

Springdene newsletter June 6th 2020

DID you know that specially trained dogs might be able to sniff out coronavirus before it appears in humans? We're delighted to report this week that efforts by Springdene families and staff are playing a part in a special initiative to defeat Covid-19.

One of our sponsored charities – Medical Detection Dogs – has been selected by the government to help in this crucial work. Dogs have already been successfully trained to detect the odour of diabetes and certain cancers, and a new study by London and Durham universities in association with the charity will investigate whether the dogs' skills can be applied to coronavirus, too.

Thanks to the dedicated work of our Springview reception manager Kathy, families raised a massive £32,000 for Medical Detection Dogs. (Some of you will recall the visit of one of their beautiful labradors to the home.) We're proud that some of this money will go towards helping defeat the appalling epidemic the world is facing.

Meanwhile we're happy to say all the virus testing at our homes has been completed, and it was worth all the hard work. As you know, we had to wait weeks to get the official test kits from the government, but now we've established a clear picture of the health of all.

At the time of writing, we're pleased to be able to report there is no resident in any of the homes showing symptoms of Covid-19. The small handful of asymptomatic cases identified in the testing are now out of quarantine – which means all the homes are now Covid-free and we're able to open up the communal areas again, with social distancing, of course. Great news for everyone!

Unfortunately this does not yet mean we can allow access to the homes for you to visit your loved ones – however desperately we would all like this to happen. For that we have to listen to the advice of Public Health England – and we hope you will

be understanding. In the meantime, we'll let you know if anything changes. And keep those Skype and Facetime calls coming.

There will be more official testing next week, and at fortnightly intervals, so we can keep an overview of the situation. And in the longer term there will be new antibody tests for the staff – known as the “have you had it?” test. This reveals whether someone has had Covid-19 in the past and whether they have recovered from it. There is still no absolute certainty whether having had the virus bestows immunity. But it helps give us a clearer picture, which is all to the good.

One of the heart-warming stories of the week comes from Spring Lane, where Mark and Lana Cohen celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Thursday. Mark, 85, is a great friend to the home and in normal times would visit his wife every day. He is the distinguished co-author with his father, J. M. Cohen, of the definitive “Penguin Dictionary of Quotations”.

Mark and Lana's is a true love story. They met at an art class when he was 25 and she was 23 – and Mark says that this year (due to the virus) is the first in 61 years that he hasn't seen his wife on her birthday. Normally Mark would spend hours reading poems and novels to Lana, which she loves. Mark had a very successful career as an educational publisher while Lana was a fabulous artist and teacher – their house is full of her etchings and artworks.

Mark is still super-active, fundraising for human rights, a big supporter of the NHS, politically astute, and culturally immensely engaged. He does online Zoom Latin classes, French classes and art classes. In normal times he would often be out at the theatre or a concert or having supper with friends. The neighbours in his street love him and are always bringing over food and IT help.

Caroline, our activities administrator, and her assistant Magda laid on a splendid celebration for the couple, providing a delicious cake adorned with their names, a table with umbrella, red tablecloth, a beautiful board with hearts, their pictures, balloons and even some rose petals on the table. Naturally, there was a toast with glasses of wine. Caroline printed off some poems for Mark to read to Lana – and it was a day full of old-fashioned romance.



Unfortunately Mark and Lana had to be placed at a distance, because of the current precautions – but Mark was delighted to have seen his wife for the first time since the March 23 lockdown, even though they have been Skyping every day.

Meanwhile, other residents are being amused and entertained in classic fashion. There has been dance and movement in the Spring Lane garden to the songs of Elvis, and folk enjoyed having the early summer sun and breeze on their skin after so long in isolation. For those in their rooms, there have been daily packs with topical material and drawing materials for the art exhibition.

At Spring Grove, Steve, our activities manager, got everyone's taste buds stimulated by conducting the Great Spring Grove Bake-Off – getting residents to make piped shortbread biscuits dipped in melted chocolate. Delicious! You can imagine how popular the tasting session afterwards was.

Steve also got everyone flexing their brain cells with his highly rated quizzes – and word searches are in high demand, too. Movement to music sessions are keeping the joints oiled. Everyone has been in great spirits for the sing-alongs, and the film club will be starting up again now that people are being allowed out of their rooms – with social distancing, of course.

At Springview, our activities coordinator Eirlys reports that her *Lockdown Advice Line* by the residents is flourishing. "As long as you have something to keep you busy, you'll be all right," writes Kathleen Taylor, aged 98. Wise words indeed. So successful has it been that Eirlys is now asking everybody to become an "Agony Aunt".

With all their very long experience of life, it will be fascinating to see what advice the residents come up with! Eirlys has also been introducing a little retro-romance into people's lives by delivering ice cream on a tray in the style of an old-fashioned cinema usherette.

We are hugely grateful for all the hard work put in by our people – and it is nice to be appreciated by the outside world, too. Staff at Spring Lane were cheered this week to receive a letter from David Lammy, the MP for Tottenham, applauding their "incredible hard work".

"I want you to know," he wrote, "that your sacrifices, along with the hours of first-class care you provide to vulnerable people, have not gone unnoticed. The care and support you give your residents is at the heart of everything you do."

Meanwhile, our homes remain very much open for new business. Theodore, our administrative assistant, has made an excellent video offering a virtual tour for prospective residents, including an interview with our group operations manager, Mark.

If you have been impressed by the care your loved ones have received at Springdene – and we have received many letters and emails from you to this effect – do pass it on. There is no substitute for a word-of-mouth recommendation. Our website can be accessed at <https://www.springdene.co.uk>, while our admissions manager Zoey Baik can be contacted on 020 8815 2000.

Stay safe and stay well!



Jeremy Balcombe
CEO Springdene Group