



Message to Duncaster Residents and Families

Michael A. O'Brien, President and CEO

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Early this week we tested all our residents in the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center and our Memory Care Assisted Living Neighborhood (Dogwood). This is called Point Prevalence Survey Testing (PPS) which entails testing all residents in a designated area of a facility, whether or not they have symptoms, on one day. I am very pleased to report that all residents in skilled nursing and Dogwood have tested negative. What a remarkable outcome, the result of the incredible teamwork and dedication of the entire Caleb team and the ongoing attention to our infection control procedures. Every member of the Duncaster Community should feel an enormous sense of pride as we continue to battle this vicious disease. In addition, one Independent Living resident and one resident in Talcott Notch/Thistle Way were tested. I am happy to report that they both tested negative. And, four Duncaster staff members were tested, two were negative and two were positive.

Testing is an important strategy in our effort to control and mitigate the virus on our campus. Under the guidance and direction of our Medical Director, our clinical leadership, and in cooperation with Hartford HealthCare, we will be testing all Independent Living and Assisted Living (Talcott Notch/Thistle Way) residents on June 4th. The staff working in skilled nursing at the Caleb Hitchcock Health Center will be tested over a 7-10 day period beginning on May 28th. Plans are also being developed to test all staff who work in Independent Living and Assisted Living.

As everyone knows the state of Connecticut is slowly reopening. And while this is the first step in what everyone hopes will be a return to normal, the virus isn't gone- the pandemic isn't over. In fact, of the 3,500 deaths recorded in the state, more than 2,100 have been those 80 years of age and older, and data continues to point to nursing homes and senior living communities as being the epicenters of the outbreak. These statistics are a daunting reminder of our ongoing duty to be compliant and responsible.

I cannot emphasize enough that while there is the loosening of restrictions in Connecticut and the rest of the country, it does not mean there is no risk of contracting or spreading the coronavirus. It also does not mean we are ready to return to "normal" here at Duncaster-we cannot let our guard down. We are coming upon Memorial Day weekend, the traditional start of the summer. With warmer weather and a holiday weekend there will be the desire to gather with family and friends. Even if you and your family are healthy, everyone is still at risk and your activities may increase the risk to others. We need to be smart and be safe as any accidental exposure could cause an outbreak at Duncaster.

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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 continue to observe our restrictions to help protect the health and safety of themselves, fellow residents and our staff. The re-launch of life as usual is what we all want, but there are potential risks because there is so much about this virus we don't know. With that said, a slow and steady consideration of what services and activities we can begin to open are part of leadership's daily discussions. We are hopeful to announce plans very soon regarding opening campus services and amenities. In the mean time we did purchase 22 outdoor chairs and put them at strategic locations around the campus to provide more opportunities for sitting outdoors with fellow residents at safe distances.

We are at a critical point in this fight against COVID-19, one that requires cooperation like no other time in our lives. I want to remind you to be extra vigilant about practicing social distancing, wear a mask when you are around people to protect them and you, keep your personal circles incredibly small and wash your hands relentlessly. We all have a responsibility to be vigilant. Complacency is dangerous and could result in negative consequences. Our collective efforts to date are great evidence that the infection control measures we have implemented and your compliance has had a positive impact on controlling the spread of the virus. Working together will ensure that you and our staff are safe and well. Your role in this battle is essential and will make a real difference.

Happy Memorial Day. Please be smart, be safe and be well.