

## **Springdene newsletter 1 May 2020**

"Cheers!" That's the message we received this week from the Bennett family, who announced they were sending a special gift to our hard-working carers at Springdene as they continue to fight the battle against coronavirus and keep everybody safe.

"Drinksupermarket.com will be delivering a treat from Maureen, myself and Paul," writes Kerry Bennett. "There's 24 Gordon's gin miniatures with 24 cans of Schweppes tonic, 24 Diet Cokes, 24 bottles of Holsten Pils. Hopefully that's something for everyone. It is a thank-you to all the staff at Spring Lane, in all your different roles, because you are literally risking your own lives to care for others." It's a sentiment we much appreciate.

And it wasn't the only bit of good cheer being sent to fortify the staff as they go about their business of making sure our residents are well cared for. The family of Chris Eracieous donated 15 boxes of pizza, which was delicious and went down very well in keeping our folk going. There were some tasty biscuits, too, from Peter Michelson's family.

At Spring Grove, staff were delighted to receive a case of bottles of hand cream and some scrummy cup cakes from Patrick Clifford's family. Dereck Councill's wife baked a lovely cake for everyone and there was a fantastic personalised box of chocolates inscribed 'Thank you, Spring Grove' from Gianfranco Iannacone's daughters, Polly & Franchesca.

Springview staff were delighted to receive a wonderful basket of groceries donated by Morrisons supermarket. And staff were touched by a warm personal letter of encouragement from Dr Arnold and Mrs June Powell, the founders of Springdene homes. If you would like to send in something of your own, it would be very much appreciated by the carers. Even a simple 'thank you' card would be nice.

Meanwhile our carers are doing their utmost to bring comfort, cheer and amusement to residents, while they are being asked to stay in their rooms. Not an ideal situation in these troubled times when we all seek consolation from getting close to others. But residents, in their usual fashion, are taking it with good humour, and understand it is currently on the best medical advice and for their own protection.

And there's plenty going on to keep spirits up. Caroline, our activities coordinator at Spring Lane, is doing a marvellous job keeping folk entertained. This week there was karaoke in the garden, with staff taking the microphone and locals hanging out of their windows and joining in.

A walking programme was started to allow residents to exercise along the length of their corridors and giant bubbles were blown through their doors to make them smile. A corridor art gallery has been launched, curated by one of the residents.

Meanwhile, Caroline has been organising a photograph of every resident and staff member with a handmade rainbow card sent in by the children of Our Lady of Muswell School. The photos will go out to residents' families, and the school and make a super mural when collaged together.

At Springview, Eirlys has been doing excellent work in organising singing along the corridors and walks for individuals in the gardens, which are very beautiful with spring flowers at the moments. The Big Quiz has been very popular and brought out everyone's competitive side.

You can do your bit, too, by staying in touch with your loved ones face-to-face on the tablet devices we have available in each home. Skype is really easy to use and our staff are happy to help with any technological difficulties. Do take advantage of it.

On the medical front, we are pleased to learn that the Health Secretary Matt Hancock plans to extend Covid-19 testing to all care home residents and staff, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

The idea is that the test kits should be sent direct to the homes, and we would undertake a testing programme for everyone as soon as we get them. However, official progress has been slow and at the time of writing we had not received any kits.

There is more positive news on the personal protective equipment front. Despite the continuing national shortages, our managers continue to keep up with acquiring supplies of PPE – which all our care staff wear at all times. And it goes

without saying that to support this, our homes are continuously deep-cleaned with specialist products.

We understand that you all have concerns about your loved ones, and we are happy to answer medical questions on an individual basis. However, because of the time pressure on our managers, who are on the front line, we would ask you to submit them in writing in the first instance and we will reply hopefully within 24 hours.

Normally at this time of year we would be announcing a review of our room rates. As it happens, we've faced a big increase in costs in 2020, with a mandatory 6.2% rise in the National Minimum Wage imposed at the beginning of April. To maintain staffing levels, it's been necessary to implement a comprehensive salary review for all staff, with new rates payable from this week.

However, we understand the stress and difficulty many of our families are facing in the present crisis, and are pleased to be able to announce we are postponing any rate review until September.

In the meantime, as a gesture of goodwill, the company will absorb the extra costs. We very much hope this will give you and your family some respite and peace of mind.

I'll conclude this newsletter with a happy note we received from family member Chris Van der Waals, whose mother is a resident at Spring Lane: "Thank you so much for keeping us informed as to what is going on in the home. Thanks to all the staff for their work in these difficult times. I am very happy that my mother is being looked after so well and is in the best place possible.

"Please, all of you, stay safe and stay well."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J E Balcombe", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

J E Balcombe, CEO Springdene Group