



# Newsletter



UPDATE FROM  
THE PHOENIX RESIDENCE, INC.



WINTER 2021

**Happy Holidays** everyone! We hope everyone had blessed holiday season. Although this year looked different than last year, we know there's still a lot to be thankful for this year—and we hope you kept that in mind over the holidays. We certainly look forward to all that 2021 will bring!

As we approach the one-year mark of the onset of the coronavirus, it's hard to believe we're still navigating this pandemic. We did have our first cases of COVID-19 in our homes, but we're so grateful to the staff who volunteered to work with our COVID-positive individuals. Thank you!

And thank you to all of you who continued to support our *Close the Gap* campaign this past quarter. We're happy to announce that we had a successful Give to the Max virtual campaign! **This November, we raised \$20,810**, much of that for Give to the Max

Day. This was by far our most successful Give to the Max campaign to-date! All the money raised from Give to the Max Day will go towards our *Close the Gap* campaign to support our hard-working and dedicated staff. Thank you everyone for your support!

Jackie Larson  
Public Relations & Development Coordinator

## Close the Gap Update

**Total Campaign:**  
**\$416,656**

**2020: \$191,897**

## Generous Donor Remembers Loved One

Phoenix would like to recognize an anonymous donor who so generously has donated \$25,000 each year for the past 3 years. These gifts are made in memory of Barb Deeney. Barb was one of the first individuals we supported back at the original flagship facility 43 years ago. When Phoenix relocated the individuals into homes in the community in the mid-2000s, Barb moved into Foss House. She lived there until she passed away in 2017. We are so grateful to this donor for their ongoing support over the years. Thank you! These funds will be used to support staff members through our *Close the Gap* campaign. If you'd like to make a donation in memory of your loved one, please visit our website.



To learn more about our campaign or make a donation, please visit [www.phoenixresidence.org/give.html](http://www.phoenixresidence.org/give.html).

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# Building a Safe Place for Individuals with Autism

It's been a journey in the making, but we recently put the finishing touches on our new Sensory Room at Carver House. Many people played a role in making this dream a reality, but let's start at the beginning.

Nearly two years ago, the concept began on the steps of the Minnesota State Capitol. During the 2019 Legislative Session, we submitted a bill to secure funding for programs and interventions for adults with autism spectrum disorder. The bill was referred to a committee, but unfortunately, it never moved past that stage.

Despite the setback however, we still persevered in creating this peaceful space. After much planning, we transformed the former laundry room into the new Sensory Room. All along the way, several staff members attended trainings and researched sensory-based activities involving touch, movement, smell, taste, vision and hearing instead of lights and noises, to help calm the individuals we support. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech, nonverbal communication, and restricted/repetitive behaviors.



Right about this time, one of the family members of Carver House made a generous donation to the house, which we used for the Sensory Room. Program Manager Karen Miller said the most challenging part of the project was working with the unique footprint of the room. But all that hard work was definitely worth it!

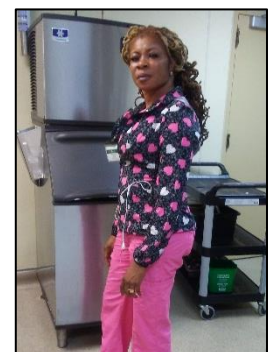
**“Laurel couldn't wait to check out the room,” said Karen. “She really loves threading wood beads and making music. And Alex is really enjoying it as well. He loves to hang out in there on the weekends listening to his piano music.”**

With a majority of the individuals at Carver House on the spectrum, this room certainly will get a lot use in the years to come! Thank you to everyone who worked on this project! To see more photos of the room, please visit our website or Facebook page.

## Close the Gap Spotlight: Victoria Karmo

Although she just joined us this past summer, Victoria Karmo, a staff member at Lydia House, is already making a name for herself here at Phoenix. Victoria and her family came to the United States from Africa in 2007. After working for 9 years in the healthcare field, she arrived at Phoenix and fit right in with staff and residents alike. “I love working at Lydia House,” said Victoria. “I like helping the individuals do things they can't do on their own, like Mary loves to watch CNN and Channel 5, and loves watching the Vikings play. I love to see their reactions.”

It's clear she's made an impact on the house as well. **“Victoria is a very hard worker and really cares for the individuals at Lydia,”** said Program Manager DeMarcus Taylor. **“She's a team player and I am very happy to have her at Lydia as she goes above and beyond her duties. Every site needs a Victoria!”**



Victoria credits the positive relationships she's built with her Lydia House coworkers as key to her success. “I am a team player. I love working with the team...I've learned you have to work together.” And this is why Close the Gap is so important – we are able recognize the dedicated staff members we have here at Phoenix. As Victoria concludes, “It's a very good thing to do, recognizing the staff and supporting those who work with their loved ones. I appreciate it very much.”

**Thank you Victoria!**

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