

Finding Unique Ways to Thrive in a Pandemic

As we enter month 11 of COVID-19 precautions, Fairmount's Administration, Chaplain, Activity Department, and other team members continue working to find creative ways to keep residents engaged and connected to their neighbors and friends. This is especially challenging as colder weather drives people indoors and COVID-19 rates in the area climb.

Christmas celebrations were a special challenge. Fairmount reluctantly had to replace the traditional sit-down Christmas meals for Residential Living residents and staff with boxed dinners. Due to social distancing, resident Christmas parties in Health Care neighborhoods had to be held at separate times, with only half of the residents at a time.

We look forward to a time where we can again gather as we did before COVID, but until then we will continue to explore new and creative ways to help our residents lead fulfilling lives and nurture relationships.



One Residential Living activity brought several brave souls out into the cold and snow to build a (masked) snowman.



In spite of masks and social distancing, Health Care residents enjoyed Christmas caroling, cookies and treats in their neighborhood Christmas parties.



Crest View Resident Ann Zimmerman occupied her time during COVID-19 weaving on her loom, and then held a COVID-safe sale of her creations as a benefit for Fairmount.

Fairmount *Perspective* is published quarterly for the residents, staff, volunteers and friends of Fairmount, a Christian retirement community governed by a Board from the Weaverland Conference of the Old Order Mennonite Church.

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Hope Arrives with Vaccine

The President's Perspective

A game on social media presents a box of scrambled letters and instructs players to quickly identify the first three words they see. It suggests that these three words can then provide inspiration for the coming year. Clearly, it's a silly game, but I thought, "Oh well, I'll try it!" As I focused on the box, the words **gratitude**, **hope**, and **growth** quickly came into focus.

Gratitude reminds me of all the blessings I received in 2020. The word **hope** reminds me that in 2021 we have much to look forward to, and I can always **grow** in my relationships with others and with God.

The past year was extremely challenging for all of us as we coped with the uncertainties of the virus. We washed our hands diligently, wore our masks faithfully, and socially distanced consistently. To our sorrow, we still lost residents and family members to the virus. Also, many team members tested positive, creating significant staffing challenges. At the same time, many new virus-related regulations from the Department of Health demanded constant changes to our procedures.

In the midst of much bad news and stressful conditions, the promise of a vaccine to eradicate the virus brought hope. I read as much as possible from the CDC and other sources, and my study convinced me that the vaccine has been researched and trialed extensively. Pfizer has reported a vaccine efficacy in their trials of 94% for individuals 65 and over, and 95%

efficacy across all age groups. This is much higher than the flu vaccine that has an efficacy of approximately 40%. Any vaccine has risks, but I feel the potential benefits of protecting our residents and staff far outweigh the risks of the COVID vaccine.

This hope became tangible when CVS pharmacy delivered the first round of vaccine doses for our team members and Health Care residents. On Saturday, January 2, approximately 80 team members and 65 Health Care residents were inoculated with the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, with another round scheduled for January 23. We hope to encourage more of our team members and residents to receive the vaccine.

I personally find it extremely exciting to be part of a process that has the potential of making a significant difference in controlling the spread of the virus. The vaccine brings me hope! It offers hope that we can someday soon return to some sort of normalcy, and it lessens my fear that we may lose a team member or any more residents to the virus. Yes, I have hope for 2021 and a sense of gratitude for all the blessings we have received even amid the difficulties of 2020!

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Jerry D. Lile
President/CEO



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My Story

By Karina Dussinger, CRNP, Wellspan Internal Medicine

Karina Dussinger, CRNP, is Fairmount's nurse practitioner through WellSpan, providing daily invaluable medical services to our residents all across campus. Here is her personal, firsthand story of one who got the vaccine and stayed safe when everyone else in her family got COVID. It is one way of getting ahead in this battle and breaking the cycle of residents and team members being sick and isolated. Most importantly, we encourage you to remember God is the great Healer, He is still in control and we put our trust in Him! On behalf of the Fairmount Administration, Board and Advisory Board, we encourage you to consider receiving the vaccine. And please continue to lift Fairmount up in your prayers.

The last few weeks have been the most horrible weeks of my life. But if I can tell my story and it helps just one person, it will be well worth it.

It all started on December 23 when my mother, who had end stage COPD, decided to sign up for hospice, shortly after being discharged from the hospital. The next day, I noticed that she seemed more tired and didn't eat much.

On Christmas day, she requested to go to my sister's house for the day because she knew this would be the last Christmas she would get to spend with her family.

Against my better judgment, I took her and my father to my sister's house. Prior to attending, everybody was tested for COVID to make sure there would be no spread. That night, after I dropped her off at home, I had a bad feeling about her health. At 4:00 a.m. I was awoken by a phone call from the hospice nurse saying my mom was running a fever and her oxygen levels were very low. I rushed to see her, only to find her in acute respiratory distress. Hospice tested her for COVID and she was positive. I spent the following 24 hours holding her hand, rubbing her back, and giving her morphine, so she could be free of the terrible air hunger COVID was causing. She passed away in my arms at 6:30 in the morning on Sunday, December 27. She was only 76.

That same day, I retested my father and he was also positive for COVID. I took him to my house to watch him closely but he was essentially asymptomatic until Wednesday morning. He told me that he couldn't sleep flat in bed, so I checked his oxygen level and it was very low. He agreed to go to the hospital where he spent the next six days struggling for every breath he



Karina Dussinger, CRNP, (left) enjoying time with her sister and parents.

took. He finally told me that he had enough, did not want any more treatment, and did not want to live without my mother. He slipped into a coma at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, January 4. At the same time, my sister was rushed to the emergency room with a fever of 103 degrees, low oxygen levels, and serious body aches. She was also admitted as COVID positive and could

not even see my father while he was dying. I stayed by my father's side for another 16 hours and watched him slowly slip away. He passed away on January 5. He was only 80. Both my parents, my husband, my sister and her husband, and all three of their children tested positive for COVID and each had varying degrees of symptoms.

I was the ONLY one who did not have any COVID symptoms, nor did I test positive at any point during this horrible ordeal. I was also the one that spent the most time with my parents as they were dying. So why was I spared? Because I had received the first COVID-19 vaccine on December 18 and had protection. I know there's a lot of misinformation in the news and social media about the vaccines and people are scared to get it. However, I truly believe in my heart that the only reason I got to spend the final hours with my parents without being sick myself was because I had the vaccine and, therefore, was not affected by the disease. I got my second COVID vaccine dose on January 8, and except for a few mild flu-like symptoms the following 12 hours, I felt just fine. I pray that no one ever has to go through anything like I experienced this past holiday season. DONT LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU. Please vaccinate!!!!" ->



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Staff Recognized for 420 Years

In keeping with all of the other adaptations in 2020, our annual Team Member Christmas Fellowship Meal was delivered to each member of our staff as a delicious boxed meal, and 78 door prizes were distributed over the first 12 workdays of December by drawing one more name each day.

We maintained the tradition of recognizing team members who were celebrating five-year increments of service. This year, we honored 29 team members who cumulatively have served an amazing 420 years! Especially remarkable were the milestones achieved by Mary Ann Huber and Mary Rineer; both were recognized for 35 years at Fairmount. Congratulations to all honorees, and thank you for your faithfulness!



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Annual Quilting Days

Saturday, March 6,
Tuesday, March 9, & Wednesday, March 10

8 am to 4 pm (lunch served daily)



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