

PILLAR CARE PARTNERS WITH WALGREENS FOR VACCINE CLINICS



Pillar High student Joseph Gittleman getting his COVID-19 vaccination

Pillar Care partnered with Walgreens pharmacy to offer three COVID-19 vaccine clinics for program participants and staff members on January 30th, February 20th and March 13th. The clinics were held at the agency's Pillar High School in Livingston. Pillar Care was responsible for registration and coordination of all logistics and a team of Walgreens pharmacists administered vaccinations.

"We wanted to be highly proactive in encouraging our staff and those we serve to access the vaccine," said Alicia-Ann Caesar, Pillar's Director of the President's Office, Risk Management and Training. "We are so grateful to Walgreens for agreeing to work with us." Alicia-Ann spearheaded the project with Susan Antonellis, Pillar's V.P. for Human Resources. "We knew this required a great deal of work in a very condensed time frame," said Susan, "but we believed that helping our folks access the vaccine was worth the effort."

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PILLAR CARE TO HONOR GERSZBERG IN NOVEMBER



Efrem Gerszberg with Owen at Pillar High School

Pillar Care will honor real estate developer Efrem Gerszberg of 2020 Acquisitions at the agency's 2021 Steps to Independence Celebration on November 3rd at The Grove in Cedar Grove. The Celebration is the agency's largest fundraising event of the year, generating funds to support all of Pillar Care's programs.

"We are thrilled to have Efrem, a leader in the business community, as our honoree," said Pillar Care Board Chair Clark Machemer. "He has a heartfelt commitment to philanthropy and to the families we serve every day and we are confident this event will be a success."

For more information on purchasing tables, tickets and journal ads, please contact:

David Bishop at dbishop@pillarnj.org
or at (973) 821-8108.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



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ANNUAL REPORT CORRECTION

In our recent annual report, we inadvertently failed to include our friends at RMG CPA, LLC as Trustees' Circle - Silver Sponsors. We apologize to RMG and thank them for their continued generous support.

Our lead story for this issue of the Independent concerns the recent COVID-19 vaccine clinics we conducted with Walgreens pharmacy to vaccinate our program participants and our staff members. I think these clinics spoke volumes about our agency. Coordinating them required our staff members and volunteers to tackle major logistical issues under severe time constraints and invest a great deal of time and energy – not because we were mandated to do so but because we wanted to help others. It demonstrated the spirit of kindness and giving that lies at the very heart of this organization.

Pages 4-5 include a feature about a few of the volunteers who support our agency. Our volunteer program has steadily grown to more than 800 volunteers per year, who significantly strengthen our agency at multiple levels. During the pandemic, our volunteer department reinvented the volunteer experience, developing new and engaging virtual volunteer experiences that helped our program participants and our staff through a very trying period. In this article, volunteers share how the volunteer experience affected them over the last year.

On page 3, you will read about the new Pillar Emergency Support Fund. This is a major step in expanding our efforts to support the families we serve. Thank you to everyone who has supported these efforts over the years and I hope you will continue to support us moving forward.

Enjoy the issue!

Warmly, Puma Rodman Conare

NEW SCHOOL NEWSLETTER COMING SOON!

We will soon introduce the **Independent - Pillar Schools**, a twice-yearly edition of this newsletter that will focus exclusively on our Pillar Schools. If you want to ensure you are on the mailing list, please reach out to David Bishop at dbishop@pillarnj.org.

CONTACT US

David Bishop, *Editor*

(973) 821-8108 | dbishop@pillarnj.org

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PLEASE NOTE OUR SITES HAVE CHANGED!

pillarnj.org | pillarschoolsnj.org

AGENCY LAUNCHES EMERGENCY FUND

Pillar Care recently launched the Pillar Emergency Support Fund, which will support two major annual fundraising drives to assist its program families and also provide emergency grants to program families facing unexpected financial crises.

Annual Fundraising Drives

The new fund will support the agency's annual Thanksgiving food drive that last year provided 144 families with a full holiday meal. The fund will also allow the agency to continue its annual holiday drive that provided more than 160 families with Shoprite gift cards as well as toys for their children.

Small Emergency Grants

Beginning this year, the fund will support grants of \$500 or less to help program families facing a significant and unexpected expense. Recent grants helped a parent repair her car so she could transport her child to her program and helped a family purchase a protective helmet not covered by insurance.



Pillar Schools are visited by Santa every year, thanks to the holiday toy drive

"The new fund significantly consolidates and strengthens our efforts to provide supplemental support our program families," said Pillar Care President and CEO Purna Rodman Conare. "And the donations to this fund are a wonderful testament to how the families we serve are willing to help other special needs families; we are so grateful for their help."



Volunteers packing up Thanksgiving baskets for Pillar Care families

To support the Pillar Emergency Support Fund, contact David Bishop at dbishop@pillarnj.org or at (973) 821-8108.

HOW VOLUNTEERING IMPACTED VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers were a lifeline for our program participants throughout the pandemic and we can never thank them enough. We asked some of them what volunteering during the pandemic meant to them.



Amanda on the Seton Hall campus

Amanda Cavanagh

Amanda has volunteered with Pillar for nine years, including the last five in her role as the Assistant Director of Seton Hall University's Division of Volunteer Efforts (DOVE). Amanda and her student volunteers worked to create virtual volunteer opportunities for Pillar program participants throughout the pandemic.

"Our students went through a lot in the last year, but volunteering with Pillar helped them see that there were folks much more secluded than them who didn't have the friends and family members to support them that they have. Being able to connect with your participants meant a lot to them and many chose to continue volunteering even throughout their winter break."

Cary Prisch

Cary started volunteering with the agency more than five years ago through an art program for our adult programs. Throughout the pandemic, she delivered critically needed PPE to the agency's group homes as well as bi-monthly food baskets to our school families in need and led a variety of virtual field trips for our adult program participants.

"Your folks were so isolated and I was so isolated and volunteering allowed us all to feel connected with one another during that extremely difficult time. And by helping with things like PPE delivery it helped me to me supportive of the incredibly important work they do every single day. It helped me feel I was making a difference."



Cary picks up food from Pillar Elementary School to deliver to a student's home



Brian and Caroline volunteering at a Pillar vaccine clinic

Caroline Leung and Brian Pinney

Caroline began volunteering with Pillar eight years ago with the Sensory Storytime program at Pillar Schools and two years later Brian became a regular volunteer as well. The couple has volunteered for a wide range of events, including the recent vaccine clinics. Caroline has done regular Zoom calls with Dwayne, a group home resident, and she and Brian have delivered PPE for the group homes.

Caroline: "I love my calls with Dwayne at the group home - especially our online cardio boxing classes. And we were so happy that the volunteer department considered the safety of the volunteers as well as that of your consumers and staff members- everything was structured to allow no-contact deliveries so we could help without placing ourselves at great risk."

Brian: "Helping an organization that delivers such important services as Pillar made us feel both useful and connected with the community throughout the pandemic."

HOW VOLUNTEERING IMPACTED VOLUNTEERS



Janis (right) stops by the group home for her first in-person meeting with Kiki

Janis Tafuri

Janis has been volunteering with special needs organizations for 20 years and began her virtual volunteer work with Pillar (from her home in PA) during the pandemic. Despite travelling 1,000 miles per week for work, she never misses her weekly Zoom call with Kiki, a group home resident, and volunteered for our vaccine clinics earlier this year.

"I was raised to always pay it forward and I have found that I'm most content when I'm giving back. Throughout the pandemic, when I was feeling stressed from work and being cooped up in front of my computer, when I get on the phone with Kiki and heard her say 'Hi Ms. Janis!' I forget all about my problems and just feel so good."

Jonah Scher

Jonah is a 17-year-old student at Montclair High School. He has done weekly Zoom calls with Richard, a Pillar group home resident, throughout the pandemic.

"We like to share screens and do all kinds of quizzes together, but mainly we just talk about the week we've had and the things we've done, like you would with any of your friends. I'm an active person and it was tough for me to be stuck inside all the time. My calls with Richard not only let us both get to know a lot about each other, I think they helped us both feel less alone and more connected through our regular talks."



Jonah (left) visits his Zoom buddy Richard



Dylan pumps up the crowd during one of his Zoom performances

Dylan Dubois

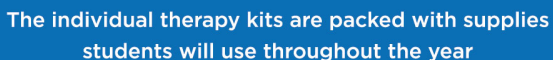
Dylan was introduced to the agency when volunteering as a freshman at Seton Hall University and continued to volunteer throughout college and for the last several years since graduation. Over the course of the last year, he has become known to Pillar's group home and day program participants simply as DJ Dylan, serving as host and DJ for a weekly dance party.

"During a time of fear and uncertainty, the dance party gave us all something to enjoy together as a community and it gave me a higher purpose, something with real meaning behind it. I think the most important thing we can all do is to give to others- help one another create memories that we can relish the rest of our lives."

To explore volunteering opportunities with Pillar Care, please contact Corry DeMarco, Director of Volunteer Services, at: cdemarco@pillarnj.org or at (973) 821-8114.

“This agency has been successful for close to 70 years because of the support of volunteers like Darren, who has been such a leader and advocate for the organization for so many years,” said Board Chair Clark Machemer.





“We wanted to help address the challenges that COVID-19 has presented for students in need of therapy,” said Carrie DiStefano, Coordinator of the Public School Therapies Program. “The therapy kits ensure each student has what he or she needs to engage in activities without having to share items and that they will have access to these items at home or in school.”

TRIBUTE GIFTS

If you would like to remember someone with an “in memory of” gift or celebrate a special occasion with an “in honor of” gift, please contact the Pillar Care development office at (973) 821-8036. We will notify the person of your choosing with a special card telling them that a gift was made.

IN MEMORY OF

For: **Jacob Strauss**
By: Helen Attenello
William Badia
James & Priscilla Bashian
James Baum
Dorothea Bello
Edward & Nancy Connolly
Corry DeMarco
Samuel Gradess
Ulrik Grau
Judy Hall
Beau Hassinger
Elaine R. Heimberger
Kelly Journalist
Colleen Kiesel
Melissa Kramer
Richard & Samantha Lee
Robert I. & Gail J. Loeb
Francis Matten
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Kevin Miller
John Murphy
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Sue Oliver

James & Janice Ritchie
Sheila Striffler
Julianne Strauss
Jeffrey Tente
Mark Tierney
Michael & Annette Tsubota
Henry & Linda Wasseh
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Wasserstein
Barry & Gail Weiss

For: **Stachia Kloza**
By: Brian T. & Paula Kloza

For: **Aida & Nicholas D'Avella**
By: Anthony D'Avella

For: **Thomas Jude Burke**
By: Mitchell & Shari Caspert

For: **Isaiah Garret**
By: Alisa DeAngelo
Michelle Roth

For: **Jeanne Goldberg**
By: Brian T. & Paula Kloza

IN HONOR OF

For: **Kelly Marx's Birthday**
By: Richard & Carole Kirschenbaum
Arle & Gloria Lazarus
Richard & Natalie Peck
Richard & Gayle Singer
Jill Steiner
Donald & Alison Weiss

For: **Ken Lind**
By: Monica Casiello

For: **Purna Rodman Conare**
By: Shawna Seed

For: **Alexandra Konidaris**
By: Edna & George Knudsen

For: **Amanda Machemer's Birthday**
By: Raymond & Janet Voelpel

For: **Clark Machemer's 50th Birthday**
By: Charlie & Kathy Morales

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Before each clinic, Pillar High School was quickly converted into a clinic setting, with temperature checks and COVID-screening questionnaires, tables lining the hallway for guests to complete the required paperwork and the school gym reconfigured to create eight pods for the administration of the vaccine and a separate area to monitor visitors after they received their shots. Staffing the clinics were teams of volunteers recruited by the agency's volunteer department. “We simply had to let our folks know what we were planning and they were excited to help,” said Corry DeMarco, Pillar Care's Director of Volunteers.

“I'm very proud of our team and everyone who pulled together and volunteered time to help others during this crisis,” said Pillar Care President and CEO Purna Rodman Conare. “This is the sort of event that defines an organization and everyone truly rose to the occasion.”

FIGHT4MIKE SUPPORTS PILLAR STUDENTS

Abby's family learned she needed another new set of orthotic leg braces, but even after their insurance paid their share, they were still left owing \$800. With Abby, as well as so many other families, parents are often left with huge out of pocket costs because insurance does not typically cover items at 100%. Particularly with items like braces, which children regularly outgrow, the costs can add up quickly.



"We see this happen to our families all too often," said Michelle Roth, Durable Medical Equipment Coordinator at Pillar Elementary School. "And while we work hard to advocate on their behalf, insurance companies often won't negotiate or change their policy rules even when a child's needs are not being met."

The school turned to Fight4Mike, a New Jersey-based nonprofit that provides grants for direct support of special needs families. The organization recently provided grants to support Abby's braces and for another student's needed bath chair. "We can always count on Fight4Mike to help our students," said Pillar Elementary principal Hetty Kintiroglou. "We are so thankful for their continued generosity."