

# VITALITY REPORT

Experience A World Where All Individuals Flourish as Valued  
Members of Their Community



## From the Director's Desk



### IN THIS ISSUE

*The COVID-19 Edition:  
Spring 2020*

**WORDS FROM OUR  
STAFF DURING THESE  
UNPRECEDENTED  
TIMES.**

Dear CEC Family and Friends,

We started the semester with much determination, optimism and gratitude. Little did we know how the semester would evolve and what value these characteristics would provide. What began as a typically busy semester became the historical hallmark of an entire generation due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. As we ceased to provide face to face programming and moved to online learning the entire CEC staff put forth the effort and energy to fare better than expected in these challenging, uncertain times. They were all resilient, persistent, strong of character and full of compassion, modeling these strengths for our participants, their families, our students and other CEC staff. As we prepare for the reopening of the CEC and the fall semester, I know they will continue to use these strengths with skill, fortitude, and grace. We are most grateful for your support as we navigate the landscape of changing and challenging circumstances. We remain committed to making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Please join us.

Very best regards.

*Mary Lloyd Moore, EdD, CCC-SLP*

# How the Communication Disorders Clinic Has Used Technology to Continue

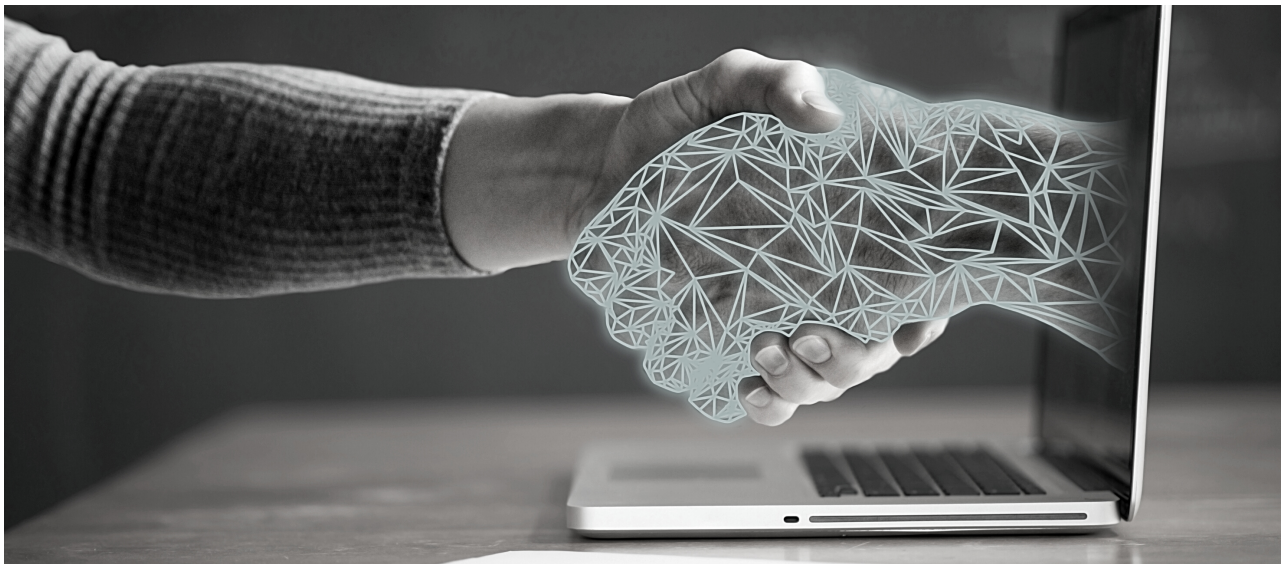
by Caroline Hudson, MS, CCC-SLP

I can't praise our student clinicians enough; in this period of staying healthy at home, they transitioned with relative ease and moved seamlessly to online instruction. Student clinicians completed weekly discussion boards to continue to learn about a variety of communication disorders and intervention techniques. They completed online assessments in a computer program called SimuCase to continue to practice diagnostic skills, and they completed weekly clinical writing assignments. In addition, student clinicians were asked to write an essay at the end of the semester about being a WKU clinical education student during a world pandemic. These essays will be archived as part of our living history. Student clinicians repeatedly mentioned in the essays how much they missed the face to face interaction with clients and families. This is a true testament that these WKU students have selected the right program of study

The most heartbreaking part of this state of emergency was not being able to serve our valued clients and families at the clinic. We knew there were so many creative things that could be completed in clients' homes, but we also were aware that clients, parents, and caregivers might be feeling overwhelmed by a variety of challenges. Yet, we wanted them to know that we missed them and desired to facilitate learning during this pause in direct services.

With this in mind, a weekly story book reading was placed online each Friday that included specific intervention tips and activities. KAP participants were also sent a weekly social communication lesson via an online literacy activity. In addition, a website was created and sent to clients that contained links, resources, and free activities to simulate learning. Finally, KAP students were provided an "online play" that highlighted the dos and don'ts of dating which emphasized pragmatic skills that were being taught at the clinic in our social groups before spring break.

We certainly hope that we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Our thoughts are with all of those who are ill or grieving unimaginable losses. All of the clinical supervisors and student clinicians eagerly anticipate being able to return to campus and continue to support our clients and families as soon as possible.



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## Reset and Resources

by Shannon Sales, Ed.D. - Family Resource Director



For obvious reasons, COVID-19 has impacted the Family Resource Program (FRP) with its service delivery in many ways. This Corona virus has changed the scope of the entire campus and forced us to learn new methods of operating to continue providing quality service for those we assist within the CEC. Visibility and accessibility have always been our strong connection for the special needs population and community. Like many of you, we had to tackle the issue head on with innovative ways to ensure individuals and families that the FRP program is still available for them. FRP has integrated all Coffee Hours, and other courses to virtual workshops for families and community members that work with the special needs population. In addition to the workshops, any referrals or follow-ups for our families' needs are available through the program by phone, email, or virtual meetings to make sure that there is a strong connection with families. Even though our interaction is different, we have worked hard to sustain the support through advocating and working to serve all individuals. Also, our partnership with the social work department at WKU has continued to evolve as we strive together to implement strategies that are beneficial for students during this pandemic. The great news is through all of these drastic changes, we all have managed to persevere and move forward with our goals.

As I reflect during this pandemic, one word comes to mind, RESET. It is evident that the challenges from COVID-19 have transformed our lives personally, professionally, and emotionally. What areas in your life have you neglected? What epiphanies have come to your mind? This time has allowed some reflection in areas that need repair, innovation, and perseverance. So, let me just state, that it is okay for us to be human about the struggles that we face during this unique time. If we are not authentic in who we are, how can we assist others? Realizing the importance of connecting with people who can encourage and provide support. That is why it is essential for us in this season to establish a balanced lifestyle. In conclusion, don't allow these waves of uncertainty to take your drive away. There is still much to be done and we all are an important piece to these new resolutions that lead us to the other side. As always, I want to encourage everyone to stay motivated and focus on looking beyond the uncertainty in front of us, while pressing toward new possibilities of what's to come for the future.

# Renshaw Early Childhood Center Examines How to Stay in Touch with Technology

by Beth Schaeffer - Director of RECC



We were off to a great semester when life took a sudden turn and all came to a standstill. We were no longer able to provide center-based services for our young learners. We were no longer able to host WKU students who were completing field hours, including our own student teacher. We didn't get the chance to say goodbye to our student workers and personally congratulate those who would be graduating this semester.

Thankfully, the foresight of Sarah Conder and Caroline Hudson allowed us to have in place a venue for reaching our children and families at home through our Big Red School YouTube channel. Our student teacher created Anna's Toddler Time and Ms. Sarah, Ms. Haley and I recorded music and movement, nursery rhymes and supports to add to our YouTube channel.

While nothing can replace that face-to-face interaction we so longed for, we made every attempt to stay connected to the children and families we were missing so much. This experience, while not at all planned, seemed to bring out kindness and generosity that we might have been too busy to notice before. Using tools like Zoom and Microsoft Team and Google Hangout have allowed others to invite me into their dining rooms, bedrooms, patios and cars. I've met children and pets and spouses. I've experienced relaxed dress and appearance. And all those things are better than OK, they are good, very good. I can't say that I am a fan of COVID19, but there is nothing that can replace the reality check and change of heart I've experienced the last several months. I am so very blessed to be a part of a team of children, families and colleagues who I could lean on and who I could offer support to.



# Kelly Autism Program Student's Transition to an Online Learning Environment

by Barrett Griffin - Assistant Program Manager

My role at the CEC is that of Circle of Support Assistant Program Manager. I advise college students with Autism Spectrum Disorders as they navigate the collegiate life and the many challenges that come with it—both personally and academically. I have been in my role since August and am so thankful I had last semester and part of this one to develop relationships with many of the students we support at KAP before the global pandemic sent us home for the remainder of Spring 2020!

Since transitioning to our online format, the greatest impact COVID19 has had on the services we offer with Circle of Support are our socials and mentoring groups. While we were able to successfully digitize our tutoring and Study Table aspect of the program, socials became impossible when—well, socializing became impossible! Fortunately, some of our more social students have been able to secure extra Zoom meetings with us, with managers of the program occasionally holding social hours on Zoom. In addition to KAP led virtual hours, many of our students have formed an online Dungeons and Dragons league. While it isn't the same for us to be with one another in person, I have been so impressed with our student's adaptability in this time!

A few observations I have noticed about the pandemic since it began as it pertains to KAP is that our program quickly digitized and prioritized support to students and families are now far more involved in their student's academics. I'm very proud of our ability as a program to make these changes to continue support so quickly with the help of WKU IT. Another quite notable feat has been that of our students' impressive ability to adapt to an online learning environment seemingly overnight.

As each day passes, we as a nation and truly, as a species, hope for the end of this pandemic. While a new normal will certainly take the place of our old sense of normalcy, it has been proven throughout time that we are adaptable and that life will be enjoyed. In a first step toward a newly established normal, I wish each of you an incredible Fall 2020 Semester at WKU!



# Kelly Autism Program Focuses on Providing Quality Services

by Michelle Elkins, MS, CCC-SLP - Program Director

COVID-19 changed the way we delivered services in a major way. All services were moved to remote and digital delivery only. Although the delivery of services changed it is my hope that the same quality was provided. We were able to continue to send social lessons with wonderful resources home for our school age students and adult clients. Weekly zoom meetings were also provided to give the students connections with their peers.

The Circle of Support students transitioned to complete online classes and online tutoring. Our student workers stepped up and continued offering their support services on a daily basis through zoom meetings. We continued to offer social/connection activities although from a distance and also met with each student two times each week. Although service delivery changed, we continued to support our students to the best of our ability.

The pandemic has caused many changes in our personal, professional, and the lives of the entire world. I have observed all range of behavior from anger to positive reactions. I personally miss and crave my schedule, contact with my co-workers, the students we serve, and family members that we are temporarily separated from. However, the positive aspects have included more family dinners, more time at home, ability to be "still" and take in some important life experiences. We can learn from and grow in every situation. I have grown in my ability to slow down, certainly grown in my patience and also in my knowledge and use of technology.

Take this time to evaluate the important things in life! Our family, our health, and our community.



# Renshaw Early Childhood Center Spreads Kindness

By: Sarah Conder, MAE - Program Manager

While COVID-19 abruptly altered the course in which we had to deliver services, we worked together to provide an alternative route for online instruction. We relied heavily on our social media outlets such as Facebook, YouTube, Remind, and Flipgrid, to engage the children and families being served.



Although it was quite challenging to alter our lesson plans so the families could participate in their home setting, their feedback was so reassuring. Families loved that they were able to access the lessons and activities at their own leisure, and that their children were still connected to their teachers. Our staff worked together to send out personal postcards to the children, and even delivered personalized totes filled with learning materials (from a safe distance of course!). Seeing the reactions of the children and their families was priceless.

The way in which we had to respond to the pandemic was difficult, however I feel that it allowed our staff to grow closer to the families the RECC serves and develop deeper and more meaningful relationships.



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# The Resiliency of Our Students and Their Ability to Adapt to Such an Unorthodox Situation

by Peyton Collins - Assistant Program Manager

It has certainly been an unforgettable semester here at the Kelly Autism Program! As assistant manager, I typically work closely with a portion of our college students to ensure that they are excelling both academically and socially on the hill. I also maintain our communication efforts with incoming and prospective students who may be interested in our college program.



As you can probably imagine, our social opportunities have historically been conducted in person. With COVID-19 we have had to adapt to an online format. One example of this is our implementation of group chats via zoom! Once a week I have hosted an open chat where students can converse and mentally/emotionally check-in with one another! I have noticed three themes occurring in these meetings: they want to know how each other are handling the pandemic, the status of the fall semester, and they want to show off their pets!

I have been so impressed with the resiliency of our students and their ability to adapt to such an unorthodox situation. They have been able to discover strengths and positivity in an uncharted event. Another important pillar of our program is tutoring with fellow students and weekly advising sessions. We asked our student tutors to transition to an online format in order for our students to be properly served from home. Our tutors, who were also adjusting to their classes moving to online, jumped to the task and virtually created our study tables via zoom. I remain so thankful and appreciative of the passion that our student tutors have for those in our program! They have acted as tutors but also as a mentor and calm voice to those experiencing COVID-19-related anxiety.

As I reflect on this spring, I am thankful for the human spirit. The population I serve often struggle with routine changes, unexpected occurrences, and not knowing what will happen next. With that said they have handled the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to mimic a rollercoaster ride, with grace and determination to succeed. I have learned so much from our students throughout my time with KAP, but I am especially thankful for the lessons I have learned from them this spring semester. I cannot wait to greet the students as they return to campus and to welcome those incoming freshmen to life on the hill!!!



# Healthy at Home

By: Cassandra Hanna - Clinical Mental Health Counselor



Happy Spring! I have had the honor of working with our college students for four years now. I primarily provide individual therapy to our students. While my services are not a required part of our program, many of the students have benefited from it.

Thankfully, the Kelly Autism Program collaborated with Dr. William Pfohl this semester, as I had a son in January. He has been a tremendous help in seeing students while I was on maternity leave. My original maternity leave morphed into a sort-of-speak extended leave, as COVID-19 altered provided services before I returned from leave. Instead of returning to work at the CEC, I returned to work via telehealth. I began seeing students online, through a secure, HIPAA compliant platform. Therapy has continued fairly the same. The only difference is being distracted at times while I hear my children playing, talking, or crying in the house.

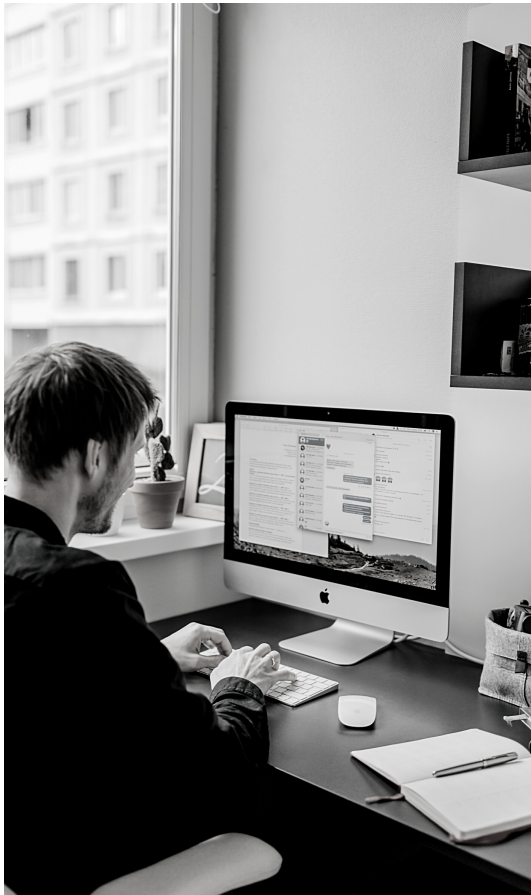
I have found it very interesting to observe how different people react to this pandemic in such a variety of ways. I will be interested to see the long-term effects and societal shifts that will happen even five, ten years from now. While it took some adjusting, I have thoroughly enjoyed this extra time at home. It has helped me be more active and intentional.

Stay safe everyone! Have a great summer!



# Circle of Support: Creative in Crisis

by Sarah McMaine-Render - Program Manager



I have always believed our Circle of Support students are some of the most resilient people and their response to this semester has only deepened this belief. When our students left for spring break little did we know that it would be the last time we would see them in a non-virtual format. This semester due to Covid-19 and the decision to close campus and move all academics online, we ventured together into the world of zoom meetings and online learning. COS staff came together as a team to brainstorm and implement the majority of our services in this new format.

We had several student workers step forward and agree to continue tutoring services for the remainder of the semester. Not only were they tutors but also a familiar face for students to speak to and be reassured that everything was going to be ok. These student workers embodied the definition of servant leaders during this time.

The KAP advisors meet multiple times a week with their students to help them problem solve and organize this new way of learning. During this time we developed a deeper relationship with many of our students, through sharing our home environments which included pets and the occasional child running into a meeting to say “hi”. Both socials and counseling were also able to continue through online formats. During this time, we supported the new COS students who will be joining us in the fall. Staff worked with the WKU advising office to help navigate the online TOPS days and attended virtual advising sessions with our new families. It was encouraging to see these students so excited about starting their journey at WKU.

In closing, I am choosing to look at the positives gained this semester with the deepening of relationships with our students and staff. We have grown as a team and look forward to celebrating with our students this fall!



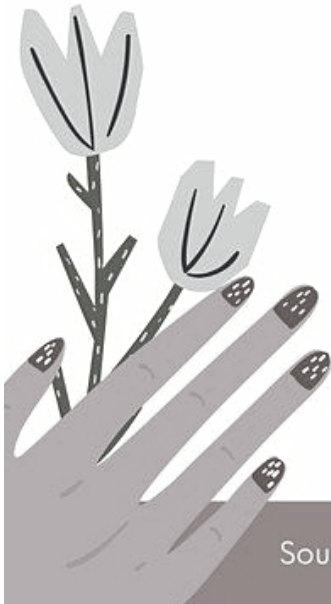
# Be kind during Coronavirus

Check in regularly especially  
with those affected

Encourage them to keep doing  
what they enjoy

Share WHO information to  
manage anxieties

Provide calm and correct  
advice for your children



Source: United Nations/World Health Organization

