



December 23, 2020

Message to Duncaster Residents and Families

Michael A. O'Brien, President and CEO

On behalf of the entire Duncaster community I want to wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. While it may be celebrated in new ways and perhaps apart from our family and friends, I hope that you will still feel the joy and hope this season brings.

While the past nine months have been extremely difficult for all of us at Duncaster, we have been very fortunate to have remained relatively healthy. Unfortunately, the past week has been a difficult one, and we now have a total of seven Independent Living residents and two Caleb Hitchcock Health Center staff members who have tested positive for COVID-19. Two couples reside in Prospect, one couple in Gillette and a single resident in Gillette.

We reacted immediately to contain the spread and we have completed our contact tracing and case investigation. Exposure risk varies based on the situation and each impacted resident and staff member has received appropriate quarantining and other information based on their particular scenario. Appropriate infection-control procedures and sanitizing was conducted. Containment of the virus is absolutely critical. As a result of our current situation, and out of an abundance of caution, we have paused all group programs and activities (fitness classes, programs, art classes etc.) until January 7th, the next testing date for Independent Living residents. Please keep these residents in your thoughts as they navigate this unforgiving virus.

Despite our immediate challenge there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The vaccine is coming to Duncaster on December 27th, the first of 3 on-site vaccination clinics. These “vials of hope” bring great promise of getting rid of the virus that has disrupted our lives, created such uncertainty and caused so much heartache. All Caleb Hitchcock Health Center residents and employees, along with employees who go between buildings, will be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on the 27th. We anticipate that Independent and Assisted Living residents and all other staff will get the vaccine in late January and early February.

The fact that the vaccine will be available to all of us at Duncaster is miraculous, a testament to the brilliance of the scientific community and the power of the human mind. Based upon what I have read about the vaccine and what I have heard from the medical experts, I have concluded that taking the vaccine is not only worth it, but it's the safest and most responsible choice we have. The vaccine will save lives, our own and everyone around us and we can look forward to protecting each other and our

families by getting the vaccine. I am more than willing and ready to take the vaccine to protect myself, my family, friends, co-workers, residents and to help end this pandemic.

While hope is right around the corner we can't ignore where we are today. The sobering news is that with more than 3,000 coronavirus-related deaths a day in America and the Greater Hartford area experiencing a high positivity rate, the COVID surge is real and predicted to get worse. And now Christmas is here, and along with it, the possibility of another COVID surge on top of the surge. I also read today that Dr. Anthony Fauci begs all of us to face reality: "The coronavirus spreads from person to person. Being around people, even Grandma, and someone can get sick and die, or be debilitated. Maybe someone you know."

As a reminder the Connecticut travel advisory states that anyone traveling into Connecticut from a state or territory, other than New York, New Jersey, or Rhode Island, or from a country other than the United States, is directed to self-quarantine for a 14-day period from the time of last contact within the identified state or country. The requirement to self-quarantine is applicable to any traveler who has spent twenty-four (24) hours or longer in an Affected State or an Affected Country within (10) days prior to arriving in Connecticut but does not include any individual remaining in Connecticut for less than twenty-four (24) hours. These requirements are also applicable to Connecticut residents who are returning from a visit to an Affected State or an Affected Country.

So my simple message to all of you is to please be careful over the holidays. Don't let your guard down. We have come so far over the past nine months and I don't want to see anyone else get sick. Traditional holiday activities and the desire to gather with family and friends must be planned very safely with great consideration for the health and safety of everyone. Even if you and your family are healthy, everyone is still at risk and your activities may increase the risk to others. I know that this is not easy; we all would like to see our loved ones especially during this special time of the year. It is difficult for our staff and for me. Personally, as someone who comes from a very large family, all our annual family gatherings this week have been cancelled, replaced by a Zoom meeting with siblings and their families. While missing family traditions doesn't feel good, we know that it is the right thing to do this year.

Be well, be safe and Happy Holidays.