

HOLY LIGHT

SUMMER 2020

A NEWSLETTER OF HOLY FAMILY INSTITUTE

FROM THE DESK OF

Sister Linda

Dear Friends,

When we began to write this newsletter, we were in the midst of remaking our lives and our services to battle the Coronavirus Pandemic. When Pennsylvania shut down, the entire Holy Family Institute (HFI) staff sprang into action. Counselors quickly learned to conduct telehealth sessions, teachers to cyber educate, administrators to hold Zoom meetings. We were all finding ways to deal with the social isolation caused by the need for physical distancing. I didn't think there was anything more pressing to deal with. And then came the death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers on the heels of the deaths of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

Is witnessing this brutal violence against People of Color what it takes to wake up our collective conscience?

When the Black Lives Matter movement began, I was somewhat uncomfortable with the wording. I thought, don't all lives matter? Now I realize that this reaction is part of what is meant by implicit bias. Saying that black lives matter doesn't mean that other lives do not. All lives matter, but Black lives are in peril. Over 85% of the children educated at Nazareth Prep, our STEM-focused private high school, are Black. The majority of the clients served by our social services are People of Color. It's imperative that my organization is part of the solution to end racism in all of its forms, and as I think about how to contribute to that effort in a meaningful way, I'm inspired by the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus was always, always reaching out to the disadvantaged, the poor, the outcast. He never let the righteous in His day get in the way of His speaking truth to power. Jesus teaches us that Black lives don't just Matter, Black lives are Sacred.

I will do my best to help those served by us directly, and the greater Pittsburgh community, heal, and will continue to lead Holy Family Institute with justice and equity in support of the Black community.

Yours in Faith and Service,



Sister Linda Yankoski, CSFN
President, Holy Family Institute



9th grade theology student
Amir Robinson
would like to share this
prayer that he wrote
with all of you:

Dear Lord, I hope you continue to bless us

Some of us aren't so fortunate
But continue to help us through
these tough times

I come to you only when I need
But I know you are always with me
Keep my family safe, please
Keep my mother and grandmother
safe for sure.

I also pray for all of those who
lost a family member

I keep those in my prayers
I also keep the Nazareth Prep
Community in my prayers

I hope none of my friends
contract the virus

I also pray for their families

I pray for my teachers, especially Mrs. Y.
Because she's pregnant and that
would be a major loss

This virus is just a test you have given us
Please keep us safe, Lord.

Amen.

Helps Families at Home

Telehealth Triumphs

Throughout Holy Family Institute's 120-year history, we have always adapted to meet a variety of challenges and obstacles in order to best serve our clients and community. So when it came to the COVID-19 crisis, we knew we had no choice but to adapt.

Due to the state-mandated lockdown, many of our in-home programs—including mental health counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, and prevention services for children at risk of neglect and abuse—were unable to maintain traditional levels of service. And unfortunately, many aspects of this crisis intensified the mental health and substance use challenges that our clients face.

When the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services issued a memorandum promoting telehealth for quarantined and isolated patients, we immediately launched a virtual counseling option for all medically-necessary behavioral health services. Counselors began connecting with clients virtually through video chats, phone calls, and online platforms. They continue to remain accessible around-the-clock and to make appointments that accommodate the schedules of clients and their families.

"The continued support through telehealth ... has enabled families who are actively working toward their goals to continue to utilize the support and resources ... We have not skipped a beat for those families that are actively working on their goals. We are thankful that telehealth has allowed us to safely continue to support and actively help our families and continue to do the work that is dear to our hearts."

~ Cynthia Teaderman, HFI Counselor

"Telehealth allows us to offer services to individuals regardless of the availability of a community-based clinician in their specific neighborhood."

~ Toni Baird, HFI Counselor

"I am grateful to have services by telehealth since I am immune-compromised and cannot have anyone in the home."

~ Anonymous Client

"I appreciate that I can still talk to someone even though I can't leave my house for appointments."

~ Anonymous Client



Praise for Student Assistant Program (SAP)

"Liz [Lepore] is trying to help my son and I. She has been a tremendous help. She's been there for me during the rough times I'm going through with my son. She has sat on the phone letting me vent and cry, has been trying very hard to help me find a way to help my son. I really appreciate all she has done and wanted you to know what an awesome woman you have working for you. She has gone above and beyond to help us. Her support has meant a lot to me right now. We have no family here and my son's own therapist and psychiatrist have been absolutely no help. Liz stepped up and has listened and tried to help when they won't. She's been there for us so much. She even made sure I had brownie mix to make brownies (his favorite) and some food for my son's birthday. I can't thank her enough for all she's done for us."

~ Anonymous SAP Parent

Liz Lepore was one of the key players in starting the Student Assistance Program (SAP) three years ago. The program is designed to help remove barriers for students who are struggling in school, and connect them with the resources they need in order to thrive. Holy Family Institute now serves nine school districts in this capacity.

Stories that Inspire

With the proper safety measures in place, many Holy Family Institute counselors continued to make home visits to their patients—and, in many cases, what they saw was nothing short of inspirational. Here are their stories:

"I have a case with a young lady who resides at Ward Home, which is an independent living facility. She is 19 years old, and she has had her rights terminated to her son. She has a post-adoptive agreement ... but due to the pandemic, she has not seen her son. Her mother recently passed away, and there was no funeral due to the pandemic. In spite of this, she is working at Wendy's... and has been cooperative with in-home services ... [including completing an] intake for outpatient therapy at Holy Family. She is now signed up for driving classes and school through her educational advocate and her independent living workers. She is young, but continues to thrive ... This young lady amazes me because she has maintained, never complained and remains positive throughout her life."

~ Charise Ainsworth, Holy Family In-Home Services



Journey of Hope Celebrates Mexican Children's Day



Holy Family Institute's Journey of Hope (JOH) program provides a safe, loving, and nurturing environment for unaccompanied minors waiting for sponsorship in the United States. JOH children enjoyed snacks, crafts and festivities on Thurs., April 30, to celebrate

El Día Del Niño (Mexican Children's Day), a Mexican holiday celebrating the youngest members of society.

"I have a two-parent family I have been working with since February. Mom went on a short vacation this week, so I told her, 'I will not bother you with daily check-ins while you are on vacation,' and that I would talk to her when she gets back. Her reply: 'It's not a bother. It shows that you care.' I had already explained that when COVID-19 restrictions started, CYF [Office of Children, Youth and Families] asked us to do these daily check-ins, but she still took it as one more sign that I care what is going on with their family."

~ Anonymous In-Home Services Worker

"This is new to me. I didn't want to cooperate in the beginning, but I realized it can only help me instead of hurt me. [Holy Family Institute] has given me a lot of resources for me and my children—help for mental health, behavioral issues. Now they're looking to see if they can find me somewhere else to live ... I've been working with them since the end of February. I love them. They're great."

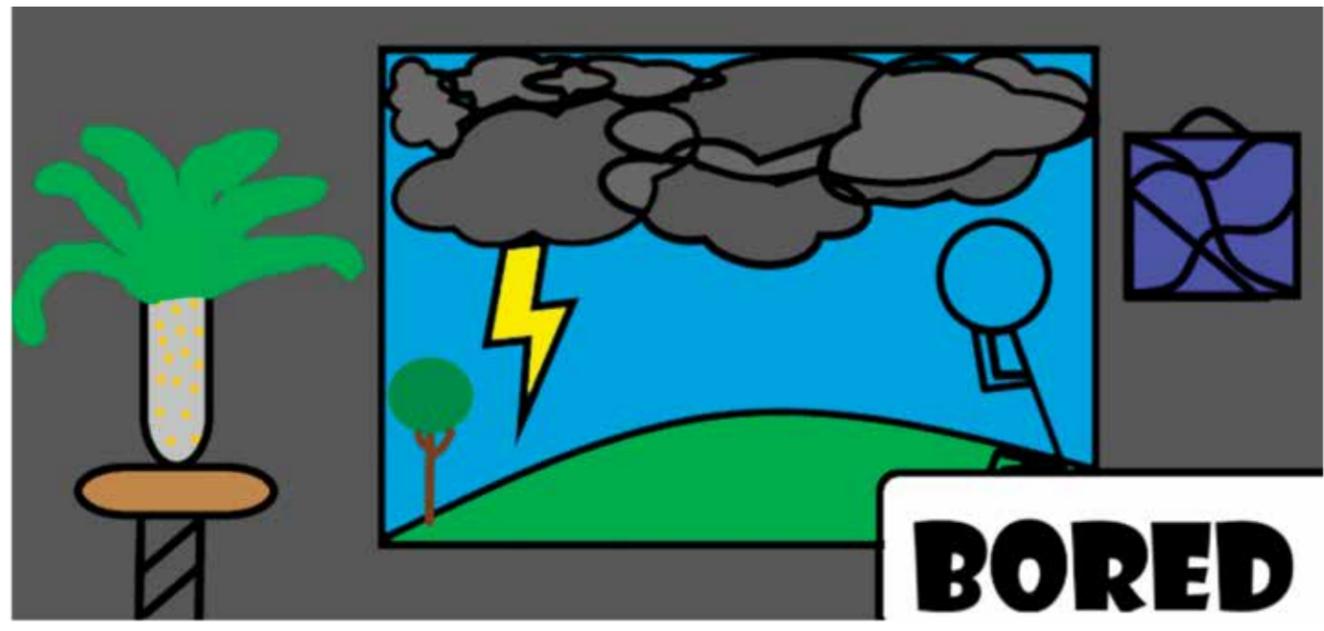
~ Anonymous Home-Based Family Recovery Client

Transition to Online Learning

Without missing any days of school, Nazareth Prep students transitioned seamlessly into a virtual learning environment, starting on March 16, 2020—the first day of Pennsylvania school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the hands-on nature of Nazareth Prep's curriculum, it is a testament

to the creative work of the school's teachers, parents and administrators that the students were able to adopt a virtual learning environment so quickly.

A student art project and a poem completed during the COVID-19 pandemic are featured below.



"Bored" by Gimbo Stunkel, digital, 1416px x 672px, 2020



PANDEMIC JOURNAL

Rabraya Logan

Title: "While I'm Young"

Date: 4/22/2020

While I'm young.
I have lied.
And did my wrongs and more.
But I've learned from my mistakes.
Now I'm no longer sore.
I walk through a narrow path.
As I witness butterflies and grass.
I realize I have moved on from earth.
I'm in heaven.
With 5 other innocent kids I saw on the news.
Or maybe even 7.
I feel so free.
Loved.
Happy.
Renewed.
All while I'm young.



9TH GRADE

Fred Rogers Assignment: How can you be a helper?

"One example of a helper in my life is my mom, she goes to the store sometimes and buys the supplies we need during quarantine. She also goes to work every morning and screens patients."
~ Teddy Evans, Nazareth Prep student

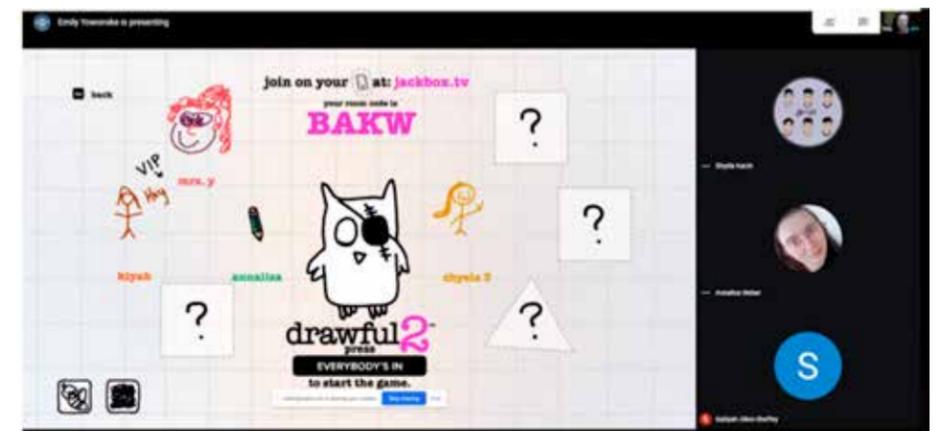
"What I can do to help is stay in the house as much as possible, so I won't catch the virus and spread it."
~ Taylor Dotson, Nazareth Prep student

"I want the world to go back to normal, and I want this disease to die ... No I can't be a helper. I am staying home and in the house because I don't want to get it, nor do I want to be around someone that has it."
~ Laila Graham, Nazareth Prep student

Staying On-Mission with Creative Assignments

Teachers instituted unique online learning projects that emphasized Nazareth Prep's focus on career readiness. For example, students completed an extensive cross-subject cost of living analysis project where they had to pick theoretical careers and budget out their earnings, figuring in expenses, retirement savings and unforeseen life events. In another project, students wrote letters of recommendation for their internship mentors to define the qualities that make good leaders.

But not all projects have followed the standard curriculum. Many teachers created assignments asking students to express their feelings and document their experiences throughout this global pandemic—arguably one of the most significant historical events in the students' lifetimes.



We played Drawful, a virtual game that you can participate in from multiple locations. It's like Balderdash meets Pictionary. The red/orange drawing's real caption was "Caveman News" but the caption that stumped the most people was "Jesus is alive!"



Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

On Fri., June 5, 2020, Nazareth Prep's 2020 class celebrated their graduation after an unique year that included remote learning for the final semester due to COVID-19. The graduates celebrated with a commencement speech by Dr. Quintin B. Bullock, President of Community College of Allegheny County, a valedictory address by Dylan Stone, and photos with friends and family.



Keeping Student Interns Interested and Engaged

Many Internship Partners have remained in touch with their students, in spite of the shutdowns. Some notable examples:

- The Carnegie Science Center engaged their Nazareth Prep senior intern to write donor letters. They also provided resources so she could continue her research on monarch butterflies.
- Duquesne Light Electric Distribution Technology is keeping in touch with two other Nazareth Prep seniors who are on track to become Duquesne Light employees. They supported the students as they began their CCAC classes on Monday, April 13, which will help them prepare for an entrance exam.

- Carlow University has allowed nine Nazareth Prep Early Childhood Education interns to continue their certifications online, using the Chromebooks which every Nazareth Prep student receives when they enroll at the school.
- Gateway Health Corporate couldn't offer a remote internship to their intern, so instead they worked to secure his resume and work permit so that they can hire the student as soon as the pandemic restrictions allow.



It's a Small World Meet Matthew Lawless: MSA Mentor

Matthew Lawless, MSA Accounts Payable Analyst, was chatting with his wife's grandfather, Walter, at the Thanksgiving dinner table, when he uncovered a unique connection between them. Matthew, who had just started in his new job at MSA, was talking about how his responsibilities included being a mentor to students at Nazareth Prep and HFI, and Walter responded, "Yeah, Holy Family. That's where I grew up when I was in an orphanage."

Matthew's wife, Dana, was stunned. So they uncovered the story: Walter was born in Poland, though his family spent time in many countries ("I've been to every continent but one," he says). After WWII, when Walter was around 11 years old, he and his father were on a train from Poland to Serbia, when Walter stepped off the train to get food and they were separated—not to see each other again for many decades.

At first, he was placed in an orphanage in Mexico, before moving to Holy Family Institute. Walter stayed there into his teenage years, before starting his life in Pittsburgh.

"I live near Holy Family Institute. It was cool for Dana, because she had been driving past it every day and she had no idea that that's where Walter grew up," says Matthew.

Matthew's personal involvement at Nazareth Prep and Holy Family Institute started two years ago, when he received his first Nazareth Prep intern. He's now had two total—one for each school year—and he enjoys teaching them the basics of finance, from useful equations to tricks in Microsoft Excel. He figures that, regardless of what field they choose to go into in the future, the basics of accounting will be useful to them.

He was disappointed that this year's student had his internship cut short, due to COVID-19 closures. In lieu of an official goodbye, Matthew made sure to write and tell him how well he did and how much his efforts were appreciated.



MSA Safety dedicated mentor, Matthew Lawless, remains a support for his interns from years past. He started a company-wide GoFundMe campaign to help support his past intern Shyela Kacin and her family weather the COVID-19 storm with a bit more ease.

"I want to help students now get better knowledge of what is out there," says Matthew. "There is so much that you can do. A lot of schools now pitch that you must go to a 4-year university. But at MSA, you can go into manufacturing, engineering, IT, finance, so many fields. It's good for others to know. I want to help by giving the knowledge of what I specialize in, so that students can make the best decisions."



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On the Front Lines

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL ESSENTIAL WORKERS who helped guide our country through this trying time, particularly the Holy Family alumni and associates on the front lines.

One such associate is emeritus board member Allan Woods (pictured at right, center), a retired physician, who spent three days a week on the streets of Charleston bringing first aid and life-sustaining provisions to the homeless. You may remember that Allan and his grandson, Jake, were responsible for restoring our hundred-year-old statue of the Holy Family, which stands in front of the main campus. Please join us in sending our gratitude and prayers to Allan, and to all essential workers, as they fight to keep us safe.

