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By **SUBMITTED ARTICLE** |

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FITCHBURG — Fifty years ago, LUK Crisis Center, Inc. was established to meet community needs in Central Massachusetts.

Over the years, LUK has remained dedicated to its vision of creating communities where all people are healthy, safe, and resilient, by ensuring that our programs and services meet the needs of the people we serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for LUK, just as it is for members of the community and other organizations. It strives to balance the commitment to the mission and the safety and well-being of its staff and their families. LUK staff have shown creativity, perseverance, and resourcefulness during this difficult time.

“Sometimes we joke that ‘crisis’ is our middle name,” Beth Barto, LUK’s CEO, said.

“Our staff has an amazing ability to come together during a crisis. Crisis can create a sense of unpredictability and confusion. Our 50 years of crisis management experience helps us help others to manage difficult life events,” Barto said.

LUK has ensured that staff and the people it serves remain informed and connected, and develop rituals and routines.

From day one of the crisis, team members have been encouraged to share their innovative ideas for continuing service delivery. The whole organization has come together. Exceptional leaders have ensured that we are responsive, not reactive.

Throughout the last few weeks, LUK accelerated implementation of telehealth services in order to ensure safe social distancing while continuing our programs.

This project had begun in October 2019 with support from The Health Foundation of Central MA, and in partnership with The Community Health Center, Spanish American Center, and CHNA 9.

LUK and its partners were due to launch telehealth services through a pilot project in April.

LUK disseminated COVID-19 practices to our staff on March 9, revising them regularly to reflect new developments. On March 18, LUK trained 200 staff members on the nuts and bolts of telehealth as well as necessary documentation and how to troubleshoot technological glitches.

Since then, creativity has blossomed at LUK. Every day there is a new story of creativity by LUK staff and consumers. One staff member purchased a Bob Ross wig and created art with a youth over video, for example.

LUK also works with children and youth ages 0-24 in our Residential, Foster Care, and Transition to Independent Living Services.

For the young people in residential services, its creative teams have established routines and activities consistent with healthy social distancing while maintaining a home-like environment.

In order to ensure these youth are feeling connected, LUK provided equipment to conduct video visits with family and natural supports. Team members in LUK's Independent Living Services are busy ensuring young people who are homeless have access to safe spaces, emotional support, and needed supplies.

The common theme throughout the above examples is its extraordinary staff.

LUK could not achieve our mission without the dedication of its essential workforce. It is grateful for their collective wisdom and thank them for their selflessness during this time of great uncertainty. LUK's managers have encouraged teams to make sure they are taking care of themselves during this difficult time. The staff is also encouraged to use video conferencing to connect with their colleagues and their families and tips have been created for those who work from home.

For more information about LUK, Inc. visit www.LUK.org, call 800-579-0000, or follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Join us in building stronger communities, family by family.

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