



VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

SERVING ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FOR OVER 50 YEARS

The Village View - Winter 2021

Volume LI Number 1



Director's Note:

It's a Thursday morning and the Village is just receiving its second round of vaccines. More than anything else over the past year, the vaccines signal, for me, the beginning of the end of the pandemic.

Not that getting jabbed (as the British call it) will change how we go about our work. The Village will still practice social distancing, sanitizing common areas, and mandatory mask wearing. On the outside, nothing changes. But internally, these vaccines change everything.

No longer will we go home each day wondering if the next morning will bring news of someone at the Village contracting the deadly disease. More broadly, there will be less concern that a positive test inside the Village would cause an agency-wide shut down. These huge burdens are suddenly lifted for myself, the staff, and the people we serve.

So, now that the clouds of this pandemic are beginning to part, it's a good time to look back and ask – what did the Village get right in facing this pandemic, and what could we have done better?

What I think we got right. For starters, I have to remind everyone that none of us had any idea about what havoc the virus would create. In December 2019 we learned about this new flu virus; the next month, a single case pops up on the west coast. And a month later it became a nationwide scourge.

- Having said that, I think the Village excelled at reacting quickly to the changing health scene. The day after we decided to suspend services last spring, Illinois mandated the closings anyway. We recognized that the spread of the pandemic presented a fluid situation; what was true one week could prove irrelevant the next. Throughout the pandemic, our planning remained flexible.
- I am proud that we honored our commitments to the companies and the individuals we served. We had a limited re-opening in the spring and summer for staff only, because we had an obligation to our customers, like Wahl Clipper, to fulfill their contracts. At the same time, we'd implement and enforced stringent health safeguards for everyone who reported for work.
- Even while closed for services, the Village's staff stayed in contact with the men and women we serve. One of the biggest obstacles for people with developmental disabilities is social isolation. Their number of friends are limited; their ability to drive themselves, even more so.

THE VILLAGE VIEW

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Director's Note continued:

Throughout the summer, we arranged for individually-created care packages to be delivered to each person. Their regular bus drivers delivered these monthly packages, adding the reassurance that the staff at the Village were safe and well. Staff also regularly wrote cards and letters to our folks, letting them know that they were missed.

- The high point of the summer was the Village Parade where about two dozen staff and volunteers drove their wildly-decorated cars through Oregon and Mount Morris along a pre-planned parade route where our men and women could come out and wave and say hi.
- Even after we started resuming limited services in August, we held almost daily Zoom meetings with those who could not come in, playing games, chatting, and even taking virtual field trips to the Brookfield Zoo, Disneyworld, and several national parks.

Even now, with services restored to the majority of our people, we conduct Zoom meetings, which have proven quite popular. Some of our volunteers have become grade B celebrities on Zoom!

- I am proud that we remained fiscally responsible. We were quick to evaluate the benefit of applying for a Payroll Protection Program Loan, which proved to be a lifeline for the Village during the summer.

What might we have done better? It's hard to know for sure. I know we could have communicated better. I'm sure it was frustrating for staff as policies would change from time to time with seemingly little notice. Certainly, communication is a huge task for agencies even under the best of circumstances.

Overall, though, I couldn't be prouder of the way in which our staff and volunteers stepped forward to keep the Village afloat.

I'm happy to report that, at present, we're able to provide in-person services to about 70% of our people. I am hopeful that in the next few months we'll increase that number even further.

It's often said that you don't know what you're capable of until you are tested. If that's the case, I'm proud of how we navigated these treacherous waters and how well we've come out of it.... So far!

Brion Brooks

47th Annual Christmas Card Contest

We held our 47th annual Christmas Card Contest, open to entries from all the men and women that attend the Village. For the last 26 years Hub - Remsen Print Group, from Rochelle, has awarded certificates of participation and a small cash prize to all entrants. They also print each year's winning card for use as both the Hub - Remsen Print Group and the Village of Progress Christmas cards.

This year's judges included Dawn Todd of the Village and Chris Haas of Hub - Remsen Print Group along with his wife, Lisa. They looked at over twenty entries before selecting a design by **Rachel Brooks** of Mt. Morris for the 2020 winning entry. **Elizabeth Bastuk's** was awarded second place honors and **Matt Spurbek's** card received third place recognition.

Rachel began attending the Village in 2009. Rachel is a real joker and loves a good hearted tease but takes her work very seriously. Her favorite hobbies include doing jigsaw puzzles, playing video games and watching Broadway musicals.



Chris and Lisa Haas of Hub - Remsen Print Group along with Rachel Brooks and her winning design.

IMPORTANT DATES AT THE VILLAGE OF PROGRESS

THE JOHN HERRMANN GOLF PLAY DAY

JULY 12, 2021

TOSOC TOUR OF SCENIC OGLE COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 25,
2021

CYCLING EVENT AT THE VILLAGE

ANNUAL BANQUET

OCTOBER 20,
2021

AT 6:30

ST MARY'S LEARNING CENTER IN OREGON



VOP Receives 1st and 2nd Vaccine

The Village of Progress received the first vaccine from the Ogle County Health Department on February 4th. The Ogle County Health Department returned on March 4th to administer the 2nd dose. Everyone that attends the Village or is employed was offered the vaccine - 90% received both vaccines.

Pat Mohr - We Miss You!



Pat Mohr started at the Village of Progress on June 7, 1976 and suddenly died on November, 23 2020 at the age of 84.

We have so many wonderful memories of our friend but a few that come immediately to mind are her love of life, her enthusiasm, her great smile and her giggle that always made us forget she was nearly 85 years old.

In her spare time she enjoyed puzzles, music and dancing. The two therapy dogs that visited the Village each week brought her great joy. She took great pride in working on jobs and receiving a paycheck. She deeply loved her family and friends. She is missed and will be remembered.

Remembering Bill Sigler

Bill Sigler started as a Village of Progress volunteer on July of 2008.

Over the course of the next twelve years, Bill touched so many lives with his friendship, caring and support. He expressed once that he felt he offered so little compared to all he received while volunteering at the VOP, but in truth, he offered something priceless--his unconditional love and friendship.

His sudden death in November was a loss to the VOP family of a staunch supporter and friend. He is missed and will be long remembered.



Abby Wolff, Bill Sigler and JJ Stiles hanging out and having fun.

Honoring Fifty Years of Service



Donna Mattison (center), the Village of Progress Program Manager, displays an original artwork painted by local artist and former Executive Director Craig Carpenter (left). The Village's current Executive Director, Brion Brooks (right) presented the painting to Donna in honor of her 50 years of service to the Village.

Brion stated that many people have either strong personal skills or strong organization-

al skills, but Donna is that rare person who excels at both. Her talent, combined with her passion for the lives of those with disabilities, continues to make Donna a vital part of the Village's work and mission.

A Brighter Day - Thanks to Etnyre Foundation

The Village of Progress had an opportunity to reduce our energy consumption by updating our lighting throughout our facility due to lighting incentives from Com Ed.

And so this winter we installed new LED replacement fixtures and bulbs for our entire facility. The new lights consume a fraction of the energy consumed by older lighting and last five times longer. It's estimated the Village can cut its electric bill by about \$2,500 annually.

We were thrilled when the Etnyre Foundation stepped in and gave us a grant to cover the costs. The project is now complete and we are pleased to report that we already started noticing our electric bill decreasing each month. Thank you - Etnyre Foundation - for understanding the importance of this project!



What have people been doing?



Summer has been staying very active recently by taking lots of walks at different parks and going swimming every day at the rec center. Summer has been enjoying her down time too, having the chance to take naps throughout the day. Summer's family has had some new additions recently and Summer has been enjoying being a big sister. Summer loves all the Zoom activities through VOP but especially loves the crafts!

Amber has been staying busy during covid-19. She has been enjoying listening to her music and coloring. When it is nice out she will take walks and sit in her new glider and read outside. She has been happy to see her brother a lot more and she loves to take care of her mother.



Cameron has been staying busy during covid by participating in lots of ZOOM sessions with the Village of Progress—whether it is bingo, crafts, tours, etc. He has also been helping with chores around the house and in his free time he enjoys drawing, looking at maps and of course the occasional trip to Target.

Harlene continues to battle cancer but is feeling positive. She also has been doing a lot of coloring and painting sun catchers. One of her favorite activities is visiting and chatting with her niece.



Village of Progress Foundation Scholarships

For 23 years the Village of Progress Foundation has presented educational scholarships to folks in Ogle County. Applicants must be a resident of Ogle County and a high school senior or full-time college student who either has a disability or is majoring in an area that serves those with disabilities.

The first scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000 is made through the generosity of the Pete & Wanda Cacciatore Family. The Cacciatores have been long time supporters of the Village of Progress. Wanda was a member of the Village of Progress Board of Directors for 10 years beginning in 1988 and has served on the Foundation's Board for over 24 years. Her husband, Pete was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Village. Pete passed away in the fall of 2014, leaving behind a legacy of commitment to the Village and its mission.

This year a scholarship through the Cacciatore Family was given to Payton Barger. Payton is a senior holding an above-4-point GPA at Stillman Valley High School. Payton will be pursuing a degree in special education. She discovered a passion for teaching during The Reading Buddy program at her school. Payton is described by her pastor as "a person with strong character and even stronger in her love and care for others."

The second scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000 is made through a gift from Larry Young & Friends Charities. Larry Young & Friends Charities partner with the Foundation to help make its annual golf outing a success. Larry Young also serves on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

This year a scholarship through the Larry Young & Friends Charities was given to Sofia Lenkaitis. Sofia is a senior holding an above-4-point GPA at Rochelle Township High School. Sofia will be pursuing a degree in Nursing. Sofia wrote about her desire to make a difference in her community and how she discovered a passion for nursing during her volunteer service. Each of Sofia's references commented on the countless volunteer hours she donates to numerous community events.

To learn more about scholarships opportunities visit the news and events section at www.villageofprogress.org.



Pictured above: Payton Barger, Stillman Valley High School Senior with Brion Brooks, Village of Progress Executive Director receiving a check for \$1,000 from the Village of Progress Foundation in honor of the Pete and Wanda Cacciatore Family.



Pictured above: Sofia Lenkaitis, Rochelle Township High School Senior with Brion Brooks, Village of Progress Executive Director receiving a check for \$1,000 from the Village of Progress Foundation made possible by Larry Young & Friends Charity.



TōSoc

tour of scenic ogle county



September 25, 2021

HISTORIC SITES
BEAUTIFUL SCENERY
WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS



THE JOHN HERRMANN GOLF PLAY DAY

JULY 12, 2021

The Village is funded in part by
the Ogle County Community
Mental Health (708) Board) .



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