



# Summer Newsletter

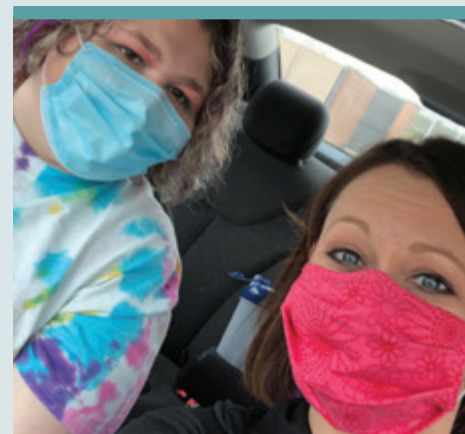
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# 2020



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# Dear Friends,

2020 has affected Achieva in ways we never could have anticipated. As the year began, implementation continued on a number of initiatives under the Strategic Vision Plan approved by the trustees in the spring of 2019. Considerable progress was made on many of the initiatives thanks to the diligence of Achieva's employees.

But, Achieva, like all businesses, was affected by the unexpected impact of a global pandemic. Progress on the strategic vision was temporarily halted, in some regards, so complete attention could be put towards keeping the people we support, and our staff, healthy and safe.

I'm proud to say Achieva's employees flexibly met everyone's needs during the numerous phases of COVID-19. While being faced with daily changes and new government directives, I witnessed development of new and innovative ways to serve people and do business, along with increased collaboration across the board.

Thanks to the guidance of a highly adaptable leadership team, dedicated employees, and supportive trustees, I'm proud to say Achieva never lost sight of its purpose and its vision, to help create a community in which "all people with disabilities lead lives of personal significance."

Indeed, 2020, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 public health emergency, has been met with an unwavering commitment to our core values.

Sincerely,



Stephen H. Suroviec  
President & CEO





# Achieva Brand Redesigned

In March, Achieva announced a new identity, aligned with the robust Strategic Vision implemented in July of 2019. Steve Suroviec, President and CEO of Achieva said, “Our new logo is innovative, professional and approachable, words we would use to describe not only our new image but also the manner in which we provide our vast array of services and supports.”

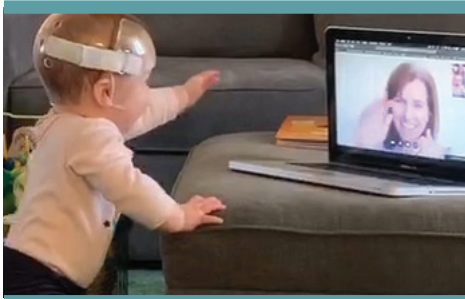
The vibrant logo and a new tagline, “Empowering People With Disabilities,” convey a friendly, inviting tone. As a nod to Achieva’s prior logo, an updated star graphic is a subtle reference to Achieva’s family of organizations: Achieva Family Trust, Achieva Resource, Achieva Support, and The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh.

“We realized early on in our research, with the help of the Achieva team, that the redesigned brand would need to clearly communicate both the depth and breadth of the supports it provides in the region,” said Sarah Mayer, partner and owner of Shift Collaborative, the firm hired to provide a brand solution. “The new logo is designed to work seamlessly across digital and physical mediums. The refreshed wordmark communicates a feeling of positivity and the star icon signifies the many programs and life-long supports that come together to serve clients.”

## The Achieva brand is more than a logo.

Our brand represents our experience and passion for supporting the disability community.

# Early Intervention Launches Tele-Intervention



Achieva Early Intervention provides vital therapeutic services to children who have developmental disabilities or delays. In light of the Coronavirus pandemic, these services proved difficult to provide, as they are usually performed in the child's home, daycare, or wherever the family and therapist decide is the most familiar place for the child to receive them.

The state early intervention program opted to suspend face-to-face services but thankfully acted quickly to allow and implement tele-intervention. An expedient response by Achieva Early Intervention allowed all families to opt in to the new system of therapy. The majority of families chose the service and the feedback from both therapists and families has been great. Some therapists have noted it really requires the parents to be engaged in the session since the therapist is not physically present and it reinforces the “family-based coaching” model that Achieva Early Intervention uses.

*Patrick, Elaine, and Louise McConnell are just one of the many families receiving therapy services from Achieva's Early Intervention team. Patrick and Elaine remarked, “Tele-intervention has been a great way to keep up Louise's progress. Jimmi, our Achieva Early Intervention Physical Therapist, seamlessly transitioned her therapy sessions over to FaceTime during the face-to-face suspension; we are so happy we have the option to use this platform so Louise can continue to receive her early intervention services.”*





Louise McConnell benefits from tele-intervention offered by Jimmi, their Achieva Early Intervention Physical Therapist.

## Creativity Increases Connections

During the past few months, we have all tried to stay connected to our family and friends. Achieva Home and Community Supports was no exception. They adapted by offering new ways to meet the challenges of communication with staff and friends. Employees developed opportunities available via Zoom for the people supported by Achieva to stay in touch, to learn, and to grow in new ways.

Utilizing Google and the Home and Community Supports calendar, activities such as Origami, Scenic Park Tours, and Zentangle drawing were offered and gave those with an interest in art and travel an opportunity to learn and grow their talents together. Fitness enthusiasts

took part in online classes led by an Achieva Life Coach that is a certified group fitness instructor. Social groups were formed that continue to meet one hour a day to discuss current events, weekend plans, and just about any topic that comes to mind! Finally, bingo and karaoke sessions became quite popular for social butterflies!

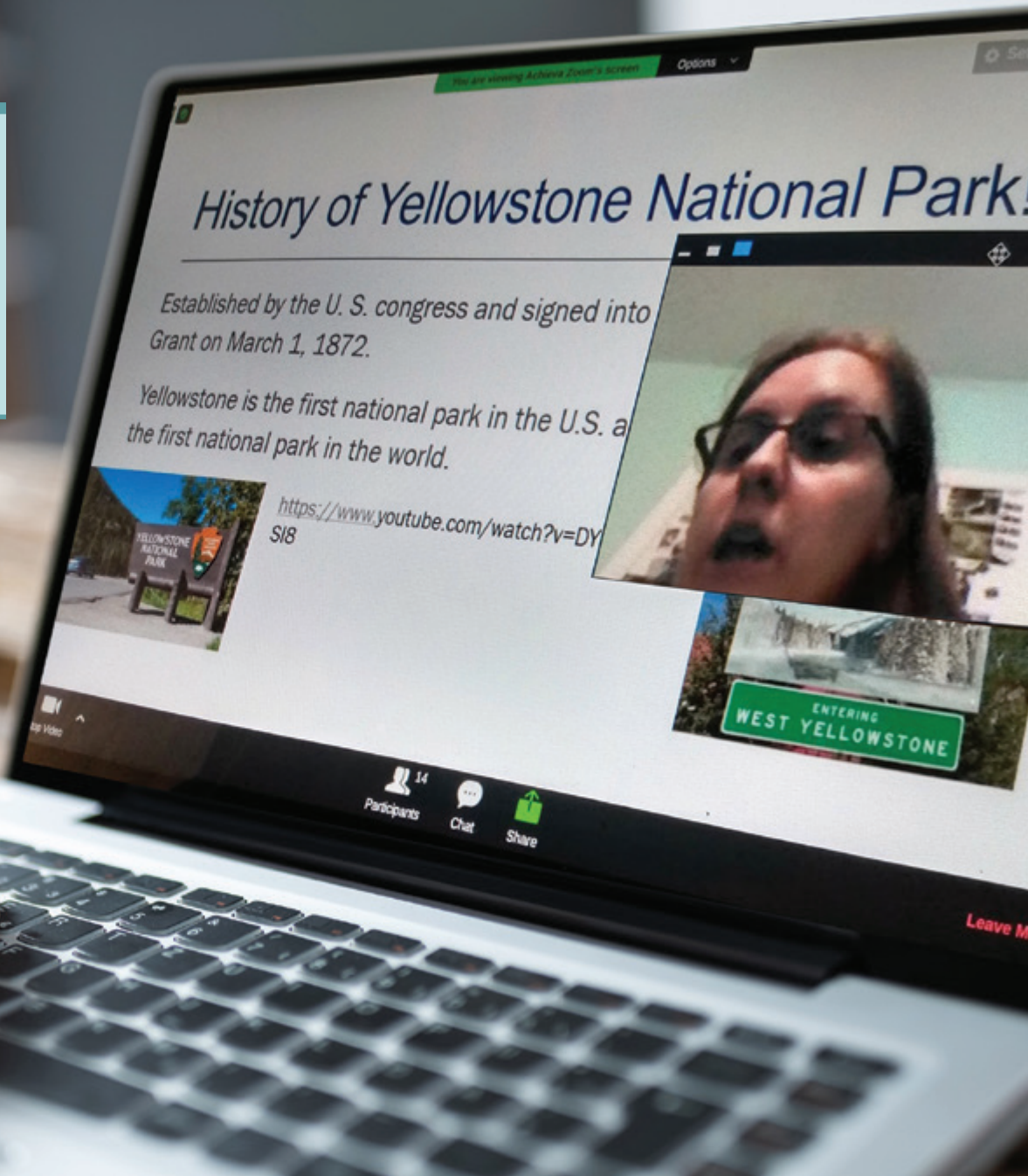
Through all of this effort and coordination from Home and Community staff, people stayed connected and developed new friendships. Those who participated planned an in-person get together too!

These challenging times have led to new and creative ways to provide support and Achieva is thrilled to see the confidence and leadership that people have developed - some are even leading their own classes!

By stepping up to stay connected, those utilizing Home and Community Supports benefited from engaging activities and conversations during an otherwise challenging time.



Sierra Wechtenhiser  
created and presented  
an engaging tour of  
Yellowstone National Park  
for a Home and Community  
Supports Zoom group.



# Advocacy And Protective Services Face Unprecedented Issues

COVID-19 created unprecedented issues for Achieva/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh's Advocacy and Older Adult Protective Services teams. Between March and May, the latter took 171 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and conducted virtual investigations; while the former facilitated 74 virtual Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and 13 mediations. The advocacy team also worked with other state and national disability advocacy organizations to fight two issues that could have had dire consequences: state-sanctioned medical treatment rationing that adversely impacted people with disabilities and denying access

to family and direct support professionals upon admission of patients with an intellectual disability.

On March 22, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) issued "Interim Pennsylvania Crisis Standards of Care for Pandemic Guidelines", the purpose of which was to "guide the allocation of patient care resources," including ventilators, during the pandemic when demand exceeds the supply. This guidance placed the lives of people with disabilities at a disadvantage relative to other people who didn't have a disability, placing them at risk and in violation of the Americans with Disabilities

Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. On March 27, 2020, the Medical Assistance Advisory Committee of the Commonwealth of PA (Nancy Murray, President, The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, is a member) passed a resolution that state guidelines must ensure patients are not discriminated against due to their Medical Assistance insurance status and people with disabilities are not given lower priority. On April 3, 2020, Achieva signed onto a complaint by Disability Rights PA to the Director of Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services challenging the Commonwealth's "Guidelines." On April 16,

2020, OCR announced PA had made significant changes to its “Guidelines,” specifically that “no one can be denied care based on stereotypes, assessments of quality of life or judgements about a person’s worth, based on disabilities.”

**Should a hospital prevent a DSP or family member from accompanying a person with a disability during admission, call the Disability Rights PA Hotline, 800-692-7443 x 402 for assistance.**

People with disabilities also faced another frightening issue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals had generally enacted “no visitor” policies to contain the spread of the virus, but these policies

discriminated against people with disabilities who required support from a family member or a direct support professional to effectively communicate with medical staff, make healthcare decisions, and receive emotional support. Achieva/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh reached out to the Office of Developmental Programs, Disability Rights PA, and the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania to strongly advocate against such policies. Finally, on May 23, 2020 the PA Department of Health updated its “Guidance on Hospitals’ Responses to COVID-19,” which states: “While hospitals are entitled to discretion in the implementation of visitor policies, the terms of those policies must adhere to Federal and State law. Specifically, a hospital, through its visitor

policy, cannot deny access to an attendant, caregiver or family member of a patient who has an intellectual, developmental or cognitive disability, communication barrier, or behavioral concerns.” Should a person with a disability be denied support from a direct support professional or family member, call the Disability Rights PA Hotline, 800-692-7443 x 402 for assistance.

And, on June 9, 2020, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services announced a resolution making clear that federal law requires hospitals and the state agencies overseeing them to modify policies to ensure patients with disabilities can safely access the in-person supports needed to benefit from medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic.





**Achieva offers multiple levels of residential support to meets the needs of everyone. George recently moved into his own home and now values the independence balanced with appropriate levels of assistance.**

# The Steps To A New Home

On his way to an evening shift, George's Direct Support Professional (DSP) strode up the steps and knocked at the door of George's new home, a townhouse in Greensburg. George's proud expression indicated something significant had happened.

George greeted him with the following statement, "I went to CVS by myself and bought this CD player after my old one broke... I walked there!" George was studying the face of his DSP as if he were in a poker game, attempting to discern his true feelings.

Waiting anxiously for a response, George expected to be reprimanded for failing to ask

permission. Instead, he heard the concise words, "Great!" and "Wonderful!" George smiled and said, "I'm going to do it again!"

Living on his own with less staff support in the community of his choice was the first step to more independence and responsibility for George. He chose his own DSPs. He customized his medication system and started washing his clothes. And yes, he used his well-earned money to walk to the store and purchase a brand new CD player.

He now enjoys a shorter commute to his job at the DeLallo Distribution Center where has worked for nearly 15

years. And, he can now walk to his seat, as an officer, with the Knights of Columbus.

George loves having his own space; he values the privacy. But, when he needs some extra assistance, he knows Achieva will be there to support him.

Choosing to live independently was a big step for George, and perhaps for his DSPs, too. Ultimately, each step has led to a better path for George towards his life of personal significance.





Irene communicates with her mother Kathy using her new Samsung Tablet. Kathy was thrilled to communicate with her daughter. "Although we talk several times a day, the tablet makes it feel as if we are together - even though we're apart."

# Rosenthal Fund Surprises Gift Recipients

Over 70 recipients of Achieva home and community services received a Samsung Tablet, courtesy of the Cecil and David Rosenthal Memorial Fund (Rosenthal Fund) to provide a creative outlet and way to stay in contact with family and friends while travel, outside activities, and visitors were restricted due to COVID-19.

Joy and Elie Rosenthal, Cecil and David's parents, were heartened that the Achieva Fund created and named in their sons' memories was able to touch so many people. "We're very proud. These tablets offer a way to talk, engage, and learn. If Cecil and David were here, they would have loved this opportunity,"

Joy and Elie said. "David would have been anxious to go out, and Cecil would have been worried about everyone else. We know these are difficult times. These gifts help the recipients to make it through," Joy and Elie continued.

During Pennsylvania's stay-at-home order in the early months of the pandemic, disability service providers like Achieva instituted temporary "no visitor" policies to some residential services to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus to vulnerable populations. The tablets offered a means to entertain and engage with people outside the home during this period of social distancing. Tablet recipients now have

the opportunity to connect with friends and loved ones via remote video chats. Also, recipients are participating in online events such as concerts, yoga classes, and religious gatherings. Online games are another popular choice of users whose devices are customized with the apps that match their interests.

*Rosenthal Fund resources may be used for items, programs and/or supports to assist people with I/DD.*

**Apply at**  
**[achieva.info/cecilanddavid](https://achieva.info/cecilanddavid)**

## Business Operations Relied Upon

Amidst a time when the pandemic shuttered many workplaces, Achieva's Business Operations persevered. The pallet and packhouse business in Bridgeville and Achieva's cleaning and janitorial (C&J) business were relied on for their essential services.

The pallet business has been instrumental during the COVID-19 crisis, making sure essential business customers who provide medical supplies and other critical infrastructure can continue without interruption to their supply chain. The pallets produced are needed by transportation companies like FedEx to transport medical equipment and pharmaceuticals shipped

by Bayer as well as electrical equipment shipped by First Energy. In the packhouse, contracts packaging Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand sanitizers, and masks were secured.

Achieva's cleaning and janitorial business stepped up to provide increased cleaning services to their essential customers. In addition to keeping Achieva's offices safe and sanitized, they provided added hours to many essential companies, including several police stations, offices at the Pittsburgh International Airport, the Marine Reserve Center in North Versailles, and the TAC 911th Airlift Wing Airbase in Coraopolis.



The pallet operation and packhouse are vital links in the supply chain to make sure important cargo and supplies can arrive at their destinations. The C&J team members have been heroes during the pandemic, sanitizing essential businesses and keeping their employees protected.



On July 3rd, Achieva's VaultArt Studio kicked off its third anniversary on Penn Avenue. The online exhibition is aptly titled VaultArt III. In a time of transitions, the artists reflect on what they've accomplished, why they're here, and how to move forward.

The newest online exhibition features twenty-three original, never-before-seen master works made in the studio and at home. VaultArt III also debuts video, audio, and text-based interviews with each artist, asking them what it means to be a part of Pittsburgh's most essential arts district.

**VaultArt III is live throughout July 2020.  
Visit [www.vaultartstudio.org/III](http://www.vaultartstudio.org/III) to see why,  
now more than ever, this community matters.**

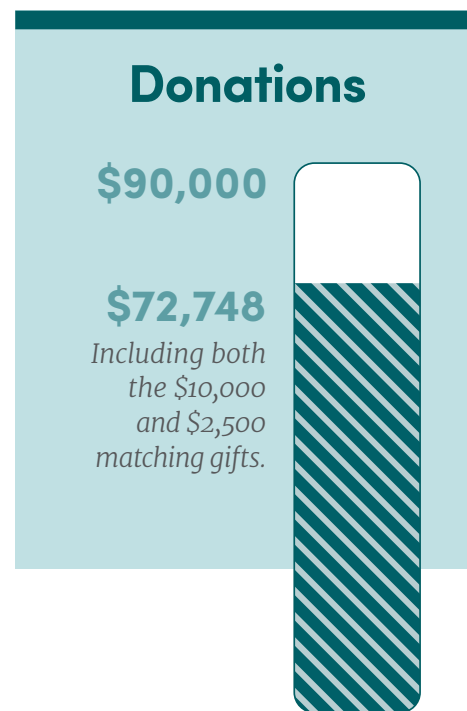


# Generous Donors Help Protect Achieva

Thank you to those who have donated to the #ProtectAchieva campaign! YOU have helped to secure over 25,000 pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to protect people with disabilities and Achieva staff. Because of you, Achieva can continue serving the people we support and the direct support professionals working alongside them every day.

A special thank you to both the McDowell Family Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation and Achieva Board Chair, Mary Richter and husband Bill, for their generous challenge grants of \$10,000 and \$2,500 respectively. Because of your support, Achieva was able to secure the full match for both challenge grants!

As we've all learned more about how easy it is for COVID-19 to spread, and the devastation that's possible for people with underlying medical conditions, Achieva will continue to build its inventory of PPE in anticipation of additional challenges from this pandemic in the upcoming months ahead. In doing so, expenses for PPE will continue to mount and we must work to absorb the cost of this life-saving protective equipment. Achieva has established an updated goal of \$90,000 and we continue to ask for your support to keep people with disabilities and our valued Direct Support Professionals safe and healthy during this unprecedented time.



**Check the current campaign status or make a donation at [achieva.info/protectachieva](https://achieva.info/protectachieva)**





## See how donations have helped to protect both the people we support and our direct support professionals:

- 17,000 Surgical Masks
- 50 Cases of Isolation Gowns
- 2,000 N95 Masks
- 100 Cases of Gloves
- 100 Pairs of Goggles
- 1,000 Face Shields
- 12,000 Cloth Masks
- 500 Body Suits and Hats
- 1,000 Bottles of Hand Sanitizer
- 70 Electric Thermometers

## Thank You!

**In addition to monetary donations, many seamstresses devoted time and resources to create homemade face coverings.**

*The official registration and financial information of Achieva may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*

## Service Project Benefits Local Families



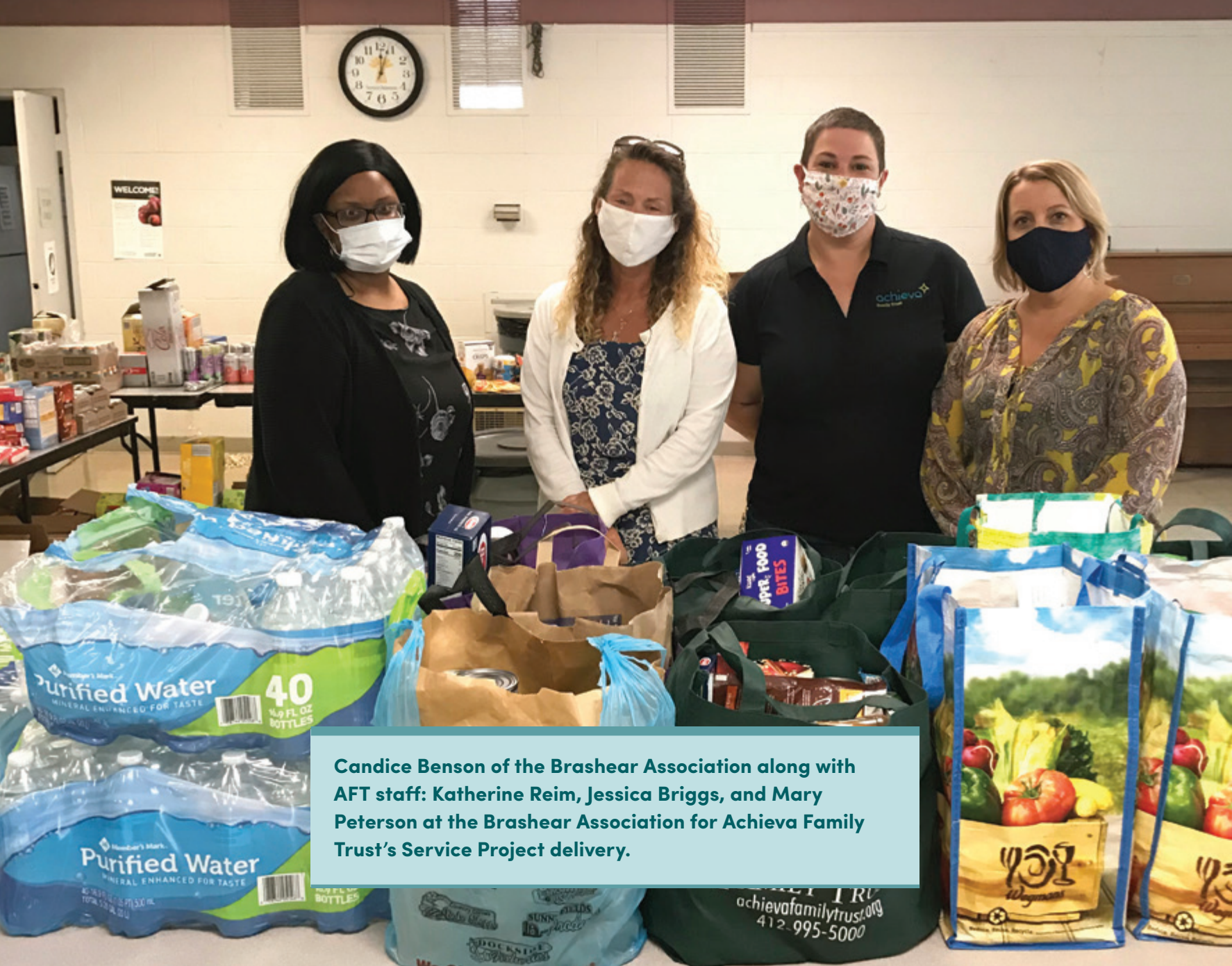
Achieva Family Trust's Katherine Reim wanted to do something to help families that have been affected by lost wages due to COVID-19.

"I personally felt like since we are so often on the receiving end of assistance, and all of us were still working, we should consider doing a special project that would benefit people and families on the South Side of Pittsburgh. Food is a basic need," Katherine said, "and food banks saw a 50% increase in request for food from the same time last year. We've worked for several weeks on this project and have received wonderful support from my colleagues at AFT. I'm so proud to be part of this organization."

Bags of food and personal care items were delivered to The Brashear Association. Brashear supports families to build more vital lives and neighborhoods in South Pittsburgh. Through its provision of human services and community action, Brashear recognizes community strengths and diversity and encourages self-help, citizen education and community improvement and involvement.

Volunteers from the Family Trust were present to distribute the donations at Brashear. They were honored to greet gracious families who received the food and toiletries at a time when they needed it most.





**Candice Benson of the Brashear Association along with AFT staff: Katherine Reim, Jessica Briggs, and Mary Peterson at the Brashear Association for Achieva Family Trust's Service Project delivery.**

# Commemorating The ADA Anniversary

“I’ll take all night if I have to,” said eight-year-old Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins in March of 1990. It was an act of determination well beyond her years as she crawled up the 78 marble steps of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. alongside other advocates with disabilities. The “Capitol Crawl” was the culmination of decades of advocacy by people with disabilities, long before Jennifer was born, and led to the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990.

In the 30 years since the passage of the ADA, curb cuts have been added to sidewalks.

Businesses are more accessible. There are legal protections in place for people with disabilities in education, housing, and employment. Overall, there has been a lot of progress.

However, people with disabilities still face challenges and discrimination. Accessible housing is still difficult to find. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is twice that of people without disabilities. Businesses, while slowly becoming more accessible, still have barriers to remove. Enforcing the protections provided by the ADA is also a challenge. People with disabilities often need to

bring their issues to court to get change, with the burden of proof upon them.

Despite the challenges, advocates continue to push for equality. Progress is slowly being made towards a more accessible and inclusive society. Achieva is happy to be able to look back at the progress that has been made in the last 30 years, but there is still more work to be done. Achieva will keep fighting for change; climbing slowly, step by step, until we have a truly inclusive society that accepts people of all abilities.





**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990 by President George H.W. Bush.**



## Board of Trustees

**Achieva's advancements are due in large part to the commitment of its dedicated trustees who comprise Achieva's five governing boards.**

The trustees' strong commitment to Achieva, their gifts of time and financial resources, and the offering of professional expertise to advance the position of Achieva have been instrumental to our success and were driven by the leadership of Mary D. Richter who served as Achieva Board Chair from July 2018 through June 2020.

Succeeding Mary, Achieva is pleased to welcome Chaz R. Kellem as the incoming Chair of the Achieva Board of Trustees for the July 2020-June 2022 term. Chaz has dedicated many years of service to Achieva and advocating for people with disabilities, and he will undoubtedly offer immeasurable support, passion, and wisdom in his new role.



**Chaz R. Kellem,  
Achieva Board Chair**

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# Save The Date

**Monday, August 17, 2020**

**Achieva's 21st Annual Million Dollar Golf Outing**

*Valley Brook Country Club, McMurray*

Golfers return each year to play this pristine 27-hole course. The day includes a grab-and-go brunch, dinner, prizes and gifts, including a chance at the Million Dollar Hole-in-One prize. To become a sponsor or participate, contact Jodie Tabano at 412.995.5000 x526 or [jtabano@achieva.info](mailto:jtabano@achieva.info).



**Saturday, September 19, 2020**

**Achieva's Pittsburgh Promenade Auction**

*Westin Convention Center Hotel, Pittsburgh*

This annual event (*postponed from March 2020*) benefits the children and adults who turn to Achieva each year for services and supports. The evening includes a live and silent auction with one-of-a-kind and highly sought after items. For more information, contact Jodie Tabano at 412.995.5000 x526 or [jtabano@achieva.info](mailto:jtabano@achieva.info).



*All events will be adjusted as needed in order to meet state and federal guidelines regarding COVID-19. Please refer to Achieva's website for current event details at [www.achieva.info/events](http://www.achieva.info/events).*

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## Thursday, March 25, 2020

### **Focus on the Future: Achieva Family Trust Future Planning Conference**

*Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Homestead*

A full-day conference exploring a variety of topics related to Future Planning for people with disabilities. Information related to the legal, financial and service considerations will be covered.



## Monday, December 7, 2020

### **Achieva's Awards of Excellence**

*Sheraton Station Square, Pittsburgh*

Achieva's Awards of Excellence honors a group of extraordinary and talented individuals, organizations and community groups that go above and beyond on behalf of people with disabilities. For additional information or to nominate someone, contact Peggie Watson at 412.995.5000 x420 or [pwatson@achieva.info](mailto:pwatson@achieva.info).





**Visit [achieva.info](http://achieva.info)  
or call**

Allegheny: 412.995.5000

(toll-free) 1.888.272.7229

Beaver: 724.775.1602

Westmoreland: 724.837.8159

An affiliated  
chapter of  **The Arc.**

**United Way Contributor's Choice Campaign**  
Achieva (161) is a partner agency of the  
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania

**The Arc of Beaver is a partner agency of the**  
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