

## Persevering Through A Pandemic

It seems that our entire globe, and everyone on it, has been affected by the Coronavirus. We started hearing about the virus only late last year, and it seemed very far away at that time. But it did not take long for it to start having an impact on our own community, and on every one of our lives.

We are incredibly thankful that, as of this writing, not a single resident or staff has tested positive for COVID-19. We continue to pray for the best, while being prepared for the more difficult.

COVID-19 has posed many challenges for our residents, for our staff, and for GHH as an organization. Sometimes it feels like our lives have been put on hold, with “safety” and “restrictions” dominating our thinking. And there’s no denying that the staff and Board have spent endless hours wrestling with how to keep our residents safe, while also promoting positive activities and personal growth.

*Challenges.* Although things are opening up recently, for several months our residents were not able to see their families or friends in person, their day programming was cancelled, their jobs were put on hold,

and they could no longer attend in-person church services. Staff have had to wear masks to protect the residents, creating a communication barrier for many who rely on facial expressions during conversation. The limitations on hugs and other physical contact has been difficult for some to understand and for many to cope with. Disruption of routines, and uncertainty about the future, have left most residents uneasy, and even distraught at times.

*Unanticipated positives.* However, while our residents’ lives have been quite *different* since March, there are many noteworthy positives. The residents in each of our homes have had more opportunities to bond with one another through playing games, watching movies, cooking and baking, sitting around campfires, volunteering, and going on day trips. Since many of the residents could no longer go to their day programming and/or jobs, they also had the chance to slow down and have more time to relax. Our residents have felt a great deal of love and support from our community during quarantine. They have been on the receiving end of ice cream bars and other goodies, games, sports equipment, and even a community parade!



*And our staff!* We already knew we had great Home Managers and Resident Living Assistants, but it’s incredible how they have risen to the challenge with their energy, their creativity, and their consistent encouragement to all our residents.

The pandemic is by no means over. But GHH is not just surviving—it is *persevering* and *thriving!*



## Testimonials

Home Manager Brandon Folkert shared a few words about what things have been like at the Sagerose Home:

*“The biggest challenge for our residents during this time has been the unknown. When can I go back to my job or day program? When can I see my parents and/or siblings again? When can I return to my church? It is a challenge to try and answer a question that I don’t have an answer to! Although we are now able to begin carefully re-engaging physically into our community, we are still a long way from the “normal” that we enjoyed pre-coronavirus. I think our task over the next few months will be to find a ‘new way of living,’ and trusting that God will help us to find that.”*

Kylie French, a resident at the High Meadow Women’s Home, also shared what things have been like for her:

*“Because of COVID, I couldn’t go to school for the rest of the school year, or go to my camp like every summer. I miss my camp, and friends that I see there each year. I also miss going to Compassionate Heart, and I hope to return to school in the Fall. One nice thing has been that I have more time with Amanda and my friends at home. I have felt happy because of fun things like Perler beads, going to the beach, and playing outside.”*



# When the World Stands Still



*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. ~ Psalm 46: 1-2a*

Just as our last GHH newsletter was hitting mailboxes, much of the United States—and the world—was shutting down due to the global pandemic called COVID-19. What initially appeared to be a devastating but short-lived crisis has turned into a situation with very long-term implications. In some ways, the world seems to be standing still. “Normal” will never be quite the same.

I believe I have heard the word “unprecedented” more times in the last 4 months than in the previous 40 years. These truly are unusual times in which we are living. They can be marked by loneliness, anxiety, fear, and loss. We might sometimes question where God is through all of this.

We certainly are not the first to experience incredible hardship, from events and injustices that often are far outside of our control. The author of Psalm 46 knew about trouble. Generations past have dealt with challenges that may appear unbearable to us. Many people, some of whom we know, face threats to their health, safety, and community every day.

In times like this, we might also experience new-found faith and strength. Relationships with God and with others might change in positive ways. We focus more on what is truly important.

The Board and staff of GHH certainly have been talking more about what is most important. As we have considered how to carefully and gradually re-open GHH, we have agreed on what our guiding principles and values are.

Number one is protecting the lives of those who are *most vulnerable*, which includes our residents. We also recognize the need for relationships and community in order to have an *abundant life*. We must balance *individual rights with responsibility to others*. We respect the law. Our policies are informed by data-driven advice of the medical/scientific community. And we depend on everyone who is part of the GHH family to stay *informed and to minimize risks* for all.

In Psalm 46 and in hundreds of other scripture passages, we are encouraged with the words “don’t be afraid.” God is with us. Please continue to pray for His protection, and for His wisdom as we look to the future, whatever it may hold.

We also ask for your continued financial support. We had to cancel one of our three major fundraisers, and giving overall is down for the year—understandable, with so much uncertainty. Now with four homes open, our need is greater than ever. If you are blessed to be able to give at this time, please keep GHH in mind!

***Stay safe, healthy, and hopeful!***



Art Opperwall,  
Executive Director

## Legacy Gifts

We are so grateful to those who have let us know that they have named GHH in their will. It is very encouraging, and allows the Board to think and act more confidently and creatively!

Have you considered making a gift to GHH that would also have tax benefits?

### Some examples include:

- ✓ Appreciated stock or marketable securities
- ✓ Real estate
- ✓ Business interests
- ✓ IRA Charitable Rollover (age 70.5+)
- ✓ Gifts from a will or trust

If you would like to consider or learn more about these options, please contact Art Opperwall at [aopperwall@georgetownharmonyhomes.org](mailto:aopperwall@georgetownharmonyhomes.org) or 616-226-3473.

## 10th Avenue Women's Home Update

Have you ever had someone talk to you about being retired and having long weekends? That is what comes to mind when I think about the last few months. I feel like it has been three months of Saturdays. I know that the ladies of 10th Ave have spent a lot of lunch hours out on the back deck. The ladies have been active on the exercise machines in the basement, playing soccer outside, and playing games with each other. For a while, we didn't have contact at all with family members other than phone calls back and forth. The ladies were sad to hear some night camps were closed, so I drove my pop up over so that those that wanted to could have a night of fun in it. They enjoyed sleeping and being active in putting it up and taking it down. The last few weeks we have had a bit more contact with others for which we are thankful. We are ready to get back into a week of doing things outside of the house. We are also ready to do things with others rather than just the ladies we live with.

-Cara Kuiper, 10th Ave Women's Home Manager



## Sagerose Men's Home Update

The residents at the Sagerose Men's Home have enjoyed some time off during our "stay at home" time! They have enjoyed going for walks around the neighborhood, practicing softball in the yard, and especially the backyard pool party we had on Memorial Day, complete with water games. Some of the guys have also enjoyed being able to stay up later at night since they don't have to set an alarm in the morning! Recently, we have begun sorting through the returnables we collected for the pop can drive, which is going to keep us busy for a while. The residents here do look forward to returning to their community jobs and day programs, and for life to look a bit more normal. Although our world has been turned upside down due to Covid-19, we do think in a few years we will look back at this time and have some fond memories of enjoying our lives at a different pace and all the fun we had during this time together.

-Brandon Folkert, Sagerose Men's Home Manager



## High Meadow Women's Home Update

During our time of quarantine at High Meadow Women, we enjoyed many trips to the beach, walks, car rides to see teddy bears in people's windows, and doing things around the house together. We also took the time to help out our regular volunteer locations such as Revive and Ripple Effect by sorting bags and going through games in the comfort of the home. I have enjoyed seeing the ladies' relationships grow together, and have enjoyed the group activities we enjoyed during our time home.

The ladies also enjoyed dropping off cookies and cards to their parents. We have our garden planted again this year, and look forward to enjoying the fresh fruits and vegetables soon. We are very thankful for all those in our community that sent letters, dropped off gifts, participated in our Walk-a thon and celebrated our one-year anniversary with us during our time at home.

-Amanda Reitsma, High Meadow Women's Home Manager



## High Meadow Men's Home Update

The High Meadow Men's home has stayed busy with volunteering with Meals at Home and Hand2hand, playing basketball, playing games together, playing pool, daily cleaning, working on puzzles, 'Zoom' meetings, watching movies, and taking day trips. Our favorite day trip was to Holland. Since Tulip Time was cancelled, we created our own Tulip Time. We enjoyed eating lunch together and looking at the tulips. We also have enjoyed a social distance ice cream party with the other 3 homes. We enjoyed seeing everyone and hearing what everyone was thankful for. We have enjoyed the extra time to bond with each other during this pandemic!

-Alicia Overlander, High Meadow Men's Home Manager





For regular updates, please like and follow us on Facebook & Instagram!

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Georgetown Harmony Homes is a 501(c)(3) organization.



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## Do we have your email?

We would love to stay in touch! We send out email newsletters monthly and would like you to be able to receive all our exciting updates. If you are not already receiving emails from us but would like to, please email [hello@georgetownharmonyhomes.org](mailto:hello@georgetownharmonyhomes.org) with your name and email address.

## Why We Do What We Do

"GHH has become a home for my son that is far above and beyond what I had ever imagined. I love GHH because of God's love shown to the guys through the home managers, the staff, the board members, the director, and so many others who serve GHH. Without this wonderful care and love, it wouldn't be as awesome as it is." - Jean Buist, parent of a resident

## Upcoming Events

**Charity Golf Classic**  
Friday, August 21

Swing into summer by joining us on Friday, August 21 for our annual Charity Golf Classic! Whether you're a golfer or someone who could be a sponsor, we need you! Our golf outing will include 18 holes of challenging golf, outstanding food, and hours of fun. Sponsors will receive recognition on the day of the event and on social media.

For more information or to sign up, visit:

<https://www.georgetownharmonyhomes.org/event-registration/golf-outing/>

**Save The Date: Bowl-A-Thon- Saturday, November 7**

More details in our next newsletter.

