



Avonlea
CHRISTCHURCH

Our Home

July 2019

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A message from Sue and Armie

Warmest greetings from all of us here at Avonlea.

Autumn is a very special time of year here in Christchurch as we watch the leaves on our majestic trees turn gold and then red before the bare branches of winter are revealed.

We were all sad to say goodbye to our Clinical Manager Charisma, but are delighted to welcome our senior Registered Nurse Armie Abalos as our acting Clinical Manager. Armie, who has been with Avonlea for nearly three years, brings a strong clinical background and sound knowledge of dementia to the acting CM position, combined with established relationships with staff, residents and families. We join in thanking Armie for stepping forward into this role and offer her our full support.

As we progress into the second half of winter, winter ills have become prevalent again. We ask that if you are unwell you refrain from visiting your loved one, as we all try to keep our residents well if we can. As usual, every resident has been provided with the opportunity to have a flu vaccination, and our entire staff team has also been offered a free vaccination to help keep them fit and well throughout the winter months.

The events in the city over the last few months have humbled and shaken us all, stirring many different emotions and feelings. We are proud that we all joined together to support each other and offer love to those directly effected by this tragic event. If you are needing any support lovely Nicky Bishop facilitates our monthly family support group where you can share your experiences and



challenges in a safe, understanding and confidential environment. This is held every second Wednesday of the month at 1pm in the back lounge in Rudo. We would like to thank family and friends for their good wishes, chocolates and flowers shared with residents and staff over Easter, Anzac weekend and Mothers' Day. We hope you enjoyed the special activities and fun we on these special occasions. Lots of special photos have been placed on the noticeboards for everyone to enjoy.

Some new Registered Nurses have recently joined our team and have fast become integral members of Avonlea. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge and caring. Please take time to stop and say hello, as they would love to meet you.

Our annual Winter Family Gathering was held on Wednesday 10th July, and as always was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy good food and spend time together here in our home. Many thanks to those who were able to attend and who made the occasion so special. In closing, we would like to thank you for entrusting your loved one to our care. It is a pleasure and a privilege to have you as part of our Avonlea family.

Thoughts on Atul Gawande's "Being Mortal"

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End, by Atul Gawande, is a most important book. It challenges us to think about the 'medicalising' of old age and death and what we could offer instead.

With much advance in medicine and surgery, death comes to many people after a long medical struggle with an ultimately unstoppable condition. Ageing and death has become a medical issue. There is often a focus on repairing health, trying to fix and control, rather than sustaining the soul.

People who are sick and/or aged do have priorities beyond staying safe and living longer.

It seems that when we see our future as finite our focus shifts to the here and now, to everyday pleasures and the people closest to us. People want to continue to be "the author of their life", to keep "shaping the story of their life in the world ... by making choices and sustaining connections to others according to their own priorities."

This has been identified as crucial to maintaining the integrity of our lives. This is the "battle of being mortal."

Often older people hand over the decision making to family. The author suggests that family will choose safety above all else. He believes that we want autonomy for ourselves and safety for those we love. We often see this thought process when families are viewing our rest home for a loved one. They ask the unspoken question: "Is this a place I feel comfortable leaving him or her?" instead of "is this a place he or she would like to be?"

The health system and aged care can help people achieve what is most important to them at the end of their lives. It is important to keep people safe, but is this the primary goal of the people we are caring for? Does this primary focus address their hopes and fears? Perhaps not.

In our homes, we want to hear laughter, to see love and friendship, to see joy all over people's faces, to encourage wonderful moments with families, to plant gardens in the sunshine, listen to beautiful music ... and we do. We want to focus on helping people to achieve what is most important to them at the end of their lives.

Accompanying loved ones to appointments

Our residents attend outpatient appointments for a variety of reasons. All residents with dementia require an escort to these appointments, and often people prefer to have a support person with them even if this is not a requirement. Please don't be surprised to receive a phone call from one of our RNs asking you to escort your loved one.

Having a family member escort a resident is a good option for residents as at these appointments health and family history are discussed and there

are decisions to be made. If you are happy to attend the appointment but have any concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss this with the registered nurse. He or she will arrange for a staff member to go with you.

If the time of the appointment does not suit you please discuss this also with the RN and they will liaise with the service provider to change the time if possible.



Creating a special Easter slice to share with friends and family



We are lucky to enjoy vegetables grown in our own gardens

Communicating with families

Communication with one another is very important, especially when it involves residents in our care – your loved ones.

We are often asked how our communication system works.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, there will be times when a resident sustains an injury, is harmed, or an error occurs. In these instances, or if a resident's condition changes and the doctor has visited, the RN will contact the resident's Welfare Guardian to inform them of the incident. It is then their responsibility to inform other

family members.

Multi-disciplinary team meetings are held on a regular basis to fully inform you of your loved ones general condition and care. Again, an invitation to this meeting will be given to the resident's Welfare Guardian. This invitation can then be extended by them to other family members if desired.



Keeping up with current events in the newspaper

Safe footwear for older people

We are often asked for advice on the best shoes to choose for elderly people.

Firstly, if the person has foot pain or known foot problems, a doctor or podiatrist should be consulted.

Choosing the correct shoe is important because ill-fitting shoes and shoes with poor contact with the ground or poor grip may upset balance and the way one walks, increasing the risk of falls.

Important points to remember are:

- Buy for fit, not size
- Try out the shoes on a variety of surfaces before buying
- A firm heel cup provides support when walking
- Low, wide heels provide more contact with the ground and prevent slipping

- Thin soles with tread reduce risk of slipping
- A wide, deep toe box allows room for toe movement and comfort
- Choose laces, buckles or Velcro that hold the foot firmly.

In winter we often find our residents return to a lifelong habit of putting on socks at night time to keep their feet warm. This can result in slips and falls during night-time visits to the toilet.

A lovely winter gift for loved ones in residential care is a couple of pairs of cosy bedsocks with special non-slip soles – practical and always received with appreciation and delight.



At Easter we were delighted to have students from Sacred Heart Primary School come and sing for us

Avonlea's Facebook Page

We warmly welcome visits, 'likes', questions and ideas from the families and friends of our residents.

Find us by Googling: *Avonlea Dementia Care Facebook*



A message from Andrew

We have chosen a new name for our newsletter, "Our Home". This feels just right to me, as the concept of home is at the centre of our philosophy of care.

Winter is a time when home feels especially important. Standing on the sidelines watching my son George play ripper rugby, my thoughts often turn to our warm home and the cosy evening ahead. Winter here in New Zealand is a time for snuggling with the kids on the sofa reading stories. It's a time for sharing home-made soup by the fire, and teaching the kids about how hot chocolate just isn't hot chocolate without a marshmallow or two floating in it – usually making it spill over the side.

These are things I remember from my own childhood, and unconsciously, instinctively, I am passing them on to the next generation.

These common human experiences are what bind us together as a community. We recognise these shared traditions and experiences, and they are important because of their

symbolic power. Shivering on the sidelines of a rugby game symbolises love and sacrifice, pride and parenthood. The rich aroma of the hot chocolate symbolises warmth and safety, love and nurturing.

As I travel around our nine rest homes meeting new staff, getting to know them and sharing our Vision and Values, I feel both proud and humbled to think how many of our staff have left their own homes and families, their own countries and cultures and traditions, to start a new life here in New Zealand. They are learning our ways and blending them with their own to form a new legacy.

The love and care they are creating and sharing in our homes is central to this process.

In the same way, each and every resident at our homes brings their own history and traditions with them to enrich our small communities.

Home is where the heart is, and where we all belong.



Helping with the homely task of drying the dishes

Looking after winter woollies

Occasionally, no matter how much care is taken, a woollen jersey or cardigan slips through to the laundry and shrinks beyond recognition.

This is upsetting for all concerned, especially the family member who has hand-knitted or chosen the gift with love.

All care is taken in laundering clothes. However, woollen clothing may be

safer hand washed by family. When buying new woollen clothing please buy machine washable items.

If possible, we would prefer you to provide non woollen clothing that is easily washed when selecting winter clothing for your loved one.



Arranging autumn leaves to create art

If you would like to receive our newsletter via email, please email your name and email address to amyd@dementiacarenz.co.nz.

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) 347 7724 x 2 or vicky@dementiacarenz.co.nz