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COVID-19. But any familiar routines, like going to work every day or participating in day programs, were gone. Starkey employees rose to the challenge, creating unique activity boxes and fitness routines, taking outdoor walks, creating lots of art and learning how to cook new meals. When a survey was distributed to inquire which staff would be willing to work in a designated home should a person contract the coronavirus, multiple employees volunteered and received specialized training.

In the early days of the pandemic, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies were hard to come by. Starkey parents, guardians, board members and community partners filled the gap, sewing masks for employees, and locating (or making) hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes. Starkey families made it easier for individuals in the homes to pass the time. They donated puzzles and games. They paid for meals from restaurants that were delivered. They built raised bed gardens. They did everything they could - all during a period of time when they were not allowed to visit their loved ones, for safety reasons - to ensure that Starkey employees were supported in their mission to keep individuals safe and healthy.

The days of caution have not ended, and the heroes on the front line at Starkey are still managing to work with smiles under the masks. They say things like: “We don’t take time to worry about the ‘what if.’ We do what we do for our extended family - the persons we serve. Smiles from six feet away and promises of hugs when this is all over.”

