



– A Special Report *from* St. Mary's Home –

# Playing it safe



## COVID-19: Providing Care In A Pandemic

**L**ike the rest of the world, we have a new reality at St. Mary's Home. Since March, the classrooms have been quiet, the vans going on field trips have been parked, and people's smiles are hidden behind masks.

One thing has not changed – not now or in our 75-year history – and that is our commitment to caring for our community's most vulnerable. Has this been a challenge? Absolutely.

But our team has stepped up in ways we still cannot believe. We go through temperature checks and screening questions upon entry. We wear masks all the time. We have increased staffing, and teams have shifted roles to fill needs.

Besides the logistics of keeping 100 children and young adults safe and healthy in a pandemic, our team has continued to seek out ways to give a good life to those we serve. From virtual conferencing with family and friends to an incredible car parade, we continue to shine in even the darkest of times.



*The team at St. Mary's competed for the top spot during Mask Madness.*

## Mask Madness

**I**n early March, the madness began. Some amazing staff stepped up to find materials across Hampton Roads and sew masks for over 300 staff. They worked overtime, they tweaked patterns, and eventually created multiple masks for each staff member.

Now, we may be wearing masks all the time but that doesn't mean we can't make it fun. Thanks to another special group of team members, March Madness became Mask Madness this year with a bracket challenge like no other.

Team members posed in their masks with photo booth props to compete against one another for the crown. With our halls blanketed in funny photos, we started to turn lemons into lemonade.





*Photos from left clockwise: Winning photo of Shatonia Hicks, Assistant Program Manager; Shirley Parham, runner up, recently retired after 32 years with St. Mary's Home; The force was strong with Director of Occupational Therapy Suzanne Eason; Nurse Kathy Ryder rocking her hat and tie.*





## We are All In This Together

**T**hrough these unprecedented times, our top priority and commitment has been to protect the health and wellness of the young people who live at St. Mary's Home and The Albero House. This has been no easy feat.

Some days prove more challenging than others. Yet we look up and see the smiles on the faces of our young people from a prank or a funny cartoon. In these simple moments, we are reminded what is truly important, why we do what we do and that we are all in this together.



*Top photo: Isaiah smiled after pulling off a prank for April Fool's Day. Bottom photo: Colton enjoyed some time swinging and listening to some tunes on The Albero House patio.*





## Story Time Gets A Makeover

In the midst of social distancing, we quickly came up with some creative workarounds for many of the regular activities that take place daily at St. Mary's. We are having more small group activities, especially with things like story time, where children enjoy some one-on-one time with team members.

And to connect with friends and family outside of the Home, virtual hangouts connect us for storytelling, visiting and more.

*Top photo: Payten and Autumn enjoyed some storytelling.*

*Right photo: MacKenzie joined a virtual story time with youth volunteer Liam.*





# A Moment We Will Never Forget

After the Engine 23 horn blew, more than 30 decorated cars full of families, friends and teachers began the greatest parade we have ever seen in honor of Mother's Day. As the cars honked their horns, people began to cheer and applaud, shouting words of encouragement and gratitude to staff.

In a time of such stress and worry, the love and support we felt in that moment was overwhelming. Our smiles were hidden behind the masks but not our tears of joy. To see the children and young adults so happy and surrounded by love, to feel the connection with families we miss seeing every day, to know our work makes a difference to people – these are invaluable gifts.

Thank you to everyone who came out that day, including Norfolk Fire Station #4, the Z104 Zoo and all our friends. You gave us a moment we will never forget.

To see more photos and a video from the parade, find @StMarysHome on Facebook.



*Top photo: Amelia smiled from ear to ear as she watched the parade and listened to cheers from the crowd. Left photo: Shaggy, Ashley and Nick from Z104 made a special live broadcast of the event.*





*Photos from left clockwise: Madison watched joyfully as the car parade begins; Jae Siyon high-fived Smiley after an awesome day; Led by Smiley the Starfish, St. Mary's mascot, Norfolk Fire Station #4 joined the 30+ car parade.*







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*You can be a Good Life Giver. Thank you!*

## Giving The Best

**I**t's safe to say that COVID-19 has touched the Home in every possible way. As people and businesses have turned their focus inward, philanthropic gifts have dropped dramatically. This includes donations to St. Mary's Home and The Albergo House, which have decreased substantially due to these immense challenges we are all facing.

Please continue to think of the amazing, resilient children and young adults we serve. Your donations keep us going and allow us to continue giving the best possible care 24/7, 365 – even during a pandemic.

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### **To donate:**

- Go to [saintmaryshome.org](https://saintmaryshome.org)
- Call (757) 622-2208
- Send your gift in the envelope provided