



# Friends of Friendship Place

WINTER 2020



## 2020 Update

It's safe to say that 2020 turned out to be a year like nobody expected! Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world struggled to find a "new normal" that was safe for all, but still allowed life to happen. Friendship Place did some refocusing in areas of daily operations, education and outreach that allowed us to remain open throughout it all and provide much-needed mental health services to the community.

Our staff knew that in order to continue operating, we needed to keep everyone as healthy as possible. In an effort to do just that, we increased cleaning throughout the facility to include sanitization between games and member visits as well as a full-facility cleaning at the end of each day. We also knew that keeping everyone safe needed to be a team effort and found that educating our members was crucial so they understood the changes we were making and why we were making them. This was achieved through information sessions, fact boards and open discussions ranging in topics from *What is a Virus?*, *How does COVID-19 spread?*, *Effective Handwashing*, *What does it mean to have a "contact"?* to *How to Stay Safe*. In addition, modifications were made to the layout of the facility and the way programming was delivered to allow for increased physical distancing. One of the largest hurdles we had to overcome in keeping everyone safe was the Implementation of masks. The population that Friendship Place serves has a high rate of trauma and many of our members were uncomfortable having their faces covered or being around individuals with covered faces. Prior to the mask mandate, we encouraged members to use their time at Friendship Place as a way to get used to wearing a mask. We suggested they start with short visits, like 30 minutes for a few days, then increasing their time as they felt comfortable. We also incentivized those that wore their mask correctly for the duration of their visit with entries into drawings for fun prizes. By the time the mandate came into effect, 100% of our members were wearing their masks with no reported negative consequences.

Traditionally, Friendship Place services are provided in-person, as we feel social and human contact are essential to mental health; however, the Safer at Home order and the phrase "social distancing" kept many of our members who already struggle with isolation from leaving their homes at all, even to meet their basic needs. It was then that we decided to expand our online platform to reach members right where they were, in their own homes. We increased our daily social media posts to include interactive things like trivia, polls and contests. We posted links to TED-Talks and mindfulness activities that members could print and complete at home. We also let them know they could message or call us anytime we were open in case they just needed someone to talk with. The members who were attending in-person services decided to launch a card campaign and they sent monthly greeting cards to those members who hadn't been to FP in a while. The response we received was overwhelming! One individual stated she started wondering if there was anyone who still cared about her during this extremely difficult period. The very next day she received the card from Friendship Place in the mail and was moved to tears. She called to thank us and then stopped by later in the week for programming.

At Friendship Place we have always prided ourselves in the quality of non-traditional mental health services we provide. This year has stretched our creativity in all directions, including the type of programs we offer, their method of delivery, and the clients we serve. This year has also been a glaring reminder that mental health services are absolutely vital to healthy individuals and a healthy community. Friendship Place looks forward to meeting the ever-changing needs of our community in 2021!

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# Programming

In 2020, self-care became a larger focus of our programming. Many community resources that our members utilize were Affected by COVID-19, so Friendship Place felt we needed to give members extra tools to stay well. Some of the things Friendship Place offered were:

**Essential Oils Mini-Classes** that explored how scents can impact mood and promote grounding.

**Weekly Mindfulness Workshops** with Fox Valley Technical College OTA Students via ZOOM.

**10-Day Gratitude Challenge** where members were provided with daily writing prompts for them to reflect on independently.



In a year when it felt like so much was taken away at times, Friendship Place really wanted to remind our members of the things that were NOT taken away, such as their individual talents, nature, and painting.

Some of members chose to share their musical gifts by hosting live performances that included singing and guitar playing. A few of members now get together on Fridays at Friendship Place for "jam-sessions"!

We vowed to spend as much time as physically possible outside this year! Each month we explored a different local park for lunch & games. We also have the pleasure of being located near several of the entrances to the Loop the Lake trail for our weekly Walks for Fitness. Scavenger hunts and eagle watching also kept us busy!

Our long-time water color volunteer, Jeff Zdrate, felt very strongly about finding a way that art could remain an outlet for our members. While being outside created some unique lighting challenges, members were able to enjoy several sketching and painting classes during the warmer months.



Another thing our members struggled with this year is their sense of community. Unfortunately many of our volunteer opportunities were unable to go on as expected, so we needed to find other avenues of connection. Our members actually asked us to take part in the heart campaign! A group worked together to choose a design, cut all the pieces out and then assemble it in the front window!

Initially our members were staying connected with each other by sending hand-made cards in the mail; however, they realized they were not the only ones who were struggling this year and chose to send out appreciation cards to other groups of people who they thought could use some encouraging words—teachers of the Neenah School District and nurses at Thedcare Regional Medical Center in Neenah.

A large source of support for our members are their fellow members! To reinforce these peer-supports, Friendship Place offered random team building opportunities throughout the year, for example a structure building challenge on National Skyscraper Day!



The programming at Friendship Place has always intentionally included fun. When times get tough and mental wellness is a struggle, some of the very first things to go are fun and laughter. Ironically it's those very things that see us through the tough times. This year has been the perfect example! As staff, we thought it was especially important this year to find ways to inject fun into our programming through activities like Wii bowling, swing ball, and karaoke. We also thought it was important that we continue to celebrate holidays together and are very proud that we were able to host our annual Halloween Party and celebrate Let's Be Thankful in ways that kept everyone safe!



## Meet our 2020 Intern



Hi! My name is Garrett and I am in my final year of a master's program for clinical mental health counseling at UW Oshkosh. One aspect of the counseling program is completing a practicum experience at a mental health facility in the community. For my practicum experience, I had the honor of joining the team at Friendship Place. I was instantly met with positivity, openness, and fun! Some of my favorite experiences at Friendship Place include playing games, facilitating group counseling, and engaging in a variety of creative activities. Additionally, I appreciated being able to get outside and in the community with members any chance we got while staying on as a Summer LTE. Friendship Place was a meaningful and rewarding experience that I am sure to never forget. Thank you, Friendship Place!

## Holiday Wish List

- \* Office supplies (small notepads, post-it notes, white copier paper, large security envelopes)
- \* Masking Tape
- \* Postage Stamps
- \* Bleach Wipes
- \* Glade Plug-ins
- \* Air Freshener Spray
- \* Sidewalk Salt
- \* Hand Mixer
- \* Cake Pans/Cookie Sheets
- \* New Board/Card Games
- \* Gift cards to gas stations/eateries for incentives
- \* Bingo prizes

## THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

**Friendship Place would like to take the time to recognize those whose contributions have helped to make everything we do possible! We thank you for believing in our mission, our programming and the members we serve. You are directly impacting the lives of hundreds of individuals in your own community and without you, Friendship Place would not exist!**

Galloway Company	Community Foundation for the Fox	Amy Schneider (and Josie the
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\*\*Friendship Place is seeking new Board members that have a background in police/fire, marketing, and human resources. Please contact us for info!