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Embracing Change and Expanding Skills

What does it feel like to start a new school? Some of us experienced this in our own childhood. Maybe you recall what it felt like to get your first job or move to a new neighborhood. For children who come to Green Chimneys, as either day or residential students, the transition can be significant. Factor in the additional pressures of the current global pandemic, and one can begin to imagine how a family may feel about taking this step.

In August, one particular family drove from Oceanside, Long Island to our Brewster campus to help their 13 year old settle into his new dorm. Beau would start Mr. Torres' eighth-grade class in September and his family, in consultation with our clinical team, felt the last two weeks of summer would allow Beau time to get to know dorm mates and staff, explore the campus, and get acclimated before his school schedule began. The family had visited Green Chimneys previously but this time, Beau would stay and his family would return home.

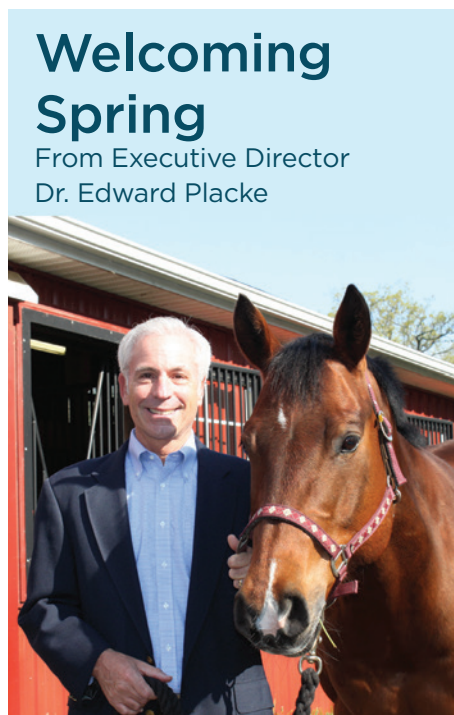
The path that leads most families to Green Chimneys is often a difficult one. For most of our students, the traditional school setting no longer meets their needs. Behaviors, emotional dysregulation, communication issues, and/or a lack of coping skills exacerbated by mental health challenges or developmental delays can severely impact a child's means of participating in everyday life. Recognizing the trauma a child may experience because of these struggles helps staff acknowledge each student's history as unique. At Green Chimneys, this perspective, combined with an individualized education plan and a specialized treatment team, creates the foundation for each student's academic and personal growth.

Vocational education builds skills and establishes future pathways for our students. See page 5.

I am pleased to greet the spring with optimism, renewed hope, and profound gratitude for our remarkable staff, students, families and the community that supports us. Despite the challenges of an ongoing and persistent global pandemic, Green Chimneys' much needed programs and resources have maintained critical support for our students, their families, and of course, our hundreds of animals and nature-based spaces.

This is a time like no other in our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to produce a degree of uncertainty, stress, and trauma in our communities and, it has brought out the best in those who are part of the Green Chimneys community. Throughout the last 13 months, Green Chimneys has been a constant to those we serve; children who were in need of emotional regulation, routine, and consistent support well before the pandemic.

Our commitment to our children and families has never been stronger. We fulfill this commitment through our continuance of in-person education, telehealth services, interactions with animals and nature, vocational opportunities, recreational and



Welcoming Spring

From Executive Director
Dr. Edward Placke

therapeutic activities, parent education programs, and the reopening of the Outreach Center in the Village of Brewster. These efforts to ensure the success of our children are a reflection of the seminal work of our founders, Dr. Samuel "Rollo" Ross and Myra Ross, which began almost

75 years ago. Their dream of creating a place that continuously adapts and improves to serve the needs of children, families and animals carries on across our campuses and in the community, and I am proud to lead Green Chimneys into the future.

Nature-based interventions and supports are a tale as old as our time and examples are intricately woven throughout every Gazette. Our students continue to interact with animals and in this issue, we visit the nature classroom at Clearpool. Through Beau's story, we gain an appreciation of how animal interactions help a new student build relationships. Excerpts from a Q&A with Michael Kaufmann provide a peek into how The Sam and Myra Ross Institute is keeping connected to the HAI community, and Green Chimneys' response to an influx in demand to help injured birds is highlighted. We also get to know one individual who understands the importance of helping children through therapeutic and educational experiences with animals: donor, board member, volunteer and longtime friend Michele Greenburg. I hope you enjoy this latest edition; thank you for support.

Honoring Our Founders



Throughout the nearly 75-year history of Green Chimneys, our work has continued to be guided by the original principles of our founders Sam and Myra Ross. At just 19 years old, inspired by his childhood boarding school experiences and a genuine devotion to animals, Samuel B. "Rollo" Ross, Jr. had a dream to create an environment where children and animals could live together in a farm setting.

With the help of his father, Dr. Barney Ross, Sam purchased a 75-acre farm in Putnam County, NY, founding Green Chimneys on October 27, 1947. Beginning with eleven students ages 3 to 6 years old, young Samuel Ross led a small staff providing academics, recreation, and a loving environment, with the unique experience of interacting with and caring for animals. In 1954, Rollo was joined by his new wife, a teacher, Myra Mattes Ross

and over time, Green Chimneys expanded to serve older children.

Realizing that some of the students, even the brightest and most gifted, had social, behavioral, or emotional challenges that prevented them from reaching their full potential, Sam and Myra enhanced services to meet their needs. Over the next several decades, Green Chimneys continued to gain a reputation for helping children with special needs with Sam and Myra leading a team of professionals to build an organization that today serves thousands of children and families each year.

Though we lost Sam Ross in 2018 and Myra in 2019, their memory and legacy are permanently imbedded in our work every day, and in our vision into the future.

Learn more about our founders and the history of Green Chimneys at greenchimneys.org/about-us

The Wildlife Center: Year In Review

By Dave Spillo, Wildlife Caretaker

In January 2020, the new year seemed to offer promise and excitement. Our new wildlife intern was learning fast and ready to take on her roster of students. The birds were well protected from the cold with heat lamps and wind barriers. The Wildlife Center was prepared for another winter but no one could have foreseen what was going to happen next at Green Chimneys, and in the world.

That day in March, when we were informed Green Chimneys would close to the public, and we would transition to a bare bones farm team, felt surreal. But in true Green Chimneys spirit, the eight of us sprang into action. For the next few months, we made sure the animals had the best care, helped each other in all the areas of the farm, entertained ourselves with daily socially distanced group photos to keep up morale, and proceeded to have an incredibly busy rescue and rehab season... one of the busiest ever!

In a typical year, Green Chimneys rescues approximately 100 birds and releases about 70. In 2020, we took in 180 birds

spanning 37 different species from Bald Eagle to Whip-Poor-Will to a tiny Kinglet songbird. Sixty of these birds were released back into the wild; birds that could not be released remained at Green Chimneys or were rehomed at other wildlife facilities. We received more songbirds than we had in a long time, and a higher number of baby raptors, as well. We also saw an influx of Barred Owls, young ones in the springtime and more recently, larger ones that suffered injury from cars. I gathered from other rehabbers, and my own observations, that our increased intake was due to reduced rehabber activity and more people spending time outside observing and caring about wildlife.

It is nice that we were able to help, and see people more active in nature. Looking back, our group of essential animal caretakers truly felt like superheroes, and the experience bonded all of us, as well.

Photo This juvenile owl was one of several baby Screeches that received a second chance at life. Over the course of the summer, it shed its baby feathers, learned to hunt food, and was released back to the wild.



We are deeply appreciative of our farm and wildlife team; their dedication and expertise are critical to the nature-based education and experiences of the students who attend Green Chimneys. We take great pride in also serving the public to educate and provide diverse opportunities to interact with animals and our annual Birds of Prey Day is our greatest tradition. In keeping with our commitment to health and safety, we have made the difficult decision not to hold this special event this year. Please join us as we focus on June 2022 to resume our annual celebration in support of children, the environment and magnificent birds of prey.

Being Aware of Mental Health

A Student Essay

Sometimes when we watch the news, we hear about a bullying case, a suicide, a mental breakdown, or sexual assault, we either just shrug it off or we just say "Oh" and we go on to the next story. But let me be clear; this is something that we all need to be aware of. "What is it?" you might ask. It's mental health. We all need to take it seriously. For the sake of our children, parents, relatives, or anybody.

Most people don't think of mental health at all. And some people don't even know that it's happening to someone they know. They never ask because, well, they don't

see it. Sometimes when I'm on Snapchat or Instagram, I see these memes about suicide and just pass it on, and I used to laugh about it. But I started to realize it's not a laughing matter. I see all these celebrities posting on their social media about mental health and, well, they're right. Think about it. Look at all the celebrities who have died at the hands of suicide.

Mental health is serious. I can tell you that myself. In 5th grade, I was severely bullied every day, to the point where I was suicidal. I asked for help and the depression may have been a side effect of a medicine I took at the time. But then in 9th grade, I was again severely bullied every day, everywhere I went, at my local high school. I ended up being taken out by my parents and the school. I became very depressed, suicidal, anxious, and wasn't

really happy. I was too afraid to ask for help because I didn't know if anything would change. In fact, I still have some anxiety, and sometimes don't know when to ask for help.

People don't think about these kinds of situations. But what if it was their child? Or their spouse? Then they would start to think about it. People who see posts on social media about mental health usually shrug it off. I get it. They might not care or think that it would never happen to themselves or their loved ones. Just take it from a guy who was suicidal and depressed, who fought his way through to get back to normal. We must all be aware of mental health and if you are struggling, I beg you, for the sake of not only yourself but for your loved ones, to get help.

Embracing Change

continued from page 1

For Beau, things had really come to a head the year prior to his arrival. Regardless of the love and support of his family, “ordinary” days had become increasingly hard for him to get through. To his parents, it would seem like things were fine and then suddenly Beau would be in crisis. It was difficult for Beau to convey his feelings or articulate needs so things would pile up to a point where, to Beau, it felt insurmountable. Beau’s many interests – sports, the outdoors, animals – no longer seemed to bring him joy. Words like “self-harm” and “suicidal verbalization” may be used to clinically describe steps in his journey leading up to Green Chimneys but to his family, it’s been years of struggle and heartache, mixed with much love and family connection, that brought Beau here.

One of the first things Beau showed interest in at Green Chimneys was the donkeys, and he asked his social worker Sarah Shenefield if they could take a donkey for a walk. Together, with guidance from Equine Program Instructor Valerie Parody, both Beau and Sarah learned how to properly harness and walk with donkey Reba. This was the start of Beau and Sarah’s therapeutic relationship, as well as Beau’s relationship with Reba.

As school began, and summer turned into fall, Beau became accustomed to his new routines. In school, he invested in his studies and wasn’t shy to embrace activities his peers were less enthusiastic about; Beau never missed a swim lesson!

He and Sarah began plotting therapeutic goals while walking Reba or taking advantage of other aspects of campus. Knowing that sessions could be difficult, Sarah planned them with Beau. They decided it would be best to sit with the goats when they met.

Before Green Chimneys, Beau ran track in his school district and relied on running as a coping skill when he felt down or upset. The activity helps him regulate his emotions and energy. To support this outlet and to reinforce all that Beau accomplished in his first months here, Sarah recruited a running buddy. Several mornings a week, Beau runs with Zac Staszak, Director of Recreation. This one-on-one time before the school day has allowed Beau to show off his speed and boost his confidence. Their runs take them through the farm and into scenarios not typically found on a runner’s daily route. A pair of turkeys in our Wildlife Center have become accustomed to seeing the early morning athletes; as Beau and Zac approach, the turkeys begin to run alongside them in their pen. And for Beau, it’s nearly impossible to dash past the goats without stopping.

Beau hasn’t been alone in establishing new relationships; Beau’s parents are our partners in his success. Green Chimneys understands that parents and caregivers are the experts when it comes to their children. As such, Beau’s mom and stepmom communicate with staff regularly. They actively participate in much of what Green Chimneys offers: family therapy sessions, as well as virtual training workshops and online support groups for

caregivers. “We love the workshops and getting input from other parents,” explains Audrey Linsky, Beau’s mother. “Staff is always around to listen to us parents and help give us the strength and guidance we need at times.”

Beau is making great progress toward trusting others and opening up. He’s begun expressing his feelings appropriately. And with Sarah and his team’s support, Beau is continuing to work on verbalizing thoughts, feelings, and needs to adults. There are times when Beau may shut down when he’s upset, as many teenagers tend to do. He’s learning to cope with emotions so that when he is distressed, he doesn’t shut *out* those who are here to help him. Beau has great insights, is motivated, and seeks to strengthen communication skills with his parents.



“From the beginning, we felt a sigh of relief seeing how excited Beau was and how much he loves the campus,” explains Jen Linsky, Beau’s stepmother. “We love working with our team and appreciate the love and support we get from the other parents. As a family, we have come such a long way. We know we still have a lot of work to do, but we are on an amazing path to success.”

School on a Farm



Beau’s story is just one example of how individualized treatment that incorporates nature can benefit children with special needs. Our residential treatment program and therapeutic day school strategically integrate nature-based practices into academics, therapies, and recreation. The Sam and Myra Ross Farm & Wildlife Center, also on the Brewster Campus, is home to over 300 farm animals, equines, and permanently injured wildlife. Animal-assisted activities, gardening, and outdoor experiences help students make connections, practice coping skills, and more. Get to know Green Chimneys at greenchimneys.org/school



Preparing Green Chimneys Students for the Future

At Green Chimneys, we work with students of all different abilities and all need to plan for the future, whatever their path may be. Transition Planning is critical to helping students get on that path and ensuring that they, and their families, are well equipped. When we talk about transition, we mean moving to the next stage in life; from school age to adulthood.

“What’s important for people to understand about families of children with special needs is that they want their children to succeed, they would like them to be independent, and move toward a productive adult life. And that’s where the K-12 system comes in; to help prepare students, and their families, for that level of independence,” says Green Chimneys Executive Director Ed Placke. “But navigating the state system is not easy and it’s critical that families get a roadmap to help them ensure their child gets what he or she needs. That’s a prime focus for us.”

Vocational Education is a large component of Transition Planning and focuses on exposure to career options and the skill sets needed to access them. As part of the standards designated by New York State, Green Chimneys’ High School curriculum includes Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS). Both encompass learning standards and work-readiness skills that are introduced as

early as 9th grade. Specific disciplines such as agriculture, business and marketing, family and consumer sciences, health occupations, technology and trade/ industrial education are covered, as are the wide range of interpersonal and “soft skills” one needs to be successful in any workplace.

Soft skills are a particular focus for Green Chimneys students, many of whom struggle with the behaviors and communication typically expected in day-to-day interactions. From active listening and learning to managing time to collaborating with others, our students work on these basic, necessary skills both in regular classroom settings and other daily activities, such as jobs at the farm, dorm resident meetings, community service projects, and even recreational activities. The next level of development incorporates awareness and hands-on experiences in various career options.

Partnerships with diverse businesses in the community are helping Green Chimneys students gain experience in a variety of settings. Several are working as sanitation specialists at Applebee’s and take great pride in putting on their uniforms and going to work each week. Students are also learning skills at other well known locations such as Gappy’s Pizza, the Brewster Elk’s Lodge, Palmer’s Hardware Store, and Brewster Shell gas station. In keeping with Green Chimneys’

nature-based focus, students also have opportunities at Boni-Bel Farm, with jobs in landscaping, farming and harvesting, and learning customer service and retail operations in the Country Store.

“Off-campus opportunities allow our students to forge their own relationships with the staff and become an integral part of these teams,” says Transitional & Career Program Coordinator Christina Henriquez. “These local businesses have been a tremendous asset to furthering the lessons taught in the classroom and on campus.

Learn more about how we help our students and their families plan, and watch for upcoming informational events at greenchimneys.org/transition-planning

Left photo Ronald works at the local Applebee’s each week bussing tables, helping in the kitchen, and providing a friendly, comfortable experience for customers.

Right photo Students Jamie and Joe are acquiring real skills in auto maintenance at Brewster Shell station where they do oil changes, and assist with state inspections, tune ups, and light repairs.



Top left Inside the Nature Classroom, student Daniel learns to properly hold a ferret with staff Maggie Pasquarella.

Top right Student Justin enjoys time with a guinea pig.

Bottom left Farm teacher April Fiorrenza poses with a bearded dragon.

Bottom right Popper Farm & Garden

Valuing the Outdoors, More Than Ever

If there has been a silver lining to the pandemic, it is that we have all realized what we value most in this world. Green Chimneys has always placed great value on the power of nature, and this has only been reinforced by the circumstances we live in today. When it became clear that outdoor programming was the safest approach to keeping active, the Recreation team, along with all of the direct care staff at Green Chimneys, took this to heart and made getting outside a top priority.

The desire to be outside as much as possible quickly took over the campus. Cornhole boards that had sat in the field unused all spring, had the grass completely worn down to dirt from all of the feet shuffling around it by mid-summer. Frisbee golf sets used only sporadically became the most in-demand items on campus. Video games were put away and children began hanging around in the trees for “Hammock Hour” or taking time just to walk out to the woods.

And students were trying activities they hadn’t before. Fishing has always been popular with a select few at Green Chimneys but before we knew it, interest spread to all of our youth. New fishing equipment was purchased and we developed staff training on proper fishing etiquette. Activities like bike riding, high ropes, and the climbing tower had more children signing up and participating regularly than ever before.

One student, Michael, became one of our adventure stars. Michael has always been active in our outdoor programs but it wasn’t until summer that he suddenly looked to the high ropes course and climbing tower. With encouragement from Residential Life staff member Todd Dorris, Tony Shenderovich from Recreation, and others, Michael practiced and moved past his fear of climbing 30 feet up into the trees. Once up there, Michael found a place that brought out the best in him and made him rise to other new challenges. He has gone from the person who would never do it, to the person begging to climb any chance he can get.

Every day at Green Chimneys, we see the inspiration and impact that animals, plants, and the outdoors can have on an individual. Our natural setting has been transformative and uplifting for the students and staff, and will remain as such once the pandemic fades into the rear view mirror, and our minds focus on our future.

Farm Program Grows in the Forest at Clearpool

From its roots as a day therapy program with only five students and a handful of classroom animals, the human-animal experience at Clearpool campus has developed into an important part of the student curriculum that incorporates a barn, garden, and nature center.

The Clearpool farm program's first full academic year kicked off in May 2012 with three classes, giving those students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience learning about animals and nature. Farm teacher April Fiorenza started with just a few guinea pigs, doves, and rats tucked inside a tiny classroom within the barn. As she continued to expand the program, tenacious efforts by the Clearpool staff relocated the classroom to a freestanding building that had served as a preschool, and offered a bright open space that was ideal for learning. Now known as the Nature Room, it is home to 20 small animals and reptiles, including a hedgehog, a chinchilla, a ferret, snakes, geckos, and bearded dragons. Students interact with these diverse creatures, as well as 26 farm animals that come to the barn regularly from Brewster campus, to study topics in animal care, health and nutrition, ecosystems, and the natural world.

The Popper Farm & Garden, tucked away near forest trails with a stunning view of sprawling mountains, is bustling with students, summer camp kids, and staff who are looking to spend some time with the farm animals or harvest fresh student-grown vegetables. Maggie Pasquarella is the animal caretaker and oversees the Learn & Earn program on campus. This popular Green Chimneys job experience provides students with opportunities to assist directly with animal care and other campus tasks. Clearpool jobs are available at the farm, the Nature Room, and in the garden or greenhouse where students can learn about innovations in horticulture by tending two aeroponic towers that grow vegetables to feed the reptiles in the Nature Room during the garden's dormant winter months.

Under the guidance and support of Maureen Doherty and the farm team at the Brewster campus, the Clearpool staff work to ensure consistency of programming and thorough attention to the animals. The students bring their own unique backgrounds and interests to the farm program and together with the staff, all are eager to see the human-animal experience continue to grow!



Top left Student Michael has been benefiting from outdoor adventure.



Top right Michael with staff Todd Dorris and Tony Shenderovich.

Bottom Student Thomas conquers the high ropes course for the first time with words of encouragement from Certified Recreational Therapist Ashawna Abbott.



Incorporating Animals and Nature Into Early Childhood Education

By Brandy Miller, Nature's Nursery Farm Teacher

The best part about working with young children is their ability to be present in the moment. Whether it's laughing, crying, holding hands with a friend, or watching geese fly overhead, children learn through the experiences happening to them, and around them. It's easy to overthink my job as their teacher. How can I successfully incorporate the importance of animals and nature into their young minds? Quite often, the influential impact of an animal or an environmental belief grows organically from a child's already sprouted seed of curiosity.

At Nature's Nursery, exposing young children to the natural world, as much as possible, is my main teaching tool. What have my life experiences within nature taught me? How can I challenge young children to see the world differently than they've been told or taught through stories? "Are wolves big and bad? Will snakes eat me? Bees are mean!" These are beliefs that I hear from my kids every day,



and showing them that animals are living, breathing, vulnerable creatures capable of connection, helps children see that maybe these messages aren't true.

Most children who enter our program come with a willingness or desire to see and visit with the animals on campus but some are much more tentative. Terrified of dogs, or hawks, you'll find these kids standing at the back of the group when a class lines up at the fence to visit with

the horses. There are also the fearless children, who come with their own magic, who attract every animal, or have an innate sense as to how to connect and empathize. Children watch other children and the desire to fit in, even at a young age, can often spark an interest that maybe didn't exist before.

Building bat houses; walking a goat on a leash along Tom's Trail; petting a bunny with a quiet, still body; helping worms off of the pavement after a rainy day; picking flowers but always leaving some for the bees; turning pine cones into bird feeders... these are active learning experiences for the children in our program.

Once children understand that their role in the natural world matters, they are empowered. Mother Nature and animals teach them boundaries, but they also encourage a huge responsibility to listen, observe, respect, and connect. When learning how their positive and helpful actions affect the world around them, children find compassion, and my hope, as their teacher, is that they carry this discovery into their lives after preschool.

Learn more about our preschool program at greenchimneys.org/preschool



Picture this:

Imagine that you have been taking horseback riding lessons for a few weeks now and have mastered the basic skills; you sit in a saddle, put your feet in the stirrups, grab onto the leather reins, tap your feet on the horse's side, and off you walk. Simple, you've got this. Now picture showing up to your riding lesson and the instructor has decided it's time for something new. There's no saddle to sit in, no stirrups to balance your feet in, no reins to hold onto. How on earth are you supposed to ride this horse?

Equine Program Coordinator Samantha Arevalo has written about the benefits of incorporating lunge lessons into the riding experience for Green Chimneys students. Read her article at greenchimneys.org/lunge

Funder Helps to Make Camp More Accessible to Local Families

Summer is still a couple of months away, but our staff is already busy planning fun and educational activities for Green Chimneys Summer Camps. Though camp may look a little different this year, we know outdoor activities for children are needed now more than ever. Our camps enable children to socialize and connect with nature while, for many families, providing much needed child care during the summer months.

We also know the pandemic has hit many families hard this past year, financially making it difficult to afford camp opportunities for their children. At Green Chimneys, thanks to our funding partners who help cover costs, we are able to provide access to camp for many families through an annual camp scholarship program.



Green Chimneys is truly fortunate to have foundations and individual partners who have supported the scholarship program for years, and stuck with us throughout the pandemic crisis. Their generosity and flexibility enabled us to provide some of our programming into the school year as schools remained on remote instruction and children needed outlets for safe socialization and activity programs.

The Barbara Apisson Testamentary Trust is one of these generous partners. The Trust is named after the late Barbara Apisson, née Serabian, who immigrated as a young girl to the US in 1915 to escape the Armenian Genocide. In the US, she met and married another Armenian immigrant, Henri Apisson, and together they ran a successful business in New York City and later purchased a 200-acre parcel of land and hunting lodge in Central Valley, NY, which they ran for years as an inn and restaurant called West Point Farms. Here she nurtured a strong belief in the healing qualities of nature and a life-long love of animals, as well as children. Following her death in 1996, the Trust was established that today provides scholarships to help children attend summer camps.

Green Chimneys is truly grateful to The Barbara Apisson Testamentary Trust. For information and an application for a summer camp scholarship, visit [**greenchimneys.org/camps**](https://greenchimneys.org/camps)

Isolated No More

Chris was an 8th grader at Mahopac Middle School when the pandemic hit last spring. His attendance was inconsistent and social struggles started to emerge. His grades were not noteworthy and there were stressors at home. Furthermore, Chris already felt disconnected from staff at school so when instruction switched to all remote, Chris found himself without any support. Now he was at home all the time with no break from strained relationships within the household, and he was spending endless hours playing video games. The inconsistencies of school and quarantine life on top of a fragile online support system left Chris feeling stuck and unsure of when things would return to “normal.”

His mother reached out to Green Chimneys to inquire about support for her son and they took advantage of the structured group therapy sessions offered virtually. Chris reluctantly showed up online for group but with each passing week, he

began to show signs of enjoyment in participating. When the Community Outreach Center reopened in July, Chris was able to meet his new friends and staff in person. He quickly became a regular, coming at least twice a week not only to get out of the house but also to keep connected to his new support system. Chris knows that he can get help with homework or find a supportive ear from staff, but he prefers to spend his time there socializing with peers. Now a freshman in high school, Chris feels grateful to have the Outreach Center to look forward to each week, and it is helping Chris stay motivated to attend his remote classes.

Chris is one of hundreds of youth in the greater Putnam County community being helped by free programs and support provided by our Community-Based Services. While the Outreach Center has always been a safe haven for kids struggling with stressors of adolescence and other challenges, the expanse of isolation felt by youth throughout the community over the past year is significant. The ongoing pandemic has only emphasized how criti-

cal positive development and essential mental health resources are for all youth.

Breaking down the barriers of loneliness and ensuring children have access to healthy in-person and virtual recreational and therapeutic experiences remains a priority. The Community Outreach Center is a safe, recreational outlet for youth whose access to school or peers has been limited or even decimated. Staff ensure safety protocols are followed so that youth can consistently enjoy the camaraderie of a group and face-to-face interaction, and find a bit of that normalcy we all need.



To learn more or to speak directly with Outreach Center Staff, please call 845.279.1467 or go to [**greenchimneys.org/cbs**](https://greenchimneys.org/cbs)

Donor Corner: Michele Greenburg

Horse barn volunteer Michele Greenburg works with a 14-year-old student to groom a horse. The teenager is speaking softly to the horse as he gently brushes its coat, “Does this feel ok?” Michele asks the student to reflect, “How is this horse telling you that it feels ok with what you are doing?” Encouraging the student to look at physical cues of the horse, they discuss the various visual indicators of the horse’s comfort. Beyond just grooming a horse, Michele is reinforcing to the student how physical cues, of an animal or person, can communicate feelings without words.

“Michele is a great example of how volunteers play such important roles here at Green Chimneys,” states Ed Placke, Executive Director. “And Michele’s many roles, as a board member, volunteer, supporter and advocate, enable us to benefit from so many aspects of her expertise. We are truly fortunate to have her with us.”

For Michele, it’s a natural combination of her expertise and her passions. “My husband and I came for a visit at the



suggestion of a friend in late 2011. We were so impressed we gave a donation right on the spot,” says Michele. Then in early 2012, she returned to Green Chimneys to generously lend her expertise as a forensic interviewer and trainer working with children, by providing training to clinical staff. Michele was asked to join Green Chimneys’ board of directors in 2013.

Upon her retirement as a clinician, Michele added hands-on volunteering in the horse

barn to her activities in support of Green Chimneys; combining her professional expertise in working with children with her love of horses. Having observed and interviewed children in her professional life, Michele is attuned to watching how children react to horses. “Children are able to regulate so easily with a horse,” states Michele, “and horses are so good with them.”

“The program staff at Green Chimneys gives me and my fellow volunteers such a great experience,” states Michele. “They model techniques and behaviors for the volunteers and are great with the children and horses. I am happy to be a part of it.”

And Green Chimneys is thrilled to have Michele! Although we have had to suspend our volunteer program during the pandemic, we’ve begun to slowly and safely welcome back volunteers. Throughout this critical time, Michele has remained keenly involved as a board member.

We are pleased to announce that Michele will receive the Distinguished Service Award on October 7 at our Annual Gala in recognition of her outstanding commitment to the children and animals of Green Chimneys. We hope you’ll join the celebration this fall; for more information visit: greenchimneys.org/gala



Gathering Together

Green Chimneys Gala

Thursday, October 7, 2021 • Brae Burn Country Club, Purchase, NY
Michele Greenburg, Distinguished Service Awardee

Though the pandemic has tested our abilities to stay connected during surreal circumstances, Green Chimneys continues to deliver support and services no matter the situation. We look forward to gathering with you in person to celebrate the children, animals and supporters of Green Chimneys. For details, visit greenchimneys.org/gala

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Professional Support During Turbulent Times

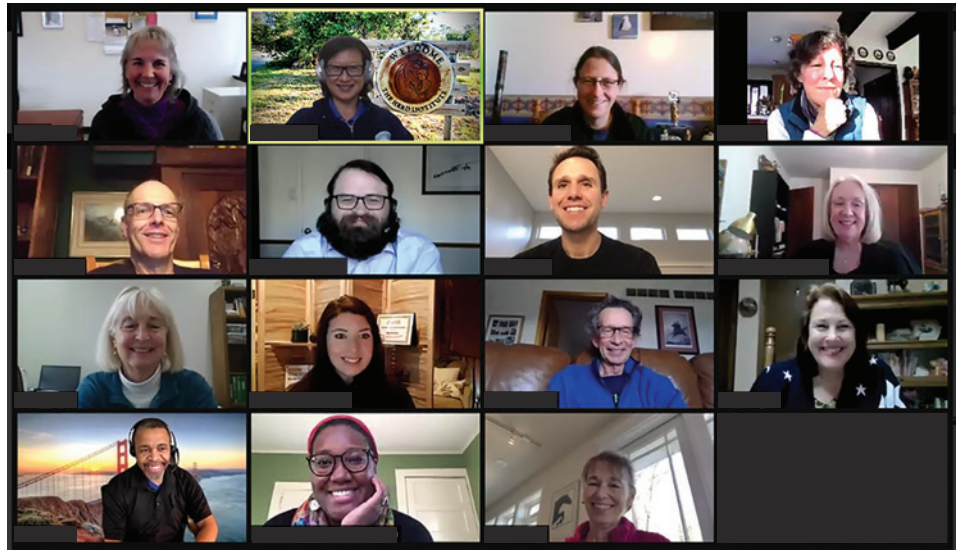
Over 14 months ago, as Coronavirus mitigation efforts began, Green Chimneys knew it would be vital to keep connected with those we serve. Administration moved quickly to launch online programs and services as safety protocols rolled out. Still, essential workers ensured the care of students living in the dorms and animals on our farm, as school instruction and full residential operations continued. In July, when day students returned for in-person classes, we knew that our students would also resume interacting with animals and spending time outdoors with their classmates – quintessential Green Chimneys experiences at the core of their education and therapy.

Managing these shifts continues to require planning and coordination across the organization and through it all, The Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys has maintained connections with the greater Human-Animal Interaction (HAI) community. Typically reliant on in-person conferences and peer organizations visiting the Brewster campus, The Institute continues to share best practices and be a part of key conversations as the HAI community grapples with the challenges before it.

We asked Michael Kaufmann, Director of the Farm & Wildlife Center and The Sam and Myra Ross Institute, to share his personal reflections on the past year.

Q How has technology allowed you to keep connected with the global HAI network during the pandemic?

A ZOOM has become the great connector. A sharp learning curve but we discovered how effective it can be for training and working groups in HAI. In the last few months, we have built real working relationships with new colleagues and the meetings feel as real as being physically in the same place. With this technology, one can reach more people, too, in different places clear across the world, at the same time. The concept of sitting in Brewster, NY, and speaking with five groups of 25 teachers, sitting in rooms all over Bangladesh in real time is amazing.



It's interactive and these sessions feel very real and connected, not remote at all.

Another big benefit: technology is allowing Green Chimneys' story to reach more people – to connect with audiences who could never afford to come to campus or to places where we may never be able to travel. Online connections are really an equalizer in sharing our nature-based approach to therapeutic education.

Q What is one of the most pressing issues the HAI community is facing right now?

A The most pressing issue for practitioners in human-animal interaction is sustainability of programs. Financial survival, retention of volunteers who have drifted away due to COVID-19, networks that have broken down, and human services settings that have had to shut down or alter their activity offerings for clients have an effect on that. Like professionals in most industries, those in HAI are worried about how long it will be before we resume work as we once did.

Self-care is another important topic. We discuss collective trauma, as well as how much pressure we're under as individuals. Both can really impact the work, especially during the pandemic when nothing is really "normal" right now. Self-awareness and giving ample space to process one's

own feelings is a challenge, especially since many are primed to "tough it out." In the HAI community, where many professionals are helping others with complex needs, it can be difficult for professionals to admit their own feelings of anxiousness, sadness, or dysregulation. Many conversations have led us to highlight the importance of self-care and to hold one another accountable to make time to unplug, breathe, rest, take a walk in nature, do something that brings joy. By taking better care of ourselves, we're in a better position to carry out our work.

Q How has the pandemic emphasized the importance of human-animal experiences within Green Chimneys?

A Throughout the pandemic, the seasons still came and went and the animals continued to need care. Our daily routine stayed the same and even with masks and social distancing, there was consistency on the farm. Restaurants were closed, social gatherings were limited, pretty much everything felt different but not in the barn. Among the animals, there is calm, peace, and a sense of normalcy. The students we serve often rely on structure like this, and we learned that our staff do, too.

Green Chimneys
400 Doansburg Road, Box 719
Brewster, NY 10509-0719

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Thank You.

Thank you for remaining a valued member of the Green Chimneys community. The care of our students and animals knows no interruption, and we are truly grateful for the support you've provided during extraordinary days. Moments like these were made possible because of collaboration with families, dedication of staff, partnership with animals, and of course, trust established with our students. Thank you for believing in Green Chimneys, and thank you for supporting our children and animals.



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