

Springdene newsletter May 23, 2020

“A LITTLE cake to have with your tea, as we acknowledge the wonderful work you do,” said the message addressed to the staff at Spring Lane this week.

In fact, this was something of an understatement, since there were three rather large cakes from the family of former resident Bridget Sandison-Smith, separately iced with the words: “Thank you.” “All of you.” “For All the work you do.” Very kind!

It’s just one example of the many treats and gifts delivered from relatives keen to show their thanks to our staff who are working so hard to keep residents safe and well in these tough times.

Eve Upton’s family sent a cornucopia of chocolate bars to Spring Grove with the message: “We miss you all so much and are deeply grateful for all the care you are giving Mum. She’s so happy and healthy and flourishing with your care.”

There was a lovely Holmes Bakery hamper from Caetano and Alfonso Reis e Souza, on behalf of their father Artur at Spring Grove: “Thank you so much for all your dedication in taking care of our father as you always do, but especially during these difficult times,” they wrote.

We took delivery of another splendid hamper from Basil Fineberg’s son Adam, with profound thanks for looking after his father so well. At Springview there were some beautiful flowers, chocolates and biscuits from the granddaughter of Irene McBride.

Next week, we’re looking forward to a promised delivery of muffins being baked by members of Project Impact, a voluntary group for Jewish teenagers. And even the simplest message has been a

delight to receive. “To the staff and residents of Spring Grove. We are thinking of you. You are in our hearts and prayers,” said a card from Maureen Smith, youth worker at Hampstead Parish Church.

Meanwhile, there is some other good news around this week. At last, the first official Covid-19 testing kits have arrived at all three homes after many delays. This is the first opportunity we have had to test everybody at the same time – both staff and residents, regardless of whether they have any symptoms.

It will allow us to get a clearer picture of the health of everybody, and all being well, could allow us to lift some restrictions. Our three managers, Sony, Mary and Lori, with their teams have worked fantastically hard to get all the tests administered and the kits returned to the government’s processing centres.

Thanks, too, to all the residents for being so cooperative with a sometimes uncomfortable procedure, which involves placing a swab in the nose and throat. Everybody has been very cheerful about it. Let’s hope we get the results back soon.

The lovely weather this week has meant that more residents have been getting out of their rooms into the gardens to experience some of the scents of spring. And social life is returning to the lounges, too. Spring Grove cine-buffs were delighted with a showing of “My Fair Lady” on a big screen in the lounge – socially distanced, of course.

There are now plans for a big movie every other afternoon. In this respect the residents are luckier than the rest of us to whom cinemas remain closed!

In the High Dependency Unit, Spring Grove’s activities supremo Steve was a big hit with a “wildlife” puppet show using long-sleeve glove puppets, complete with sounds. People loved to join in and a raucous time was had by all. It was rounded off with an energetic karaoke session.

At Spring Lane and Springview, our ever-resourceful activities coordinators, Caroline and Eirllys are doing a grand job keeping folk stimulated and amused. Caroline is busy getting the residents to record a version of “All the world’s a stage” – Jacques’ famous

speech from Shakespeare's "As You Like It" about the seven ages of man.

Each participant is reciting one line each, with the whole thing set to music. There were smiles when it got to the end – with the famous words on old age – “sans teeth...sans everything”. For more contemporary tastes, Caroline also organised a virtual disco in the gardens, which was very popular – “There's nothing like a bit of Tom Jones on a hot afternoon,” she says.

Eirlys, meanwhile, has been doing everybody's hair. With hairdressers out of action, residents are delighted – saying this is a great boost for their morale. She is also setting up our very own “Advice Line” for residents. The idea is that everyone offers a piece of advice about how to cope with the lockdown and is photographed with a pertinent quote, which are then sent on to families.

Resident Ken Newman, aged 99, advises wisely: “Be sensible, obey the rules and be patient”, while Margaret Smith has some upbeat thoughts. “Think of lovely holidays, lovely friends. And look forward to the day we all get out!” We're all with her on that one!

The letters from the Pen Pal club continue to flow. “Thank you so much for your letter – what a lovely family you are,” wrote resident Violet Stone in response to her letter, which was typical of many. Work is apace, too, filming for the coronavirus song we wrote about a couple of weeks ago – based on “Is This the Way to Amarillo?” It was quite surreal seeing our care staff in protective gear prancing around to the music – and everyone had a good laugh.

On a final note, the children of Mulberry House School in West Hampstead have made a charming video in tribute to Vivien Frey, the activities coordinator at Spring Grove, who sadly passed away last month.

They sang her favourite song “Reach for the Stars” by S Club 7 with a dedication reading: “For ten years the children at Mulberry House School shared a special relationship with Vivien who arranged our visits. The pupils and residents love spending time together sharing stories with each other. We dedicate this song to all the residents and care workers at Spring Grove and to all the amazing key workers across the UK.”

Vivien would have been touched, and so are we...

Stay safe and stay well!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J E Balcombe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

J E Balcombe, CEO Springdene Group