

the Star

The Children's Inn at NIH

Family Newsletter



Spring 2021

Welcoming Spring Interns

Melody Phuong, Programming Assistant

A new season brings new Family Programming interns with innovative ideas and activities! This spring, we are excited to welcome Family Program Interns, Azzah and Tendai! They have each developed and implemented their own activities for families that will continue in the coming months.

Azzah introduced an “Indian international program” to promote diversity and multicultural awareness among families and guests at The Inn. To create a fun learning environment, Azzah has developed activities like henna nights, cultural dance workshops and Indian cooking programs. During the first session of her “Indian international program,” Azzah taught guests about the history and use of henna. Guests were able to design and decorate their henna on a candle to take home. Inn guest Rini said, “Henna night was very inspiring, and I was able to connect because Azzah and I speak the same language. [The activity] felt like something I would do back home.”

Tendai has developed a program called “Y.A.C.H.T”, which stands for “Young Adults Creating Happy Times”. In order to support the increased number of teen and young adult guests currently at The Inn, this program facilitates creativity and expression. Each of the activities has been created to help enhance positive emotions that can reduce stress, anxiety and depression. From DIY vision boards to playing board games, Tendai has worked to organize activities that will bring teens and young adults together to have fun, laugh and connect with one another.



Zilly's Corner



Melissa Dell'Omo

Woof, woof! Hi, Friends! I hope you had a nice winter and were able to enjoy some snowy weather! I loved running through the fresh snow and trying to play fetch with snowballs. I also had a great time celebrating my 7th birthday, and although birthday celebrations are a little different right now, I was still able to hand out fun birthday treats to all of my friends at The Inn from a safe distance. Despite all the fun I had this winter, I sure am ready for some warmer, sunnier weather this spring! Some of my favorite spring activities include playing fetch outside, going on long walks and sunbathing when I can! We will continue to host some fun virtual programs this spring, so be on the lookout for those in our monthly programming calendar. I will also continue coming to The Inn a couple of days per week, so please be sure to ask for me at the front desk and say hello. We can even go on a walk together outside if the weather is nice!

COVID Updates

April Garber, Resident Services Manager

It has been a year since the coronavirus pandemic turned our lives upside down, including here at The Children's Inn. To help ensure the safety of our families we have restricted the number of people allowed in our public spaces, moved most of our activities to virtual platforms and swapped volunteer-sponsored, buffet-style meals for catered, individually packaged lunches and dinners. We have also changed our check-in process, requiring families to be tested for COVID-19 72 hours before traveling and to be saliva tested and self-isolate upon arrival to The Inn. These, among other changes, have impacted all of us at The Inn; however, the spirit of The Inn has not changed.

Here is what some of our families have shared about their experiences staying at The Inn during the pandemic:

"I miss The Inn before COVID and things are just getting stricter, but it still feels like we are family here." -Danielle H.

"During COVID is definitely the time we are most vulnerable. Everything is affected in a negative way. But we also learn from it. The Children's Inn teaches me to look at the positive side of any situation. Some of life's best lessons are learned at the worst times." -Saranlak T.

"Although no one wants a positive test result, the experience of being saliva tested at The Inn was nothing but positive. The Inn has always been a very fun and welcoming place, and even though things have been shut down during the pandemic, The Inn still goes the extra mile to make things as normal as possible. The Inn has still found ways to keep the residents entertained by transitioning to Zoom events not only to keep the fun but to keep residents safe. So even with the pandemic, The Inn is still the fun and welcoming place it has always been." -Shay A.

ACTivitiEs

Virtual Game Nights at 7:00 PM: Join other families in rounds of Jeopardy, Family Feud and other games that can be accessed from your personal device.

Virtual Paint Nights: Join other residents to follow along with an instructional video and create masterpieces.

Virtual Exercise Classes: Join fitness instructors, Ashley and Stacy, for cardio strength workouts that you can do from the comfort of your room. All you need is a yoga mat.

Young Adult Virtual Sessions: Young adults ages 18-30 can learn from the expertise of others to build skills and connections. Session topics include leadership skill development, interview skill building and other opportunities.

Virtual BINGO: Residents at The Inn can log on to play BINGO, win great prizes and meet a local Montgomery County Police Officer. Fun for the whole family!

Family Lunch - Everyday at 12:00 PM: Enjoy a meal from local restaurants. To promote safe practices, meals are individually packaged and set up for no-contact pickup in the Bistro.

Family Dinner - Everyday at 6:00 PM: Enjoy a meal from local restaurants. To promote safe practices, meals are individually packaged and set up for no-contact pickup in the A/B Kitchen.

Grocery Delivery – Various Days and Times: Order your groceries each Sunday for delivery throughout the week. They can be picked up at the front desk.



Virtual Escape Rooms for Teens and Young Adults

Kelly Nguyen, Programming Coordinator



Escape rooms found their way to the United States in 2012 and expanded like wildfire! By combining a social activity with interactive adventures and challenging puzzles, players are immersed in an entirely different world. Beating an escape room requires teamwork, speed, creativity and patience. It is an amazing experience to share with people, as everyone works together to discover clues to get out of the escape room, crack puzzles and accomplish the ultimate goal of solving it.

As we remain virtual for programming, we are continually looking for new ways to transform an in-person activity into a virtual one, including partnering with different escape room companies in the area to bring the virtual escape room experience to The Children's Inn for our teen and young adults. Each virtual escape room has a unique mission. In one game the prompt may be trying to find where the philosopher's stone is hidden or become an undercover spy on a dangerous mission to take down the Mafia or working together to find a missing friend while fighting the ancient evil living in town. The game guide, a staff member from the escape room company, helps the players throughout the game by answering any questions the players may have and even giving out clues. The guide acts as their eyes, ears and hands by moving exactly how the players tell them to. Once the timer starts they have only one hour to escape!

Pablo, a 27-year-old young adult staying at The Inn, said, "The escape room provides an interactive team-building activity that's both fun and challenging. It offered me an escape (literally) from our everyday lives and the staff really helped in making everything fun and organized!" This program has become so popular that we plan to hold it twice per month for the foreseeable future. As Pablo said, it's a great way to "escape" and have a moment to bond with other people who are going through a similar situation.

PrOgRAmS

Virtual Game Nights at 7:00 PM: Join other families in rounds of Jeopardy, Family Feud and other games that can be accessed from your personal device.

Virtual Paint Night: Join other families to follow along with an instructional video and create a masterpiece! All materials needed will be provided.

VisArts: Their mission is to transform individuals and communities through the visual arts. We partner with VisArts to make fused glass plates every month. All materials get delivered and picked up.



Indian International Series: This series helps to promote diverse programs and multi-cultural awareness among families and residents at The Children's Inn. Families get to learn more about the Indian culture and traditions while having fun! The series includes Henna Night, cooking Chai, Making Dandiya and Learning a traditional Indian dance.

Y.A.C.H.T Series: Young Adults Creating Happy Times (YACHT) is a series of 4 events. The series is brought together to facilitate creativity and expressiveness while simultaneously enhancing young adults' minds. The series includes making vision boards, creating quote photo frames, culture fun activity and guess the song/artist.

KiwiCo Collaboration

Aisha Dubose, Associate Director of Programs and Services

In late October, as a way to further support virtual learning and the initiatives previously provided by in-person STEM activities, we decided to look into additional options for our families at home. We identified KiwiCo as a great resource for family support.

KiwiCo celebrates kids' natural creativity and curiosity while saving time for busy parents. The company provides science and art kits, which include all the materials and inspiration for projects related to an age-appropriate theme. In January, we were able to provide 148 subscriptions to families at their homes. Each Inn family with children between the ages of 3 and 21 will receive a monthly kit for six months.



LaUgHtEr

