, which has been postponed from July until September. This event draws almost as many people as the Hall of Fame Induction Weekend and from all around the world. The Cooperstown Summer Baseball Dreams Park Camp/Tournament also has been canceled. As result of these, and in continuing our strong risk reduction position, we have made the difficult decision to cancel Camp Pathfinder this summer. Camp families have been notified; most expected the phone call, were understanding and are interested in participating next summer.

*“ that each life may find meaning”<sup>®</sup>*

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Our Annual Splash Path 5K Fun Run/Walk scheduled for May 30, 2020 has been postponed until the fall. To keep our loyal participants engaged, we are hosting a modified (still fun!) virtual Splash Path event on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Our title sponsor, Brown & Brown of New York, is underwriting this virtual event. Stay tuned for more information!

I have been invited to present at the **AADMD Virtual Grand Rounds Webinar - COVID-19 & People with IDD: Healthcare Concerns of People with IDD & Dementia on WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020, at 8:00PM EST.** This webinar features Dr. Seth Keller, a leading neurologist specializing in aging and intellectual and developmental disabilities. My presentation will focus on the issues facing those with I/DD, their families, DSPs and support organizations during the current COVID-19 crisis. If you would like to join this webinar, [please click this registration link.](#)

Please take a minute to read this article from [Cooperstown's Freeman's Journal](#) featuring how Pathfinder Village residents and staff are adjusting their new COVID-19 lifestyle. Focusing on the simple things, it's a heartwarming article!

Ending on an upbeat, positive note, this week we acknowledge and celebrated the hard work, dedication and creativity of faculty and therapists at Pathfinder School. For five weeks now, they have delivered educational programming remotely, while many still managing their own families and children. This has required all to be flexible and patient. Maura Iorio, Senior Director of Education shared many heart-warming stories:

***Easter Story:*** *Mrs. Z and Mrs. P mentioned many area school districts organizing "teacher parades" where district teachers drive through communities and past students' homes to wave hello. Since our students come from many different districts, some over an hour away, we recognized that this would be difficult. As an alternative we decided to divide and conquer and create our own mini Easter parades. School staff, teachers and therapists, armed with Easter baskets (filled with gifts from all of the wonderful donations to the school and Village), divided into four groups, and mapped out routes to all students' homes. We contacted all families beforehand to ensure they were comfortable with our distant visit and gave them the options of us honking and waving and yelling hello, OR we could be in "stealth mode" and simply leave the Easter baskets on their front porch. While most chose the first option, several families did choose the second—because they recognized that their children WERE MISSING SCHOOL SO MUCH that seeing us would be too confusing and difficult.*

*In the end—students and families were so appreciative. One student, who is nonverbal, was so excited to see his therapists honking their car horns in front of his house, that he kept yelling "Yay, beep-beep! Beep-beep!" Mrs. C, PT, was quite choked up. His mom captured it on video; it was a very special moment. I received many grateful messages from families who couldn't believe that we had taken the time to drive so far on the day before Easter. Many of my staff said they looked forward to doing it again, just to see the smiles on their students' faces. Even in the uncertainty and chaos, we are finding ways to stay connected.*

***Support Services with Pets!*** *PE teacher, Mrs. P and PT, Mrs. C had to get creative with their instruction. Because physical education and physical therapy involve exercise and modeling, they took to creating videos of themselves doing all the exercises and activities – they even got their own children and pets involved! Mrs. P's dog Zoey was a big hit with the PE instruction!*

***Burning the Midnight Oil!*** Sometimes the best work gets done between 10 pm and 1 am! That's what was determined with one of my teachers this past week. Since we are in the planning stages of our annual IEP meetings, we are corresponding a lot by email to get the paperwork completed. I noticed one of my teacher's emails were always time-stamped between 10 pm and 1 am. When I asked her what she was doing up that late, she told me that it was the only time she could get work done. Each day, she's with her young kids while her husband works (switching with him as needed so she can participate in web/remote sessions with students and staff meetings). She gets everyone through their dinner/bath/bed routines, and then finally gets a chance to lesson plan, go through emails, and complete her paperwork for IEPs and other student meetings. Finding a balance between work and home in the wake of school (and daycare) closure has been challenging and I am so proud with the efforts all my staff are making.

***One more, for good measure:*** Teachers Mrs. Z and Mrs. K have started hosting weekly video group sessions with families and students. The first week, Mrs. Z prepared a lesson plan in collaboration with Physical Therapist, Mrs. C. The plan was to go through their usual morning meeting routine and add stretching exercises. While they were able to get through most of the first session, the rest of the session was spent with students smiling, laughing and waving at one another in excitement. They were SO HAPPY to see one another on the video screen. While we were briefly sidetracked, staff agreed that the session was time well spent reconnecting! For most of our students, Pathfinder School isn't just where they are learning, it's where they are making friends. It was heartwarming to see their smiles as they saw all their classmates appear on the screen.

These stories make me Pathfinder proud!

We continue working hard, and we continue to miss seeing our residents on a regular basis; they truly are the heartbeat of the Village. Thank you again for your continued support, kind words and generosity. ***Be Healthy, Be Kind, Be Patient.***

Best,



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