**September 2021 Monthly Newsletter**

**We Will & Always will be ESSENTIAL**
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When SILO had to close its offices due to the pandemic it had to figure out a way to continue to serve the participants of its many programs and services. They did so by holding several support groups over video conference. In addition to the in-person support groups being moved online, SILO added a “Connecting through Covid-19” support group. This group helped participants stay connected to each other. It gives them an opportunity to share their fears and anxiety around Covid-19. This group was held every Friday at 11 AM on Microsoft Teams. The Covid-19 support group ran for six weeks beginning in April. The group was facilitated by Kim Bjorklund.

They have also have added a women’s empowerment group where women can join together and share their diverse experiences. A men’s group has also been added. The Man Cave is a place where men with disabilities can come together and share their problems and experiences. It is run by Erick Dehrer and Justin Ainsworth.

SILO also offers an anxiety and depression support group. “Mending Mindsets” takes place every Friday at 11 AM via Zoom. It is facilitated by Kim Bjorklund and Erick Dreher. Weekly attendance is not necessary.

Erick Dreher and Alberta Galdi also run a mindfulness group over Zoom. The mindfulness group aims to teach its participants meditation techniques in order to, “live a more peaceful, happier, and empowered life.” The group takes place on the last Wednesday of the month.

SILO also continued to run its food pantry in association with LI Cares and Long Island Harvest during the heart of the pandemic. Participants who needed this assistance were asked to call ahead. Their food was brought to them curbside.

SILO also held virtual bingo games and an art competition to provide a way for the people it serves a venue to stay connected with each other.

SILO continued to serve its consumers through its various programs and services. The TBI and NHTD programs still worked in the office. They continued their work to allow those with physical disabilities and those with traumatic brain injury the supports they need to live independently in the community. Benefits counselors continued to speak with clients.

NY Connects helps older adults and those with disabilities discover which long-term services and supports they may need to live in their community. They have continued to provide their services throughout the pandemic. NY Connects also delivered food to those in need.

The Lending Closet at SILO provides durable medical equipment to those in need in the community. Examples of durable medical equipment include wheelchairs, walkers, and portable ramps. The need for this type of equipment did not stop during a pandemic. SILO allowed consumers to pick up equipment curbside.
​If you need assistance from the Lending Closet, feel free to contact Maria Patellaro at (631) 730-3737 or mpatellaro@siloinc.org.

**My Experiences During COVID-19!**
**Author: Margie Suarez
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When SILO shut down its offices in March 2020, I thought I would be back in person within a couple weeks. As everyone, I had no idea how it would upend and change my life. Since we are beginning to turn the corner with the pandemic, I would like to share how I got through the beginning stages of it.

After I came to terms with the fact that New York was closed for the foreseeable future I had to figure out how to fill my time. It was vital for me to stay connected to my closest friends. We decided to institute a weekly video call to be able to keep each other’s spirits up. These phone calls have been a light during this time of uncertainty. Whatever has happened during the week I knew I could count on those girls to keep me afloat.

The five of us all celebrated birthdays during the heart of COVID. Any other year that would have meant a celebratory dinner and gifts. 2020 being what it was, we had to pivot.  I was the first among our group to be celebrating a birthday during COVID. Honestly, I did not know what to expect. My friends surprised me with a care package centered around one of my favorite shows, Parks and Recreation. I was also surprised and touched to receive a video birthday message from my friends and family. When I received the email, I did not know what was in store. After the slideshow of pictures there was a message from my parents. Somehow in the weeks leading up to my birthday my nearest and dearest put together messages of support and love for me. These video postcards, care packages and video calls became how we celebrated each other’s birthdays.

I also was able to maintain a social life by virtually attending events put on by my high school’s alumni association. I had the opportunity to cohost an event this past March. I look forward to being able to resume in person events as soon as possible.

Another way I spent my time during 2020 was helping my nephews complete their school year. When their school closed down I was asked by my brother and former sister-in-law to help them with virtual school. It was one of the toughest things I have done but also one of the most rewarding. It felt good to support them during this strange time for the world. I came away from that time with a deeper understanding of them as people and a glimpse of the young men they will become.

  The Covid-19  made me rely on my ability to adapt. I would never want to repeat the experience again but I will never forget what I have learned and how I have changed.



Margie Suarez, SILO's Newsletter Editor

**A message from the Author: Margie Suarez**

Hi, everyone! I would like to take a moment to reintroduce myself because I know that SILO has expanded during my time away. My name is Margie Suarez. I received my undergraduate degree from Dowling College. While there I majored in Communications and minored in English. I went on to receive a Master’s degree from Hofstra University in English. I am the editor of SILO’s newsletter the New Beacon. In the newsletter I cover the goings on at SILO for the community.

​The newsletter highlights important people and news in the local disability community. A revamp of the newsletter and website is in the works so be on the lookout for that. When not working with SILO you can find me reading or spending time with my newly expanded family. In addition to my two older nephews I have a niece and a nephew that were born in April exactly a week apart. I am also happy to say that my closest friends and I instituted a weekly video call during the beginning of the pandemic to keep our spirits up. My friends and family were my lifeline during quarantine. I look forward to working with everyone at SILO to make the New Beacon better than ever!

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