As the impact of the COVID pandemic lessens, SteppingStone participants are returning to their Centers, looking forward to seeing their friends, and resuming full in-Center activities. For most, this is a gradual process as they ease back into normal activities and navigate transportation challenges made difficult by the pandemic.

Currently, most SteppingStone clients are receiving care both at their Centers and in their homes, but over the next few months virtually all will return to full in-Center care. Key in preparing for participants return is each Center’s Activity Director, who plan and oversee activities in conjunction with the entire care team. Activities vary among Centers to meet their clients’ needs and between individual participants because of health, interest and language. All of this is considered by the Activity Directors as they create daily schedules for their Center and implement them with the participants.

Each Center creates a weekly schedule of group activities that include both recreational and therapeutic activities. Group activities at the Centers include therapy sessions, often led by the Physical or Occupational Therapist. While these are underway individual clients may meet with the Center nurse, and physical or occupational therapists if needed, to receive individual therapy.

At Mission Creek Center, Activity Coordinator Maria Martinez has a busy schedule planned every day.
"Because we have two care shifts at Mission Creek Center, we schedule a lot of activities and I plan things that engage everyone; something that they will love. We have crafts, games, dancing classes and karaoke. Now that it is spring we use our courtyard regularly and also take walks to Mission Creek itself, which is next to the Center." Maria Martinez, Activity Coordinator, Mission Creek Center.

In addition to group activities there are individual activities such as crafts, puzzles and other tasks that have therapeutic benefit. Golden Gate Center Activity Coordinator Roy Yang explains his approach:

"I create individualized therapeutic packages for each participant like Chinese culture games, picture puzzle, handwriting practice, word search, coloring paper, etc. Those activity packages are discussed with our Occupational Therapist and designed for every individual participant." Roy Yang, Activity Coordinator, Golden Gate Center.

Roy creates many materials in Chinese as this is the primary language of most clients at Golden Gate. All Centers create materials and lead activities in multiple languages depending on the needs of their participants. All Centers celebrate cultural events and special days for participants, such as birthdays, each in their individual ways. Here's how they do it at Mabini and Presentation Centers.

"In March, our participants made flowers to honor International Women’s Day. We provided green construction paper for participants to create their own clovers in celebration of St. Patrick’s Day. Participants have been doing karaoke in preparation for our karaoke contest at the end of April to celebrate National Karaoke Week. In May we will have a singalong for Mother’s Day. Participants will sing “Mom is the Best in the World”, a Chinese folk song, and have dim sum for lunch. In June we will have a “Hat Show” to celebrate Father’s
"In April we will have our spring celebration including egg dying, making our annual egg salad, and a special Spring Keno with wonderful surprise gifts for participants. In May we celebrate Cinco de Mayo where we make our special ice cream margaritas, fish tacos, and we will have a piñata. We will also celebrate our women on Mother’s Day, with virgin mimosas and a fashion show, where we will roll out the red carpet and let the ladies walk down and receive a special rose. In June we will have our Filipino Independence Day celebration, and the men will be acknowledged, as the women were, for Father’s Day." Sandia Bruno, Activities Coordinator, Presentation Center.

Though the activities at each Center vary to meet the interests of their participants, two are seen as highlights at multiple Centers. One is the Body Dynamics class taught by City College Instructor Janet Gee, whose skill and enthusiasm motives participants. The other is Laughing Yoga, which is led by therapists at most Centers. Melissa MacDonald, the Program Director at Mabini Center, explains how it is being implemented there.

"Jamie Lew, Occupational Therapist, introduced laughing yoga to Mabini. Laughing yoga is a form of yoga that focuses on laughter. Laughter uplifts the spirit and helps us feel connected with one-another."

"Isabella Lung, Program Aide, coordinated a laughing yoga contest. Special prizes were awarded for "Best Laugh" "Loudest Laugh" "Longest Laugh" "Most Accurate" "Best Effort" and "Best Attendance." Melissa MacDonald, Program Director, Mabini Center

As of mid-April, SteppingStone Centers are having daily in-Center attendance of about half capacity as many participants have difficulty getting to their Centers. Others are still receiving care at home. Over the next several weeks we expect this to change as people become more accustomed to leaving their homes and transportation services for adults with disabilities improves. In addition, all Centers are having new participants join the program and seeing a general increase in referrals.

At all Centers the Activity Coordinators are busy organizing a highly varied program designed to interest their participants, help them maintain their health and stay connected to their community.
communities. These will expand to accommodate more participants who attend their Centers for all their care days.

Photos: (Masthead) Jamie Lew, Occupational Therapist, Mabini Center Leading therapy class. (Top) Maria Martinez, Activity Coordinator, Mission Creek Center with Walking Club at Mission Creek itself. (Middle 1) Maria Martinez, Activity Coordinator, Mission Creek Center with participant in bowling game. (Middle 2) Roy Yang, Activity Director, Golden Gate Center with participants doing arts and crafts. (Middle 3) Chinese writing practice sheet at Golden Gate Center, created by Roy to help clients with their writing skills and hand strength. (Middle 4) Mei Chen, Activity Coordinator, Mabini Center, leading participants in Thera-Band exercises. (Middle 5) Sandia Bruno, Activity Coordinator, Presentation Center helping participant with a craft project. (Middle 6) Janet Gee, SF City College instructor, leading her Body Dynamics class at Golden Gate Center. (Bottom) Mission Creek participant practicing dancing at the Center.

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