

The Marsh Messenger

• Winter 2020-21 • www.marshfoundation.org

Serving children and families since 1922

A Year in Review: 2020 at The Marsh Foundation



Pictured is The Marsh Foundation's new fitness and dining facility connected to the Administration Building. The new space has been extremely beneficial to staff and youth.

2020 has been a year like no other at The Marsh Foundation. Like every other person and organization, The Marsh has had to change plans and adjust policies in order to adapt to safety recommendations in the midst of a global pandemic. While we have never had to face these types of challenges, The Marsh is proud of how we have reacted and adapted in order to keep our staff and youth safe.

Despite delays related to the pandemic, the new fitness and dining facility on campus is now complete. The new space has been extremely beneficial to staff and youth. As soon as it can be done safely, an open house will be held in order to

showcase this wonderful new space.

In the spring, The Marsh relaunched their website with an emphasis on making it more user-friendly for constituents and referral sources. According to Kim Mullins, the executive director of Child & Family Services, it is important to have an organized, attractive website for families, caseworkers and others to use. The site can be found at www.marshfoundation.org. Please visit for more information about services, alumni, becoming a foster parent, staff and resources.

Last spring, mandated school closings forced The Marsh School to move to distance

learning. Principal Robbie Breese praised the student and teachers' efforts during the difficult time. "It was amazing how well our students adapted to this adverse situation and even more amazing how well our teachers did in providing engaging material with such little time to prepare," he said. The spring graduation ceremony was also moved online. The two graduates were celebrated with a virtual ceremony.

The Marsh saw the pandemic as an opportunity to give back to others. The boys residing at Marsh Hall were very aware of the global pandemic and its af-

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Leadership

- **The Marsh Foundation Board of Trustees:**
Gary Clay
Gary Corcoran
Robert Gamble
- **The Marsh Foundation Executive Team:**
Robbie Breese
Jeff Grothouse
Kim Mullins

The Marsh Foundation
1229 Lincoln Highway P.O. Box 150
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

From the Executive's desk ...

The 2020-21 school year is off to good start, considering the uncertain times we are facing. We have had to make several adjustments to our school day, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but have found many positives to some of the changes we've made and plan to incorporate some of these changes long-term.

In the past, our students would have each teacher once in the morning and once again in the afternoon. In an attempt to minimize COVID-19 exposure, we doubled the length of our classes which cut our transitions in half. Both teachers and students love this adjustment, they feel they can accomplish more during one long class period than two separate periods. Transitions are many times difficult for our students. Our school family teachers have voiced that limiting transitions



"The school year is off to a good start, considering the uncertain times we are facing."

- Robbie Breese
Director of Education

have resulted in an increase in student focus and has cut down on opportunities for

negative behaviors. Students and teachers are also sanitizing their classrooms in between each class.

Also, we now have two separate lunch periods. Half of our students come for "Lunch A", the cafeteria is sanitized, and then the other half of our students come for "Lunch B". This change has resulted in a much more laid-back atmosphere during lunch. Also contributing to the laid-back atmosphere at lunch is the use of our new cafeteria. The large cafeteria is much easier to supervise and the combination of beautiful views and ability to watch television contributes to a very peaceful atmosphere. The top choices for television shows seems to be Tom and Jerry and SportsCenter.

The new gym and weight room projects are complete. Students and staff have been getting a lot of use out of both facilities. Currently, we only

have basketballs and volleyballs to use in the gym, but hope to add more equipment and activities for the students to participate in. Our counselors have also been taking advantage of both spaces adding flexibility for activities during their group sessions.

One very exciting addition to the Marsh School this Fall is Arachne Rose Vance. Arachne is a Mexican Red Knee Tarantula. She is a juvenile that loves eating crickets and mealworms. Arachne is becoming quite comfortable in her new home and is more and more active every day. Although there was some uncertainty with this new creature living in our science room, the students have all warmed up to her and love taking care of her.

These last several months have been very challenging as we have all been affected by COVID-19. I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to everyone struggling through this pandemic. In return, I ask that you extend your thoughts and prayers to The Marsh staff and students as we enter the holiday season. This season can be very difficult on our students as they celebrate the holidays away from their families.

In closing, my family and I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Robbie Breese

Director of Education, School Principal

Deceased Marsh Foundation Alumni and Former Employees

Alumni:

Betty Homer

Deceased: January 7, 2016

Mary M. Rahrig

Deceased: December 19, 2019

Arthur William Webb

Deceased: Unknown

Mary Lantz

Deceased: February 23, 2020

Kathy Marquart

Deceased: July 12, 2020

Louise A. Miller

Deceased: August 9, 2020

Former Employees:

Shirley Woodyard

Deceased February 17, 2020

A commitment to excellence

A Note from The Marsh Board of Trustees

The Marsh Foundation’s mission of providing for Children and Families has never been stronger. At this time of year, it is crucially important for families to feel the love and compassion our staff provides. The added stress of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic has been difficult for many people. As Trustees, we could not be prouder of our employees and how they continue to provide loving care to kids in need.

During the Christmas season we hope and pray you will remain healthy and safe and enjoy the many blessings you have been provided. We are thankful to be serving over 100 youth in our residential, foster care and Ohio DJFS Bridges programs. Our foster care division is expanding into Auglaize County and will have an office in the same building as the Wapakoneta Chamber of Commerce. With so many children in need, we are aggressively expanding our outreach to help as many as possible.

The coronavirus has delayed many things-including the completion and opening of our new addition. The addition has a dining hall, kitchen and gymnasium that the kids will enjoy immensely. Many thanks to Executive Secretary/Treasurer Jeff Grothouse and Principal Robbie Breese for shepherding this project. Kim Mullins, Executive Director of Child & Family Services provided exemplary leadership during this challenging year of the coronavirus. Her staff have been able to perform at an amazing level during extremely difficult times. Our foster parents deserve kudos for bringing children into their homes and providing a safe and comforting environment in these difficult times. The vision of George & Hilinda Marsh from 100 years ago has become a reality and children and families continue to be beneficiaries of their generous gift to the community.

Take time to slow down during this busy season. Enjoy your family and friends, even if it does involve social distancing. Everyone at The Marsh Foundation wishes you a truly Merry Christmas. May God continue to bless you and our country.

*Marsh Foundation Trustees;
Bob Gamble, Gary Clay and Gary Corcoran*



Foster Parents are our Super Heroes!

The Marsh Foundation Foster Care & Adoption staff participated in some fun Halloween activities in October! They passed out treats at the Main Street trick-or-treat in Van Wert and the trunk-or-treat at the Auglaize County Fairgrounds.

Their theme was Super Heroes because Foster Parents are real-life Super Heroes! Their dedication to helping kids makes them SUPER every day! If you are interested in learning more about how you can join our efforts, contact us today!



The Marsh Foundation Says 'Thank You' to Van Wert Police Department

The Marsh Foundation truly values our partnership with the Van Wert Police Department. The department has been especially supportive over the past few months. 2020 has been challenging in many ways and The Marsh wanted to show appreciation to the VWPD for all they do. It was decided to deliver a meal to each shift during the first week of December.

Megan Tuttle, director of residential services, said that a good relationship with the police department is important to The Marsh's mission. "I feel a strong partnership with our Van Wert City Police Department opens up so many opportunities for our youth," she said. "It shows that a relationship with the police department can be positive, that our youth can have positive interactions with the police, and our police officers can help support our youth in different ways."

The meal was sent on behalf of The Marsh Foundation Trustees, and Directors. Meals from Wild Hare including pulled pork, scalloped potatoes, cole slaw and beverages were provided for police officers on all three shifts. "We want to express our deep appreciation for the help and support your police officers offer our organization," Tuttle said. "We feel very grateful to the VWPD for the continued collaboration."

According to Tuttle, the meal was just a small token of appreciation. "We consider ourselves very fortunate for having the chance to live in such a place where our police department is so supportive of our mission and the impact we are attempting to make on the youth we serve."

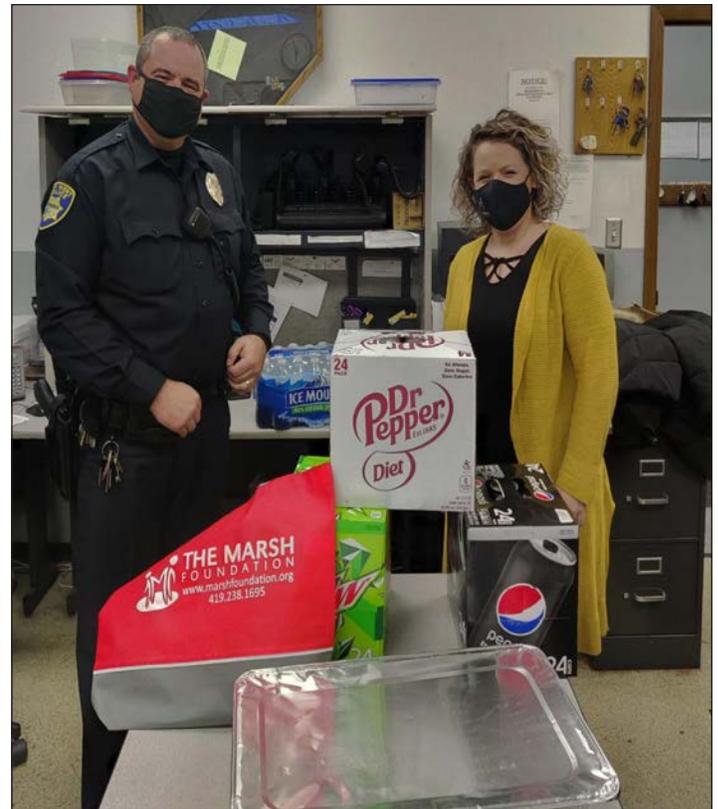
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fects on the community around them. As a thank you, they decided to color hearts and send them, along with a thank you note, to the Van Wert County Hospital. The note began by saying, "Thank you for all the work you do for our community. We are all glad to have you guys as our care-givers and we could not get through this pandemic without you." It was a great gesture of kindness.

There were also several excellent donations received throughout the year. Project Believe once again generously donated Valentines, back-to-school back-

packs and Christmas gifts this holiday. The Marsh is grateful for these donations which always put a smile on the faces of the youth. In addition, Shirley Haight's family once again made the Easter holiday a memorable one with an Easter egg hunt and gifts for the youth on campus. While these events looked a little different in 2020, the smiles on the youth's faces were the same.

Some annual traditions were still alive and well this year. National Foster Care Month was celebrated in May, along with National Adoption Month in November. The youth were still



Pictured is Megan Tuttle, director of residential services, presenting the Van Wert City Police Department with a meal to say thank you for their continued service and support.

able to participate in the annual horse show in August, with a social distancing audience. And, the poinsettia sale was held in November.

2020 has been a challenging

yet exciting year at The Marsh and we are looking forward to what 2021 will hold. We hope that 2021 brings renewed blessings for you and your families!



Residential/Group Home Referrals: Call Kelly at 419.238.1695 ext. 360 or kgrass@marshfoundation.org

Foster Care Referrals: Call 419.238.1695 option 3, then option 1.

After Hours/Emergency: 419.605.8056
fostercare referrals@marshfoundation.org



Clockwise starting at top: The new dining and fitness facility holds a gymnasium that the youth and staff have already been putting to good use. Earlier this fall, Congressman Bob Latta visited The Marsh. He toured the new fitness and dining facility and talked to Marsh leaders about how non-profits were able to use federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) money to replace revenues lost during the pandemic. The basement kitchen in the Administration Building has been refurbished and now will serve as a kitchen for the Independent Living group to utilize when working on life skill lessons. The previous cafeteria in the Administration Building has been turned into a weight room and fitness facility for youth and staff.



Marsh Foundation is Undertaking Major Pond Enhancement Project

The Marsh Foundation property includes a pond which has been a long-time favorite spot for the youth on campus. They have spent a lot of time there grilling out and fishing. However, activities coordinator Sherry Grone saw much more potential with the space. In 2019, The Marsh Trustees approved a comprehensive enhancement project which is nearing completion.

Several improvements can be seen from the road. New fencing has replaced the old and there have been two docks installed that will provide a better fishing experience, as well as a place to launch canoes. One may also serve as a potential swimming or cool off area. The youth on campus have already enjoyed the new sand volleyball court. The improvements are meant to beautify campus, but also offer functional benefit to the youth and staff. According to Grone, the project will directly benefit the youth in several ways. "It will promote hope, pride, and moti-

vation in our youth. It will be a space where they can feel proud of and excited to use," she said. Other improvements include updated restroom facilities and a sandy beach area. One enhancement that is not easily seen is water treatment to improve the water quality for fishing and swimming. Further plans this fall include the planting of more trees and the installation of a fire ring. The goal is for the improved space to be an outdoor setting that promotes health, well-being, fun, relationship building and responsibility. It will also be used by staff and provide a great environment for team building exercises.

There is a lot of evidence-based research that supports this enhancement project. Grone pointed to evidence that playing outdoors and spending time in nature reduces attention problems. "Spending time in nature regularly can reduce the severity and frequency of symptoms in children with attention deficit

hyperactivity disorder," she said. In addition, she pointed to things like increased creativity and lessened stress and anxiety. "A beautiful, functional pond area really has a lot of potential ways to

benefit our youth," she said. Jeff Grothouse, executive secretary and treasurer, and The Marsh maintenance staff oversaw the completion of the project.



The Marsh Foundation's pond enhancement efforts are becoming evident with new docks and a sand volleyball court.



New Staff Members

The Marsh Foundation would like to welcome new staff members:

- Romulus Robinson - Family Teacher
- Lilian Geething - Family Teacher



Clymer Chat

As the holidays near, the girls have been keeping busy with various projects and activities. This year has been very different and presented its share of challenges. Because of the pandemic, this year's fall festival on campus was canceled. While there have been many disappointments, the girls have done their best to adjust to the changes.

The girls enjoyed the Thanksgiving projects in Mrs. Looser's class. They wrote essays about thankfulness and also wrote acrostic poems about the holiday. Winners were chosen and recognized with awards.

As the holidays approach, the girls have been busy decorating Clymer Hall. Some of them also participated in the on-campus poinsettia sale where they sold the flowers to the community. Funds raised go toward the Marsh Grown garden program.

All of the girls are looking forward to the holidays and want to wish you all a Merry Christmas!



Marsh Matters

The boys at Marsh Hall have been excited to use the new exercise and fitness area in the Administration Building's basement. There is cardio equipment like bikes, treadmills and an elliptical machine that they are able to use. In addition, there are free weights and nautilus equipment as well as an area for stretching. This, in addition to the new gymnasium, provides a lot of great wellness opportunities for the youth on campus.

As the holidays approach, the boys are looking forward to special meals, time with family, and making memories with each other. While the pandemic has forced things to look a little different, the youth are resilient and looking forward to all of the opportunities 2021 has to offer.



Vance Voice

Vance Hall is always busy and the boys stay active with a lot of activities. They are making the most of the differences this year. While the weather has turned cold, the boys have shifted their basketball games indoors and spent time in the rec hall, fitness room and new gym.

They have also kept busy this fall and assisted with the poinsettia sales. During the times for pick up, youth take money, help customers select flowers and then carry them to cars for patrons. Not only is the event a good fundraiser, it is also a great opportunity for youth to work on social and customer service skills.

As the holidays approach, the boys are looking forward to time with family and friends and a break from the classroom. They are optimistic that 2021 will be better for everyone.

If you are interested in making a referral, please contact Kelly Gross at 419.238.1695 ext. 360.

Merry Christmas!

The Marsh Foundation
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P.O. Box 150
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

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Did You Know? We offer adoption services!

The Marsh Foundation has the ability to license homes with a dual foster care and adoption license. This means that families that may be interested adopting their foster children in the future can simplify the process with The Marsh Foundation.



This allows The Marsh to provide additional support to families. Families that think they may be interested in adoption can complete the necessary steps up front, with very little additional work. Many families that are interested in becoming foster families are interested in accepting young children that may be available for adoption in the future.

If you are interested in more information, contact The Marsh foster care department at 419.238.1695.

The mission of The Marsh Foundation is to inspire hope, to teach and to care for children and families.

Calendar of Events

December 2020 - April 2021

- December 23 - January 1 - Marsh Foundation School winter break. Classes resume Jan. 4.
- No School Monday, January 18 in honor of MLK, Jr. Day.
- No School on Monday, February 15 because of President's Day.
- March 5 - No school, staff in-service.
- March 15 - 19 - Marsh Foundation School Spring break.
- Friday, April 2 - No school for Good Friday.
- Saturday, April 17 - Parent Teacher Conferences



For more information about any event, visit www.marshfoundation.org.

Attention Marsh Foundation Alumni

Are you an alumnus of The Marsh Foundation? Did you know that on our website, www.marshfoundation.org, we have a directory of alumni? To view the directory, or sign up yourself, visit the Alumni page online at www.marshfoundation.org.