

The Effects of a Global Pandemic on the Easterseals Colorado Community

Words from a Care Provider



"Just like everywhere else in the world, COVID came to Loveland, Colorado, and like millions of others households, ours went into a lockdown phase for months while we all learned more about the illness and how best to take precautions. Initially, I drew upon my creativity to keep the two female clients I care for by staying engaged with fun theme nights, special meals, game nights, movie nights, crafting, music, some outings, and the like. One of my clients who had attended Easterseals Colorado programming for many years prior to COVID, is the social butterfly of the household and quickly began missing her day program, her friends there, and all of the Easterseals staff! For her, Easterseals is her anchor in the community, the hub she loves!! The Easterseals staff always provided her with such wonderful supports, which on a daily basis, lifted her spirits, boosted her confidence, and her

self-esteem. And when times get tough in this life, as 2020 has shown us all, one continues to need those encouraging voices to know that they matter, have a purpose, and to remind them that we are all in this together!

Easterseals Colorado did not let their attendees down in that regard, nor let them fall through the cracks during this unprecedented time. They have offered my client one-on-one supports in the form of weekly phone check-ins. And during those discussions, our client and her Easterseals staff buddy chatted about her hobbies, her likes/dislikes, activities she might enjoy, and then like clockwork, a large folder would appear in the mail for her with customized activities to complete based upon the conversations they had. Additionally, Easterseals online classes have offered a wonderful variety of art, music, science, cooking, etc., and have proven to be a lifeline! Those classes have kept my client engaged and connected to the staff and friends she has missed so dearly during this challenging time. Not to mention providing a much needed safer option than attending in person, which I have needed with clients considered at high-risk for COVID.

When people of the future want to know the ways in which we fared during this pandemic, I think they would be in awe of how organizations like Easterseals Colorado were able to bring people together by adapting, and innovating in a myriad of ways to support those who are some of our most vulnerable members of the community. As a care provider, it has meant the world to see my client continue to thrive, largely due to this particular community connection. So Easterseals Colorado, I thank you most sincerely!"

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Words from a Client



Jeremy attended our Adult Day Program and his job that he landed through our Employment Services, which were both shut down in March. Jeremy reflects, "I was sad I couldn't go to work or day program anymore. Day Program is my only opportunity to see and connect with friends. We typically would do outings into the community like bowling, hiking and attending museums. This made a lot of extra work and stress for my host home provider." During the shutdown, our day program staff would check-in with participants weekly, host Zoom calls, and offer one-on-one socially distanced meetings.

Six months later, Jeremy was thrilled when the day program opened back up with limited capacity, and he even landed a new job after working with one of our Employment Specialists. "The Easterseals Employment Specialist, Kim Berg, started working with me in September. We worked on finding out what my interests were and job skills and things I might like to do for a job. I went on two tours of different businesses and picked applying at American Solutions for Business. I was interviewed and hired as a picker in their warehouse. The other employees are all very nice and I love my new job."

Kim applauds the experience with Jeremy's new company. "American Solutions for Business is a warehouse and ships out items all across the United States. It is a small company with about 15 employees in the warehouse area. They are very strict in following Covid protocols - common areas are cleaned daily, employees disinfect their area and carts after each use, each employee has a cart labeled for their own use, and masks are required and strictly monitored to be worn in the warehouse at all times. I am very impressed with the company owners and employees. All have been very friendly, encouraging and welcoming to Jeremy. He said that he feels like a member of the family. Today, they asked Jeremy to sign a birthday card for another employee and he is already looking forward to their Halloween potluck! The warehouse manager said that the company is proud to be an inclusive part of the community. American Solutions for Business is striving to be an open and caring workplace, an engaged business, and give back to the community."

Jeremy added, "I'm very excited and grateful to have been hired at a new job so quickly. I don't want coronavirus to shut everything down again, so I make sure I always wear my mask, wash my hands often and practice social distancing," says Jeremy.