



# United Friends Group Homes

Summer 2021

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## Recap of 2020-21, Rick Massey, Executive Director

Welcome to United Friends Group Home's first newsletter 2020-21. It's been a longer communication break than I wanted. But, covid-19 severely impacted our caregiving for over a year and a half. Everyone, including myself, made the health and safety of the residents and staff our first priority. This meant keeping up with and following state and federal guidelines for how to cope with covid-19. Since, the rules for masking, sanitation, temperature checks, quarantines, visits, and outings changed constantly, this required constant training and retraining of staff. We also spent long hours searching for supplies of masks, disposable gloves, sanitizer, and toilet paper, etc.!

Looking back over the last year is difficult. COVID swept the world. Sadly, it left its mark on UFGH. Two of the three houses experienced COVID outbreaks among staff and residents. Thankfully, all of the staff and residents who contracted covid-19 recovered fully, except for our beloved, Floyd Tokuda. Floyd contracted COVID-19 in December 2020. Unfortunately, his health had already deteriorated over the last few years and the virus was just too much.

### **Shout Outs!**

Kudos to the staff for sticking to their posts and continuing to find ways to bring whatever fun and joy they could to the residents in the midst of turmoil and confinement. You can see from pictures of the residents that staff was successful in brightening tough times.

Finally, a review of these times warrants thanks to those who came to our aid when we needed it most. Many thanks to monetary donors and to unnamed people who supplied Personal Protective Equipment, gloves, masks, hand sanitizer and those who found us sources of everyday materials that sometimes seemed impossible to find.

## A Cautious Return to “Normal”

We’ve had our hands full. We’re just now feeling that things are slowly returning to normal. Although COVID and its variants seem likely to cause mayhem for many months, the vast majority of residents and staff have been fully vaccinated. Residents have resumed visits with guardians and outings (albeit on a smaller scale). Over the next couple weeks, a few will be returning to work and community integration programs. The future, finally, is not all about “CANNOT”, but CAN.

I asked staff to think about what they have learned over the last year and here are some of the highlights that I’d like to share: the importance of being kind even when it may feel that others have forgotten what kindness is, the importance of staying in contact with friends/family even when that has to be on a virtual/phone basis, cherishing the simple things in life and not taking anything for granted, to be patient with others and value each day, and to celebrate what we’ve been able to accomplish and the positives.

The staff and I look forward to “normal”, knowing that “normal” is apt to be a moving target for a while. But, our goal remains fixed—to ensure that our residents enjoy the best of home, health, family, and community.

## Staff Spotlight

The secret behind UFGH is really not a secret at all. We simply have a phenomenal team. I’d love to highlight each and every one of our staff, but there just isn’t space. Instead, I asked each house to vote for the one person that they saw as a “Shining Beacon.”

Crown Hill voted for Jonathan Hartford. Jonathan has worked at all three houses and knows all the residents very well. He first became interested in this work because of his youngest brother who lived for about 30 years in a Massachusetts group home. Jonathan is now a cornerstone in Crown Hill’s weekend staff. He manages to commute to Crown Hill from his home in the Centralia area, even when it is snowing. That’s responsibility!

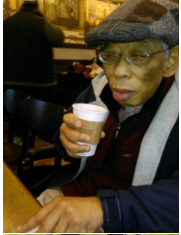


Beverly Park voted for Zinash Ayele. Zinash is vital to the morning routine there. As we’ve heard so often, a good morning is the only way to start a **good** day! Zinash has touched each residents’ life in positive ways. She is also a fantastic multi-tasker, who has begun to take on organizational functions at Beverly Park. We are all excited to see what the future holds for Zinash.



Lincoln Park voted for Florence Johnson, a relative newcomer to UFGH. As some of the votes mentioned, Florence challenges herself on a daily basis and celebrates every time she succeeds. She has brought a fresh sense of creativity and excitement to the house that started to flag during covid-19. (Florence declined to have her picture here)

## In Memorium---Best Friends Forever by Rick Massey



The past six months have brought great sadness to United Friends Group Homes and Beverly Park Group Home, specifically. Two long-standing residents, who also happened to be best friends, passed away within 3 months of one another. Staff and residents miss them greatly and I am beyond honored that I got to know these two wonderful souls.

Floyd Tokuda (March 28, 1945-December 12, 2020). Floyd (aka Butchie) suffered deteriorating health for the last few years. At one point, he was on hospice care, but Floyd rallied. Sadly, he contracted COVID-19 in early December 2020. It overwhelmed his poor body. We remember the hours Floyd spent painting and drawing. His artwork continues to bring smiles to all those who knew him and even those didn't. Besides art, his favorite activities included visiting his friends at Saturday Special and summer camp (both sponsored by the Japanese Baptist Church), seeing Vicky Hartley (his art mentor), singing Christmas carols, watching "Leave it to Beaver" with his best friend Wade, listening to a variety of music (Johnny Cash at the top of the list), bowling, and so much more. Floyd's hearty laugh and sweet smile remain with us.

Wade Haraldson (January 19, 1958- February 26, 2021). Wade Haraldson passed away at the end of February 2021 of natural causes. Wade was one of the very first residents at Beverly Park Group Home when it opened in 1980. Wade was one of the sweetest individuals on the planet. He may not have been able to speak, but he had absolutely no problem communicating to those who knew him. His favorite activity was his trips to Disneyland with his brother and sister-in-law. Words cannot describe the huge joyous grin he wore when returning from a Disneyland trip or looking at photos of his trips. At Beverly Park, Wade spent hours watching "Leave it to Beaver" or other classic comedies with his best friend Floyd. He had a wonderful sense of humor and his laugh could fill the house. Wade enjoyed community activities like bowling, dining out, and movies. But, Wade was a homebody. He worked several days a week for many years...and not much beats kicking your feet up and relaxing. There's nothing wrong with simple pleasures like that... I learned this from Wade. We all miss you, Wade.

## From Delores Kannas, Board President

In the last year and a half since the COVID 19 pandemic began, all of us have had to change almost every aspect of our daily behaviors just to stay healthy. The Board of Directors for United Friends want to acknowledge the leadership of our Executive Director Rick Massey and his work to meet the challenges United Friends has had to face to ensure

our residents and staff stay as healthy as possible. There have been many such challenges, for example:

- getting adequate PPE supplies when needed
- keeping up and implementing health care guidelines that were and still are constantly changing
- the stress of uncertainty in deciding just how to prioritize the use of personnel and material resources
- the impact of this stress on relationships among residents and staff

As the dust is settling somewhat but the air still not clear, we can celebrate with our residents the hopeful changes, with vaccination levels increasing, that are leading us toward an end to the pandemic. Common joys of the past such as resident outings are now possible. Even though we are not completely out of the woods, the Board celebrates with Rick the achievements and the learning to adapt to what has come out of our collective journey.

