



# Wishing You a Blessed Holiday Season

## Thank You For Answering Our Call to Action!

Thank you for being our hero! Within the unknown virtual world, families and youth are feeling discouraged and overwhelmed. Your generous gift helped families feel supported and empowered during this scary world we all find ourselves now, and your donation has made all the difference! We see the effects of this pandemic every day, and now this study confirms what we already know.

*Nearly a quarter of people in the United States are experiencing symptoms of depression, according to a study published September 2, 2020. That's nearly three times the number before the COVID-19 pandemic began. And those with a lower income, smaller savings and people severely affected by the pandemic — either through a job loss, for example, or by the death of a loved one — are more likely to be bearing the burden of these symptoms. When a population experiences something traumatic, such as a pandemic or a natural disaster, researchers usually expect a rise in mental illnesses in the weeks and months following the event. But the mental health toll of the coronavirus pandemic seems to be far greater than previous mass traumas, says Catherine Ettman, a doctoral student in public health at Brown University and an author of the study, which was published in the current issue of the American Medical Association journal JAMA Network Open. "We were surprised at the high levels of depression," Ettman says. "These rates were higher than what we've seen in the general population after other large-scale traumas like September 11, Hurricane Katrina and the Hong Kong unrest." (Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/09/02/908551297/pandemics-emotional-hammer-hits-hard>)*

And now add to this stress, families desperately working with their child with disabilities to engage with the new virtual world of school. It can be overwhelming trying to prevent their child from falling further behind, but through support like yours, Mission Empower will continue sending life lines to families and their children with disabilities during these chaotic times. Thank you again for partnering with us!

## Back to School!

These times with the COVID-19 Pandemic are very uncertain. Schools have been scrambling to develop protocols to keep the learning environment safe and are overwhelmed to find solutions for an effective learning experience. However, these protocols and solutions are not perfect, even for the average student, so what about those who need more inclusive help to be successful? We fear that many students will not be able to succeed, and those who need extra support will be left even further behind.

Mission Empower strives to help concerned parents advocate and work with school administration to carry out a plan that benefits their children to learn to the best of their ability. Our help is always available!



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## Wonderful Wednesdays with Wendi



It has been our pleasure to bring you the podcast, Wonderful Wednesdays with Wendi! As Erie County's Community Parent Resource Center, Mission Empower developed this podcast as an alternative and more current way to bring you the resources and information you need. Our weekly discussions have touched on many topics, from compensatory services and IEPs, to free services from local nonprofits to help during your time of need, and many things in-between.

Every episode is catalogued on Mission Empower's YouTube channel, so the information you need is available to you at any time, right at your fingertips! You can find the link to tune in live and join the discussion on our Facebook page, Instagram page and newsletter.

If you have an idea or would like to be a guest speaker, please feel free to reach out to Wendi at [wwojtecki@missionempower.org](mailto:wwojtecki@missionempower.org). Hope to see you there, every Wednesday at 3PM!

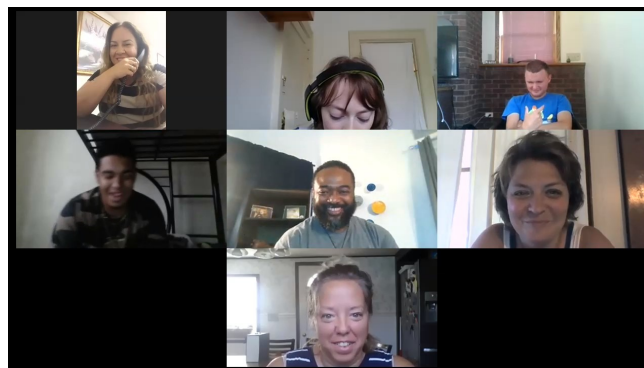


Mission Empower has participated in the Highmark Walk since 2009, and 2020 was no exception. However, this year we had to take a different approach to our fundraising. Due to COVID-19, the walk was moved to be all virtual participation as opposed to our usual in-person event. We were also unable to seek support from local businesses in the same capacity as previous years. Despite these obstacles we were faced with, this year's walk was still successful, and we appreciate every bit of generosity from the community. We look forward to walking with you next year in 2021!

## Youth Summit

Mission Empower's 2020 Youth Summit in August was once again a success. Unfortunately, we could not conduct our summit in person like other years, but we still made the best of a virtual adventure. Youth participated in enriching trainings that included topics about goal-setting, resilience, positive mental health, and tips on doing school work from home in the coming months. The students enjoyed being interactive, like typing their responses to questions on the Zoom white board, making gratitude trees, and of course dance breaks!

Our summit is not the only time we empower youth! We host trainings year round to help youth with every day life skills and being a part of the community. If you or someone you know may benefit from our youth program, please contact our Youth ENVISION Connector, Britney Myers via email at [bmyers@missionempower.org](mailto:bmyers@missionempower.org).



## An Update From Director of Mission Employment's Desk!

**Paid Work Experience** this month was located at McQuillen Chevrolet-Buick-GMC Truck, INC. in Girard.

Andrew Smith is an energetic student that loves to work with cars. Mission Empower obtained an opportunity for Andrew to learn how to do detailing of new and used cars. Andrew learned the skills quickly and after the 40 hours of Paid Work Experience, McQuillen's offered him a part-time position. Mission Empower enjoyed working with Andrew and we want to shout out a big **THANK YOU** to McQuillen's in Girard for giving a student the chance to grow and be part of their community.



*Andrew Smith vacuums out the trunk of a car*

**THANK YOU**



Thank you for another successful year of Erie Gives! We have been a part of this event since its beginning 10 years ago. This year, you helped raise a little over \$4,000, which is incredible to us. Your gifts will be used to support our youth to be more prepared for life after high school.

Next year's Erie Gives is set for Tuesday, August 10th, 2021. Don't forget that checks will still be accepted on August 9th! We appreciate everyone who supported us this year, and all the other years we have been a part of this event! Thank you!

*“Autumn is a  
second spring where  
every leaf is a  
flower.”*

*~ Albert Camus*

## Searching for Board Members!



Are you passionate about what we do? Mission Empower is looking for individuals who are interested in sharing their talents to help improve Mission Empower!

Our board members are extremely important to help decide the direction Mission Empower should go in. We believe that every organization needs a strong and effective board to fully realize its potential for good. Board members become active advocates and ambassadors for the organization, and are engaged in identifying and securing financial resources and partnerships that will assist us in achieving our mission.

If you are interested in joining or have any questions, visit our website at [missionempower.org](http://missionempower.org) or contact Jill Hrinda-Patten, the Executive Director of Mission Empower at [advocate@missionempower.org](mailto:advocate@missionempower.org).

**Help us fill our conference room!**





Mission Empower has upcoming giveaways! Visit us on Facebook for the full details! Each giveaway involves a chance to win a gift card!

October 2020



Costume Contest! Post a photo of yourself, your kids or even your pets dressed up for Spooky Season!



November 2020

Fall Favorites! Post a photo of your favorite part about the fall season!

December 2020



Light It Up! Post a photo of your holiday decorations!

### Knowing Your Rights in the Midst of a Pandemic

*A Webinar Series Discussing How to Advocate for Your Child During Virtual Schooling*



Join Curtis Jones on three Thursdays in October starting at 6 PM for guidance on your child receiving the accommodations they need to be successful during this new school experience!

**Register on our website at [missionempower.org](https://missionempower.org)**

- October 8th—Advocating in the New Virtual World
- October 15th—Rights and Responsibilities
- October 22nd—Assistive Technology Tips

### Mission Empower is on social media!



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**@mission\_empower**

[instagram.com/mission\\_empower/?hl=en](https://instagram.com/mission_empower/?hl=en)



**@Mission Empower**

[youtube.com/channel/UCjsJI3GFo1128eWQBxWzdkg](https://youtube.com/channel/UCjsJI3GFo1128eWQBxWzdkg)



**Don't have social media? Visit us on the web!**

[missionempower.org](https://missionempower.org)



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