



**A letter from Starfish CEO Ann Kalass** | Publish date: Tuesday, April 22, 2020

Dear Starfish family and friends,

As we continue to navigate through these unpredictable times, it's important for us to stay connected. As community and Starfish supporters, it's essential for me to connect with you.

There is no roadmap on how to respond to the COVID-10 pandemic. It hasn't been an easy journey; and the journey is far from over.

**Every day, however, I am inspired by the unprecedented outpouring of care, selflessness, and determination.**

We are buoyed by our strong board leadership. We are humbled by the extraordinary generosity of our donors, especially our Great Hearts Gala chairs and sponsors, and Michigan community foundations. I am particularly proud of the tireless efforts of our nearly 500 Starfish staff.



### **COVID-19 can't stop Starfish.**

We remain mobilized because over 4,000 metro Detroit children and their families count on us for hope, to help them cope, and to make the world better.

Our talented Starfish team continues to adapt, evolve, and find ways to make a difference as the needs of the community and the world are ever-changing.

### **What We Are Doing: By the Numbers**

I communicate daily with our entire staff at 4:00. It's the best part of my day. I applaud their devotion, share well-being tips from our Starfish therapists, and detail the tangible fruits of their devotion via a COVID-19 report.

I am pleased to share the the latest **COVID-19 Monitoring Report** (covering the last 5 weeks) with you. [Click to view.](#)

- Provided **therapy sessions** to 1,268 behavioral health clients by video or phone.
- Connected with 683 of our children's families via online **education portals** that include face-to-face time with their teachers.
- Organized **distribution hubs** to deliver basic-life resources to 3,573 community families---including 19,000+ diapers.

### **What We Are Doing: Advocating for Change**

The extraordinary toll that COVID-19 has taken on Michigan's communities of color has put a global spotlight on the social inequalities we have been battling for too long.

**Our Starfish leaders are serving on the front lines as vocal advocates**---to fix broken systems in the short-run and for long-term positive change. We regularly contact more than 35 county, state, and federal officials and policy makers advocating for urgent funding to critical behavioral health providers.

**Starfish's message is clear:** Funds must get to the front line, so professionals can meet the needs of their clients. These are especially perilous times for our families who desperately rely on mental health assistance to navigate through uncharted trauma.

- **Breaking news:** Former Starfish executive and current board member **Marijata Daniel-Echols** has been appointed by Governor Whitmer to the new **Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities**. [Read the press release.](#)

**COVID-19 can't stop Kindness.**

I am proud of Starfish's ability to continue to serve as a source of hope for our community.

We are grateful for all of you, who are staying strong, acting with patience and perseverance, and working from a place of kindness.

Thank you for being essential so Starfish can remain essential . . . now during this time of response and into the future as we recover as a community---together.

And please know that all of us at Starfish remain here and near.

Stay safe and be well,

