

Springdene Newsletter 24 April 2020

HEARTFELT thanks for all your responses to last week's newsletter, voicing your appreciation for the heroic and incredibly tough work our staff are doing in the face of the Covid-19 crisis.

"Thank you so much for the newsletter. It means so much to me to hear how you are all getting on. You are all doing such a marvellous job," writes Anne, Helen Joplin's daughter. Meanwhile, Kay Thompson emails: "Thank you for keeping us all updated on life at your care homes. It must be a very stressful time for you all but I'm sure you know that what you do is so greatly appreciated by all friends and family."

Alan and Linda Almond express a view held by many: "We wanted to reiterate how grateful we are to all you guys. The care and diligence that every one of you have displayed has been fantastic. We really do appreciate everything you are all doing."

We're delighted to hear that every Thursday evening you are all clapping or rattling saucepans to express your support for our hard-working carers – as well as their counterparts in the NHS. And for that, a big vote of thanks to you too!

We are also grateful for the many tributes to Vivien Frey, our much-loved activities coordinator, who died suddenly earlier this month. They include one from the distinguished actor Simon Callow who first encountered Vivien when his mother Yvonne was in Spring Grove:

'Vivien stood out as a powerhouse of kindness and enthusiasm, never ceasing for a moment to think about what would enliven the residents' days. I can see her now, reading out loud from the day's newspapers, drawing the residents into discussions about world affairs, the arts, personalities of the day – everyone came alive. Vivien was a sparkling, generous, loving spirit and she'll be terribly missed, not least by me.'

Meanwhile, the hard work at Springdene goes on in these hugely difficult times. You will have read in the press over the past week of the problems with the national supply of personal protective equipment. Well, we are pleased to say that we have been able to source our own supplies for the weeks ahead. Our staff are wearing the full PPE gear as recommended by Public Health England, and because we have adequate quantities, no corners are being cut.

Testing is proceeding apace, with more residents undergoing tests this week. However, testing for staff has not been as fast as we would like because the closest government testing station is a drive-through centre at Wembley and many of our staff do not have cars. However, the government has now offered a pilot scheme for testing at home and the first home testing kits have arrived this week.

You will know that over the past week residents continue to be asked to stay in their rooms for personal protection. We appreciate how frustrating this can be as many of us enjoy a natter with our friends or a comfy seat in the lounge. It's made even harder in the absence of visits by friends and relatives. But this is decided on the best medical advice for everybody's welfare.

Rest-assured, though, that our room-bound residents are getting lots of extra attention from their carers, who make sure they never go short of company. We have a plan in place, as soon as the restrictions are lifted, to allow residents into the communal areas on a phased basis, while keeping social distancing rules. We'll keep you posted when this happens.

Meanwhile, there are plenty of things to keep folk amused and entertained. Caroline, our activities coordinator at Spring Lane, is presenting everyone with a special pack each day.

The packs have been fun to assemble and each resident gets one tailor-made to meet their requirements. On one day, for instance, the pack contained an 'Important events from this day in history' article, an April poem by Laurie Lee, the joke of the day, a 'name this vegetable' visual quiz and an animal quiz.

This week Caroline has been taking individual residents on garden visits, with fruit plates and some April flower quizzes. Shakespeare's birthday on April 23 saw residents working on recognising famous actors who had played a Shakespeare character and the Queens' birthday on April 21, featured another visual quiz, 'Name that Royal'.

The quote from the Queen that day was very apt for staff and residents alike: 'When life seems hard, the courageous do not lie down and accept defeat; instead, they are all the more determined to struggle for a better future.'

Over at Springview, activities coordinator Eirlys has set up a 'Pen Pal Club', deploying members of her extended family to write letters to the residents. We hear this is going to be very popular. How nice to get a good old-fashioned letter rather than a cursory email or text! Meanwhile the Vicar of Hampstead Parish Church is arranging for his parishioners to write cards of encouragement to the residents of Spring Grove.

There was another marvellous moment when Gladys Gathergood, our oldest resident at Springview, celebrated her 107th birthday on the Queen's birthday. Morrison's supermarket sent her a cake and some flowers. "I was truly Queen for the day," says a delighted Gladys.

We remain indebted to all our staff for their incredible hard work and devotion to duty during this crisis. Where staff have been self- isolating, extra carers or volunteers are being brought in and we are proud to say that no shift has been left uncovered. We have made sure everyone knows they are appreciated by offering extra sick pay.

Many of you have asked how you can help the staff in their magnificent efforts. One simple way of showing your appreciation is by sending in a treat – it only needs to be something simple like some fruit, a box of chocolates, cakes, some handcream or even a simple 'thank you' card.

Getting a treat is a bit like getting a hug, said one, after being presented with a 'goody bag' donated by a group of volunteer ladies from Highgate last week.

And we all need more hugs these days...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jez Johnson', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.