SURPRISE! Family Resource Associates (FRA) recently made impromptu home visits to all seven of this year’s Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH Interns to celebrate their many accomplishments during this academic school year.

The surprise visits were facilitated by Nancy Phalanukorn, Executive Director of FRA; Phillip Duck, Director of EmployAbility at FRA; Tyler Swiggart, Job Coach at FRA, Jessica Hamburg, Project SEARCH Instructor at FRA, and Julia Siersema, Project SEARCH Skills Trainer at FRA. The FRA team visited the homes of Molly Hebert, Gabe Aquino, Jim Peters, Janet Wells, Kate Danish, Angel Ramos Jr. and Robert Scott.

“It was a joy to be a part of the celebration, acknowledging each intern for all their commitment and accomplishments as they now prepare for employment in the community,” said Phalanukorn. “Each intern grew tremendously and it gives us great pride to have been part of that growth.”

The interns were just as excited to see the FRA team. During his surprise visit, Angel Ramos Jr. said, “I’m nervous and excited to see you all here... I’m really touched by it.” Another intern’s mom expressed how the program has made a difference in her daughter Molly’s overall growth as a person and how she has become an independent thinker.

Project SEARCH is a 10-month internship program for people with disabilities in their last year of school through early adulthood. It is targeted to those whose goal is competitive employment. The program takes place at Monmouth Medical Center where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process, as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable work skills. Interns participate in three unpaid internships to explore a variety of career paths.

“The goal of Project SEARCH is competitive employment for each intern utilizing the skills they learned during the program,” said Phillip Duck, FRA’s Director of EmployAbility, which encompasses the Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH program. “The skills acquired through Project SEARCH can be transferred to many different workplace settings.”

If you would like to learn more about how to hire a Project SEARCH graduate, please email pduck@frainc.org.

To learn more about Project SEARCH, visit projectsearch.us.
ED Summer Note  By Nancy Phalanukorn, Executive Director

The months have flown by and summer arrives with everyone still responding to COVID-19. Like all else, FRA’s direct contact services closed on March 17. The creative and responsive FRA staff adapted by implementing remote services within five days. Some of the children, parents and adults are thriving in this computer-linked world, more than we realized they could manage. Adult students have shown how computer savvy they are by completing online tasks independently. Parents of infants and toddlers have learned how best to help their child succeed with the guidance of the interventionist team supporting them with these new remote activities. It has also been exciting for the staff to learn a new style. However, it is clear remote learning is not for all. Both our infant and adult services dropped by 52% enrollment and our employment services dropped by a stunning 82%. The loss in skills and abilities for these people will continue for many months, as will the loss in our revenue. We are busy planning to safely restart direct contact services and how to work more efficiently with less resources. Much is needed including temporary structural changes in order to keep everyone safe and well. These challenges will not deter our efforts to continue to meet our mission and to help those we care about so deeply. We miss seeing all of our FRA family members and know that the future will be brighter again!

UPCOMING EVENTS/PROGRAMS

FRA’s 39th Annual Golf Classic is ON! - Sponsorships Available
Join us on July 13 at Navesink Country Club in Middletown! Come out and enjoy an afternoon on Navesink Country Club’s beautiful golf course! We are excited to be the first outing of the season! Check-in starts at 10:30am. Event features include: Lunch burger bar, shotgun start, dinner reception and Live Auction & 50/50 raffle. To learn more or to register online, visit frainc.org.

Nick Johnson, Shacana Smith, Kim Keune and Sam Kinningham (not pictured).

PossAbilities during a Pandemic
FRA helps individuals with developmental or acquired disabilities stay connected through remote learning and telehealth.

What motivates you to keep volunteering?
“A lot of what I saw at FRA was people putting in the work to look for ideas and connections, which is what I do every day. It started as a golf committee which was super easy. Everything seemed normal -- the business connections, social media -- all things I already have expertise in and was what FRA needed. It was easy to plug in and start helping right away. I’m glad to be a part of it, and it’s close to home.”

Congrats to our EmployAbility Staff on their ACRE Certification!
Pictured: Imelda Medel, Janice Palmadesso, Tyler Swiggart, Shacana Smith, Kim Keune and Sam Kinningham (not pictured).

Rose Dowling, Prevocational Student
FRA student spreads positivity by giving back to staff that helped her through the pandemic.
Rose has been learning online since March. Living on her own and working at Dollar Tree, Rose inspires others every day by making small canvases and painted rocks with inspirational quotes that she gave to FRA teachers.
“"I made these inspirational quotes for the FRA staff because I am grateful for all they have done for me during quarantine," said Rose. "I don’t know how I would fill up the extra time in my day if it wasn’t for the online classes at FRA. I enjoy keeping busy and having a chance to see my teachers and friends.""