

MOVING FORWARD WITH

# *Clarity & Courage*







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Springbrook is the leader in providing innovative supports for people with developmental disabilities. With locations across New York State, we offer support options that span all aspects of a person's life.

On the cover: Brendan and a Susquehanna House DSP enjoy some fresh air on a walk around our main campus







Above: Springbrook resident, Patty Clute, receives her first COVID-19 vaccine

# A Message from the CEO

## "THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT, THEIR FAMILIES, AND OUR EMPLOYEES ARE THE HEROES..."



makes you happy, healthy, and productive, you can be happy, healthy, and productive. Sounds easy, right? Not really. It takes courage.

Families—mothers, fathers, grandparents, sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles—could not visit their loved ones for over 100 days. This was a challenge—a hardship for everyone—made possible by understanding the need to keep all people safe, trusting in Springbrook, and connecting in ways old and new—Zoom, FaceTime, phone calls, pictures, and gifts. That took clarity and courage.

Our essential staff changed the way they work, comforting and guiding the people they support, and meeting the demands of strict protocols to keep our community happy, healthy, and productive within the confines of each Home Unit. That took clarity, courage, and, I will add, creativity. From art projects to contests to tele-everything, life changed but not our mission.

As we move forward together with clarity and courage, I will pass along a few thoughts from an article I found on the internet (from a reliable source) about living intentionally. These suggestions struck me because they speak to the way Springbrook has and will continue to navigate this year like no other.

- Create space in your mind and your environment
- Identify what matters
- Do one thing at a time
- Eliminate distractions
- Eat well
- And, finally, experiment

I am thankful to be part of an organization that strives for transparency, inspires trust, and is engaged. The people we support, their families, and our employees are the heroes of the day and this time.

I wish you health, happiness, and I hope to see you soon.

*Patricia E. Kennedy*

We are now one year into a pandemic that none of us planned for or could have imagined. This has been a year that has changed the way we live, the way we work, and how we recreate—a year where people were challenged and changed, or not. Springbrook's community of people supported, employees, families, and donors met the challenges and made the necessary changes—keeping true to our mission with clarity of purpose.

You will see the words clarity and courage exemplified by the stories found throughout this edition of *Inspirations* magazine. Those two words are the perfect descriptors of Springbrook's actions and intentions. This year we had to live very intentionally—clearing our minds to focus on the very essentials of our community. Living intentionally requires clarity. When you are clear about what





Walnut Street resident, Jane Sternberg, making beautiful crafts

# When the VIRUS STRIKES

By James Hansel

COVID-19 has affected everyone in our community as we face various challenges, ranging from economic hardship to personal and professional relationships as we do our part to social distance. At Springbrook, we took proactive measures to ensure resident, student, and staff safety by implementing Home Units. Home Units limit the potential spread of the virus by preventing anyone from visiting or working in another Home Unit outside of their own. While this measure effectively slowed the spread of the virus, the truth of the matter is that it can still strike.

Despite the use of Home Units, regular disinfecting, and mandatory staff use of masks, the virus is still a threat. Staff members have lives outside of work and are careful not to come to work sick but could have inadvertently been exposed to the virus. Direct

care is not like a traditional healthcare setting, and a DSP's work involves very close contact with the people they support. Social distancing within a home is near impossible. Still, our protocols are effective, keeping the virus from spreading to multiple Home Units at a time.

Protocols and precautions can be followed, but the virus is unpredictable and should be taken with the utmost seriousness. We were fortunate that the residents and staff members who contracted the virus at Walnut Street recovered without any hospitalizations. With our preventative measures and quick response, we could isolate the incident and provide care to those affected. The health and safety of everyone who chooses Springbrook for supports and services will remain a priority as we work together toward beating the COVID-19 virus.

## 8:00 am TUESDAY MORNING

A new trainee who had been out sick called to notify the home they had tested positive for COVID-19. Not long after, a few residents at Walnut Street reported high temperatures after routine temperature checks, an immediate sign of concern. "After we notified the clinical team, they called the house frequently to check on the condition of the residents and scheduled testing," said Assistant Manager Jaimie Provenzano.

## 3:30 pm TUESDAY AFTERNOON

By 3:30 pm a COVID tester was on Walnut's porch. The entire house was tested for the Coronavirus twice for accuracy. Onsite COVID-19 testing was done for all residents and Home Unit employees.

# Springbrook Perspective

## TOGETHER WE WILL BEAT THE COVID-19 VIRUS

### JAIMIE PROVENZANO • Assistant Manager

Jaimie helped care for infected residents but did not contract the virus herself. Springbrook provided a hotel room for her while she quarantined as her family's safety was a priority to her. Jaimie got lonely away from her family and unfortunately missed Thanksgiving, but she was grateful to help Walnut Street. "The virus is real. I saw the effects. We followed protocols and thought we were doing well, but it shows how easily the virus can spread. My experience has made me cautious for my mother, who has had three heart surgeries. I am taking all precautions; you don't know who will get it or how it will affect them."

### VINCENT DEVINE • Resident at Walnut Street

While the virus affects the body with physical symptoms, it can also take a great emotional toll on staff members providing care and family members. Vincent Devine shared that he was surprised and a little nervous when he found out he had the virus. "I was surprised. I never did feel not good," shared Vincent. He only experienced a fever when he got the virus, but his family was still worried about him and called every day to check and make sure he was doing well.



### CARLEE TUTTLE Staff Member

Carlee, who cared for Vincent, was asymptomatic but shared that the experience was terrifying for her after she was confirmed to be COVID-19 positive. "I was terrified because I didn't know how my body was going to handle the virus. I would wake up every morning thinking I would have a new symptom, but when I woke up with none, it would slowly begin to ease my mind." The virus affects everyone differently, and the uncertainty that Carlee faced for those few days was straining.

### MAUREEN DEVINE Vincent's Sister

"It was shocking and quite sad to get the call that my brother Vincent had contracted the COVID-19 virus. It was also scary because it was the first direct person I knew who had gotten the virus. I was relieved when I heard that Vincent had a mild case and was extremely happy with how Walnut Street Community Home handled the outbreak," Maureen commented. Once she heard the news that Vincent was sick, she got right to work sending Vincent a care package with some tea, honey, movies, and a fluffy robe—all things Vincent enjoyed when he was sick.

## 7:00 pm TUESDAY NIGHT

All the residents, but one, were COVID-19 positive. Walnut Street Community Home became a COVID-19 Emergency House. The gentleman and three staff, who tested negative, were transferred to a quarantine home that night. Springbrook's admin team handled staffing for the home and allocated COVID-19 Response Team members to staff the house. Immediately, three of the staff members who currently worked at Walnut Street volunteered.

## 8:00 am WEDNESDAY

Emergency Response Team Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was distributed to the team. The Response Team then began their seven-day, 12-hour shifts, ensuring that residents were comfortable and receiving the care they needed.







## WHEN THE VIRUS STRIKES

All COVID-19 statistics  
are as of 03/15

# Covid-19 BY THE NUMBERS

**96%**  
Residents  
Fully Vaccinated\*

\*Vaccine eligible residents over the age of 16.

**25%**  
Employees  
Half Vaccinated

**15%**  
Employees  
Fully Vaccinated

### Self-directed Services\*

**4.7%**

Staff w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**4%**

Staff quarantined  
due to exposure  
(negative COVID-19 results)

**0.38%**

Clients w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**4.3%**

Clients quarantined  
due to exposure  
(negative COVID-19 results)

\*Self-Directed Services  
employs over 500 people and  
supports nearly 550 clients

### The School at Springbrook & Kids Unlimited Preschool\*\*

**10%**

Staff w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**9.3%**

Students w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**11 Times**

Response Team Deployed

NOTE: The Response Team is deployed when there is  
a confirmed or suspected positive within a Home Unit.

\*\*The School at Springbrook employs 250 people  
and supports nearly 100 students

### Community Homes†

**14.4%**

Staff w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**9.6%**

Residents w/positive  
COVID-19 results

**5 Times**

Response Team Deployed

NOTE: The Response Team is deployed when there is  
a confirmed or suspected positive within a Home Unit.

†Community Homes employs nearly 250 people  
and supports 162 residents



Above: Springbrook Residents and Staff receive their first and second doses of the vaccine.





Clare enjoying the comforts of fluffy pillows and snuggly blankets!

# Staying Connected FROM A DISTANCE

By Molly Richtsmeier

One of the greatest challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic is the limited opportunity for families and friends to see each other. For Jane Wickstrom, who lives and works in Seattle, WA, staying connected over this last year with her daughter, Clare Deignan, who chooses Springbrook for residential support, has been an experience guided by distance but filled with determination. Their story holds lessons that can—and should—guide us far beyond the pandemic. During this extraordinary time, they capture the power in patience, honesty, teamwork, and hope.

Since March of 2020, Jane shares that she has been open and honest with Clare about the changes taking place in the world and around her. “I explain to Clare that people are sick, and people need to stay home,” says Jane. “I keep her up to date, trying, in a way,

to explain the almost unexplainable. I tell her, ‘we have to be patient and we have to wait,’ and Clare understands.”

Even as changes are constantly occurring, Jane keeps things as normal as possible for Clare. So, just as they had done before the health crisis, Jane picks up the phone and calls Clare each day to catch up, hear what she ate, and what she has accomplished that day. “It is so important to keep our routine,” says Jane.

One of the most difficult aspects of the changes to life for Clare was the sudden pause in her favorite activities: going out into the community for errands, drives, and events. Jane shares that the staff of LeChase House, where Clare resides, keep her busy with the activities she loves to do while at home: spending time in the kitchen, watching baking videos, helping to clean the house, and folding her laundry. Finally, in June, when the opportunity arose for families to begin visiting Springbrook residents in person, Jane says, “We jumped at the opportunity! We were one of the first families to sign up for a visit. Clare’s sister Trish and I were able to come see



Clare relaxes while getting her hair trimmed.

## Take a Look! SOME OFF-SITE/OVERNIGHT VISITATION RULES

- Family members attest that no member of their household is suspected of or confirmed to have COVID-19
- All family members have to pass a pre-visit health screening (conducted by a Springbrook nurse)
- The Springbrook student or resident must pass the health screening and temperature check on the day of their scheduled visit
- Offsite visits, in accordance with OPWDD regulations, only occur with immediate family members of Springbrook students or residents
- During the visit, family members ensure that the Springbrook student/resident wears a face mask if in any public space
- Any dining outside of the home with the Springbrook resident or student needs to take place in restaurants with outdoor dining that enforce all NYS COVID-19 health and safety mandates
- A complete log of any and all places the Springbrook student or resident spent time during their visit is kept and shared upon the student or resident’s return to Springbrook

Clare for a few days for a few hours in the tents on campus. We really missed her, and those visits were critical for all of us.”

Jane says that following this visit, they started making plans, or, in Jane’s words, establishing “goalposts” for the coming months. “Both Clare and I need things to plan and hope for, so at the end of our June visit, I told her, ‘we’re going to make a plan for August,’ and that helped us stay upbeat.” Jane and her partner Cal flew to New York in August and, following state guidelines, quarantined for two weeks before bringing Clare back to New York City and the beach with them for another two weeks. “I don’t make a promise I can’t keep,” remarks Jane, “So in August I told her, ‘if everything is still okay, you will come to Seattle in October.’”

Clare was, in fact, able to visit Seattle in October. Cal flew to Albany to meet Clare, and they flew back to Seattle that very same day. Jane continued to be truthful about the situation, and during Clare’s four-day visit, Jane explained that they might not be able to be together on Thanksgiving, so they were going to celebrate the holiday then. “We had Halloween pumpkins and a full Thanksgiving dinner—all at once!” says Jane.

Through everything, Jane’s main goal is to keep things as normal as possible for Clare and, as she says, “To take advantage of any opportunity when

the window opens for us to see Clare.” As for their next goalpost? Once Clare received both her shots of the COVID-19 vaccine in late January, Jane began thinking about Clare’s next visit to Seattle.

“Ultimately, we’ve been able to navigate this year because of teamwork,” notes Jane. “My partner Cal and daughter Trish are very involved with supporting Clare, as is her father, Ted Deignan. Ted traveled to pick up Clare so she could spend time with family for Thanksgiving and Christmas in her hometown of Brooklyn. And ‘Team Clare’ is so strong because everyone at Springbrook is supportive, extremely clear, timely, transparent, and optimistic throughout all of this. Now we eagerly await the time we can be together again.”

Jane and Clare’s story is one of many marked by missing our loved ones during this challenging time. Yet, while on different sides of the country, Jane and Clare show us that even in the hardest of times, positive things are possible. They show that when we are guided by patience, perseverance, and partnership, great things can happen.



Clare having a fun in-flight snack!

### MARCH 2020

All visits were suspended; home units were established.

### JUNE 2020

On-site visitation was opened to family of Springbrook residents and students.

### AUGUST 2020

Off-campus visits were allowed with restrictions in place and testing required.

### JANUARY 2020

With local infection rates rising, off-campus visits were suspended, on-campus visits took place in the Family Engagement Center.





*Nick Cottrell gives the camera a giant smile while home at Sweet Briar.*

# Thriving IN A PANDEMIC

*By Emily Falco*

2020 was a year of abrupt changes. Within a matter of weeks businesses shut down, restaurants offered take-out only, and office workers packed up their computers, paperclips, and family photos, trudging them home in bankers boxes to work from their guest bedrooms. At Springbrook, we put into place strict visitation and health screening protocols, locked the doors to our Day Hab and school, and confined activities to homes.

It was a challenging time that required lots of patience and creativity. Yet, despite these difficult transitions, some silver linings were found. Such was the case for Nick Cottrell.

“Nick is no shy guy,” said Christie Skope, laughing lightheartedly. “He likes to be in the midst of everything.” Christie is the residential manager at Sweet Briar Community Home in Endwell, NY, where Nick has lived for the past two years. When we asked her about the way things have changed since March, she reflected on how the pandemic necessitated many adjustments within everyone’s day-to-day lives, including shaking up Nick’s regular routine.

Nick’s favorite pastimes include going for car rides, eating out at restaurants, and taking sunny walks around the community. He enjoys the freedom of the great outdoors, where he might

listen to the neighbors’ dogs play or contemplate airplanes as they fly through the clouds overhead.

Up until recently, Nick attended a day program in Owego, which gave him a very structured routine. Five days a week he would wake up early, eat breakfast, and take a 30-minute drive to his day of planned activities. But after the pandemic hit, Nick no longer got to see his friends outside of the house, and many of his favorite activities were restricted.

It took a little adjusting, but Nick began to find things he liked a lot within the “new normal.” Although he missed seeing his friends at program, he now was spending more time with his housemates at Sweet Briar as they all did their daily activities together. Nick likes to feel included. Before, he was the only person going up to Owego while the rest of the residents spent their day in Binghamton. Now, they all participate together as a Home Unit.

But this was just one silver lining to quarantine; Nick also discovered he loved the freedom of having a more easy-going schedule.

“Nick really used to struggle with doing chores at the end of the day,” Christie recalled. “By the time he got home—between commuting 30 minutes each way to program and having worked all day—he was exhausted.” Prior to this year, Sweet

Briar kept a ritual of evening chores, such as doing laundry and tidying up the house. But now, Nick has the flexibility to do his chores throughout the day, instead of having to do them all after program.

“Nick doesn’t like to sit still or have to commit to one particular task for a long time. So this schedule has worked out really well for him,” said Christie. “It’s less demanding with deadlines, so he can do a chore, and then have recreational time to play games on his iPad or watch a movie with others in the house.”

In the future, Christie hopes that Nick can switch his program and join his housemates in Binghamton instead. “It would be nice for him to not have to take that long ride by himself,” she reflected.

Change can be a challenge, but it can also be seen as an opportunity. For Nick, quarantine definitely came with its hardships, but it also brought about many positive revelations for a brighter future ahead.



*Nick vacuums the living room with the help of staff at Sweet Briar.*



*Nick enjoys using the exercise bike at Sweet Briar.*



*Nick LOVES to eat (who doesn't!). Here he is enjoying a holiday meal during a recent visit with his parents.*





## THRIVING IN A PANDEMIC

*A letter from*

*Dave Cottrell, father of Nick Cottrell*

**108**  
DAYS

**4**  
MONTHS

**Mid-March**  
TO END OF JUNE

That is how long we went without seeing our son in person. Difficult? Absolutely. But thanks to the staff of Sweet Briar and Springbrook, our son was safe, happy, and even grew during quarantine.

We know every student, resident, staff, and their families had to deal with many changes during quarantine. We all handled it a little differently while making sure our family and friends at Springbrook were safe.

In the dawn of this new year, we wanted to say thank you and share why we are forever grateful.

### **We are grateful because:**

Springbrook was proactive, seeing the data for what was coming and planning accordingly. They were about a week ahead of most places in preparations. Ideas for staffing, online teaching, training, and support for staff, residents, students, and families were put in place with an open mind to change things as needed.

### **Communication.**

Sweet Briar was creative to aide communication between us and our son. Besides our regular phone calls, we were able to send pictures, videos, and recorded stories. Staff, in turn, sent back pictures of our son's reactions to seeing and hearing our voices.

### **Routine.**

When Day Hab was no longer a choice, Springbrook came up with a plan to stay as close as possible to a normal routine. Supplies were delivered to homes. Virtual training was set up. Throughout every day, our son had tasks,

household chores, exercise programs, and creative art programs to keep him active and learning.

### **Mind, Body, and Health.**

Springbrook found ways to take care of everyone. From coffee packages for staff, to take-out dinners at the houses, Springbrook was innovative in getting people items to be safe and happy at home. More importantly, they listened to staff and families for ideas.

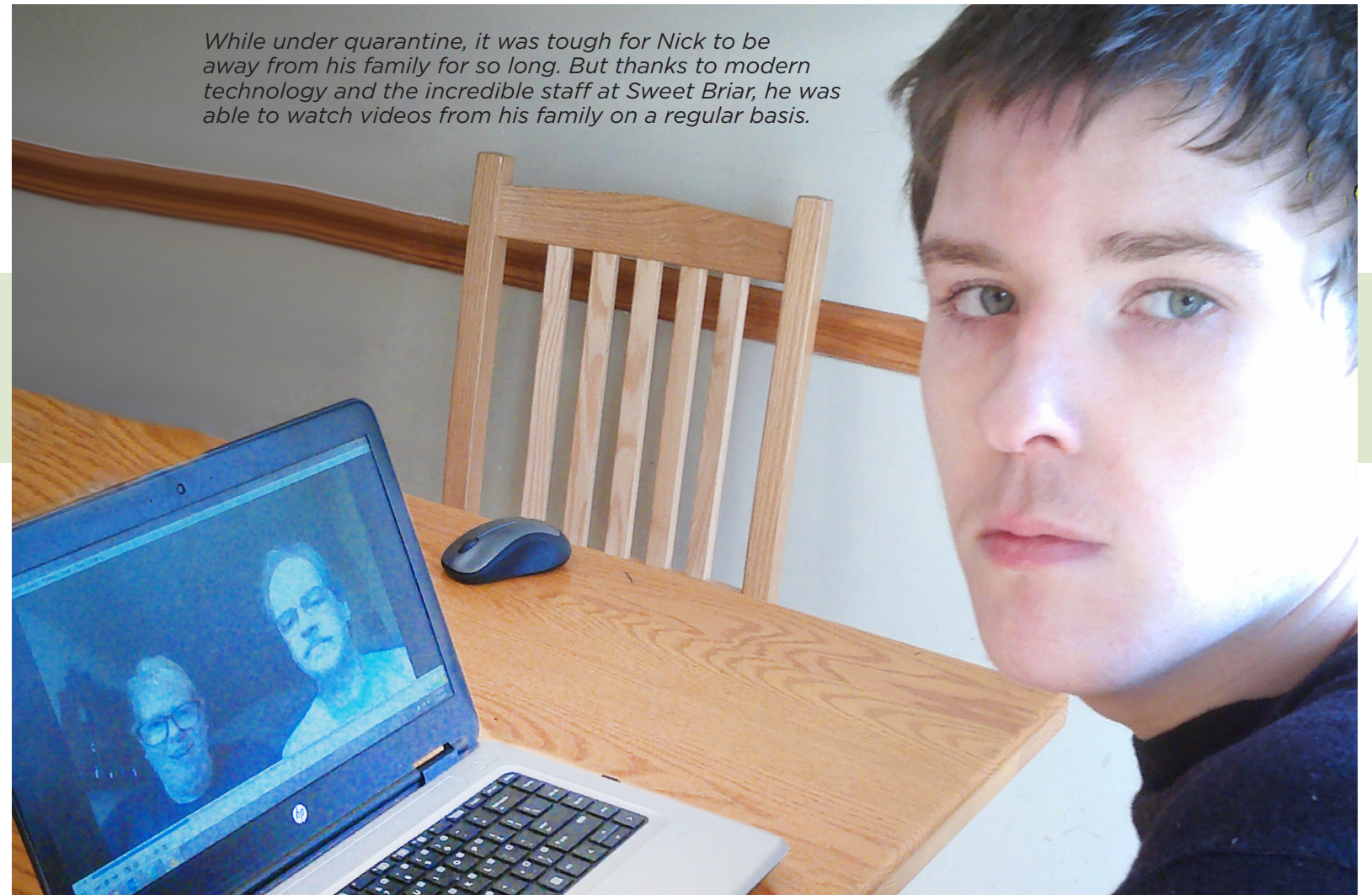
### **Clinical Health.**

Thank you to the wonderful Springbrook Clinical Team for staying on top of all the changes in health guidelines to keep everyone as safe as possible.

### **Community.**

It takes all of us to work together to get through life changing events. Living in this part of New York, we have dealt with blizzards, massive floods, and now a pandemic. Starting with the leadership of Patricia Kennedy, staff worked tirelessly at Springbrook to clean and set up their facilities to meet health guidelines, to train their staff, and implement virtual learning. They followed recommended health guidelines and set their standards to a higher level to keep everyone as safe as possible. They provided food and supplies throughout the organization in the safest way possible. Just as importantly, they also planned events like drive-in concerts, and distributed weekly spotlights on Community Homes. Reaching out to families weekly, daily, or hourly if needed, they kept us updated on COVID life at Springbrook every step of the way.

*While under quarantine, it was tough for Nick to be away from his family for so long. But thanks to modern technology and the incredible staff at Sweet Briar, he was able to watch videos from his family on a regular basis.*



### **Understanding.**

Whether it was in a webinar, phone call, or email, Springbrook administrators, house managers and staff, and coordinated care managers listened to parents about their concerns, ideas, and anxieties. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

### **Growth.**

Because of the wonderful staff at Sweet Briar, our son, Nick, grew during his 108 days of quarantine and continues to do so. He learned to do new types of crafts and puzzles, started using an exercise bike, stayed on routine to clean his room and laundry, and learned to navigate his iPad more independently. Nick also quickly adapted to staff wearing masks as well as learning to wear one himself. Finally, our son is considered non-verbal with limited words but an amazing thing happened for us as parents when it came to phone calls. Our son started to stay on the phone longer with us. If we asked questions, we started getting rhythmic responses and some yes/no responses. As parents, we were overjoyed to know our son was safe, healthy, and happy.

**108 Days**

*is a long time to not  
see a child. We are  
**FOREVER GRATEFUL** to  
Springbrook for taking  
care of our son and the  
many other people that  
they care for.*



# Staying THE COURSE

By Michael Basso

Moving out on your own for the first time is an exciting adventure. Moving out in the midst of a global pandemic is an adventure filled with unexpected challenges. COVID-19 has affected millions of lives across our nation. Despite all the challenges, through the turmoil and chaos that was 2020, the old adage remains true, "Courage is the power to let go of the familiar."

**Springbrook service recipients Will Sutton and Deidre Herr personify courage.** Will is an independent free thinker who loves to sing and play the piano. He is legally blind, but that has not hindered his determination. He lives at Springbrook's Walnut Street Community Home in Oneonta, NY, and chooses Community Habilitation services five days-a-week. Will has several friends that live nearby with whom he enjoys spending time (including jamming with a few!). Ask Deidre what she likes to do and she'll proudly tell you about her many volunteer and community commitments. "I volunteer at two local schools, the local Root Farm, and I am part of the local volunteer fire dept. I like getting out in the community and going to church." Deidre is also legally blind and manages a seizure disorder. She currently lives with her parents, Amy and Fred, and meets with her primary SDS employee, Claudia, throughout the week

Will and Deidre have each dreamed of living on their own. So, they sought out the help of Springbrook's Self Directed Services (SDS), to put the proper steps in place to achieve that goal. They plan on moving into their own place in the Cherry Valley area this spring. Pandemic or not, Will and Deidre would not be deterred. Will shared, "I would like to have more control of where I live." The home he and Deidre will be sharing was purchased by Will's mother, Lorraine. Will and Deidre have chosen Self-Directed Services as their means of support, through which they will hire a live-in-caregiver (LIC), and Community Habilitation staff.

Self-Directed Services ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families have the flexibility to choose the supports that are right for them. The program ensures people have the staff that they want to work with, the opportunity to create a schedule that matches their needs, and the technology and staff to support them at every level. Together with Housing Navigation Services (HNS) people can design their own distinct living arrangements. Springbrook Assistant Director of Community Services, Hank Lobb, is a New York State Master Level Housing Navigator who partnered with Will and Deidre to facilitate their living arrangements. Hank is inspired by the motivation and partnership of Will and Deidre, pointing out that Deidre's main incentive to move from her parent's home is because she wants to do so before her parents are too old to care for her. "That's a thoughtful and pragmatic decision," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically slowed the approval process for environmental modifications to Will and Deidre's new home. Modifications include, among other things, a bathroom rehab and a wheelchair ramp addition. Although slowed, they were never deterred. Will and Deidre will be supported with the following technology in their new home: Google Nest, Alexa Show, and a mounted iPad. They will use the rent subsidy from their SDS budget to help pay for rent and ISS Transition Funds to furnish the home. Will looks forward to going on dates with Deidre, being a more active member of his local community, being able to watch what he wants when he wants, and jamming with his friend Carl in Cherry Valley. Deidre looks forward to more space, more control, and the increased time she will be able to spend with Will.

Many lives have been negatively impacted in the wake of this global pandemic. With clarity and courage, and a little dreaming, Will and Deidre have carved out a little piece of heaven we like to call home. We should all be so lucky.



*The Cherry Valley house was purchased by Will's mother, Lorraine, and will be maintained with the help of Self-Directed Services (SDS). They will have a live-in caregiver (LIC), and community rehab staff. In the home, they will be supported with the following technology: Google Nest, Alexa Show, and a mounted iPad. This technology will assist with day to day functions of the home.*

Will and Deidre are ready for a place of their own!







# Celebrating Success SPRINGBROOK SCHOLARS

By Luke Moran

Since it began in 2012, the Springbrook Scholars program has provided employees with the opportunity to pursue their higher educational goals. Springbrook created this program to invest in dedicated employees who commit their time and talent to meeting the needs of the people that Springbrook supports.

The Springbrook Scholars program consists of two tracks: Springbrook Scholarships, which are tuition-free programs in partnership with our area's esteemed academic institutions, and the Springbrook Scholars Tuition Reimbursement option, which allows for more flexibility and self-paced study.

The journey to become a Springbrook Scholar starts with an application that includes a personal statement of intent and recommendation from the applicant's department director. The applicant is then interviewed by the Springbrook Scholars Panel, which is comprised of administrators from departments across Springbrook.

For this reason, admission into the Springbrook Scholars program is highly competitive. Scholars represent the very best of Springbrook—employees who are ready to better themselves and the world around them through dedication, hard work, and a positive attitude.

## WE'RE READY TO INVEST IN YOU...

It is an honor and a privilege to be selected as a Springbrook Scholar, and we are proud to recognize the accomplishments of these hard-working individuals.

As an organization, we celebrate the success of these seven ambitious, dedicated employees. Each person recognized in this piece graduated from their higher education program in 2019-20. It is our desire to help as many people as possible realize their dreams of achieving a higher level of education, and we cannot wait to meet the next round of Springbrook Scholars.



*The Springbrook Scholars program provides a pathway for employees to pursue their educational and career goals, thus the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the individuals Springbrook supports.*

– Kelly Suhoke, Talent Acquisition  
University Relations Coordinator



**Jamie Bliss**  
Residential Manager, The Pines  
~  
Associate in Applied Science  
and Human Services

Jamie Bliss was motivated to pursue a degree through the Scholars program after working at Springbrook for over 13 years. "It's home," she said. "I love the people we support and I like what we do. I believe in what the organization stands for. This is a place where I want to stay."

When the job requirements for Residential Managers were updated to require an Associate's Degree or higher, Jamie knew that she needed to take steps to not only meet the new requirements, but to finally take on a task she had been putting off for years.

"The degree helps me professionally in that it solidifies me as a supervisor," she said. "I am here to show my daughter that you don't have to go to college right after high school. I'm 35 years old and I just graduated with my associate degree. I'm going to go for my bachelor's next. It's go big or go home at this point. I have already started, so I might as well keep going!"



**Kristina Walsh**  
Special Ed Teacher,  
GEMS School  
~  
Master of Science in Education

"When I was getting ready to graduate with my Bachelor in Education, as a teacher I knew I needed to get my master's," said Kristina. "There was a lot of anxiety because I honestly didn't know what my next step was going to be."

After graduation, a friend encouraged Kristina to apply for a position at Springbrook, and only two weeks after beginning her career as a special education teacher at Springbrook, Kristina began to pursue the Springbrook Scholars program.

"Having the knowledge that I was going to be able to work and get my master's without having to worry about more student loans was amazing!"



**Michael Mihalko**  
SDS Coordinator Analyst,  
SDS Admin  
~

Master of Business  
Administration

"After working at Springbrook for one year, I applied for the Springbrook Scholars program, and I just completed my Master in Business Administration degree. It can be daunting thinking about working and going back to school, but Springbrook is a place where you are going to find a lot of support along the way so you can definitely do it if you set your mind to it."

Before committing to the program, Michael—like his fellow Springbrook Scholars—felt slightly apprehensive about working a full-time job and going back to school. He balanced work and school by meeting with his supervisor to figure out scheduling to ensure that all of his work got done.

Throughout his coursework, Michael learned the value of data, and is looking forward to applying what he learned to his career.



**Shannon Nadolny**  
Interim Special Ed Teacher,  
GEMS School  
~  
Bachelor of Arts/  
Education Studies

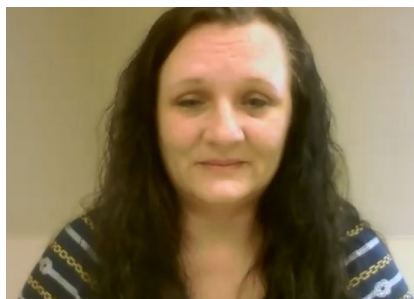
"I was a sophomore at SUNY Oneonta and I saw a table with Springbrook stuff on it in the student center. I stopped and the people there were able to tell me about Springbrook Scholars, and how after I graduated I could come work for Springbrook and they would help pay for my grad school."

Now, as a graduate of the Springbrook Scholars program, Shannon is excited to share what she has learned with not only the students in her class, but with her coworkers as well.





## CELEBRATING SUCCESS



**Shannon Carreras**  
Interim Special Ed Teacher,  
GEMS School

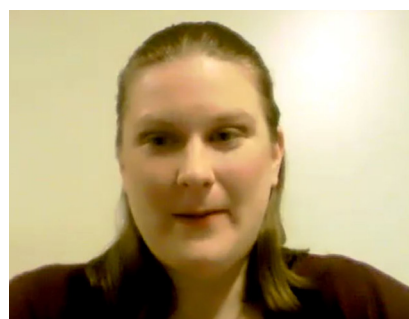
Bachelor of Arts/  
Education Studies

Shannon Carreras, Interim Teacher in the GEMS Program in The School at Springbrook, is proud to have earned her bachelor's degree and she intends to continue on this path towards her master's degree.

"I have worked for Springbrook for 11 years. I want to be able to use the knowledge that I have gained over my time working here to help the people we support, and I felt like being a teacher was the best way to do that."

Like many Springbrook Scholars, Shannon utilizes the Tuition Reimbursement option to help offset the cost of a higher education.

"I pay for my classes up-front and Springbrook reimburses me based on my grades. It pushes me to do better and focus on my classes, which in the long run only serves to benefit my job. There aren't many employers I know of who are willing to invest in their employees the way that Springbrook does."



**Holly Wilkinson**  
Special Ed Teacher,  
GEMS School

Master of Science  
in Education

After graduating with her bachelor's degree from SUNY Oneonta, Holly started working at The Golisano Center for Autism. Like many young adults, she was concerned by the thought of taking on more student loans in order to achieve her master's degree.

"I just want to thank Springbrook for this opportunity. I became a Springbrook Scholar shortly after they introduced the full-tuition coverage option. This was huge for me, because I don't think I could have afforded to pay for the classes up front. I was able to get my master's degree from SUNY Oneonta, and Springbrook covered the cost!"



**Katherine Orrell**  
Early Childhood  
Teacher, Preschool

Master of Science  
in Education

During her time at Kids Unlimited Preschool, Katherine worked with a wide variety of children, both with and without disabilities. When she heard about the Springbrook Scholars Program, Katherine knew it was something she needed to take advantage of.

"My degree has taught me behavioral strategies and how to best work with students in Special Education. This is such a great opportunity, and you can do it! If you push yourself and work hard, it will be worth it. I am really thankful for the opportunity to be a Springbrook Scholar."

**You can support a scholar.  
MAKE A GIFT TODAY!**

<https://springbrookny.org/your-gift-matters>



We are proud to recognize our newest group of Springbrook Scholars. Scan this code to view our virtual recognition presentation.

Senator Seward giving remarks at the  
Golisano Coming Home Ceremony



## Wishing Good Luck TO A LONGTIME ADVOCATE

By Molly Richtsmeier

After 34 years representing the people of the 51<sup>st</sup> district, we are wishing Senator James Seward, a longtime advocate and dedicated supporter of Springbrook, good luck upon his retirement from the New York State Senate. "It has been an honor," shared Senator Seward, "and I am so grateful to the people of our area for the opportunity to serve them."

Senator Seward's commitment to our region has been lifelong—he grew up in Otsego County, attended Oneonta public schools and graduated

from Hartwick College with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He was first elected to the state Senate in 1986 and he has been steadfast in his support of Springbrook and many other institutions since that time. "Having grown up in the area, I was aware of the Upstate Home for Children, and it has been very exciting and

satisfying to see that evolve into Springbrook and watch it grow—it's an incredible community," shared Seward. This growth and evolution is thanks in large part to his work for and advocacy of Springbrook, something that can also be said for many other local businesses, schools, and organizations that have benefited greatly from his dedication to strengthening our region. Many of his colleagues note that Seward was a friend to all of his constituents, and someone who listened and understood their concerns and realities. Seward shared that this, in particular, may be one of his proudest achievements during his time as a state senator. "I am immensely proud of our legislative achievements during my time with the Senate, but I have perhaps gotten the most satisfaction and pride from helping individual constituents with their problems. To be able to listen to someone's concerns and problems, and then to act on it and help solve the problem has meant a great deal to me."

Springbrook CEO Patricia Kennedy echoed those thoughts, noting, "He represented all the people in Otsego County. He did not ask your party affiliation or your status. He was and is incredibly knowledgeable of the region he represents and all the people within it. I was always amazed at how much he knew about the issues we faced at Springbrook, our programs, and the people





# SAYING GOOD LUCK TO SENATOR SEWARD

who were affected by it, and his memory of each and every meeting that we had. It gave me the assurance of knowing that someone really listened to you, was thoughtful, and responded with real help and guidance.” While Seward shared that it was part of his job to advocate for Springbrook, he also noted that, “he wanted to help as a senator, but also as a human being.” He reflected that there is something special about Springbrook, and that it was a pleasure to spread the word in Albany about all that the organization offers. “Whenever I visited the campus, school, or a residence, I felt the positive energy, saw the quality of the programs, and appreciated the compassionate care that is provided,” he said.

As Springbrook grew over the years, so did Seward’s role in ensuring our success. His support was integral in our Coming Home campaign and pursuit of the Golisano Program expansion, as well as getting state support for improvements to the Oneonta Campus. Additionally, he advocated for creating Southern Tier Connect, working closely with Kennedy as she continued to make the case that our region would be overlooked without a small, local Care Coordination Organization. Kennedy shared, “Senator Seward took pride in all our successes because he was a part of them. From the School at Springbrook to the Oneonta Campus, the creation of the Capstone Day Habilitation Program and the opening of The Wellness Clinic, Senator Seward ensured our projects were moving along and successful.” Tom Maggs, President of the Springbrook Board supported Kennedy’s words. “Seward has been invaluable in supporting and furthering our mission at Springbrook. The organization would not be as far along on its path without him. He is a great source of strength for all of us, and he represents the best of what we expect from our legislators.”

Throughout his distinguished career, Senator Seward has served on numerous New York State Senate committees, as well as many local organizational and educational boards. However, having battled and survived two life-threatening

illnesses over the past year, he is looking forward to settling into retirement and spending more time with his wife, Cindy, his children, and his two granddaughters. “I’m ready for a much less structured schedule,” he said. Yet, even with a bit more freedom and time, Seward shared that he is open to additional part-time opportunities to serve the people of the area. “While I did retire from the state Senate,” he said, “I have not retired from my commitment and dedication to the people of our region.”

On behalf of our entire organization and the 51<sup>st</sup> district, let us say thank you, Senator Seward, for all you have done throughout your three decades as our state senator. We are grateful for all you bring to our region through your selfless, generous, and dedicated spirit. Kennedy captured the gratitude of so many as she remarked on Seward’s influence on our community: “You live and breathe our beautiful area, Jim. You know our needs and support our goals, and you moved people towards their dreams.”



Seward presents the Women of Distinction Award to Patricia Kennedy



Breaking ground at the Golisano Coming Home ceremony

# Belden and TRIUMPHANT LIFE AWARD



By James Hansel

We are thrilled to recognize the winners of the 2020 Belden Special Merit Citation and the 2020 Triumphant Life award. The Charles A. Belden Special Merit Citation was established in 1994 by the Board of Directors to honor Charles Belden. Mr. Belden served Springbrook in many capacities, including 40 years as a member of the board. The recipient of this award has demonstrated a compassionate spirit and an unusually high level of care for the people served by Springbrook, as exemplified by Mr. Belden during his many years of service.

The Springbrook Triumphant Life Award is an annual award intended to honor and

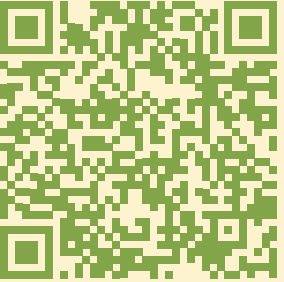
give special recognition to an individual with a disability who has a relationship with Springbrook. The Triumphant Life Award is an acknowledgment of an individual’s attitude and triumphs.

We recognize our winners differently from previous years as we adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 virus. Raising several health and safety concerns, the Employee Luncheon—a time to come together and celebrate accomplishments and recognize our award winners—was canceled. While we cannot celebrate these awards in person, we can spread the news of the 2020 award winners throughout the Springbrook Community by other great means.

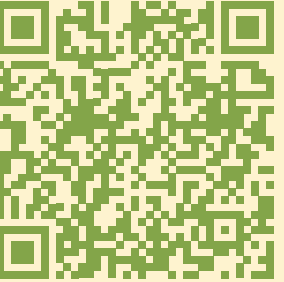


TRACI LANNER, BCBA  
Director of The School at Springbrook

We are proud to recognize our Belden and Triumphant Life Award recipients. Scan these codes to meet Deb and Beatrice.



Deb Carey, Belden Special Merit Citation



Beatrice Goff, Triumphant Life Award

YOU ARE AN INSPIRATION!



**BELDEN AND TRIUMPHANT LIFE AWARD**

2020

TONY BARBERA  
2011  
KATHY YAGER  
2010  
JOEL CURTIS  
2009

2012  
KAREN PALMER

JEFFERY DUTCHER  
2014

2015  
NICOLE VALENTINE

DORONDA CHAMPEN  
2016

2017  
JENNIFER GRACE

TRAVIS GRAY  
2018

2019  
ANNE HUTCHISON

*The Belden Special Merit Citation*  
**DEB CAREY • CUSTODIAN**

Deb started her career at Springbrook in 2006 and has been with us for 15 years working as a custodian at the School at Springbrook. Deb is complimented on her work ethic, and she always attributes it to her father for teaching her the importance of hard work. Deb tirelessly works to keep the School at Springbrook safe for students and staff by cleaning and sanitizing every day. If you talk with Deb, she always shares that one of her favorite parts of her job is seeing all the students' smiling faces at Springbrook. COVID-19 has brought many changes to how the school operates—changing some of Deb's job responsibilities and affecting the part of her day that she usually looked forward to most. "The hardest part of the virus is not being able to be around the students," she said.

In her free time, Deb likes to be outside and keep active. She enjoys riding her bike, going for walks, and just being outdoors enjoying the fresh air. Deb's friends, family, and colleagues will tell you that she is humble, caring, dependable, and truly passionate about her work. "Deb's work ethic is very admirable. She goes about her job with steadfast dedication and is decidedly focused on what she has to do and the time she has to do it. Her dedication keeps her scheduled, and she knows what it takes to get

through a day and touch all bases," said Deb's supervisor Kevin Morris, Director of Facilities.

When Deb found out that she won the Belden award, she wanted to thank everyone who nominated her for the award and express how much it means to her. "I was so happy and surprised. It shows how much people care about you and how much they respect me for what I do. I feel valued here because people care about me, and it is a family atmosphere," she said.

It's no secret that Deb is a hard worker, and her advice for current and new Springbrook staff is simple: "Just come to work and do the best that you can—make sure you keep busy—and enjoy every single day." Deb's kindness, passion, and positive attitude are inspiring. It's easy to tell that she enjoys what she does. Congratulations on receiving this award, Deb, and we are hopeful that things will soon be back to normal, so you can once again see all those precious smiles that make your job special for you.

*"Congratulations, Deb!  
You're very deserving of this  
award—it couldn't happen to  
a nicer person."  
Kevin Morris, Director of Facilities*

*Triumphant Life Award*  
**BEATRICE GOFF**

Congratulations to Beatrice Goff, winner of the 2020 Triumphant Life Award! Beatrice first came to Springbrook in 2012, around the time of the grand opening of the Tom Golisano Center for Autism—a premier program designed for young people with a primary diagnosis of autism. When Beatrice first arrived at Springbrook, she had difficulty communicating with others and transitioning from the house to the school. As Beatrice began to warm up to classmates and staff and develop her skills, her personality began to blossom.

Today, Beatrice is a recent graduate of The School at Springbrook and has grown into an independent young woman driven to reach any goal she sets her mind to. If you've had the pleasure to meet Beatrice, you'll notice that she's a fashionista and has developed her own unique style, topped off with her trademark accessory—an arrangement of hats. She is always on the lookout for new ones that catch her eye, ready to add to her collection.

Beatrice is an entertainer. She happily stands in front of a crowd to sing, dance, or share her thoughts and opinions. Beatrice also loves music. She plays many instruments and sings her favorite songs with her peers. She is bubbly and confident and, since her time at The School at Springbrook, has made the most improvement in her social

interaction skills. Outside of the classroom, you can find Beatrice sitting out in the grass, listening to all her favorite songs, socializing with friends (socially distanced, of course), and eagerly waiting for the time she can enjoy another Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival with her family and friends.

Beatrice has made many friends at Springbrook and leaves a lasting impression on everyone she meets—she is someone who will put a smile on your face. Maggie Reopell, Behavior Specialist at Springbrook, shared one of her favorite memories of Beatrice. "Beatrice would visit me in my office at the end of the day, and one day in particular, I could hear her coming from two hallway lengths away. She was singing 'Ice Ice Baby' and dancing down the hall. When she made it to my office, she had a huge smile on her face and got us up, out of our chairs, and we all started singing and dancing with her." Beatrice is so inspiring to others because she truly embodies the motto of living life to the fullest. She encompasses all the qualities that the Triumphant Life Award recognizes, and from everyone at Springbrook, we would like to congratulate Beatrice for receiving this award.

*"Congratulations, Bea!"  
Enrique Carrasco, Behavior Specialist  
at the Golisano Center for Autism*





# Good News ROUNDUP

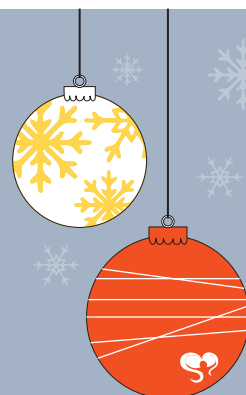
## WE ARE ESSENTIAL

New York State heard our voice! The people we support and our staff were included in the first wave of COVID-19 vaccinations! We are all proud to be doing our part, and we appreciate every letter, email, and phone call that helped make this happen.



## SANTA PARADE

Santa came to visit The School at Springbrook with a little help from his friends at the Milford Volunteer Fire Department. To the delight of the students, Jolly Ol' Saint Nick toured the entire campus on top of a fire truck.



## SCHRAMM BAND CONCERT

In early October, The Schramm Band performed an exclusive concert for Springbrook residents and staff. We are so grateful to John Anderson, President of the Springbrook Foundation Board and lead guitarist for the band, for providing Springbrook with this fantastic entertainment. John and his bandmates, Kurt Schramm and Mark Amman, have been playing together for nearly 15 years. It is moments and relationships like these that make Springbrook such a special place.

## BEWARE THE HAUNTED TRAIL!

Donors and sponsors made this past Halloween extra spooky and special for Springbrook residents and students! Springbrook decided to create a socially distanced Haunted Trail for residents and students to walk—and it was made possible by the community and our supporters. We are so grateful to the Fly Creek Cider Mill, Middlefield Orchard, Schneider's Bakery, Price Chopper Cooperstown, Price Chopper Oneonta, Marcy Birch and the Barnyard Swing, Nelson Mondaca and John Webb, and the Russell family. These businesses and individuals generously donated festive decorations and Halloween treats for students, residents, and staff to enjoy.



## 80 ACRES OF WOODS AND FIELDS

Donor dollars allowed us to create a new Springbrook Nature Trail for residents and students this past summer. This trail system is an expansion of the existing campus trail and covers 80 acres of beautiful woods and fields, including views overlooking Goodyear Lake. Gifts from our generous donors have made this vital addition to Springbrook take shape. From the equipment rentals needed for clearing the trails, to the trail markers and signage, printed maps, and the purchase of new machinery to mow and maintain the trail—this incredible project has been and will continue to be 100% donor funded!



## FIGHTING BACK

Roughly 200 people (staff and residents) have had their first dose of vaccine! We have 200 doses on order and are anxiously awaiting the chance to vaccinate all at Springbrook. Gordon Mumbulo, Assistant Director of Community Homes for the Otsego County Region, was the first person in the organization to receive the vaccination. Thanks for leading the way, Gordon!





# Donor DOLLARS

## CLEANER, HEALTHIER AIR FOR ALL

With winter in full swing in Upstate New York, our donors have been incredibly generous as we navigate the heightened concerns that accompany these months. A number of donors responded to our call for help as we set out to further protect the health of participants and staff by installing ionization systems within every Springbrook residence and agency building. Their gifts are helping to keep Springbrook participants and staff healthy by limiting the spread of airborne viruses within the environments in which they spend the majority of their time. Furthermore, they are mitigating potential viral exposure to our most vulnerable and high-risk community members who are susceptible to serious medical complications in case of infection.

## WORDS OF HOPE FROM PATRICK PRIOR

At the start of this new year, an inspiring and much admired Springbrook Community member and donor, Patrick Prior, shared his hope for 2021. Patrick's brother, Michael, chooses Springbrook for residential support, and Patrick has been a constant and generous supporter of Springbrook's work. Like so many of us, Patrick hopes for "the opportunities to see our loved ones in person once more." He shared that it has been over a year since his mother has been able to visit with Michael in person, and Patrick has only seen Michael once, which was in July. While this was to protect everyone's health, Patrick notes, "There is great promise out there—between the arrival of the vaccine and the proactive work of Springbrook, I feel hopeful that a return to some form of a familiar life is near."

## A #GIVINGTUESDAY FOR THE RECORDS

Thanks to our network of donors, 2020 was our best #GivingTuesday to date! We raised over \$9,000 on this one, special global day of giving. The generosity of our donors meant we could provide safe and festive seasonal activities and events for everyone at Springbrook to enjoy. A sincere and special thanks to our fall and holiday sponsors for supporting this day and the months that followed: Bryans & Gramuglia CPAs LLC, Westminster Consulting, Kinney Drugs Foundation, Health Direct Pharmacy Services, NBT Bank, and Chianis & Anderson Architects.



## FAREWELL, MOHICAN FLOWERS!

In January, we said goodbye and thank you to a beloved local business: Mohican Flowers of Cooperstown. Carol and Bill Waller, owners of this charming floral shop, have worked with and alongside Springbrook for over 15 years. From helping outfit our campus for the holidays, to providing the floral centerpieces and other decorations for our annual gala, Mohican Flowers has brought abundant color, beauty, and joy to Springbrook. Carol and Bill have retired after 50 years at the helm of the business, and Carol remarked that "it has been a true pleasure working with Springbrook."



## SPREADING JOY AND CHEER

During a time of significant challenges and uncertainty, the generosity of our donors afforded Springbrook opportunities to fully embrace the optimism and potential of the holiday season. With their support, we were able to provide holiday wreaths for every Springbrook residence, a Christmas parade featuring Santa, festive decorations on our main campus, a gingerbread house decorating competition, Secret Santa gift exchanges between houses, holiday activities during family visits, Christmas cookie decorating sets for each campus and Community Home, and many more experiences filled with laughter and happiness.

## THANK YOU, BILL PHILLIPS AND AIR TEMP

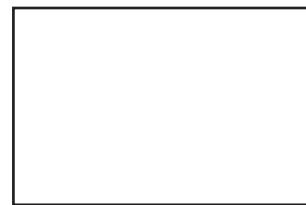
Here at Springbrook, the holiday season is a time when we reflect on the many relationships for which we are grateful. In December, we recognized a valued Springbrook donor, vendor, and board member: Bill Phillips, Jr., Vice President of Air Temp Heating and Air Conditioning, Inc. Bill and Air Temp began their work with Springbrook 20 years ago, when the organization was still called The Upstate Home for Children. "As Air Temp saw how the Upstate Home transitioned into Springbrook," said Bill, "it was clear that donating, through both our corporate contributions and my own personally, was the right thing to do because of how many people Springbrook helps."

## CELEBRATING GENEROSITY

During November, we recognized some of the individuals and families for whom we are thankful, and it was wonderful to celebrate the Vogel and Nelson family. Rob Vogel and Judy Nelson are both employees who also give generously to Springbrook. Rob's late mother, Lucille, and his father, Sam, have been steadfast supporters of our organization for many years. Sam continues their tradition of giving, making a gift to Springbrook each month. "My son has worked at Springbrook for a very long time," Sam said. "He and Judy would tell us about their work, and sometimes people don't see or understand how much of a difference Springbrook makes for families. It's just amazing to see what Springbrook can do for people."







MAKING THE DIFFERENCE FOR PEOPLE WITH  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES **FOR A LIFETIME**



*Josh, a student at The School at Springbrook, smiles  
alongside staff member Dayna Handy*