

JQ Jubilee Quarterly



SUMMER 2020

A NEWSLETTER OF JUBILEE ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND

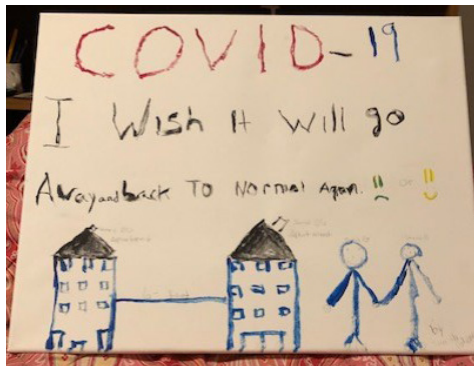
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Lamin Yilla and
David Geske



Michaelis Young



Artwork by Steve Brent



Chalk Art at Jubilee

Executive Director's Message

This summer marks my first anniversary at the Jubilee helm, and even in my wildest imagination I could not have foreseen what 2020 was going to throw our way. Yet as I reflect, I realize that while this pandemic created enormous challenges for Jubilee, my initial vision of further enhancing the already strong bonds of our Jubilee community has never been more fully realized than right now.

Let me explain. While it may seem counter-intuitive to talk about strengthening our sense of community as we all stay home, that's exactly what's happened. Faced with a growing threat to our health and safety, our community leaned into the changes we needed to make practically overnight. People we support committed to staying at home to keep themselves and their housemates safe. Family members gracefully accepted staffing and visitation policy changes, some brought their loved ones to their family home. Staff members learned new safety procedures and changed their schedules to reduce or eliminate outside contacts. We've built new relationships and strengthened existing bonds of friendship with virtual volunteers and online

programs that help keep loneliness at bay.

Strong relationship bonds have always been a Jubilee hallmark. Friendships form that last a lifetime. The virus forced us to make changes to reduce opportunities for the virus to spread, and because housemates and DSPs are together even more, relationships are flourishing more than ever. Elizabeth Billups moved in with Michaelis Young to reduce the chance of getting sick. "Now that we're home all day, I learned we both like to garden and bake, we just never had time to do them together before," says Elizabeth.

Our direct support professionals are truly essential, and they should be supported and rewarded like other health professionals. While this problem predates the pandemic, the current crisis has greatly exposed the fault lines in how our society values their work. With low wages requiring people to work two or three jobs, it is no wonder that the national turnover rate pre-COVID among professionals supporting people with disabilities was 51 percent. At Jubilee, due to a combination of passion, pay, benefits, and culture, it's only 16 percent. With the world turned upside down by



Steve Keener

COVID, we have remained committed to our team, keeping people on payroll even when asked not to work for safety reasons, along with other benefits like hazard pay, extra sick leave, and bonuses. We have been able to afford these important changes in part by securing a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan.

We are now thinking deeply about new models that will enable Jubilee staff to be financially sustained by just one job. If we strategize and take action that leads to positive long-term change, we'll have forged some good during this time that has taken so much from so many.

With gratitude,
Steve Keener
Executive Director

*"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings,
we pay ourselves the highest tribute."
Thurgood Marshall*

ADA 30th Anniversary

This summer marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Even in this challenging time it's important to take a moment to reflect on the difference this landmark legislation has made in the everyday lives of people with disabilities. It was only three decades ago when many people could not imagine the kind of meaningful, independent lives that adults with disabilities could lead. Jubilee was founded on the belief

that people with disabilities could and should be integrated into the community, and we've seen firsthand the difference the ADA has made in the lives of the people we support. While there is much more work to be done, we celebrate the achievements of the disability community on this important anniversary.



Charlie's Legacy to His Brother

Reflection by Eric A. Swenson, recent graduate of Georgetown Law School and brother of the late Charlie Swenson who Jubilee supported. His article can be read in full online via *Exceptional Parent Magazine*.

Being integrated in the community meant more than living with our parents for my brother Charlie's whole life. It also meant more than living in a safe place that addressed his every bodily need. Charlie always wanted to know people and make friends. He was disabled but he was curious. He liked being out and about. He liked to go swimming in a local pool where he could walk in waist-deep water. He liked to go to the local library to rent opera DVDs, or to go out for coffee, to see and be seen. When he was finally out on his own, his support staff at Jubilee figured out how to help

him create a small dog-walking business. In other words, **without knowing the law, he wanted to be the embodiment of the Americans with Disabilities Act's Integration Mandate.**

In the bad old days before the ADA, parents of children like my brother used to be told: "You should institutionalize him. It will be better for your other children." I hope that now parents are being told, "Do your best to include your disabled child in your family life and in school and help them live a full life in the community. This may well be wonderful for your other children." People need to be given a chance.

Change takes persistent work. I believe now that the ADA and Olmstead set the table for true belonging for citizens with disabilities, but the work of families

still matters. We have love to give and expectations to set, and there is more work to do as advocates.



Eric and Charlie Swenson



Sarah Glenner



Direct Support Professional
Patrice Komongnan



Debbie Lim, Liz Grimberg and
Sarah McGee



Maryknights deliver masks with Fr. Joseph Calis,
Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

Jubilee Heroes During COVID-19

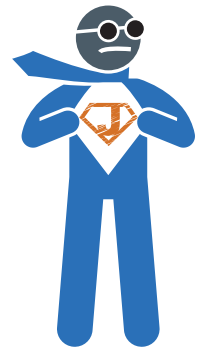
Not all heroes wear capes.

*It's a popular refrain these
days as we lean not on
Superman, but on each other.*

*While many people are able
to stay at home, Jubilee staff
show up at the homes of
people we support every day
to provide essential services.*

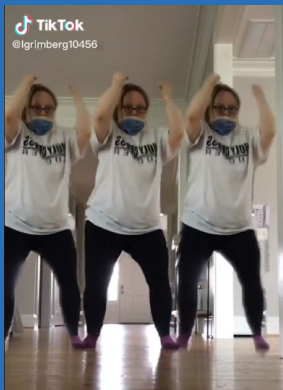
*There is heroism in their
work. There is also heroism in
staying home, in volunteering,
and in lending a helping hand
to family and friends. Let the
following Jubilee heroes be a
beacon of light in a dark time.*

Faced with the decision to continue supporting people with a positive virus diagnosis while also facing their own positive diagnosis, three of our direct support professionals banded together and made the decision to be the sole support in a home so that nobody else would be exposed to the virus. The compassion and bravery of **Adefolami "Ade" Odusanya**, **Saturday Nnam** and **Babafemi "Femi" Majasan** are an inspiration to us all. Thankfully all six men have now recovered.



When the sister of a person Jubilee supports was not allowed into the hospital with him due to COVID-19 visitor restrictions, she knew right where to turn for help – the extended Jubilee family. Rallying to her side, Jubilee moms **Graciela Sanz** and **Margie Billian** reached out directly to elected officials to explain why hospital visitation policy changes were critically needed for the intellectual and developmental disability community. Their call to action built on groundwork laid in April by Jubilee family member **Christina Williams** and **the Disability Law Center**. The state released new guidance allowing family members into the hospital, benefiting not just one Jubilee family but families statewide. We are grateful to our elected officials for taking quick action, and to the family members and professional advocates who never give up working to ensure that the unique needs of our community are met during this crisis.





Liz Grimberg on TikTok



Debbie and Stanley Roth teach ASL



MaryKnights and Knights of Columbus cook and deliver meals



Like so many of us these days, **Stanley Roth** found himself at home with time on his hands to fill. With his in-person volunteer opportunities closed, he found Jubilee's request for Virtual Volunteers on the

Montgomery County Volunteer Center website.

He and his mom **Debbie** brainstormed the idea of a weekly sign language class for Jubilee. So far, they've covered the alphabet, proper names and how to ask questions. "It's been very rewarding," says Stanley. "It's great to see how eager everyone is to learn. It's something we can do to give back right through the computer" added Debbie.

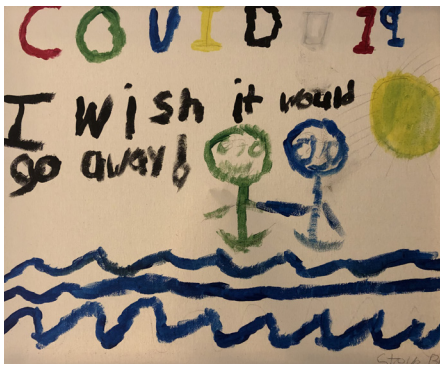


Liz Grimberg is determined to remain cheerful and keep spirits up while she does her part to fight the virus by staying home. Liz uses her social media savvy to make TikTok videos that are both funny and poignant. She dances to pop music, shows off her mask and tells the coronavirus to

go away. Liz also celebrated her 35th birthday during this stay at home time, and her roommates helped make it special by sharing a big birthday dinner complete with strawberry shortcake. During Jubilee Radio she shared pictures of the celebration and all her friends were able to sing happy birthday.



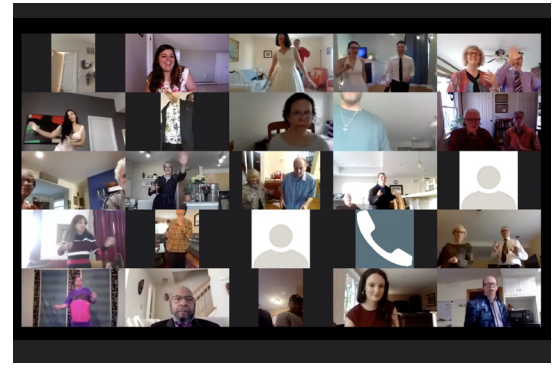
The Maryknights, along with the **local Knights of Columbus, Fr. Rosensteel Council** are longstanding friends of Jubilee. Members have forged strong relationships with the staff and people they support at St. John's House and before COVID planted flowers, cut the grass and cooked dinners. "St. John's House is close to our hearts and our parish," says **Margie Cuff**, incoming president of the Maryknights. During the current crisis, the Maryknights furthered their support of Jubilee with a generous donation to our COVID-19 Relief Fund. They mobilized to provide a meal train to a home where people had the coronavirus, sewed cloth masks which they donated to both St. John's House and another residence where one of their very own Maryknights, **Elaine Carney**, lives.



Artwork by Sarah Glenner



Julia McCune and Bethany Coomes prepare new activity boxes for delivery to keep the people we support engaged at home



Virtual Fashion Dance Party

Jubilee COVID-19 Highlights By the Numbers

- ▶ 17 positive COVID-19 cases (12 staff members, 5 people we support), thankfully all have recovered.
- ▶ Increased hazard pay to 200 percent for staff working with people with a positive virus diagnosis.
- ▶ Trained 100 percent of staff on Jubilee COVID-19 protocols to keep them and the people we support safe.
- ▶ Collected over 1,000 cloth masks so that every staff and person we support has at least four cloth masks, and purchased disposable surgical face masks now in use at all 70+ locations.
- ▶ Stockpiled PPE and enough disinfectant for all 70+ locations supported by Jubilee.
- ▶ Engaged 28 new Virtual Volunteers since April and matched 20 volunteers and people we support based on shared interests. Our new volunteers include medical students, artists and retired teachers.
- ▶ Created eight new virtual programs to provide virtual connection to the people we support every weekday. Programs emphasize fitness, wellness, movement, and social connection.
- ▶ Provided more than 70 people we support with arts and crafts items, writing journals, stuffed animals, and Roku streaming media players purchased with grant funding from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, managed by The Arc Maryland.



In Memoriam

The Jubilee family extends its sincere condolences and mourns with the members of our community whose loved ones have recently passed away.

Al Veerhoff – Beloved father of Will and Jamie Veerhoff.

Bernie Billian – Beloved grandfather of James Billian.

Fatim Sylla – Beloved mother of Hassan Sylla.

COVID-19 Relief Fund

Never before has the need from so many been so great. Nearly overnight, the economic forecast for families, businesses and non-profits changed from rosy to dire. Jubilee faces these same financial stresses, all while knowing how critical our support is for men and women in Montgomery County.

Due to the pandemic, we were forced to cancel our Spring Fashion Show, which would have been our largest annual fundraiser. At the same time, our expenses have increased in ways

we could not have foreseen. Jubilee now pays staff overtime to cover time that the people we support are not at work or day programs, purchases personal protective equipment, disinfectant cleaning supplies, laptops, hot spots and other technology to support our virtual programming and staff who are teleworking, and covers the cost of COVID-19 testing for staff. Our food costs have increased while clients and staff stay at home and groceries and meals are delivered. We've incurred

hotel expenses to isolate clients and staff who've tested negative from those who've tested positive.

If you can donate to our COVID-19 Relief Fund, your gift will help us to keep Jubilee's 140 clients and 260 direct support staff in 70+ homes and apartments safe during this pandemic. Gifts can be sent in with the enclosed envelope, or via our secure website donation page at www.jubileemd.org.



#GivingTuesdayNow

Jubilee's participation in #GivingTuesdayNow global day of giving raised **\$12,000!**

Thank you to our matching gift sponsors

McNamee Hosea Attorneys & Advisors
and **Shaffer Wealth Advisors of**
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Thank you for your support.
We are enormously grateful
to our 272 donors who donated
between October 1, 2019 and
June 1, 2020. Please visit our
website for a full list of donor
names. Thank you, thank you,
thank you!



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Statement on Racial Justice By Steve Keener



It is with heavy hearts that we continue to bear witness to the racial injustice in our country. The pandemic's disproportionate impact on communities of color and the senseless killings of Ahmed Arbery and George Floyd have rightly pushed the long-standing issue of racial disparities to the forefront.

Jubilee has long stood for equality as we work for a better life for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities of all races and religions. We are committed to expanding our efforts to address structural

injustices that affect people that receive services from and work for Jubilee. This includes actively working to increase our services to minority populations here in Montgomery County. It also means talking about how our diverse team works together and looking for ways we can do better. These times remind us that it is not enough to avoid explicit racism – we must actively practice anti-racism. To our black and brown colleagues and people we support, I share your anguish and pain and am committed to being part of the solution.