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Like everyone else, once the pandemic arrived, we had to adapt our 2020 plans. Our in-person Family Fun events are on pause until we can safely offer them again. In the meantime, our advocates are supporting families in a few ways:

- Going virtual with events – In May & June, we will be offering drum circles, a dance party, a magic show, and virtual bingo.
- Emailing or calling families – With the shutdown of schools, families are often wondering what schools are responsible for providing and how to best support their children in continuing to learn. Many schools are finding creative ways to deliver education, but it is still challenging for all involved.
- Connecting with care coordinators – Particularly while schools are closed, care coordinators play an even bigger role in helping families learn about options. Our staff are staying in touch so that care coordinators know we are there to assist.

These connections would not have happened without the creativity and willingness of our staff to take a fresh approach. Thank you to our advocacy team!

Starbridge’s Family Fun events are provided through a grant from OPWDD’S Western NY DDRO.
Dear friends,

Thank you for being a valued member of the Starbridge family.

The successes of Starbridge and the people we serve are made possible, in part, by the gifts we receive from supporters like you. We thank you for your support and hope you enjoy reading about the impact you have in the lives of many!

Thank YOU

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Thank you for working with people with disabilities for 24 years, but my real start began as a young girl when my family moved next door to a young man who was a disabled veteran. My neighbor quickly became close friends with us. Richie was a quadriplegic and had enough hand movement to operate an electric wheelchair. He required total support and yet he successfully lived alone in his own home. In the 80s services weren’t what they are today and there weren’t options to push community supports into the home. Richie’s family played that role in supporting him with living successfully in his home for many years.

I remember seeing Richie’s friends come visit. One friend pulled up in his large van, got out and, to my amazement, he was also in a wheelchair. As an 11-year-old, I was in awe and I asked, “How did you drive that van?” Richie’s friend showed me the inside of his adapted van that allowed him to independently drive and my world view of people living with disabilities changed. I realized people can do anything with the right support, the right adaptive equipment and the right access.

It was a normal day to sit on my neighbor’s porch with all of our friends and families trying to determine how we could get an automatic door opener attached to his house like at grocery stores (again this was a dream). When Anna wanted to add a day to her schedule to move from an internship to a job – situations many interns find challenging – Samantha worked with her on how to proceed. The YMCA was one of those choices. With Samantha’s assistance, Anna prepared for an interview and then met the staff to discuss possible internships. The YMCA offered Anna an internship as a front desk greeter.

During Anna’s internship, Samantha met with her regularly, providing coaching if needed. When Anna wanted to add a day to her schedule and to move from an internship to a job – situations many interns find challenging – Samantha worked with her on how to proceed.

The YMCA was so pleased with Anna’s work as an intern, she was offered a permanent position!

Anna says, “My mom didn’t think I could get the job, but I sure proved her wrong. They love me!”

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CBCS • Center Information Services
Charlotte Furnitures & Appliace
Amy and Nancy Mihalakas
Matthew L. Perdue and David Chappius
Edge Pavement Marking, Inc.
Paul Shew and Paula Silvestrone • Kristyna Staub

From Internship to Employment

Anna is a determined young woman who was looking for a rewarding job helping people. She had experience working for the Rochester Childfirst Network and volunteering at Highland Hospital.

Anna’s ACCES-VR counselor referred her to Starbridge for our internship program. At the first meeting, Anna and her Starbridge counselor, Samantha Brown, created a list of five potential employers.

The Pittsford YMCA was one of those choices. With Samantha’s assistance, Anna prepared for an interview and then met the staff to discuss possible internships. The YMCA offered Anna an internship as a front desk greeter.

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Thank you, Anna!

Nikisha Ridgeway, Chief Operating Officer

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You can make a gift through:

 Online at starbridgeinc.org/donate
 Your company’s United Way campaign.

Your donation today, no matter the size, will go a long way in helping us maintain a safe working environment for our frontline staff and allow us to continue supporting people who have disabilities. You can make a gift through:

• The enclosed donation envelope

• Online at starbridgeinc.org/donate

• Your company’s United Way campaign. Our donor designation code is 1406.

We are all going through an extraordinarily stressful time but we are in this together. Thank you for being a valued member of the Starbridge family.

Kind regards,

Colin Garwood

Message from the President/CEO

Dear friends,

Much has changed since the last time we wrote to you. First and foremost, our hearts go out to those of you impacted by this virus directly or indirectly. We wish all a full and speedy recovery.

Secondly, we are inspired by all the dedicated health care workers and essential employees at the front lines caring for people. We are particularly thankful for and proud of all the Starbridge staff in our residential and community living services and their commitment to supporting people with disabilities to stay safe and healthy.

Our priority is to secure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure the health and safety of our staff and individuals. This has been challenging with the shortages experienced around the country – especially considering this virus is not going away soon. We are truly grateful for the donations of masks, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and paper products.

With most of our staff working remotely, we have shifted all in-person workshops planned through the spring and summer to online events. You can visit our event calendar online to view upcoming webinars or look at our webinar recordings page to view recent topics.

Our staff continue to provide guidance, resources, and supports. If you are looking to connect with us, please phone or email the appropriate staff member or use our Contact Us form on our website at www.StarbridgeInc.org.

Our Among the Stars Gala has been postponed until Friday, October 30, 2020. All ticket purchases and contributions will be honored in October.

This is an unexpected, challenging time for us all. We are grateful for your partnership, trust, and continued support.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Starbridge family.

Nikisha!”

Nikisha Ridgeway, M.A., joined Starbridge as our Chief Operating Officer in December 2019. In her role, Nikisha is responsible for Starbridge’s overall operations and service delivery.

Nikisha brings a wealth of knowledge and experience delivering high-quality services to people with disabilities across Western New York. She has a talent for embracing change, learning new service options, and successfully implementing new initiatives.

Welcome, Nikisha!

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Thank you to everyone who donated masks, cleaning supplies, and other essential items so that we can keep our DSPs, Nurses, and residents SAFE & HEALTHY!

- Monroe County Department of Health
- Sew Creative
- United Way of Greater Rochester
- Germaine Knapp
- Marilyn Kraitsik
- Deborah Nellenbach
- Lisa Stephenson
- Bonnie Watson