

Message to Duncaster Residents and Families

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President and CEO

May 15, 2020

As I look outside on this breezy May afternoon, I am struck by the beauty of spring. The birds are singing, the flowers and trees are in bloom, the campus looks beautiful and yet still so much remains “dormant”. And we have made it through another week.

Testing

As you have probably heard in the media the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the National Guard will be working with all nursing homes to test every resident, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, by the end of May. This effort is based on the fact that nursing home residents are most at risk of infection from COVID-19. In addition, there is now sound clinical evidence that testing, cohorting (the act of grouping together people with alike symptoms or diagnosis) and the use of appropriate PPE are the key to controlling the spread of COVID-19 in nursing homes.

On Sunday, May 17th every skilled nursing resident in the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center will be tested. We anticipate having the test results on Monday the 18th and residents will then be cohorted as necessary. Any COVID-19 positive resident will be transferred to our dedicated isolation neighborhood (Elm), a necessary step in the process to protect the resident's health and well-being. Please know that all Caleb Hitchcock Health Center residents and family members will be notified prior to any room change. In addition, residents in our Memory Care Assisted Living (Dogwood) will be tested on Monday the 18th with results expected on Tuesday the 19th. Any COVID-19 positive resident will be transferred to our dedicated isolation neighborhood (Elm).

Testing is an important strategy in our effort to control and mitigate the virus on our campus. Our leadership team, in cooperation with our clinical team and medical directors, are planning for a phased approach to test all staff in the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center and all residents and staff in the Main Building (Independent Living and Assisted Living). We will inform everyone of the dates once the plans are set.

Current Status

- **Assisted Living (Thistle Way/Talcott Notch)** - one resident who tested positive remains in a private room at the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center in our dedicated isolation neighborhood. No tests pending.
Assisted Living (Dogwood) – one resident who tested positive remains in a private room at the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center in our dedicated isolation neighborhood. No tests pending.
- **Caleb Hitchcock Health Center** – one resident who tested positive is being cared for in our dedicated isolation neighborhood. No tests pending.
- **Independent Living** – no positive cases. No tests pending.

- **Employees** – a total of three employees have recently been tested: two employees tested negative and one tested positive. One test pending.

What's Next

With many restrictions beginning to be lifted in Connecticut next week (May 20th), I know everyone is looking for a return to normal living and activity. However, consistent with Governor Lamont's recommendation that those over the age of 65 continue to stay home, at this time our current restrictions must remain in place. I would ask that all residents commit to observing our restrictions to help protect the health and safety of themselves, fellow residents and our staff.

Everyday our COVID-19 Task Force is thoughtfully and carefully planning how and when we can "unwind campus restrictions" in an organized, systematic and safe way. I anticipate a plan much more cautious than Governor Lamont's plan due to the high vulnerability of those who live at Duncaster. Duncaster continues to be guided by scientific data and recommendations from federal, state and local agencies as we consider all options and plans over the next several weeks. In addition, I will seek input from residents in our planning and decision making. Please remember that your continued safety as well as the safety of our staff remains our top priority.

We are currently in the process of developing organized and safe move-in plans for several families who are ready to move to Duncaster. These move-ins will begin after Memorial Day and will be closely managed. Residents in the move-in neighborhoods will be informed in advance and all common areas that the movers use will be thoroughly disinfected upon completion.

In addition, the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center clinical team is working with our medical director regarding a plan for safe admissions of COVID-19 negative patients. The utmost care and precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of our current residents and staff. More to come as these plans are developed.

Gratitude

The letters, emails, notes and kind words of appreciation from residents and families have been extraordinary and much appreciated by staff. The following is a beautiful letter from a very appreciative daughter:

"Dear Michael,

Your notes to residents' families have kept my brother and myself surprisingly confident in Mom's safety during the pandemic. We are grateful and relieved. The loneliness that the residents are surely feeling, especially those living alone, is inevitable, but you and your many remarkable teams have kept our elders entertained, well fed, and feeling special. Thank you, all of you, for your commitment to excellence.

I know that the strain on you, the staff and employees, the caregivers, everyone, must feel unbearable at times. All I can do is thank you all and send my love to every single worker bee in your hive.

I also want to extend sympathy to you and the staff for your recent losses. You know these elders so well, and you are with them now more than their families are, so I know you all must be grieving greatly and, in some cases, silently.

We're all looking forward to a better time. Til then, I know Mom is living in the best of all worlds. Thank you."

We have also been blessed by many donations to support our incredible staff including a \$20,000 grant from the Richard P. Garmany Fund at The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and several anonymous donations. And our staff continue to be well fed through the generosity of many local restaurants, residents and friends of Duncaster.

Other News

Our own Kelly Papa, Vice President-Strategy and Community Life, was a panelist on a national Facebook Live program entitled "Aging Services & COVID-19-Clinical and Legal Perspectives sponsored by Med-IQ, a clinical education and risk management consulting services. The following is the link for the program: <https://www.facebook.com/MedIQCME/videos/279130543113956/>

With the pool closed down during the pandemic we have decided to carefully and safely proceed with the replacement of the Aquatic Center translucent glass (Kalwall) project. The contractors will follow all Duncaster infection control procedures as well as COVID-19 Guidance for the Construction Workforce. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of August. The construction workers will only be working in the pool area and will not enter any other part of the Main building.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at mobrien@duncaster.org with any questions or comments. Thank you again for your continued support during this unprecedented time and for the trust you put in all of us.