



**PossAbilities**  
for people  
with disAbilities™

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 16, 2020

# Spreading light, hope and PossAbilities for individuals with disAbilities in 2020

Red Bank, NJ – In a year that has been overshadowed with struggles and hardships surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also been sprinkled with light, hope and PossAbilities through the work of one local nonprofit organization.

As new realities set in, Family Resource Associates (FRA) in Red Bank has continuously adapted in order to serve people of all ages who have developmental or acquired disAbilities. From its own support staff to the families it serves, FRA has witnessed countless stories of lives that were touched over the last nine months through its various outreach initiatives.

Before COVID-19, FRA was seeing over 250 children from birth to three-years-old with developmental delays and disAbilities each week in their homes and daycare centers. With social distancing in place, even services for babies have changed.

“FRA’s team of 60 Early Intervention specialists have now been trained to give high quality Telehealth services to our little ones as well,” said Nancy Phalanukorn, Executive Director of FRA. “It is just so comforting to know that we have both the capability and opportunity to switch from onsite daily classes to remote learning if and when we need to.”

Lisa Smelas, a Pediatric Physical Therapist at FRA, provides Early Intervention services from birth to age three. “These services are traditionally provided in the home using a family training model. When we were told to go virtual in March, I knew we would be okay because we were used to providing services that were specifically tailored around the family.”

FRA has learned a lot from the twists and turns put forth this year, and the nonprofit has successfully turned challenges into opportunities for growth. “Telehealth is here to stay and it opens a lot of doors for us in terms of continuing services,” said Smelas.

Throughout the year, students have connected through Google Classroom, Classroom Dojo, Zoom and other apps. FRA teacher, Jen Lindsay, is exuberant about the way the students have adapted to this new adventure as they continue to learn from home. “Every day our students take on new lessons, persevere in their focus and work hard to participate in activities with various apps,” said Lindsay. “They also love this new way of interacting with their friends and classmates.”



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One FRA parent shared, “I was so happy to see how successful the structure of a Telehealth session works from a parent's view. My daughter was fully engaged in the session, and her physical therapist was able to prompt me to assist her in a better way. Telehealth is truly perfect for Early Intervention. We cannot wait to see the continued progress my daughter makes!”

Another FRA parent, Megan Fasullo of Oceanport, could not be more thankful for FRA when it comes to her daughter Grace who was born with myotonic dystrophy in 2018. “As an agency, FRA is so knowledgeable about the world of Early Intervention,” she said. “They are just amazing at what they do and make it so Telehealth is not scary at all.”

Despite the pandemic, Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH has continued on for the 2020-2021 calendar year. The 10-month internship program, led by FRA, started on September 1 and is for individuals with disAbilities in their last year of school through early adulthood. Eight interns have been accepted into this year’s program, which takes place at Monmouth Medical Center. Each intern will participate in three unpaid internships to explore a variety of career paths, with the support and direction of the FRA EmployAbility staff.

“All of the interns have a common set of interests, they are excited for new beginnings, a chance to gain independence, learn new skills, meet new people and make new friendships,” said Jessica Hamburg, FRA’s Project SEARCH Instructor. The ultimate goal of the program is to find employment for each intern, because they have been fully prepared for success in an integrated, competitive environment through participating in Monmouth Medical Center Project SEARCH.

Through all of its programming, FRA strives to keep those with developmental or acquired disAbilities connected to each other. Earlier this summer, after receiving feedback that there was a need for mental health support for its adult students, FRA launched a COVID-19 Bereavement and Stress Management Group. Although the future of this group is fluid, FRA knows that there will always be a desire for personal connection. “It is our promise to help facilitate that desire,” said Sue Levine, MA, CSW, FRA Social Worker. “The goal is to provide safe spaces for adults to express their feelings and support each other through various peer to peer platforms.”

FRA has also continued to provide EmployAbility services to prepare individuals with disAbilities for success in integrative and competitive employment. Tyler Swiggart, a Job Developer for FRA’s EmployAbility Program, said that it is exciting to see how many job seekers are looking to return to work. “With these new challenges brought by the pandemic, everyone on our staff is thinking in more creative ways,” he said. “Many people are not only getting job interviews, but also landing jobs.”

Tom Monaco and Phill Duck, who both serve on FRA’s EmployAbility Committee, even launched a monthly job club over the summer. “Phill and I led the first meeting this past June in the middle of COVID-19 and have since had guest speakers from the United States Air Force, the South Plainfield Fire Department and



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Google,” said Monaco. “Although we envisioned having face to face meetings, we obviously had to strategize after the outbreak.” FRA anticipates growing this program for the future.

Although FRA’s doors have temporarily closed yet again, reopening plans are still front and center for 2021. “We will continue to work with our students, teachers, staff and families to pave a way for a safe reopening,” said Alexis Spektor, the Adult Program Director at FRA. “Looking to the future, we hope to find ways to expand virtual services to reach more people, while still offering classes on site.”

Since 1979, as a program whose vision has been to expand and create innovative options for people with unique abilities and disAbilities, FRA has again shown that there are no limits to what can be accomplished by someone with a disAbility when the right supports are in place. To learn more about FRA – PossAbilities for People with disAbilities, please visit [www.frainc.org](http://www.frainc.org) or call 732-747-5310.

### **About Family Resource Associates**

Family Resource Associates, Inc. (FRA) is a 501(c)(3) in Monmouth County helping children, adolescents and people of all ages with disAbilities to reach their fullest potential. FRA connects individuals to independence through specialized therapies and advanced technology. Acknowledging the powerful influence of the family, we remain committed to them by offering both support and education.

FRA assists individuals of all ages who have developmental delays or disAbilities as well as acquired disAbilities. FRA provides home-based early intervention for infants, therapeutic recreation programs, pre-vocational and educational classes for adults, EmployAbility training and job coaching, along with family and sibling support groups. TECHConnection, a signature program of FRA, leverages technology to help increase, maintain or improve the capabilities of individuals with disAbilities as a result of accident, injury, illness or aging as well as related issues affecting hearing, vision, reading or mobility.

To learn more, visit [frainc.org](http://frainc.org). Federal Tax ID # 22-2285850 - NJ Charity Registration # CH0232800

FRA offers PossAbilities for those with disAbilities.

