

HOW cheering it is to hear the buzz of conversation in the lounges once again! The great news this week is that isolation restrictions have been lifted in all three homes and residents are now able to leave their rooms to enjoy communal life again.

There are currently no infections of Covid-19 among residents in any of the homes and we pay tribute to our folk for their fortitude and good spirits during the period when they had to hunker down. Thanks, too, to our hard-working staff who have done so much to stay on top of the virus.

Naturally, with new variants on the loose, we remain on our guard against any resurgence, with hygiene and PPE rules followed rigorously and ozone-generating machines sanitising the atmosphere. Staff take a test every day before beginning their shift and go home to isolation if it should prove positive.

Sadly, however, we have to report that two staff members have passed away after contracting Covid-19. We are very sorry to lose Sally Neri, who has done so much in making activities a success at Spring Grove, and Mario Juco, one of the laundry team at Spring Lane.

Sally, who was with us for 15 years, will be remembered for her lovely smile and gentle manner with residents, while Mario, with 13 years' service, was a hard-working and hugely popular member of the team. Nothing was ever too much trouble for him.

Our condolences go to both families, whom we are helping to support in their loss. "Just Giving" pages have been set up for donations. If you would like to help out the links are here:

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sally-neri?utm_id=2&utm_term=PYDddzjZN

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/mario-juco?utm_term=PG5VaK5Vj

We are also seeking a lawyer who might be able to assist the families in organising probate. If there is someone among the relatives and friends who could come forward to help, please contact arosen@springdene.co.uk.

Now that the majority of our residents have been vaccinated, the question arises about whether visiting can resume. Unfortunately, there isn't an easy answer. Scientists are still in the early stage of studying how well the vaccines perform in the "real world", and until we have more information, we feel it would be too great a risk to rush into re-starting visits.

In any case, it is prudent to wait until everyone has had their second dose of vaccine, which for most of our residents is still weeks away. Helen Whately, the Care Minister, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme this week that the government was looking at ways that care home visiting might be reintroduced at a possible future date. We'll wait to hear the official thinking, and report back to you.

In the meantime, the activities team are celebrating having our folk back in circulation again. Eirlys has expanded the highly popular Big Quiz across the three homes, and relatives and friends are now invited to take part.

You would do well to beat our champion, Spring Grove resident Robin Young, who got all 21 questions correct in the initial bout. Gaby and Stanley Rosenthal did well with 18 points. (Be honest – do you know how many months a dormouse hibernates for? Answer: six.) Can you beat our brainy residents next week?



As well as the wider rolling out of the quiz, Eirlys and her team are fizzing with ideas. Magda at Spring Lane has devised the Great Springdene Bake Off, with each home producing a recipe to be baked and photographed, and then judged by you, the relatives. The final "Paul Hollywood-style" taste test will be performed by one of our directors. Magda is also working with residents on some lovely Valentine's Day decorations (see picture above).

The prospect of Chinese New Year next week is also getting the creative juices flowing. This year is the Year of the Ox, and there will be themed parties in each home, with delicacies produced by our chefs. Our new book club, which starts on Thursdays, will feature some Chinese stories, with discussion afterwards. At Spring Grove Tegan has compiled a Chinese-themed quiz while Odile is working on some special arts and crafts.

Meanwhile, folk have once again been able to gather together for the latest "Artists 'n' Residents" live-streamed concert – this week featuring "Three Cellos – One Roof". The trio offered a delicious box of treats, ranging from favourite tunes, such as "The Girl from Ipanema" and "In the Mood" from the Glen Miller era, through to some of Schubert's most beautiful compositions – all specially arranged for cellos.

We'd like especially to praise the work of our ever-cheerful activities staff, whose jobs have been made so much harder during the lockdown. Magda has been doing some wonderful sessions with individuals in their rooms, telling jokes, distributing sweets and making sure everyone stayed cheerful. Odile inspired folk with her passion for arts and crafts, while Steve put a song in people's hearts with his corridor carousing.

Folk at Springview love Susie for her relaxing hand massages, her quiz compilations, and her overall upbeat attitude to life. Sadly for us, Susie is retiring after 32 years with the company to spend more time with her delightful granddaughter. Thank you, Susie, we wish you well!

On a positive note, we're delighted to announce that Tamas Fazekas, our new manager at Springview, has achieved his certification as a care home manager from the Care Quality Commission. This means that all our managers are now certified by the CQC. Well done, Tamas! We're also grateful to Lori and her team at Spring Lane who recently spearheaded a reorganisation to help make the home run more efficiently.

Meanwhile, your gifts and kind messages continue to come in. We'd like to thank Elizabeth Beesley, who rang into Spring Grove offering some beautiful handmade twiddle muffs, which will be much appreciated by our high dependency residents. They are pictured below. Thank you, Elizabeth!



There was a moving moment last week at Springview when a candle was lit in the window of every room in the home to mark National Holocaust Memorial Day. The candles also served to commemorate the sad tally of 100,000 deaths from Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic.

The candle ceremony was the brainchild of our reception manager Kathy, who said: "It was poignant that the terrible toll from the Holocaust was marked on the same day as we got news of the death figures from the pandemic. Our hearts go out all the families who have lost loved ones." (in case you are wondering, the candles are battery-powered, so they were perfectly safe!)



Another highlight was the recent snowfall, which made the gardens look beautiful for a few hours. Although, obviously, the residents could not go out and build their snowmen, some of the white stuff was brought in and crafted for a bit of fun. Pictured here is Spring Lane resident Chrysoulla Eracieous with her mini-snow bunny.

Finally, in the interests of making everybody as comfy as can be, we have purchased brand-new beds and mattresses for every resident. We're happy to say that 85 per cent of people say they are delighted with them. There are few things better in troubled times than a good night's sleep!

Stay safe and stay well!

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Jeremy Balcombe
CEO Springdene Group
