



ATD FOURTH WORLD

FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S VISIONS

SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Donate Today!
Online: 4thworldmovement.org/donate
Mail check or money order:
PO Box 1787, Gallup, NM 87305

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GALLUP NM
PERMIT NO. 9

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PO Box 1787
Gallup, NM 87305 USA

ATD FOURTH WORLD





Making Sure Our Children are Okay

The school year for most students is over and many parts of the country have re-opened for business after strict Covid-19 closures. Children now have less school work to do and more time and possibility for outdoor activities. As a movement that takes action to be close to people most isolated because of poverty, we feel strong incentives to resume summer activities with children. But in order to do that, we need to ensure that we are doing it safely and in accordance with official guidelines.

"This isolation is killing me," one parent told us. Another asked, *"When are you coming back for the kids? They need you, you know."* Children need times for fun and learning this summer, more than ever, and times to interact with friends and others. We know that one role of Story Garden is to break down the isolation that many children face because of the hardships that poverty creates for their families. We also know that being close to families for whom life is so challenging is the right thing to do this summer. But is it safe and what is at risk?

ATD Fourth World team members are asking parents' advice and starting to spend time in neighborhoods where Story Gardens happen to observe how people are adapting to being outside with others.

We are learning a few lessons along the way. The first is that no one knows exactly where the perfect balance is among the different aspects of a community's health and well-being during Covid-19.

The second lesson is that, for parents, their children's safety and well-being always come first. Some parents know what it means to be in situations that are severely unsafe for their families - living in a car, moving from one place to another, walking home through violent areas. Such life experience carries within it a deep wisdom and sense of responsibility that we want to learn from.

What does it mean for these parents to care for their children's well-being today? Is it healthy for their children to not have times to socialize, laugh, and learn? Are they worried that playing outside increases the risk of exposing others in the household to Covid-19? Is it in their best interest to take part in activities, in a setting that follows proven health precautions and with ATD Fourth World, where they hear, *"the future is not only waiting for you, the future is you"*? We do not know all the answers yet, but are committed to finding them with the help of families who have been impacted the most severely by this pandemic and persistent poverty.

To embark on this journey points out our individual and collective responsibility for today's situation, but also for tomorrow's: *"I feel like my goal is to make sure that my kids are okay after all of this,"* one mother told us. *"When life brings you chaos, my children are my bright star."*

Wishing you all a safe and wonderful summer.

Guillaume Charvon
National Director

Strength, Struggle, Solidarity – and Children’s Visions for the Future

ATD Fourth World teams and members rallied around the common concern we have for children throughout these past months of uncertainties. Although our programs and ways of being together changed, our core values and process of working together, facing the uncertainties together, remained strong and will continue to push us ahead.

Advocacy for Remote Learning

During the ATD Fourth World Community Calls, many parents expressed their frustrations regarding the social, emotional and academic consequences remote learning might have on children, especially children with special needs. In response, the New York Team held additional meetings with several mothers and grandmothers in New York and Boston, primarily to give mutual support. A longstanding partnership with The New School, a university in New York City, led to a webinar in which this working group and New York City educators exchanged on the theme, “Children and Poverty in the Era of Covid-19: How Remote Learning Exacerbates Inequality in New York.”

The parent and grandparent group presented the following statement: *“Parents are worried that their inability to properly teach could count against their child and initiate failing grades, which would result in children being left behind or penalized because of external difficulties that are out of parents’ control.”*

This same working group later taught three classes to students in the Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. Reacting to that same statement, students wrote recommendations for the New York City Department of Education and school staff to ensure that no child is left behind.



My friend calls people and sings to them, and she sits on the front porch and sings to whoever goes by. The music is so healing, both to her and to the people who hear it. And it has a ripple effect.

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity

What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19



When life is a struggle on a normal day, can you imagine what it is now?

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity

What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19



We need to realize when it's a hard time, that we need to understand we are brothers and sisters; we are on the same planet and we need to work together. We need to help each other.

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity

What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19



Following the Hopes of Children

The sudden rupture in our programs with children - Story Gardens, stemDiscovery Exhibits, Tapani - due to Covid-19, was quite a shock. Long brainstorming sessions within our teams and with community members, trying new approaches and seizing new opportunities, and staying creative in our thinking were all key to maintaining relationships with children through this period of isolation.

When the Community Director of the Gregory Jackson Joko School in Brooklyn suggested that we continue Tapani workshops online, our team in New York welcomed the proposition as a beautiful gift. We were especially eager to find ways to link children to others, within and outside their own community. Our first remote Tapani workshop was the "Solidarity Birds" activity. Children made paper birds to carry their message of solidarity around the world. Aniyah, one of the students, wrote on her bird: *"Thank you to all my fellow solidarity friends for helping us learn different things. I just want to say thank you a lot of times because you guys help us build the strength and for me to be stronger."*

The Team in New Mexico has been creative in staying connected to children and their families. They've been sending packages full of educational and art supplies, starting with Tapani's Solidarity Birds. Through their birds, children in New Mexico shared their concern for their friends from the Story Garden. Vera wrote, *"I hope you're safe"* and Kiara wrote, *"Hope you guys are doing well. I'm doing fine!!"*

The birds from New Mexico and from New York are now together on a joyful poster that each child will receive soon. The covid-19 crisis and the huge need to keep feeling part of a community became the opportunity to create links among children living across the country.

One lesson learned during this crisis is that ATD Fourth World Movement is not only about doing, but first and foremost about being deeply present, together. It's been impossible to be there physically for each other and it's a painful feeling. But it doesn't mean that we're not together anymore. We will continue to be connected with children, listen to them, and uphold their hopes for the future and for the world.

Ten year old Fran in New Mexico will help us. She texted to a Story Garden facilitator her vision for both a Covid-19 cure and for fairness and ending hunger in our world: *"I wish the virus would go away. It stops us from seeing people's families, friends and to visit places, planets and stars. Why couldn't people eat the cure and then the virus will go away? It seems like an easy thing to do. ...Because it's not fair if other people get gifts on Christmas and others don't get gifts on Christmas. And it's not fair that people are hungry for food and others aren't, because they have money to get food."*

“

Things were happening way before this pandemic and most likely, it's going to get worse if we don't talk about it, if we don't have this forum to congregate and be a **community**. We really truly have to be a community like we say.

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity
What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19



“

My energy comes from my grandbaby. I help my grandbaby with remote learning. That's a lot of energy. It also leaves me no time to be down and out.

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity

What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19



“

My students and I are sharing stories about what we are doing now and what we are going to do in the future, and learning how to think about the pandemic as a piece of our story. That story is a lifeline.

Stories of Strength, Struggle, and Solidarity
What ATD Fourth World members tell us about life during COVID-19

