



Heartspring DIALOGUE

Fall 2020





Our Story

Founded as the Institute of Logopedics, Heartspring has been a leader and innovator in creating hope for families for more than 85 years. Heartspring provides a wide range of services and therapies through the Heartspring Residential and Day School, Pediatric Services, and Autism Services.

The **Heartspring Residential & Day School** serves children with developmental disabilities from across the country.

Pediatric Services offers outpatient therapy services to children from birth to 21.

Autism Services provides services and resources for children and families impacted by a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Heartspring is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

On the Cover

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Heartspring School staff and students adapt, find the fun, and embrace mask-wearing on campus.

Table of Contents

- 3** When Life Comes Full Circle
- 4-5** My First Three Months at Heartspring
- 6-7** Our COVID-19 Story
- 8-9** Turning Crises into New Opportunities: Pediatric Teletherapy Services
- 10-11** Building Community in the Time of COVID-19: Helping Teens on the Spectrum Stay Connected During a Pandemic
- 12-13** Heroes in Disguise: Facing COVID-19 with Strength and Courage
- 14** How Can Supporters Help?
- 15** The Event Landscape is Ever-changing

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When Life Comes Full Circle

My journey with Heartspring began in the early 1990s, when the organization was still known as the Institute of Logopedics.

At the time, I was a financial auditor for firm that worked closely with the Institute. I remember the long rows of houses, the majestic main building, and the warmth of the leaders and employees I had the pleasure to meet. The more I learned about the Institute, the more I developed a deep esteem and respect for its mission.

Almost two and a half decades later, life came full circle and once again led me to this wonderful place. Former board member Alan Howarter called me to invite me to join the Heartspring Board of Directors, and I, of course, gladly accepted.

Within my first four years on the board, I got to witness countless children and families succeed in life thanks to the noble work of Heartspring employees. Now, as I begin my term as Board of Directors Chair, I eagerly look forward to helping guide the organization into its next generation so more families can step into empowerment and come to know hope.

I feel incredibly grateful for this opportunity to steward the same powerful mission that once left a lasting, moving impression in me. Today, its leaders and employees continue to astound me with their remarkable commitment to do good in the world.

On behalf of the board of directors, I thank you for supporting Heartspring's life-changing work.

Durrel Kelley

*Heartspring Board of Directors Chairperson
Chief Operations Officer
Great Plains Health Alliance, Inc.*



My First Three Months at Heartspring

Despite beginning my tenure during a pandemic, my first three months at Heartspring have undoubtedly shaped my life for the better.

I witnessed staff celebrate every milestone, cherish every breakthrough, and resolve every struggle with strength, patience, and compassion, and it is incredibly awe-inspiring to experience firsthand how they bring their whole selves into their roles.

I met kindhearted donors, volunteers, and board members who believe in the Heartspring mission so profoundly that they continue to give their support even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Thanks to our employees' hard work and the support of our community in the past three months, we have contained our COVID-19 outbreak to minimal levels, deployed an organization-wide COVID-19 testing protocol that many other organizations have yet to accomplish, successfully accredited our school, accomplished many goals, and served our

students and clients with kindness and warmth during a most unusual time.

The challenges brought by the pandemic have made me realize that, in the face of hardship, Heartspring employees are bearers of hope and light in a time of darkness. It has been a truly humbling experience to observe employees' eagerness to help one another while gracefully adapting to changes amid many unknowns.

I am impressed, humbled, and filled with gratitude to be surrounded by such dedicated employees and passionate supporters who help the Heartspring mission continue to widen its impact.

As time evolves, I look forward to investing in our collective future — it is my duty to drive change, empower employees and families, and help the world become a better, more inclusive place for all.

I am eager for our journey together, and I am so grateful to serve.



Karina Forrest-Perkins
Heartspring President & CEO



Our COVID-19 Story

Resilience

noun

Definition: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

This year marks a time in history when citizens of the world came together to fight a worldwide pandemic. There is not a single person in the world who has not been touched in one way or another by COVID-19.

As we adjusted our work schedules, accommodated our children's at-home learning, and radically changed our personal lives and social behaviors, many of us faced unavoidable waves of sorrow, fear, and despair.

Some of us grieved from home, surrounded by our

families as we discovered paradoxical feelings of joy in the midst of sadness, hope in the midst of tragedy, and faith in the midst of darkness. But those who have faced the pandemic in the frontlines — including Heartspring employees — were forced to lament while fighting, pushing, and enduring the difficulties head on.

Heartspring's 86-year history has been marked by many hardships in which employees carried the mission with strength, grace, and grit. While the world continues to combat

the risks and perils of COVID-19, Heartspring employees continue to adapt to the circumstances and embrace changes with a hopeful heart and a strong conviction. Though these changes have been, at times, very challenging, they undoubtedly demonstrated a remarkable trait every Heartspring staff carries within: resilience.

Today, it is our employees' resilient spirit that carries the Heartspring mission, making it shine more brightly than ever before.



Thank you!

From volunteering to do temperature checks to helping deliver meals and administer COVID-19 tests, staff members have gone above and beyond to keep our organization healthy and safe. We are sincerely thankful for their dedication to our mission.

Turning Crises into New Opportunities: Pediatric Teletherapy Services

On March 25, 2020, the Heartspring Pediatric Services therapy rooms were quickly closed.

A world pandemic had reached Wichita, Kansas, and many local businesses and organizations were forced to close and pause services, including Heartspring.

While some could go a few months without dining at their favorite restaurant or getting a haircut, many families served through Heartspring's Pediatric Services found themselves in a bind. To continue progressing in their journey towards independence, children served at Heartspring depended on regular therapy sessions.

“It is fun to be on the other side of the computer screen and see the parent and the child beaming with pride.”

Mimi French • Heartspring
Occupational Therapist

Though COVID-19 brought difficult unintended consequences, it also paved the way for a bright new therapy solution: teletherapy.

At first, the promise of teletherapy was not an easy one — on one hand, therapists had to find ways to adapt their typical mode of operation so every child could receive the same quality of services. On the other, they had to shift their focus to find accessible at-home therapy tools, create attainable goals, and help parents navigate a new “normal.” With much strength and positivity, Heartspring Pediatric Services therapists embraced the opportunity to continue changing lives for the better despite the difficult situation.

Though challenging at first, therapists quickly began to notice a unique effect in certain children: some were actually progressing faster than they normally would because of teletherapy.

“I see a child on the autism spectrum who typically has a

very difficult time participating in tasks in my therapy room,” states Speech-Language Pathologist Belinda Allen. “In our teletherapy sessions, he has been able to have conversations with me and show me his toys from home.”

Allen considers this a big win. While she can usually get this child to talk in therapy with structured prompting, teletherapy has allowed him to open up to her more freely — and though going into the therapy room has its benefits, the virtual sessions help him focus on connecting and following tasks without feeling overwhelmed by the unpredictable sights, sounds, and quick transitions he typically experiences in the Pediatric Services building.

Similarly, Physical Therapist Cheryl Jabara noticed many positives from teletherapy, especially with the opportunities it allows for tailoring therapy to a child's natural environment and helping parents have more agency in their child's development.



“I have noticed parents feeling more empowered,” affirms Jabara. “With my coaching, they can work on skills they may not have otherwise thought of or thought they were capable of on their own.”

In a traditional therapy room, parents can typically observe, listen, and ask questions. Teletherapy, however, offers a special opportunity for parents to play an active role in the delivery of services.

“An interesting twist on things is that we are problem-solving through the parent versus through ourselves,” states

Occupational Therapist Mimi French. “With teletherapy, you may have to help a parent with placement of their hand on the child to help turn the page of a book.”

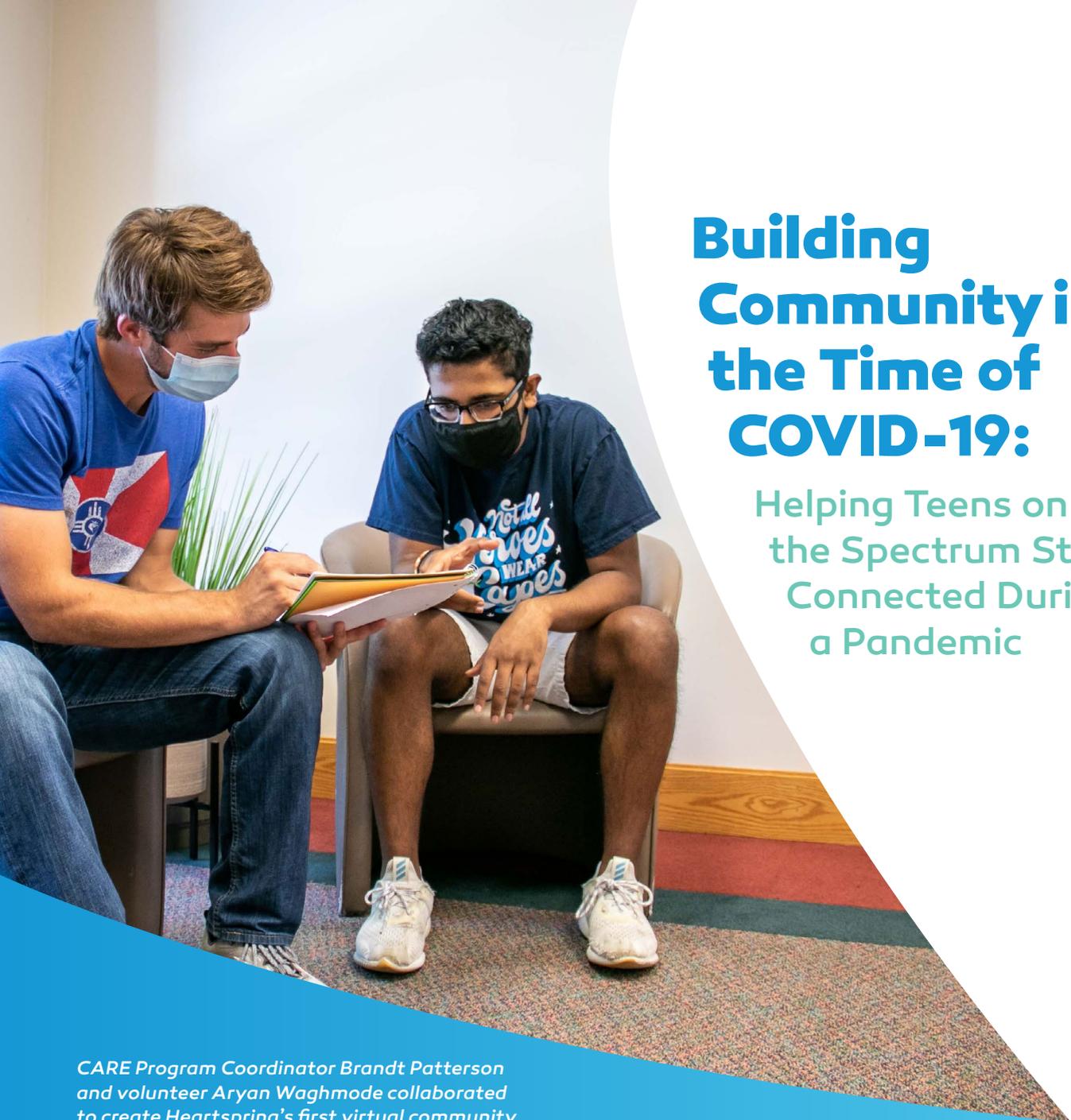
To French, this outcome has led to many beneficial experiences. “I have loved being able to see children in their home environment and empower parents to help their child perform a task to the best of their ability,” she says.

Late this summer, Heartspring resumed regular in-person outpatient services with strict sanitation precautions. Though

families are happy to be back in the therapy room, during a time of high unpredictability, teletherapy continues to give families a safe option so children can continue working on their goals from home.

The history of Heartspring has demonstrated that its employees are the bearers of hope in times of distress. As our country continues to battle COVID-19, Heartspring Pediatric Services therapists are a true testament of hope — they demonstrate that every challenge is an exciting opportunity waiting to be discovered.

Above: Though in-person services were cancelled this spring and summer, Heartspring Pediatric Services therapists helped children continue achieving their goals via teletherapy.



Building Community in the Time of COVID-19:

Helping Teens on
the Spectrum Stay
Connected During
a Pandemic

CARE Program Coordinator Brandt Patterson and volunteer Aryan Waghmode collaborated to create Heartspring's first virtual community service for teens on the spectrum.

When COVID-19 first hit, individuals around the world had no choice but to adapt to a lifestyle based on isolation.

For many, this was difficult. Humans are social beings, and as such, depend on social interaction to thrive.

In March of 2020, Heartspring's Community of Autism Resources and Education (CARE) Clubs — a program that helps children and young adults with autism build friendships, develop social skills, and grow in confidence — had to shut down due to the pandemic.

For the teen group, this drastic end to the social clubs meant a sudden loss of the friendships and authentic connection they had proudly built.

“Many parents were emailing us telling us that their teens were lonely,” says CARE Program Manager Kalee Beal. “We felt like there was something that we needed to do.”

Out of this difficult dilemma came a brilliant, innovative solution: weekly virtual teen club sessions.

“The most amazing thing about this new service is that we have a teen volunteer, Aryan Waghmode, who suggested this idea and now helps run the meetings as both as a moderator and a peer,” states Beal.

Waghmode has volunteered with the CARE team since January of 2019. When CARE Clubs shut down, he saw an opportunity for a fun virtual platform where teens could continue to interact and practice social skills while having fun.

At first, Beal didn't know if the sessions were

going to be successful. She quickly realized, however, that the virtual club was a success, especially after one attendee told her, “This is the best hour I've had all week.”

During the sessions, teens enjoy a fun, relaxed online atmosphere in which they can play games, enjoy each other's company, and engage in relevant conversation topics such as school, hobbies, and family life.

“The teens were used to one-on-one conversations during the in-person clubs,” states Waghmode. “But the virtual meetings have helped them have multiple-people conversations, and I've noticed they also have a more profound ability to pause and listen than before.”

According to Beal, the virtual setting allows the teens to engage with one another from the comfort of their home, and the presence of a peer moderator helps them feel more comfortable. In addition, the ability to communicate both verbally and through a chat helps those with limited verbal communication share thoughts and opinions more easily and in real time.

“The teens who have attended the meetings during this time have grown significantly,” says Waghmode. “I've been working with some of them for a year and a half now, and it's remarkable to see the progress that they've made recently.”

For Heartspring, COVID-19 has caused multiple unpredictable interruptions in traditional services. The mission, however, has not stopped because of the pandemic. In a time of many uncertainties, Heartspring's CARE program continues to help individuals find hope, learn their strengths, and discover new depths of connection.



Heroes in Disguise: Facing COVID-19 with Strength and Courage

For humans, a sudden recognition of threat leads to a natural instinct of self-preservation — a trigger for the fight-or-flight response.

For Heartspring School employees, a menacing danger in their lives and the lives of students means embracing grit and determination to fight a threat.

As cases of COVID-19 began to rise in the community this summer, the inevitable happened: the virus reached Heartspring, affecting multiple

students and staff within a group home.

“It was a tough situation,” says Division Director of the Heartspring School Megan Swett. “We were already following strict health and sanitation guidelines, but all of the sudden, we were forced to change everything that we were doing to minimize the risk of a larger outbreak.”

In just a matter of days, employees began to wear personal protection equipment, students were quarantined

within their homes, and learning programming, which had resumed in the classrooms after the state of Kansas lifted its shelter-in-place order, had to be quickly adapted to be provided in the group homes.

Though this difficult situation brought several challenges, it also brought to light a unique characteristic that unifies Heartspring employees: a resilient faith in the organization’s mission.

“Our staff are incredible,” exclaims Swett. “They didn’t think twice about going above and beyond to help one another and make sure every student remained healthy and safe during this difficult time.”

This desire to help one another instantly became contagious — the more employees witnessed

“Our employees truly put the ‘heart’ in ‘Heartspring.’”

Megan Swett, Division Director
of the Heartspring School



their peers helping, the more they grew a yearning to protect students and themselves during a trying, challenging time.

While the school speech therapy team got together to create custom social stories to help students understand what to expect with COVID-19 tests, other employees began to volunteer on their days off work to help administer the tests and make sure students felt at ease. Meanwhile, Outpatient Services staff signed up to pick up shifts in the school, and employees

from other departments volunteered to deliver lunch and dinner to the homes.

“Even though this was a hard time for our employees, they faced the adversity with such an extraordinary sense of hope, bravery, and positivity,” says Swett. “They did this because they have such a strong belief in the Heartspring mission and a deep love for the students they serve.”

Thanks to the strong, faithful efforts of its employees, the

Heartspring School succeeded in keeping the COVID-19 outbreak from spreading within its campus.

While the pandemic remains unpredictable, the difficult situation employees lived this summer illustrated an indisputable truth: Heartspring employees are powerful heroes in disguise — they are capable of breaking through the toughest of barriers to continue helping children thrive in life.

Above: Behind their masks and their personal protection equipment, Heartspring school employees are ready to take on the day with a hopeful heart and a strong belief in the Heartspring mission.

How Can Supporters Help?

What a year this has been for each of you, our community, and our world.

As you may imagine, COVID-19 has reshaped our plans and expenses for the year ahead. The cost of compensation for staff has increased, and personal protective equipment (PPE) has added to our expenses more than \$50,000 this year. You, our supporters, have done so much for Heartspring in this time of uncertainty. You have sent cards of encouragement, special treats for members of our staff, and you have contributed with financial gifts to support COVID-19 response efforts.

Now more than ever, we need your continued support!

Fiscal Year 2020 Giving Breakdown (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020)

- Individuals 37.51%
- Corporations / Businesses 15.04%
- Clubs / Civic Organizations 8.91%
- Private Family Foundations 23.61%
- Public / Corporate Foundations 14.93%

These numbers help us focus on and evaluate our fundraising plans for the year. They display the unwavering support of individuals, businesses, and foundations alike. Now in the time of a pandemic, our giving reports have shaped our focus for the year ahead. We are relying heavily on the support of our community to help us achieve success.

Your support is not about reaching a fundraising goal; it is about changing the lives of those who need it in order for their children to reach their greatest level of independence. We know the giving of one's financial resources to an organization is one of the greatest displays of trust and investment, no matter the size of the gift. My hope and request of our supporters is to stay the course with us, continue to support the organizations you believe in, and stretch your commitment, if you can. You are a part of our story, our past, our present, and our future.

[Click here to give today!](#)



For more information on giving, contact Senior Director of Development and Advancement Stacie Williamson at 316-634-8816 or swilliamson@heartspring.org.



The Event Landscape is Ever-changing

In Fiscal Year 2020, the total funds raised through events amounted to 27% of our total fundraising efforts. Nearing 30% of annual revenue is a considerable source of income, but with that, we must also evaluate the costs associated, including staff time, volunteer time, rentals, products, and materials.

At Heartspring, events are more than a source of income. They are a way for us to engage with our community of clients and supporters and to gain new friends. Events are tremendous common bond builders — wouldn't you agree?

We know Heartspring continues to thrive because of the clients, families, individuals, and businesses who believe in our mission. No matter what the year ahead looks like, we ask you to continue to support our efforts. We are committed to hosting

to the best of our ability so that we can continue to come together in support of Heartspring's long-standing commitment to our community. We hope you will, too — and if you are unable to attend your favorite Heartspring event this year, we hope you will know that your continued financial contribution will be doing the most good for those who need it!

Maggie, Heartspring's 2020 Autism CARE Walk spokeskid, discovered confidence and friendships at CARE Clubs. Proceeds from the walk fund Heartspring's CARE program to help children on the autism spectrum build the necessary social skills for a successful, independent future.

Light Your Heart with Heartspring

Presented by  **RELEVANT**
AUDIO + VISUAL

New Date!

Saturday, February 20, 2021 • Wichita Marriott

A whimsical evening to benefit Heartspring



New this year! Virtual Option

Support the children at Heartspring from the comfort of your home!
For more information on virtual registration, please visit our website.

LightYourHeart.org

