

Hi Folks,

Thank you for your patience, those of you who are registered and have reached out. ***The short version is, we're on!*** On Thursday we heard from the state and received all the additional approvals we needed on Friday, which is when the last pieces fell into place. Randy Croshier (FRCOG) and Betsy Kovacs (Heath BOH) were our champions!

We are starting on July 13 as planned. We are cutting our numbers by half (40 participants) and using three and, possibly, a fourth, site to make it easier to maintain, supervise and follow safety protocols. **Please let us know ASAP if your child would like to attend.** This info is intended to help you make that decision.

FYI, we are considered an **outdoor education program**, not a summer camp and, as of today, the state just moved into phase 3 of its start up plan, which helped us and allows for gatherings of up to 25 people. However, we are not changing anything about our guidelines or plans.

This email includes info on our safety protocols at each campus, what to expect on a typical day, and the days and times for the first week. **ZACH**, will be emailing later today with more info about the workshop itself (read: the fun stuff) and in general you will be hearing more from him than me.

COVID Safety Protocols

Attached is our proposal that was approved by the Heath board of health, the Franklin county board of health and the DPH. (Department of Health). Our primary campuses will be the Heath School and Berkshire East but we will be using our space at 49 Conway Street for some smaller breakout groups.

We were told that this was one of the most thoughtful proposals they've vetted and that it exceeds COVID regs. I think some of the enthusiasm for this plan is that prior to COVID our work was 95 percent outside. And that is not going to change.

What Will A Typical Day Look Like?

Ensemble members will be broken into groups of 10. So if we are full we will have 4 groupings. Ensemble members will remain in those groups for the entire workshop (Trapeze silk lessons, music, art, acting/voice work, etc..)

This does not mean they will be doing activities with all 10 of them, most of the time they won't. For example Groups A & B are at the Heath school campus. **Group A** might have 4 participants on the trapeze, while 4 are dancing with Molly and 2 working are working on lines. (This is to avoid a bottle neck at the trapeze)

Meanwhile while **Group B** is working on art, music and silks in the gym. But they will remain in those activities for an entire block of time and then the two groups will switch. (On a half day there will be 2 blocks on a full day there will be 3.)

The next day those two groups will be replaced by **Groups C & D** who spent the previous day at Berkshire East And Groups A & B will go to the mountain. At the mountain, Group A might spend the first block working on scene composition (5 and 5) and Group B zip lining and/or working on art and music. And then the two would switch again.

Performances

Regarding the “performances” that is future planning. :) But we have myriad ideas and will be hosting them at Berkshire East. And although phase 3 allows for gatherings of 25 people. We are thinking that we will limit the audience to groups of 10 that can move through the space to view scenes the cast will repeat 4 or 5 times each evening.

As said, that is Zach’s department but it’s not a rumor that we are going to be performing a retrospective of past work that we will tie together with a storyline of our own making. This will allow us to go deeper into previous work rather than taking on new material.

First Week Schedule

We are planning what I would call a "soft start up" as we are opening with three half days and one full day (i.e., a shorter week). We are also opening one campus at a time with our full staff at each site.

This will allow all of us to exercise our social muscles while physically distancing and well, you know, get used to stringing together more than one compound sentence at a time. And

get used to wearing something other than our pajamas.



The schedule for the first week is as follows:

Monday July 13, 9:30 - 1:30

- Groups A & B (20 students max) @Heath from **9:30AM - 1:30PM** (We will send more info on pick up and drop off later in the week but we have a designated outdoor drop off area and an rain plan.)
- Groups C&D off

Tuesday July 14, 9:30 - 1:30

- Groups C & D (20 students max) @Berkshire East w/full staff.

- Groups A& B off

Wednesday July 15, 9:30 - 1:30

- Groups A& B @Berkshire East

- Groups D & C @Heath

Thursday July 16, 9:30 - 3:30

- Groups A& B @Heah

- Groups D & C @Berkshire East

And then we are Monday - Friday, 9:30 - 3:30 for the remainder of the Workshop. Groups will continue to rotate between the two campuses, with the possibility of one of the groups (10 students max) spending a day with a guest artist, outdoors, at our Shelburne Falls space. We are also planning for one or two evening and weekend trainings.

Franklin will send the groups and master schedule once you've had a chance to digest this info and let us know if your child still plans to attend. **Note: siblings will be in the same groups.** And if you have been social quarantining or created a social bubble with another workshop family we will try to keep those youth together as well.

Compassionate Closer :)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL JONATHAN, day or night. I am happy to unpack any of this further with parents, grandparents, guardians, social workers, or PARTICIPANTS. This is not the time to be concerned about inconveniencing me or worrying about my having to field the same question multiple times.

One of the reasons we are able to pull this off safely, responsibly and mindfully is because of the incredible community of returning families, artists and ensemble members and the culture of connection we've built together. And I've spoken with many new families and I am so psyched to have you and your children with us on this adventure!

I am including the plan for Berkshire East. The safety protocols will not change but Gabe and I will be meeting again to vet some of the specific activities we hope to have access to and on what days they'll be available, so those details will be forthcoming.

Most importantly, we will not be zip lining or on the aerial park with any other Berkshire East's guests. If we have the opportunity to zip line or use the aerial park it will be with Hilltown Youth, faculty and artists only. (And those activities will be *optional* for ensemble members, always.)

I think that's it.

Yours in creating, supportive, creative communities!

xoxoxo

Zach, Franklin, Laura, Arlie, Sam, Margaret, Anna, Lydia, Scott, Molly and Jonathan
(On behalf of the Hilltown Youth Leadership Team)

Ps: Jonathan's phone contact info:

413.337.4017 (home)

413.387.8783 (mobil)

This is the plan approved by the Heath Select Board, Board of Health, Building Use Committee and the state and county agencies

WHO: The Recovery Theatre, the newest initiative of the Hilltown Youth Performing Arts Programs, is a strength based, holistic model creating change for area youth through theater and the arts. The following are two *very* short vids on the Recovery Theatre and our after school program, the Hilltown Drama Club.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJojXEC0Mmg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3IFX9clAgO7Tfhg8TH0opgtft88Exrv6mC6fgf1YzCBIVmPSWwLSflhX0>

Building supportive, creative virtual communities (5 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvQPzd4VOtI&feature=youtu.be>

A short song from one of our first Drama Club Zoom Workshops (60 seconds)

For the past 10 seasons we have also run the **Hilltown Youth Theatre Summer Workshop**. The Workshop provides intensive training, artistic and professional skill building, and leadership development to youth from underserved rural areas in Franklin County. Before the pandemic, 95 percent of our workshops and trainings took place outdoors.

Our programs are student-led not staff driven. Said Recovery Theatre co-founder Alyssa Wright, "When people ask Jonathan and I why we started the Recovery Theatre program, the first thing that comes to mind is how much I needed the program when I was a teenager. I always felt there was an energy in the space between art and healing where it was created, and I was invited to it, but I wasn't invited to it and then allowed to create . . . So what we really try to do here with our kids is to take a dignified approach to seeing them as the creators, as the artists, and as the drivers from the get . . . So it's more than just art therapy or being able to express yourself; it's actually showing up in a space and feeling safe enough to grow there."

All our student faculty that work for us are current Recovery Theatre members or alums. Consequently, **the Workshop would provide much needed summer employment in the creative economy at a time when summer jobs are hard to come by.**

Despite our moniker, we are clearly, an **outdoor education program**, although we have some overlap with sports camps and outdoor adventure activities for sure, which are also permitted in phase 2, education is the box we check most often when asked what kind of nonprofit best describes us.

That is how we were classified by the United Way of Franklin County when we became a Community Partner. If permitted more than one we frequently add "youth program." Our cultural partners are the Opioid Task Force of Franklin County, the United Way, Health New England, and BC/BS is, currently, exploring a partnership with us.

- **Outdoor Education Programs** Organized educational programs, activities, workout classes, and outdoor public art installations may occur in outdoor spaces during Phase II only if the program does not require individual participants to share equipment or make physical contact in order to engage in the activity, subject to the following guidelines.
- *Outdoor Education Program Guidelines:* To allow for adequate social distancing for the activity, as well as ingress and egress, the layout of the class should be managed to accommodate a minimum of 12 feet distance between each individual activity station.
- Facial coverings are required, and instructors and participants must always comply with all social distancing requirements and remain 6 feet apart. Programs must be conducted without shared equipment, tools or materials.

- Activities must be limited to gatherings of no more than 10, including instructor or leader. **Larger areas may be used by more than one group of 10 at one time, provided that adequate social distance and group separation can be maintained. To ensure group separation, groups must be spaced at least 20 feet apart at all times.**
- Organizers must use a pre-registration process to ensure group size.
- Instructors must be familiar with all protocols and procedures to maintain a safe activity, e.g., monitoring physical distancing, not allowing participants without facial coverings, disinfecting tables before and after use in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Temporary signage will be posted to inform participants of public health guidelines and standards of behavior during program. ∞ If using outdoor displays or tables, add protective barriers, when possible and/or disinfect before and after use.

WHAT: *We propose running a physically distanced training and workshop at the Heath School, Berkshire East and The Mill at Shelburne Falls. We view this summer's programming, first and foremost, as a mood booster.*

It is, to paraphrase internationally known experts in infectious disease epidemiology Michael Osterholm, PhD, MPH and Dr. Erin Bromage, a way for children to maintain *both* safe physical distancing *and* healthy social connection. Both are critically important for developing strong mental health and healthy immune systems.

(Dr. Osterholm is Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota and served as interim Director of the CDC. Dr. Erin Bromage, Faculty at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth since 2007 where he teaches courses in immunology and infectious disease.)

WHERE: **The former Heath School, 18 Jacobs Road; Berkshire East Mountain Resort Thunder Mountain Road, Charlemont MA; The Mill At Shelburne Falls, 49 Conway Street.**

WHEN: July 13 - August 5, Monday - Friday 9:30AM - 3:30PM, with select evening and weekends. NOTE: will need an hour for set up prior to students arrival. And will be phasing in campuses and times (e.g., We will begin with half days and have a shorter first week.)

WHY: The Covid-19 pandemic has mobilized our program to be nimble and, most importantly, to keep showing up for our community members. Physical distancing and quarantine requirements have hit young people in recovery especially hard; the virus has taken away the structures they have come to rely on to stay healthy and functional, and, in some cases, it is trapping these youths in unsafe homes. From the standpoint of recovery and public health, we are **cultural first responders**.

HOW: Our plan involves capping our numbers at 40 (1/2 of a typical summer workshop) utilizing three sites so there wouldn't be more than 10 - 15 students on each campus (20 @the Heath School due to its size), which will make supervising physical distancing, hand washing etc. more manageable.

We are going to offer families/students the option of participating virtually and/or a combination of in-person and virtual work (we don't want to set it up such that the "courageous" come in person and others participate online, families will participate based on their own comfort levels);

Families with a parent or household member who work in a hospital or extended care facility that treat or provide care for COVID-19 patients (e.g., nurses, doctors, hospital staff, etc.) will only be permitted to participate virtually. Unless that person agrees to live elsewhere during the workshop and their child(ren) are tested and quarantine.

The remainder of this proposal pertains to the work to take place at 18 Jacobs Road. The max number of students allowed on campus will be 20. They will be separated into two groups of 10 and remain in those groupings.

NOTE: *Even if the regs or phase we're in change these protocols won't.* In other words, the max number of students on campus at any one time will remain 20 to make it easier to supervise physical distancing, mask wearing and hand washing.

NUMBERS

- One group of **10 students inside** the building (**max**);
- Two group of **10 students outside** the buildings (20 max);

- The **groups don't cross-pollinate**, they remain in the same groupings throughout the Workshop;
- ***All activities, except aerial fabric lessons, will be held outdoors whenever possible, and we will have an outside rig to use as well.***
- Up to 10 additional adult artists and/or parent volunteers will be permitted on campus working at least 12' away from any large group activity. No activities can have more than 10 participants at a time (including supervising adults).

AGES

- 9 - 18
- Littles 7 and 8 year-olds will participate online and be part of our *backyard theatre program*.

SPACES (Indoors)

- We would use the same rooms in our current lease agreement (e.g., cafe, art room, gym, all-school space);
- Max number of students allowed in cafe at one time is 4 including staff (e.g, working on art and props);
- Max number of students allowed in art room is 3 including staff (e.g., working on art and props);
- Max number of students allowed in atrium is 4 (e.g., working on poetry and writing)

- Max numbers indoors includes every space in use (i.e., **no more than 10 participants inside the building at one time**);

SPACES (Outdoors)

- Soccer field (*Trapeze*)
- Four Square Area (*Music*)
- Island inside circle driveway (*Poetry & Writing*)
- Area Behind Art Room (*Art & Set Design*)
- Outside Tent In Parking lot (*Dance & Yoga*)

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Temps taken at the beginning of each day;
- Hand washing hourly;
- Hand sanitizer and paper towels will be available at every station at all times;
- Bathrooms sanitized hourly in accordance with Centers for Disease Control guidance and best practices;

- Physical distancing maintained at ALL times indoors and out;
- Mask wearing required indoors at ALL times;
- Mask wearing required outdoors except during lunch time and a specially designated activity where participants are 12 - 20' apart.
- Lunch and snacks all take place outdoors;
- No shared food or drink
- Water bottles only, the water fountain will be off limits if it's not already closed (**we will provide bottled water to refill or use**);
- Cafeteria, gym, stage and art room floors mopped w/disinfectant daily;
- When inside, the gym, cafe and art room doors and windows will remain open for circulation;
- **The Workshop will be cancelled if there is inclement weather.**
- If the workshop is cancelled due to weather 10 students (max)—2 groups of 5 (or may be broken into smaller groupings)—will be permitted to work for a half day on music, art, film, poetry and writing inside the building.

- In the event of a thunderstorm during the Workshop participants will be assigned rooms/areas to report to inside the building, **this will be treated like a fire drill**. If the storm doesn't pass we will assign groups to indoor activities.

APPARATUS & EQUIPMENT

Aerial Fabrics

- Performers use the same aerial fabrics (by color) only one student per silk (except siblings);
- Fabrics swapped out and mats sanitized when groups change;
- Limit of 2 group lessons per day 6 students per lesson (max) and/or in gym at one time (2 additional students can be on the state);
- Aerial fabrics sanitized/washed every night (we will be working with at least 2, preferably 3 sets);
- Any staff/faculty working with students on fabrics will wear gloves at all times;

Trapeze

- The trapeze will be treated similar to a zip line at Berkshire East or Zoar Outdoor (although the latter actually requires more contact with users);
- Participants and staff on apparatus will wear disposable, single use nitrile style gloves and masks at all times;
- One staff, one flyer on board;

- Flyers will climb the ladder with gloves and mask on on, once at the top they will throw their gloves in a receptacle, put their mask in their pocket;
- After they land in the net flyers will put their mask back on;
- No catching, flying only;
- **Note:** Our trapeze artists have been quarantining together since March, a single staff will be assigned to each group of flyers who will be assisted on the board by that same staff member for the duration of the Workshop.

Music

- Instruments will be brought in from home by individuals whenever possible, and not shared with others and can be used by only one participant per day.
- Hilltown Youth equipment will be sanitized after each use;
- Singing lessons/trainings will be outdoors either 1:1 or in physically distanced groups space 12' apart (**there will be no singing instruction indoors**).

PERFORMANCES

- Our current plan is to view the Workshop as an enrichment and have a "pandemic festival of the arts" that showcases the work online as we have been doing since the stay-at-home advisory and/or, weather permitting, invite parents and family members to view it in groups of 10 or less, the way you might visit a gallery.

- Outdoor exhibition(s) or performances will take place at Berkshire East and/or, possibly, the Heath School.

BERKSHIRE EAST

- Safety and physical distancing protocols will be the same as at the Heath School.
- We will have use of the West Lodge exclusively for our program along with its bathrooms, no other parties will be sharing those restrooms.
- All activities will take place outdoors. I am comfortable with 5 people (4 participants and one staff) working inside the lodge (e.g., on art) during a light rain, similar to the Heath school cafe
- The West Lodge is where we will wait out a storm or should we require an early pickup due to inclement weather
- We will have use of the tubing park as a base of operations where we will have a shade tent and, possibly, an outdoor static rig.
- Hilltown Youth will not have to wait in the lift line but can enter the lift thru the gate the mountain bike patrol use.
- Chairlifts will be sanitized before we load and unload on days we use them.
- The mountain's shutdown days are Tuesdays and Wednesdays so we will have that site to ourselves on those days.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Jonathan, Scott Halligan, Laura Iveson, Arlie Hart, Zach Arfa, Franklin Speck, Alex Schmidt, Sam Picone-Louro & Molly Fletcher-Lynch

(On behalf of the Hilltown Youth & Recovery Theatre Leadership Team)

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