

NYFAC NEWSLETTER

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NYFAC

LEADERSHIP UPDATES

Hello Friend of NYFAC,

Welcome to the first edition of the NYFAC newsletter.

The last two months have been a challenging time for NYFAC and everyone in New York. Sickness and loss have touched our community, and we continue to support each other in whatever ways we can.

Early on in the pandemic, in a number of days we successfully moved delivery of our on-site based programs to virtual interactive classrooms providing enriching activities in a matter of days. As fun and inspiring as the experience has been, everyone is still very much looking forward to being able to see each other in person again.

Despite the difficult times of the last two months, life at NYFAC has continued with plenty of joy and celebrations.

For the past year, NYFAC has been growing stronger. We have welcomed new participants, nearly doubled our capacity to provide enriching experiences to the people we support and strengthened the quality of our services. This commitment to quality delivered by our talented team, has seen us well prepared to respond to current challenges.

The core strength of NYFAC is our front-line workers. None of the fantastic things that have happened could have occurred without the care, compassion, and dedication shown by our Direct Support Professionals – they are true Health Care Heroes. They do fantastic work every day to support the individuals and families of NYFAC. For this, we give our heartfelt thanks.

Despite the gains of the last eighteen months and our outstanding workforce, the pandemic has brought challenges that are harder to meet. We have invested more in technology and purchased additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like face masks and hand sanitizer. The pandemic has also significantly disrupted the government funding that our sector relies on to deliver quality services.

To respond to these dual cost and funding headwinds, we have established the [Support NYFAC Fund](#). This fund will offset the added costs of PPE, and the technology required to deliver remote services. We recognize that many in our community are in need; however, if you are in a position to contribute even a small amount, it will go a long way to supporting the health, safety, and independence of children and adults with autism and developmental disabilities.

Thank you also for the many messages of support we have received since the crisis began. We are indeed all in this together, and our community keeps us strong. We both look forward to the lifting of the social distancing restrictions and are eager for the day that provides us with opportunities to see you all again.

We wish you and your loved ones health and happiness during these trying times.

Be well.



Cheryl Marsh, Board Chairperson



James Sherry, Chief Executive Officer

WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS

Responding to the unique circumstances of recent times, in March, NYFAC went digital.

A couple of the individuals in the Day Habilitation program have some thoughts about the new interactive virtual classrooms.

Written by Day Habilitation program participants: Anthony D, Brandyn, Daniel, Eddie, Karlvin, Sam, and William.



Every morning when we wake up, we no longer prepare to get onto the morning bus to take us to the NYFAC building, we log into our computers and begin our virtual program where we know the staff and our peers are waiting for us.

In the virtual classrooms, we know many fun activities are waiting for us, which include favorites such as Karaoke, Cooking, Virtual Tours, and the new games we play, such as Money Jeopardy and Coping Skills Bamboozle.

The virtual tours help us to learn more about different places and other countries, places we usually wouldn't be able to visit. We got to travel to Mexico, China, and outer space.

With our new cooking lessons, we get to learn new recipes online and see Ms. Camille, and Ms. Grace cooks us virtual meals that we wish we could try.

There are things we miss about being in the building, such as Ms. Camille's cooking, community walks, and the big celebrations. The best thing about the virtual classroom is getting to see all our friends. We miss everyone and can't wait until we can see everyone in person again.

Every day we get one day closer to going back to the building, and we are looking forward to it!

Surprise Phantom Birthday Parade Lights up Day!



Three of the NYFAC team surprised Mathew, one of our community members, on his birthday with a Jurassic Park and Phantom of The Opera themed birthday 'mini-parade'.

The surprise celebration was a real hit, with themed music, and even dinosaurs turned up to celebrate.

Mathew had been hoping for a parade for his birthday but did not think it would happen this year. But, when he stepped through the front door, he said: "Wow, I got my wish!". Mathew's mom Suzy said that Serena, Natasha & Rosie made Mathew's birthday even more special with their act of kindness. He is still talking about how happy he was to see them in person and that they played his music. He will remember this for many years to come."

Talking about the surprise parade, Natasha said that keeping Mathew and everyone smiling is our main priority.

Rumor has it that it was also one of the dinosaur's birthday that day.

There is still no word on the current whereabouts of the dinosaurs.

Image: Courtesy Serena

SEASONAL FUN

Valentine's Day Celebration

This article was originally written for an earlier version of this newsletter, then Covid happened!!

Written by program participants: Brihany, Daniel, Jake, Matthew and Stephen

On February 14th in the NYFAC Community Room there was a Valentine's Day celebration. The room was decorated with beautiful heart shaped balloons in many colors, red, white and pink. The tables and chairs were also covered in a fancy cloth. The chairs had a red ribbon wrapped around them. A good meal was prepared for us by some of the staff members that we were able to all enjoy together. The special meal was grilled chicken with a cherry sauce, red potatoes and mixed vegetables.



We also enjoyed delicious drinks such as a strawberry smoothie and red berries. Along with the lunch we also had delicious desserts. A favorite out of the desserts were the red velvet cupcakes.

The staff were such good DJs that had everybody dancing. They played all different types of music, hip-hop, pop, country, and house music. A favorite part of the party was when we all danced with staff and our friends to the song "Cotton Eye Joe."

We enjoyed hanging out with all our peers and we had great conversations and jokes that made us laugh. Everyone was excited on that day because everything was fun. Some of us even gave out Valentine's Day cards.

The only thing we disliked about the party was that it had to end. We cannot wait for the next party and we cannot wait to have another one next year!



Support NYFAC Fund

NYFAC needs your help now more than ever!

We rely heavily on government funding to support our individuals, families, and community. With increased Coronavirus related costs and continued uncertainty around government funding for our sector during this crisis, we need your support now more than ever.



Every day our Direct Support Professionals provide critical services to children and adults with autism and developmental disabilities. Your gift will help purchase PPE, enhance our technology capabilities, and so much more.

Every contribution to the fund counts. Thank you for helping to keep NYFAC strong, and helping us get through this tough time.

Support NYFAC Today

NYFAC partners

Partners supporting us!

Our partners, both old and new, have supported us during these tough times. Thank you to all of the government agencies, provider network associations, businesses, and other I/DD agencies, including the **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**, the **InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies**, the **New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation**, **Access: Supports for Living**, the **Women's Club of Forest Hills**, the **NYFAC Foundation**, and **Warren Levi Martial Arts & Fitness**.

On May 24, [Warren Levi Martial Arts & Fitness](#) and the NYFAC Foundation hosted a virtual Family Fitness event contributing to the [Support NYFAC Fund](#). A fun time was had by all!

Shout-out to our NYFAC Heroes

Everyday, NYFAC staff support people in their homes. Our Direct Support Professionals are essential workers and are true heroes.

Thank you, NYFAC Direct Support Professionals!!

Angela, a Direct Support Professional on the front-line and pictured here, said, "I'm so thankful for the face masks and hand-sanitizer. They help me and the families I support keep safe. I feel better about the work we all do every day knowing we are all in this together."

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Ms. Colon, who's loved-one attends the day program, said, "I want to thank all the NYFAC staff for doing a fantastic job with my son. He loves the online platform, and the quality and range of things you do with him on the platform are truly amazing."



Honor our staff with a gift today!

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