



# soaring

A PUBLICATION OF MENNONITE HOME COMMUNITIES

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FALL 2020

# Coping with COVID-19

## Supporting Our Residents and Healthcare Heroes

Although the past few months have been challenging ones, Mennonite Home Communities' (MHC) residents and staff members are rising to the occasion in creative and uplifting ways. Even as terms such as "social distancing" became a new part of our vocabulary, we pulled together en force. Our primary goal is and always will be to provide for the safety and well-being of our residents, both at Mennonite Home and Woodcrest Villa. We are their home and, in many cases, their extended family, and the COVID-19 pandemic showcased this in ways we could never have imagined.

As a continuing care retirement community, Mennonite Home and Woodcrest Villa took quick action to help protect residents and staff members against this highly contagious virus. MHC followed the advice of the PA Department of Health,

Centers for Disease Control, various consultants and numerous health care associations by initiating temperature checks of all staff members, mandating the wearing of masks for staff members and residents and establishing checkpoints to enter the Woodcrest Villa campus. All guests were initially prohibited at Mennonite Home and Woodcrest Villa, but allowed at Woodcrest Villa when Lancaster County moved into the Yellow Phase of the Governor's Reopening Plan. Meal service in dining rooms was discontinued, and resident meals were delivered. Residents and staff members also were closely monitored for symptoms of illness.

"As we've learned, the guidance has gotten more refined, which I think has helped reduce some of the fear and anxiety," shared Dan Mortensen,

Vice President of Operations for MHC. Mortensen also spearheaded COVID-19 updates on the website and the Coronavirus Information Line in an effort to inform resident family members and friends of ongoing developments.

To help residents at MH who missed seeing their friends and family, the Social Work Department offered FaceTime, Skype and Zoom sessions. In June, the Volunteer Services Department also began coordinating scheduled window visits. Community Life and Chaplain teams also developed creative ways to engage with residents, using the in-house television station for programming.

MHC leadership recognized the extraordinary efforts of staff members and concentrated on keeping employees informed, comfortable and inspired.

"There were regular expressions of appreciation, including cards and letters, supportive posters, snacks and treats, free meals, spiritual and emotional encouragement, and making available professional counseling resources," said Mortensen. Staff members received a financial "serve together" bonus in light of their extra efforts as well.

At Woodcrest Villa, staff members focused on lifting the spirits of residents. Director of Residential Living Jenn Bicher and her team developed in-house programming to help residents continue to feel connected to staff members, even if it was only virtually. Jenn and Jessica Perry, Social Worker, created the "J & J Show," which became an instant hit. On this program, which was broadcast over the in-house television channel each week, they updated residents and addressed frequently asked questions.

Since large community events were put on hold, Activities Coordinator Becky Wise found ways to bring fun into resident homes. She lined up a host of musical acts, trivia shows, game shows and more to be televised. She also organized weekly

*Our primary goal is and always will be to provide for the safety and well-being of our residents.*

gift deliveries to resident homes of small items like candy bars, tissues, stress balls and more. Although the pool and fitness center were closed, Wellness Manager Kristin Manser and her team broadcasted exercise classes that residents could follow in their own homes. Each resident also received regular phone calls from staff members and resident volunteers

who checked in to make sure they had what they needed—including masks and toilet paper!

To assist those residents who were uncomfortable with leaving their homes, staff members delivered mail and packages and even picked up their trash. Dining Services delivered a daily meal. Free grocery delivery was available from The Marketplace on-campus grocery store. Normally staffed by resident volunteers, staff members stepped up to run the store until Woodcrest Villa entered the state's Yellow Phase.

MHC is so grateful to the amazing team members who put residents first throughout the past few months. To us, residents are family and we remain committed to doing what we can to foster a safe, supportive and caring environment—which is especially critical during times such as these.



# Why I Love Woodcrest Villa

## *(Especially in a Pandemic)*

**Woodcrest Villa became my home about nine years ago.** From the outset of my life here, I was telling everyone that choosing Woodcrest for my retirement years was one of the best decisions I had ever made about where to live. I loved my new neighbors, the convenient location, the food, the kind and friendly staff, the opportunities for volunteering, the safety, the entertainment offerings, and the ability to put lawn care, snow removal, trash pickup, and many other daily home management responsibilities behind me. I also knew that when the time came for me to require personal or skilled nursing care, it would be immediately available to me at the Mennonite Home.

**In March of 2020 we were all hit with the news of a terrible Pandemic.** A virus about which few, if any, knew what caused it, how it spread, how to avoid it, or how to treat its resulting illness COVID-19. The only thing that nearly everyone agreed on was that it was particularly ravaging to the elderly and people with certain pre-existing health conditions. Clearly that meant that the staff at Woodcrest had their work cut out for them. The Woodcrest reputation to care deeply for its residents was at stake. With an amazing amount of hard work, creativity, flexibility and good humor, the staff has taken care of the residents here in a way that is unmatched anywhere.

- Direct delivery of delicious meals daily (often including surprise gifts!)
- Face masks delivered to you, just for the asking
- Packages and mail delivered directly to your door
- Twice weekly trash pick-up at your door
- Closed circuit exercise and yoga classes
- Closed circuit Sunday worship services and bi-weekly Bible study
- Closed circuit information and entertainment programs
- Medications delivered directly to you from the pharmacy as needed
- Help with ordering groceries and getting necessary supplies without leaving home

My deepest gratitude to the staff and the administration for all they have done to care for us during this time of uncertainty, fear, and sadness.

*Written by Rosalyn Ward, Woodcrest Villa Resident*

# Light in the Darkness: Volunteers Brighten Lives During COVID-19

Perhaps one of the darkest emotional impacts that COVID-19 has had on people everywhere has been social isolation. As senior living communities, including Mennonite Home, had to close their doors to visitors for resident safety, it was especially hard on residents who missed seeing and hugging their friends and family members.

Within a week after Gov. Tom Wolf issued stay-at-home orders, Mennonite Home Communities Volunteer Services Department shared an invitation for volunteers willing to reach out to residents through phone calls and letters.

Woodcrest Villa resident Rosalyn Ward was the first to respond to the letter-writing effort. Her letters were so uplifting that Volunteer Services made copies for multiple residents to enjoy. Soon, letters, cards and notes started rolling in—some from as far away as New Jersey and North Carolina.

Matthew Ramos, a high school freshman, contacted his friends and family and encouraged them to join him for his project to promote happiness in Mennonite Home residents. His group of volunteers included helpers from 2 years of age to his grandmother, Annie Salvatore, and her friends. This young man delivered 125 extremely precious cards—many

of which were handmade—to Mennonite Home to share with residents. “Each card was made with love, hope and our prayers,” he shared.



*“It is in the dark times that the light of friendship shines brightest.”*

– Richard Paul Evans, *The Walk*

many wonderful volunteers and members of our community. We are grateful to each and every one of you. All we can say is thank you. Each time you reached out, your actions were like the rays of the sun shining upon all of us!

Telephone calls also became—and continue to be—a bright spot. As much as possible, Volunteer Services pairs volunteers and residents who share common interests, lifestyles and professional backgrounds. Some volunteers call 2-3 residents weekly, while others call more than 15 people in a week’s time. Most never met each other, but they quickly became friends. The volunteers want to brighten people’s days, and the residents are quite happy to have their days brightened.

Cards and phone calls are just two examples of the amazing ways people reached out to support Mennonite Home Communities. Several churches, individuals and groups donated handmade cloth masks. Others had their children draw pictures or color pages for residents. Several local businesses donated lunches to our hardworking staff. We are truly blessed to have so

# The Good Doctor



**Although part of the Woodcrest Villa community for only a few years,** Dr. Ernie Wood and his wife, Jean, made a lasting impact through their gifts to benevolent care. Jean moved to Mennonite Home skilled nursing in 2016 and Ernie moved into an apartment at Woodcrest Villa shortly thereafter.

**To many, Ernie was well-known as a beloved Lancaster obstetrician** who delivered more than 35,000 babies during his illustrious career. To Woodcrest Villa residents, he was known as a friendly face who enjoyed using the gym, nature trail and dining with friends.

**Shortly after moving in,** he became a strong financial supporter of benevolent care. With his wife at Mennonite Home, Ernie had seen firsthand the care and devotion of the staff members and knew he wanted to help others continue to receive the same. Jean passed away in 2019.

**In January, Ernie moved to Wissler Run** for rehabilitation following a hospitalization. When COVID-19 struck the county and nursing homes around the state were made to limit in-person visitation, Ernie enjoyed window visits and Facetimeing with his loving family. His experience as a doctor came in handy as he coached his fellow residents on wearing masks.

**Sadly, Ernie passed away in April.** His smile and spirit are sorely missed, but his legacy will continue to help people at Mennonite Home thanks to his generosity during his brief time with us. But even more than his professional or philanthropic contributions to the Lancaster community, Ernie's greatest impact lives on in his three sons and daughters-in-law and six grandchildren.

**Ernie's oldest son David and David's wife Lisa live** in Lancaster and have spent a great amount of time visiting their parents at both Mennonite Home and Woodcrest Villa. "My mother suffered from Alzheimer's

*... Ernie had seen firsthand the care and devotion of the staff and knew he wanted to help others continue to receive the same.*

and never really had the opportunity to appreciate the joy of retirement," David commented. "She did, however, have small moments of joy from the daily visits of my dad and the caring staff members and residents on Goods Run." He also noted that his father truly loved his apartment on the first floor of Bluebird. He enjoyed the comradery of his friends at breakfast and sitting outside on his porch reading the paper and listening to the waterfall from the koi pond. "Ernie really wanted to get back to his apartment, but his rehab from surgery and COVID-19 complicated his life too much," his son noted. During his final days, despite the sadness of not being allowed to have his family with him, the staff members worked tirelessly to provide comfort and communicate with the family. In the end, Ernie died comfortably and of his own accord, knowing he would soon be with his wife in the loving arms of his Father. His friends and time spent at Woodcrest Villa were truly a blessing for him and the entire Wood family.

# New Director of IT Leads Staff and Residents Into the Technological Future

**Mennonite Home Communities (MHC) has Atari to thank for having Dennis Bowden** at the helm of Information Services (IT). It was a love of 1980s video games that sparked his interest in computers. And that spark was fanned by a lifelong curiosity of how things work.

**"Technology is fascinating,"** said Dennis, who was named Director of IT on July 1. "The sky's the limit; things are always changing."

**At Warwick High School—**he's a 1997 grad—Dennis focused on accounting but "when Windows 95 came out, that changed everything," he said. Dennis soon realized it wasn't the computations that drew him in; it was the opportunity to work at a computer.

**"It's about solving problems,"** he said. "It's like a mystery."

**Dennis graduated from YTI in 2004** with a specialized computer degree. He worked in custom cabinetry and then, for two years in IT support with Clark Filter.

**In 2006 Dennis landed at MHC** as IT specialist and, in 2011, was named manager. "We had just 50 computers when I started, with about 100 users," Dennis said. "It was a small confined network. Computers at Woodcrest were almost nonexistent." As populations change, however, the network at Woodcrest has grown and, he predicts, there soon will be resident requests for networking at Mennonite Home. There are now 250 computers with 400 users, and MHC Wi-Fi handles 700-800 devices.

**IT also handles the MHC corporate phone lines.** "When I first arrived, there

were all POTs (plain old telephone service, AKA landlines)," he said. "It would take us two to three days to switch over a phone." The digital migration started when Dennis first came to MHC. There are now 1,200 digital lines.

**Security, Dennis said, will remain at the forefront of all future plans.** He will continue to explore best practices and ways to further protect the network.

**As director of IT,** Dennis will sit on the Senior Leadership Team where he'll offer technical input about trends and how to meet the needs of our residents. He'll also explore employee efficiency. He intends to create a five-year plan, exploring problem areas

and looking for technological solutions. "My big goal is to help people become more efficient at their jobs. Be proactive instead of reactive. In the end it all effects our residents."

**When Dennis goes home from a busy day at MHC,** he tries to unplug as much as possible, spending time outdoors—golfing, hiking, geocaching and creating "adventures" with his 7- and 5-year-old children. And, though it's not on an Atari system, Dennis is still a gamer.



## Mennonite Home Communities

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## soaring

### Featured on the cover:

Healthcare heroes from Mennonite Home and Woodcrest Villa find reasons to smile, even underneath their masks.

### SOARING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Connie Buckwalter, Jane Gamble, Elizabeth Harvey, Kathleen Maule,  
Daniel Mortensen, Kim Peters, Greg Pierce, John Sauder

If you would like to receive information about **Residential Living at Woodcrest Villa**, call Cathy at 717.390.4103

If you would like to receive information about **Personal Care or Health Care** at Mennonite Home, call 717.390.7979

If you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, call Kris at 717.735.2647.

# 25th Anniversary Golf Outing

**Thursday, October 8, 2020**  
**Meadia Heights Golf Club**

**Join Us in 2020!**

We are so excited to announce our new venue for our 25th anniversary Golf Outing. Please join Mennonite Home Communities on October 8, 2020 at Meadia Heights Golf Club in Lancaster.



**New Location!  
New Date!**