

## OUR HEROES OF THE PANDEMIC

The worst of times often bring out the best in people. Heroes abound, from a Kansas farmer sending his extra face mask to the governor of New York, to the principal who made it a point to personally visit every senior in his small school who would miss the tradition of commencement that their siblings, parents, grandparents, and on-and-on, got to experience.

The Home for Little Wanderers has been blessed throughout the COVID pandemic to have witnessed or been on the receiving end of the generosity of so many heroes. Every one of you who have opened your hearts and have offered us your resources are heroes to us. We do not have the space for all the stories of all the heroes we have met over the last three months, but we want to share with you some as a nice reflection of all.

### MAKING FAMILY PERMANENT

Paul and Randy\* have been foster parents for The Home



for many years and for the past five, have parented two brothers, Michael and Eddie\*. Their goal has always been to help as many children as they can. Paul and Randy are patient, loving parents. They embraced the boys, making them part of the family, celebrating their successes, drying their tears after disappointments. Recently, Paul and Randy made the decision to adopt the brothers. "They are part of our family.

"We can never let them go." When they told the boys, Michael's smile was so big it could be seen for miles. Eddie began to cry and hugged his parents. He stated "I have been so worried. I am so happy now that nothing is going to change." With perseverance, reassurance, discipline, and love, the boys became closer to each other and their new family. Paul and Randy understand just what "family" means.

\*All names have been changed to protect the identities of our clients

### GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND



From the very beginning of the social distancing mandate, Patty\*, a clinician in The Home's Safe at Home Boston program, had two concerns for her families: 1)

that they had access to food without putting their own health at risk and 2) that all the kids in the families had access to laptops/technology so they could remain connected to their schools, teachers, therapists and family members. Every Friday is delivery day for Patty. She goes to food pantries to pick up groceries with gift cards from our donors for families who would otherwise put their health at risk due to pre-existing conditions. She drops off the food to the families' homes. Patty has also contacted multiple Boston Public School locations to get laptops and internet connections for families. Patty even had a laptop at her own home that was not being used so she set it up with internet access for a family and dropped it off. Despite all the challenges, Patty is always holding on to the positive moments in the work and sharing that positivity with the rest of the team.

### EATING FRESH



At our Southeast Campus, some of our teachers have been working with the kids to get our garden back into shape. They

are growing tomatoes, zucchini, squash, watermelons, and herbs for our chefs to use in summer meals, as well as catnip to gift to a few of our cat-fanatic teachers, clinicians, and staff (that was the kids' idea!)

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## From the President



Dear friends,

With all of the sad and stressful news these days, we decided to dedicate this issue to our heroes of the pandemic. Our staff and our foster families have stepped up in ways that continue to inspire me personally and keep all of us motivated and engaged. They embody our sense of community every day.

We also want to share with you how we are adapting and changing as we move through this crisis. Crisis forces innovation and there is much we have learned that we can incorporate into our “new normal” moving forward.

The past three months have challenged all of us, but there are some things that we have done here at The Home for which I am particularly proud. We worked with the Baker Administration to take in children in state care who tested positive for COVID-19 so that once they recovered, they could return to the placement they know and where they feel most at home. We redoubled our work with children who are now home from school. Our clinicians are continuously using telehealth to reach students and parents, ensuring that critical services are still provided. The Home’s teachers and staff reached out to students and families to ensure the students’ education did not miss a beat and that support services continued. Students and families have teacher vlogs, virtual field trips, audio books, and many other school-related resources.

But every coin has a flip side. Without the structure and safety of school, children who are already vulnerable to abuse and neglect at home face a greater threat. Many parents who have lost jobs and income due to the COVID-19 pandemic may be feeling overwhelmed and strained. I have no doubt we will see a surge in reports of child abuse once this crisis is over. We are working hard to maintain a workforce ready and able to meet those needs when they come.

Your support is most welcome, greatly needed, and is doing amazing things for vulnerable lives. Whether it has been opening your wallets or making us facemasks, these are all labors of love that touch us deeply and define the goodness that has been so needed. Thank you for supporting this life-changing work. Your continued help is needed now more than ever. I know we will get through this together.



I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Christopher Egan as he finishes up his term as Chairman of The Home’s Board of Directors. Chris not only hired me but helped guide this agency through the transition of executive leaders. His foresight and guidance were always welcome as we steered the agency through difficult financial times and the exciting merger with Wediko Children’s Services. Thank you, Chris, and please help me welcome Tim Miner to the Chair! Tim is no stranger to The Home, having recently returned to the Board. I look forward to continuing to work with him.

On another note altogether, once again, the children in our care inspire us to be better and remind us that our work is not complete if we are not standing up for others. Children of color, particularly black children, are overrepresented in the child welfare system. The pervasive impact of structural and systemic racism that drives our systems in this way must be dismantled. You can read my public statement on the events that have engulfed this country since the brutal murder of George Floyd on [thehome.org](http://thehome.org).

Please enjoy this newsletter, dedicated to our heroes making this world better everyday. We hope you are as inspired by these stories as we are!

Sincerely,

Lesli Suggs  
President and CEO

## OUR FAMILIES WHEN THEY NEED US



Our Diaper Drive, where our corporate partners drop off diapers and wipes for the families we serve, was scheduled to occur early on in the pandemic.

Rather than cancel

or postpone, we went ahead as planned (albeit with proper health safeguards in place that certainly weren't a part of the original plans!). We collected over 7,000 diapers and over 500 packages of wipes from seven companies! Kat Ratey, Director of our Boston/Suffolk Family Resource Center (FRC), and her staff had originally arranged for a pick-up day for the more than 100 families who had signed up to receive the diapers and wipes, but with the stay-at-home policies in place, that was no longer feasible. Instead, the FRC staff made personal, individual drop-offs to 100-plus families!

## THE PERFECT SHOT

Veronica Monterosso, The Home's Graphic Designer, is a gifted photographer. After learning about The Front Steps Project, where families gather on their front porch or steps for a family portrait, she decided to bring it to her town and surrounding towns.



The Front Steps Project was started right here in the Boston area by two photographers who wanted to raise funds for local charities during the pandemic. The idea went viral and has raised over \$1 million globally! Veronica does not charge for this service, instead providing her participating families a link to donate to The Home. As Veronica explained in her hometown newspaper, the Norwood Bulletin, which featured her work, "I wanted our local families to know that their donations really make a difference. The Home's programs and services continue to operate during the pandemic and are providing the critical services our youth and families need during this crisis."

## TRANSITIONING TO HEALING



It is common for foster care placements to happen quickly. It is not common for a placement to happen with zero transition time, during a global pandemic, when

everything is locked down. But that was the scenario for our foster parent, Gerri Gray. When a call went out across the state for an emergency placement for 10-year-old Andrew\*, Gerri wasn't concerned about viruses or lockdowns; she saw it as an opportunity to do what she does best: serve her community and support a child in need. Gerri is the first to acknowledge that taking in a child under these circumstances has not been easy. Her relaxed days as a retiree are now filled with online school lessons, virtual therapy groups, Zoom meetings, and too many phone calls to track. But through it all, Gerri and Andrew are thriving. Her nurturing and well-structured household has provided Andrew with a renewed sense of safety and comfort. Technology has also allowed him to stay connected to many of his previous providers, which has helped ease his transition into his new home. And, as luck would have it, Andrew's younger brother is placed in a foster home just blocks away! So, while some aspects of life for Andrew and Gerri have shrunk down to the size of a computer screen, other aspects have opened even wider towards growth, healing, and hope.

## FROZEN-PRINCESS-FIRE-FIGHTER-DANCE-PARTIES

If someone were to ask Maria\* what she does in her job as a clinician in The Home's Adoption and Intensive Foster Care Program, she could tell them about the treatment plans she writes or



about the foster care reviews she attends or the home study assessments she conducts. But Maria would rather tell you about the Frozen-Princess-Fire-Fighter-Dance-Parties she gets to have each week with a brother and sister who have been in our foster care program almost as long as they have been alive. Through song, dance, (lots of dance!), says Maria) costumes, and Zoom, brother and sister Paulo and Serita\*, along with Maria, have found a way to not only maintain their weekly meetings during this pandemic but to use them as a development opportunity. These moments give them a chance to engage positively with one another and to bond as siblings. It also helps them to see that even during this time of social isolation, we are all still connected. Ultimately, the siblings have a long road ahead of them (and the pandemic has only made that road longer). Court dates, adoption recruitment, more treatment plans and more foster care reviews still await them. But so too do more Frozen-Princess-Fire-Fighter-Dance-Parties!

Heroes indeed abound ■

# COVID-19 RESOURCE



The Home for Little Wanderers  
Strong families. Strong life.

## CORONAVIRUS NEWS AND UPDATES

The Home for Little Wanderers is deeply appreciative of your interest in supporting our children and families as we weather this unprecedented situation together. The health of our youth, families, and workforce is of the utmost importance and we are taking every precaution in accordance with recommendations from public health officials.

**Learn more:**  
[thehome.org/COVID19\\_information](http://thehome.org/COVID19_information)



**Donate to COVID-19 Relief Fund:**  
[thehome.org/covid19relief](http://thehome.org/covid19relief)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### October 19: Generous Masters for COVID Relief

This year's tournament will be a celebration of the remarkable work The Home has done in supporting thousands of at-risk kids and families all year long and especially during the pandemic.



**Learn more:**  
[thehome.org/generousmasters](http://thehome.org/generousmasters)

# VV&V



We added a V! Voices & Visions went *Virtual* this year! On June 4 at 7:00 PM, our annual fundraising event kicked-off online instead of in the ballroom, but there was still a lot of familiarity to it. Once again, the indefatigable Shayna Seymour, Co-host of WCVB-TV's award-winning magazine show Chronicle, emceed the evening. Shayna and WCVB reached out to us as soon as it became clear we were not going to be able to have our traditional V&V to let us know they were available for whatever we planned instead.

We were honored that Boston Mayor Marty Walsh also helped welcome our guests. And, of course, nothing screams "Bahston" like our homegrown funnyman, comedian Lenny Clarke!

In the end, because of supporters like you, whether through your original commitments to V&V or your additional support online, we were able to raise over \$1 Million. Thank you! If you missed this year's virtual event, you can still check it out at [thehome.org/vv20](http://thehome.org/vv20). We hope to be able to see you in person next year.

A note from all of us at The Home for Little Wanderers...

We share in the grief and pain this nation is enduring as a result of the senseless death of George Floyd and too many others.

# Hate Has No Home Here.



**The Home For Little Wanderers**

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