

November 2021

Dear Friends of Benhaven,

I am inviting our many friends to consider making a financial contribution to Benhaven, and want to thank those of you who have already done so earlier this year. As COVID continues to impact our country, state, place of work and families, we have continued to be challenged to sustain the quality of our services. I sincerely hope this finds you and your family members healthy and safe.

We have incredible staff. They have proven this year to not only be dedicated to the individuals we serve but to be extremely flexible and resilient. Our ability to keep individuals safe and healthy is the result of the staff's talents, efforts and commitment to their work. We like other agencies have experienced staffing shortages. That has made the efforts of our staff even more meaningful and appreciated.

We are fortunate to have a variety of funding sources, including state agencies and local school systems. In the past few years we have expanded our programs. Children Behavior Services supports children and adolescents with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) techniques to increase their independence and ability to be part of their home communities. Our Career and Transition Services, has amazingly found more employment opportunities for the young adults they serve during this past year. We are now certified by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services/Aging and Disability Services to provide customized employment support. BRS is referring individuals for whom we can conduct very individualized assessments and secure jobs tailored for their unique skills and interests. This will allow us to help more young adults with ASD who do not have an intellectual disability and therefore are not eligible for state funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities, to find and maintain work. Currently we support individuals to work in manufacturing; food and beverage; computer and technology; retail; office administration; and customer service.

We like all other human services agencies, have been impacted by the pandemic. Our staff have been incredible throughout all of this. They have taken responsibility to keep themselves safe and therefore helped us maintain the health of the individuals we serve. We have staff who continued to work in individuals' homes when our staff were providing an essential service, necessary to support them. Many of our adults in Individual and Family Support (IFS) live on their own and greatly rely on our staff to be independent.

And of course our residences all remained opened and fully operational. We have one home that is no longer accessible for the two individuals who live there. We have the support of the state agencies to build a new accessible home. These two residents will be much safer there, and we will be able to design the home to include a third person who will have his own apartment within the home. Our Facilities staff are overseeing this construction. It will be a beautiful home in Northford that will open next summer.

The School and The Academy were happy to see their students return to in-person learning. Slowly each program has returned to community engagement as part of the learning opportunities they offer. The School has added a beautiful loop around the new parking lot for students to walk, bike and enjoy exercise. The Academy is expanding its number of students. The Academy has expanded its number of students. In addition to classroom special education teachers, all academic middle school and high school level classes are being taught by a content-certified teacher. Additionally, increasing social opportunities at the Academy is addressed through clubs such



as Dungeon & Dragons, Live Action Role Play, wood working (building a catapult). One classroom is devoted to a new teaching technique that relies much more on visual communication and teaching to help students advance their skills. We believe this teaching method is of interest to more families and their children. We are leasing a space adjacent to the Academy to support the space needs of the current services and accept more students who would benefit from the program.

We are so pleased to have kept all programs operational and appreciate the public funding we receive. However, our program participants, students, and residents have needs that are not fully met by public funding. We serve young adults with ASD who do not have funding for their postsecondary support after school graduation. We have families in need of more in-home support than they currently receive. We need to continue to maintain and renovate our residences and program locations. We can better serve individuals by using technology and have used donation money to purchase Smart Boards, Chrome Books, and iPads.

We started an Annual Benhaven Walk as our primary fundraiser in 2018. After cancelling the Walk planned for 2020 we felt it safe enough to hold a Walk this past September. We raised over \$60,000 to use to benefit our programs and thank all of you who sponsored the Walk or donated to a Walk Team. Donations remain important to the quality of our programs. Our loyal donors play an important role in helping Benhaven maintain high standards and assist those individuals and families with unmet needs. We are grateful for the generosity of our donors in the past, and we try to be worthy of your continued support. We are asking you to consider donating to Benhaven to further our ability to live our mission and improve the lives of children and adults with ASD.

Thank you for considering my request. If you are interested please send a check to the address below or use the Benhaven website to donate online. Here is our link: <https://www.benhaven.org/Donations/>

I hope each of you will find joy this holiday season and once again be able to spend time with family and friends. May the New Year bring you good health, prosperity and the gift of time.

I remain very grateful for your support of Benhaven and our mission.

Sincerely,

Kathryn du Pree

Kathryn du Pree
Executive Director, Benhaven

Please send donations to:

**Laurine Tylec
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