



Avonlea
CHRISTCHURCH

Family Newsletter

March 2017

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A message from Charisma and Sue

Warm greetings to everyone from the Avonlea Team as we move into another year together.

We hope everybody had a wonderful holiday season and enjoyed the changeable weather.

The past several months have been a very busy and exciting time at Avonlea, especially during the holiday season. The residents especially enjoyed helping decorate the homes for Christmas and singing Christmas carols with the staff. We were also delighted to share our time with residents and families during the Christmas family gatherings, enjoying the festive spread and lovely music. To everyone who was able to attend, thank you very much for taking time to spend it with us and by making it extra special for your loved ones.

Our diversional therapists have been busy preparing for another wonderful year ahead. We have been pleased to see families making use of and enjoying our “memory room”. If you haven’t visited it yet with your loved one, please ask staff for assistance.

In each lounge area we have a bookcase with items/books to share with your loved ones. Please feel free to use any of these during your visits and ask staff if you require any assistance.

2017 has begun with a significant achievement in attaining Tertiary ACC Workplace Safety Management accreditation. This is the highest level it is possible to achieve, and is only attained by facilities with health and safety systems strongly supported by the commitment of staff. We are proud of the wonderful work our staff do.

The Medical Care Guidance Plan has now been fully approved by the CDHB. You will be offered the opportunity to participate



in the near future. This document is similar to an Advance Care Plan but designed to be completed for a resident who is no longer competent to make decisions for themselves. Completion of this document rests with the GP and the Enduring Power of Attorney and family, influenced by the residents’ values, beliefs and wishes as expressed throughout their lifetime. Completion of this document can be very thought-provoking and valuable. Registered Nurses will be speaking with you about this soon, and will be available to assist in the completion of this very important document.

We would like to remind you to look out for your Influenza vaccination consent forms coming in the next few weeks. As always our focus is on keeping our residents and your loved one as healthy as possible. Most importantly, please do not visit if you are feeling at all unwell, as there is high potential for infection being introduced unknowingly by visitors to the facility.

Having a family member with dementia can be hard, and it is often helpful to share your thoughts and feeling with others. Every second Wednesday of the month, at 1pm, we hold a support group meeting for the families of residents at Avonlea. All are welcome to attend.

We have many exciting plans and ideas for 2017 and we hope to welcome you often during the coming months.



Residents and staff enjoy decorating traffic cones together every year to commemorate the anniversary of the 2011 earthquake

Thresholds

Alison Hume

Lately I have been taking some steps towards putting things in place so that I can have a less active role in our rest homes and identifying other ways in which I might make a meaningful difference to this world of ours. Although this is a positive process for me, it does involve some sadness. I have been finding much pleasure and solace pondering the comforting words of John O'Donohue:

“No threshold need be a threat, but rather an invitation and a promise. Whatever comes, the great sacrament of life will remain faithful to us, blessing us always with visible signs of invisible grace. We merely need to trust.”

Our lives are full of thresholds: endings, and new beginnings. Sometimes I am conscious of being on the cusp of a change and am able to draw on the wisdom of the still, quiet voice in the depths of my being for courage and comfort. At other times I am confronted with an unexpected and sudden change that I do not have the luxury of preparing for. These times remind me that our lives are tenuous and fragile, yet resilient. None of us can ever be sure what the future holds.

Every day, new life is beginning and other lives are ending. Often we are

not ready when someone dear to us moves on. Yet transitions are an important and positive part of our lives, as necessary as they are inevitable.

Each one of us who lives, visits or works here in this home walks alongside, on a day by day basis, people who are in the last hours, days or months of their lives. In this we see our own mortality reflected. Death is a frontier that none of us know anything about. In contemplating that threshold and whatever lies beyond, our hearts open and we go deeper. We find out a little more about who we are at the deepest level of our being. We are fully alive in the moment. There can be an exquisite mix of tenderness, joy and sadness.

I am reminded of the words of Helen Keller: “What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love becomes a part of us.”

I would like to share with you with a special little Gaelic blessing I have in a frame in my home:

Deep peace of the running wave to you
 Deep peace of the flowing air to you
 Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
 Deep peace of the shining stars to you
 Deep peace of the gentle night to you
 May the moon and stars pour their healing light on you.

Alison

Visiting our Facebook page

While many families visit our website when they are first investigating care options, few people are aware of our Facebook page or visit it on a regular basis.

The Dementia Care NZ Facebook page can be accessed by clicking on the link at the top right of the website. The Facebook page is current, topical and updated on an almost daily basis. By ‘liking’ our page you will ensure that our postings will come directly

through to your own Facebook home page for you to enjoy on an ongoing basis.

Our page has regular contributions from our team, ensuring that updates cover a variety of subjects including staff and facility news, activities, magic moments, and links to informative articles about dementia.

Previous issues of our Family Newsletters are available on our Website.



A hand picked team

Occasionally family members and visitors express surprise at the age and multicultural makeup of our staff team.

Each member of our team has been hand-picked with great care. Many are registered nurses in their own country, with the courage and initiative to start a new life far from home and family. Every staff member is chosen because they have what we call 'knack' in working with people

with dementia. They know how to love and care for someone as if that person is their very best friend, and they are passionate about working in this way. Our staff are loving, capable and experienced. We are enormously proud to have such committed and professional people working with us. Their cultural diversity, energy and dedication enriches us all.



Dementia therapy dog Merlin's Wednesday afternoon visits are a highlight of our week

EPOA Family Survey

Very many thanks to all those who returned the EPOA family surveys sent out late last year. These have now been collated, and had Quality Improvements raised as a result.

52 Welfare guardian surveys were mailed out on the 5 October 2016 and 20 Responses received, providing a 38% return rate.

We did not meet expectations of family in the following areas

Q13 Do you feel comfortable approaching a Diversional Therapist regarding information and suggestions about activities your loved one is involved in?

Q14 Are you happy with the work carried out by the Diversional Therapy team for your loved one?

Q15 What is your overall impression of the laundry service?

Q24 Are staff quick to assist your relative at meal times if required?

Q25 Are the likes, dislikes, cultural preferences and special dietary needs of your relative taken into account?

We have raised Quality Improvements to address the above, as follows:

- We will ensure the Cook has a copy of all residents' dietary forms in the kitchen, and will work with the dietitian and staff to ensure choices offered to residents reflect dietary preferences and requirements. Residents will be assisted during meals as required, while encouraging independence
- We will ensure that all Diversional Therapists wear identifying badges and distinctive uniform tops
- Include increased family input into Avonlea Diversional Therapy objectives for 2017
- Additional reminders and training will be provided to staff in respect of our laundry service, and information displayed in the laundry and in the staff bulletin reminding staff to sort clothes and wash appropriately
- Ensure all residents clothes are named upon admission and when new items received. Reminder to be included in Family Newsletter
- Housekeeping – an in-service to be held for all staff and housekeeping information to be included in new staff orientation



The best china means a special afternoon tea is planned!

Concerns and complaints: your gift to us

As we strive each day to provide the very best possible care to our residents, it can sometimes be hard to identify where changes are required to improve upon the service that we provide.

We would like to say a special thank you to each and every one of you for providing us with feedback, either positive or negative. We really appreciate your honesty and the time it takes to let us know when things have not gone quite the way you would wish. Your concerns and complaints provides the opportunity for us to pass on this feedback to all our staff and take corrective action when needed, as part of our ongoing quality improvement programme.

Please remember that our door is always open. You are welcome to pop in for a cup of tea and a chat.

Suggestions to improve our service should be made on a Quality Improvement Form. If you wish to make a complaint about something you are unhappy with, a Complaint Form should be used. The completed form can be given to any staff member, or put in our suggestions box.

Please ensure that any verbal complaint is made directly to either Charisma or Sue. If they are not available then the complaint should be made in writing on a complaint form to ensure that it goes through the correct investigation and resolution process.

Advocacy Services (0800 555 050) are available to assist you if required.

We always welcome your ideas and concerns, and your loved one will never be disadvantaged by anything you may share with us.



Residents love spending time in our 'memory room', which offers opportunities for reminiscence and quiet enjoyment

Caring for possessions

Occasionally we have incidents of treasured jewellery, especially rings, going missing. We would like to remind you of the importance of taking residents' rings away home with you.

It is important to stress that we cannot be responsible for any loss of property, and that this is very likely to occur, especially in an environment where people with dementia are cared for.

If a resident has a strong sentimental attachment to a particular ring, we suggest that you consider substituting an inexpensive copy for the original,

which can then be kept safely by your family.

We require all clothing to be named upon admission, and any new items to be clearly marked before they arrive. Names or initials written with laundry pen onto existing clothing labels are not sufficient. Commercially printed labels either sewn on or ironed on will significantly reduce the likelihood of clothing being misplaced.

Please remember that we discourage expensive woollen items, which are easily damaged in the wash. Please select easy care clothing wherever possible.



'Men's Club' provides a special focus on activities gentlemen enjoy

Second Point of Contact: Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, there may be a need for a second point of contact to discuss an issue with. Vicky Jones, our Operations Management Leader, is available Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. to discuss any issues of concern. (03) 385 1286 x 9 or vicky@dementiacarenz.co.nz

Admissions and Funding Navigator: Deidre Hickey, our Admissions and Funding Navigator, is available to help you through the unfamiliar and sometimes confusing admission and subsidy application process. Deidre can be contacted at deidre@dementiacarenz.co.nz.

Activities in our Small Homes

The traditional view of 'activities' in a rest home context, or Diversional Therapy as it is often called, is of bingo, baking activities, outings, sing-alongs, themed days, craft and creativity: of groups of residents animatedly engaged in interaction with one another as well as with the facilitating person, primarily with a recreational focus.

We are often asked why we do not do more conventional activities in our homes. The reason is complex and central to our philosophy of caring for people with dementia.

Increasingly, as current thinking moves away from a medical and towards a social model of care, significant changes are evolving in our approach to activities in our homes.

We now realise that the perception of the way in which care should be delivered has traditionally been informed by medical practitioners and registered nurses. This is often in conflict with the what the person living with dementia would choose. Often the person with dementia is unable to appreciate their need to be 'cared for', particularly in a medicalised environment.

The same applies to 'activities'. An older person in a family home in the community does not often take part in regular organised 'activities' within their home, unless they choose to host a bridge club or book club, for example, or have grandchildren visiting. When at home, they simply live life.

Key to what we call our 'homely approach to care' is creating an environment that closely mirrors a household living experience. This is a challenge, as most of us do not live in a home with upwards of 12 other adults with a group of staff. However, supporting access to familiar homely

activities can go a long way towards creating a relaxed, natural and productive social environment. Gradually, as we dispense with clearly defined roles like cleaners and laundry staff, we are moving towards a model of care where residents and staff share in housekeeping and various other activities of daily living together. Most residents enjoy voluntarily helping with setting the table, folding linen, peeling vegetables, flower arranging and gardening. It seems that doing what they have always done helps them stay connected to their previous lives and memories, giving them a sense of continuity and wellness, in addition to the sense of value associated with contributing to the practical running of their home.

All those who work effectively – which is by definition therapeutically - with people who have dementia become very skilled at establishing meaningful connections with residents through the interactions that accompany activities of daily living, whether showering, choosing what to wear, applying makeup and selecting jewellery, shaving, preparing and eating a meal, washing the dishes, or reading a magazine together. In our small homes these interactions occur spontaneously with all staff and all residents every day, many times within a day. They are characterised by a loving, in-depth knowledge and understanding of each person, and by patience, concentration, empathy, humour, and love. They provide the context and opportunity for talk, reminiscence and the ongoing development of close, trusting relationships. They are enormously valuable and valued.

Making eye contact and sharing a



Sorting jewellery

smile, the sharing of memories, or being offered a biscuit still warm from the oven are simple yet vitally important ways of fulfilling the Universal Emotional Needs defined by Jane Verity, an Australian Occupational Therapist working extensively in the area of dementia care:

- To feel needed and useful
- To have the opportunity to care
- To love and be loved
- To have self-esteem boosted
- To have the power to choose

Small miracles of connection occur day by day and moment by moment in each one of our small homes. Woven together into the tapestry of the lives our residents and staff share so intimately, they are intricate, complex and deeply meaningful: the fabric of life.



Helping with laundry is a familiar activity enjoyed by many residents.

Magic Moments

Every day magic moments occur for residents and staff alike. At each facility we keep a Magic Moment Book in which members of the staff team record and share these special moments. Reading the stories reminds us all of the value of the moments we share together.

Seeing a resident's enjoyment of our van outing, and especially assuming the role of 'tour guide' on the trip

Watching a resident win musical bingo and seeing the glow on his face.

Sing-alongs with residents and having one of them play the piano. Seeing them smile and enjoy themselves so much is truly wonderful.

The birthday of one of our residents was coming up and he was going to have a party at the weekend. I went to check if he needed a hair cut or podiatry so that he could look his best for his birthday. I saw him in the hallway and asked permission to check his nails to make sure he was ready for his birthday. And he suddenly said, "Oh yes, my birthday December 12." The date was correct!

A resident told me: "You are as warm as toast. I like to hold your hands. I love you."

We have a resident in the rest home who hasn't been on a van outing for a long time due to his poor mobility. We brought the lazy boy beside the van but he didn't want to get out. Then we pointed out his wife who is also a resident and was inside the van. He unexpectedly stood up and slowly went inside the van with a big smile on his face.

A resident requested a complaints book in order to suggest that caregivers should be paid \$1000 a day!

It was wonderful to see one gentleman's enjoyment of the entertainment, in which his wife played the piano. He enjoyed the entertainment so much that he conducted the music at times!

It was wonderful to see the enjoyment of the many residents who participated in "Cultural Day 2016". They really enjoyed the music, songs and dance performed by the staff, and the food from different countries they had prepared. Some of the residents shared information about their own culture and lives. We had a lot of fun together.

Residents wearing different hats and watching the Melbourne Cup all placing bets on their choice of horse and cheering them on during the race. What a great atmosphere!

I was so happy to see this lovely lady smiling on her birthday. She was so happy to see her family members, including her grandchildren. She said, "Little ones are gorgeous and sweet".

Managing the Symptoms of Dementia

Sometimes people who live here do things differently and some people can be unpredictable. Please do not take this personally. We teach our staff how to handle these situations. If you are uncomfortable or unsure about anything, please talk with a staff member.