UPDATE FROM CEO DAN RENALDO

April 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

It has been a month since I last wrote to you. In that month, it feels like everything has changed. We know that the COVID-19 crisis has impacted each of you, and we hope that you and your loved ones have been able to stay safe throughout this incredibly challenging time. Please know that what has not changed is our partnership with all of you in our commitment to serving those who need us.

At Eva’s Village, the challenges abound every day – but so does the hope. We are caring for more than 200 men, women, and children living in our Halfway Houses and Shelters. I personally met with each of our clients weeks ago – accompanied by our senior staff – and promised them we would not abandon them. We have kept that promise thanks to an incredibly dedicated and determined staff, and thanks to your support. But to be honest, it has been rough.

A number of our residents have been diagnosed with COVID-19 – and when they are discharged from the hospital and sent “home” to recover, the home they are coming to is Eva’s. We have set up space for them to heal and recover away from the rest of our population, and our staff members are providing round-the-clock care and monitoring. It’s not easy – you can see what life at Eva’s looks like right now in this recent story on WABC-TV. Some of our staff members have also been diagnosed with COVID-19. But we remain committed to providing care no matter what, and we are thankful to front-line partners like St. Joseph’s Health, where our staff doctor, Dr. Murtuza Tameem, also works as a Hospitalist. Just as he and his colleagues at St. Joe’s celebrate each time a patient is taken off a ventilator, we rejoice each time one of our residents is cleared by the doctor to return to the Halfway House or Shelter.

At the same time, we are continuing to distribute 300-500 “to go” meals each day to members of our community who are in need, while encouraging them to maintain social distance, and giving out donated, hand-sewn masks to those who don’t have them. We’re staying connected via telephone and video chat with our outpatient clients who are working to maintain their recovery and mental health during this extremely stressful time. And we’re keeping in touch with community members who are used to gathering at Eva’s for fellowship meetings, social activities, and recovery-based workshops, letting them know that even though we can’t be with them in person right now, their “Eva’s family” is still here for them every step of the way.

We’re inspired and motivated every day by the heroes we see among us...our clients, who are supporting and lifting each other up, reminding themselves and each other that they have endured challenges before and they can get through this...our staff, who are working long hours on the front lines, monitoring symptoms of sick residents, cleaning and maintaining our 11 buildings, counseling and supporting our clients, and cooking and packing over a thousand meals each day...and you, our donors...
and supporters. During this unprecedented time, you have shown us that you believe in and support our efforts in so many ways. We’ve received donations of nourishing food to prepare and serve to our residents and community; hand-made cloth masks to protect our staff, clients and community members; **laptops so the school-aged kids who live here with their parents can participate in virtual learning.** And while this crisis has created an enormous financial strain on our organization due to canceled fundraisers and increasing expenses, the gifts we have received, both large and small, are allowing us to keep hope and help alive for the hundreds of people who rely on us. We are so deeply grateful, and we hope you will continue to do whatever you can to help.

Earlier this week, I was checking in on some of our sick residents with Dr. Tameem. One young woman, who was diagnosed with COVID-19 shortly after coming to Eva’s Village, was having a really difficult day. She hadn’t been at Eva’s long enough to build strong ties to her counselor or other clients or staff, and she was feeling lonely and depressed. What little comfort I could offer her was in the form of a bowl of homemade vegetable soup, which had been cooked and dropped off by a staff member who was a client of Eva’s 30 years ago. Though it’s been three decades, he remembered what it felt like to be new in recovery and afraid, so he wanted to offer what he could. That bowl of soup worked wonders. It turned this woman’s day around, and she wanted to thank the person who cooked it for her and the other sick residents. I called him, and I listened as these two people – who have never actually met, who were apart physically, and who are separated by 30 years in their recovery journeys – connected and forged a bond. We say Eva’s Village is the place where hope begins, and I think in that moment, hope was born for that woman. In a very dark time for all of us, I had the great privilege of seeing a bright shining light that also gave me great hope for brighter days to come.

Those moments of connection and hope are still happening every day, despite the need to keep socially distant. And though most of you have never had the opportunity to meet the men, women, and children of Eva’s, please know that your support, your prayers, and your gifts do reach them. You turn their days around. You bring them Hope. Thank you.

Together we will remain strong, and we will keep working to bridge the physical distance so we can ensure that hope and help is there for anyone who needs it.

Please be well.

Stay Safe
Stay Strong
Dan