

**ZOOMING**

PIVOTING TO

**FOR**

VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

**IMPACT**

MAY | 2020



**STARability**  
FOUNDATION

# AS THE WORLD WAS DRIVEN APART WE CAME TOGETHER

In March 2020, social distancing precautions required creative programming changes. The team at STARability Foundation pivoted center-based programs to virtual platforms, positively impacting participants' lives.



**STARability**  
FOUNDATION

[www.starability.org](http://www.starability.org)

## virtual programming impact measures first 30 days

# 1,791

the number of experiences participants engaged in during our first month of virtual programming

STARability Foundation launched virtual programming on March 22nd, just 6 days after suspending center-based activities. Pivoting to virtual platforms opened up a whole new world of possibilities for those we serve.

### virtual programming highlights



# 776

#### Fit 5 Challenge experiences

These daily classes integrated *Special Olympics Fit 5* concepts and workouts into a fun challenge promoting exercise, nutrition, and hydration. The series featured 30 video sessions released to STARability's Facebook page and sent directly to participants through email.

#### social wellness experiences

These Zoom-based classes feature lessons on self-advocacy and critical thinking skills to promote safety while interacting in the community.

# 58



#### music class experiences

This Zoom-based class includes song requests, sing-alongs to posted lyrics and more!

# 53



# 63

#### Next Chapter Book Club experiences

This class offering is posted on Facebook and sent via email to participants. Readers follow along and respond to instructor questions, building vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

#### IMPROV: performer experiences

Hosted in partnership with The Naples Players, these Zoom-based classes provide participants the opportunity not only to have fun, but also to build communication skills, confidence and peer relationships.

# 73



# 34

#### cooking & nutrition experiences

This weekly series, released via Facebook and email, features easy and fun-to-follow cooking lessons and recipes. Each class includes discussion on food safety, nutrition, and plant-slant menus in line with the *Blue Zones Project - Southwest Florida*.

STARability Foundation has taken the Blue Zones Pledge!

# how virtual programming impacted one family's life

## A Virtually Colored Tapestry

by Nancy Ross

mom to Jake

STARability Foundation

participant

April | 2020

expertly  
engaging  
each  
individual



## Our 32-year old son,

Jake, was born with fragile X syndrome. His intellectual challenges affected every aspect of his growth and development. We took a deep breath, and started to create the tapestry of his life, being careful not to miss a single stitch, weaving learning into every part of every day.

Day by day, month by month, year by year, he was flourishing.

### trailblazing new life skills

We were so fortunate when he became a STARability Trailblazer in 2018. We celebrated as we watched him progressing with self-confidence, overcoming his intense shyness, truly enjoying new experiences, forming and keeping new relationships, and gaining a willingness to share his thoughts and ideas with friends and staff.

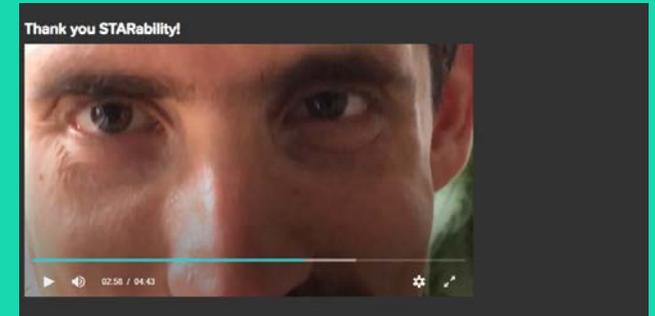
The colors of his tapestry were deepening and becoming more vibrant. He was thriving.

### grinding to a screeching halt

And so, we were all moving along in our lives during the early winter of 2020, pacing ourselves and our loved ones through our typical daily routines, and then, in what seemed to be just a moment in time, our lives as we knew them ground to a screeching halt.

COVID-19. Novel coronavirus. Social distancing. Shelter in place. Follow every rule to ensure the safety of your family, neighborhood, community, world.

For how long? How were we to continue to help Jake grow? How were we to help him deal with his losses? How were we to explain to him this sudden and intense disruption of life as we knew it?



### pivoting to virtual programming

And, in what seemed like just another quick moment in time, we had our answers. The staff of STARability immediately seized the monumental challenge of keeping its participants and their families living as normal a weekly schedule as possible.

By utilizing the platforms Zoom and Facebook, our son is enjoying multiple learning experiences facilitated by the STARability instructors 7 days a week, including math, social wellness, book club, physical fitness, theater improvisation, bingo, cooking, art, yoga, money management, music and computer class.

We have the strong feeling that this dynamic team has just begun to develop learning and support opportunities on these virtual platforms. We feel like we're watching their spirited creativity become unleashed in real time. Their enthusiasm is palpable and contagious! Even when there are as many as 30 participants in the activity, the staff is expertly engaging each individual as if he or she were the only one "in the room."

In addition to these multiple learning opportunities, the STARability staff is actively connecting every week with Jake via FaceTime and texting. This extra layer of support is priceless.

And so, the colors of Jake's tapestry have not faded at all. In fact, these days, they are glowing.

produced by  
STARability Foundation

An in-depth interview  
platform on the topics that  
impact ability most.

## Today's interview: Nancy Ross

author of  
**A Virtually Colored  
Tapestry**  
hosted by Kit Baker



**KB:** Nancy Ross, welcome to IMPACTability! I read over the beautiful, well-written expression of how you depicted your family's journey, and specifically Jake's experiences in the virtual programming offered by the STARability Foundation. I was particularly drawn to the paragraph where you describe the multiple learning experiences your son is participating in, which prompted my curiosity about the impact the program is having. My first question relates to how you talked about the programming running 7 days a week. How many sessions is Jake participating in over a week's time, and how does that time commitment relate to the center-based programming he attended prior to social distancing protocols?

**NR:** Jake has the opportunity to do the same number of hours per week in virtually based programming as he did in LIVE programming. Depending on his part-time job schedule, he spends at least 10 hours a week participating in online classes through STARability Foundation.

**KB:** Anyone unfamiliar with video-based learning may assume this type of programming would be similar to watching Netflix; a very passive format, and a big departure from the interactive experience offered through a traditional, center-based program where participants are physically together with others.

How would you describe the experience virtual-based programming offers your son? Are there any unexpected benefits to this type of learning?

### VIRTUALLY BASED PROGRAMMING

“are there any unexpected benefits to this type of learning?”

**NR:** The virtually based programming STARability is providing to participants is definitely a multi-dimensional experience. This goes way beyond the experience of a passive viewer accessing content from a piece of hardware. For individuals who have sensory/processing challenges, this type of programming forces the viewer to process information on multiple levels. For Jake, he's accessing the virtual programming from his home; his safe space, a place of comfort and control where he's willing to take risks he may not take in a real-world setting. He's seeing his friends in their homes; he's seeing his instructors. He's getting the opportunity to process all kinds of interactions in a way he never has before. In order to participate, Jake has to deal with his sensory/processing issues and take in information, process it, and give out information. The question for him becomes, "How can I stretch myself to bring in more and deal with more information?"

“he's willing to take risks

HE MAY NOT TAKE IN A REAL-WORLD SETTING”

An analogy would be going on a kayaking trip and hitting rapids. You instantly find yourself in a different dimension with an automated fight-or-flight response to "paddle harder!" It's almost a brain-training approach using a highly concentrated, complete emersion experience on a given subject. It's become an invitation for Jake to push himself. We feel like he'll be stronger for this experience when the center-based programming resumes and he's back in a live setting.

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### VIRTUAL-BASED PROGRAMMING BECOMES A COMPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY IN PROMOTING ABILITY NOT JUST A SUBSTITUTE FOR CENTER-BASED LEARNING

Continued | from previous page

**KB:** So let's talk about how people transfer learning to real-life settings for a moment, in exploring the impact of virtual programming.

When Jake logs off a class, do you see anything happening in his home life or work life that you can credit to something he learned through the virtual classes?

**NR:** We've seen two ways virtual programming has made an impact in Jake's life. One, he has had a big change in his ability to make eye contact. Social anxiety is always a factor for Jake. No matter how much cueing we've given him over the years, he's basically a very shy guy and always had severe challenges in making eye contact when interacting with people. What we've noticed is when we do FaceTime with family members, they comment on how much more "in the game" he is. He's simply more relaxed and able to engage in a more meaningful way.

#### TRANSFERRING LEARNING

“do you see anything happening in his home life or work life you can credit to something he learned through the virtual classes?”

“... he's much more 'in the game.' He's simply more relaxed and able to engage in a more meaningful way.”

**NR:** Second, when a class is over and he logs off, Jake spends a great deal of time reminiscing about everything that went on. So much is happening in a given class, and he's picking up on nuances that likely would have been lost in the context of a live experience where sensory processes become overloaded. This new format of episodic programming paces out learning and affords him time to process what's happened and achieve positive carryover.

“he's picking up on nuances that likely would have been lost in the context of a live experience

WHERE SENSORY PROCESSES BECOME OVERLOADED”

**KB:** Do you see a future for this type of programming once we all resume our "normal lives"?

**NR:** Absolutely. I have a new appreciation for virtual learning as a complementary strategy to center-based activities. I don't think there's any going back now. ■



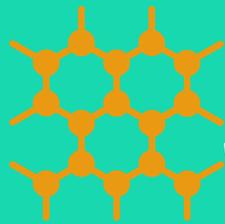
# invitation to become a philanthropist

be an investor in our life-changing programs

The CARES Act allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$300 of charitable donations from their 2020 taxes above-the-line. Donors who itemize their philanthropic gifts can deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income for cash donations made in 2020.

BE A PART  
OF HOW WE  
BRING THE  
WORLD  
TOGETHER

## ways to be a champion of inclusivity!



\$2,500

### help us fund our technology for a year!

You've read about the meaningful impact virtual-based programming can make. Help us invest in this complementary instructional strategy and make a world of difference!

### sponsor our Trailblazer Academy

Pen a check to underwrite 30 participants in our virtual academy programming for 1 month..

\$1,000



\$250

### art, anyone?

Creative expression builds fine-motor skills, eye-hand coordination and more! Consider sponsoring a workshop for 25 participants!



\$25

### Next Chapter Book Club experiences

Is reading a love of yours? Consider sponsoring this class where readers follow along and respond to instructor questions, building vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

### sponsor a month of IMPROV!

Join our community partner, The Naples Players, by ensuring that a full class (25 participants) will have the opportunity not only to have fun, but also to build communication skills, confidence and peer relationships.

\$500



\$100

### sponsors a 6-week cooking & nutrition class

This weekly series features cooking, food safety, nutrition and a plant-slant menu in line with the *Blue Zones Project - Southwest Florida*. STARability Foundation has taken the Blue Zones Pledge!



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