



Avonlea
CHRISTCHURCH

Family Newsletter

March 2015

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A message from Kirsty and Charisma

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2015!

We hope you all enjoyed some special family time over the Christmas/New Year period. We were so lucky to have such wonderful weather over this time. The staff at Avonlea felt so fortunate to have our Christmas gatherings so well attended and enjoyed by our residents. Thank you to all those who helped make it such a success.

This month we are having our Avonlea Annual Bake-off, with staff busy preparing recipes for the exciting and very delicious competition on 24 March. Last year this was such a successful event with residents/ homes competing for the title, and we hope this year's event will be just as much fun.

Recently beautiful new artwork was installed throughout the facility. I hope you are all enjoying seeing the amazing colourful pictures as well as prints of Christchurch's historical landmarks. We have so enjoyed reminiscing with our residents on how things were during this era, where they were, what they were doing and how it was for them: simple questions with such diverse answers.

We would like to invite families to come to our next session of Sharing the Journey which will commence Thursday 9th April at 2.30 pm, with three consecutive sessions. We so enjoy facilitating these sessions as



there is so much information to be shared and hope that family walk away feeling more empowered by the knowledge they gain and the sharing of experiences that occurs. We would love to have you join us, so please let us know if you would like to secure a spot.

We would like to remind you of our Support group session which is held on the second Wednesday of the month at 1.30pm. The session is facilitated by Pam Barrett, an independent facilitator who has been associated with Avonlea for a number of years. When family have come and shared their experiences they have reported that this has been of benefit to them. Please come and share a cuppa and a chat if you feel this would be helpful to you.

We look forward to sharing many special times together over the coming months.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please ensure that all items of value, especially hearing aids, dentures, glasses and jewellery, are fully insured. We do not take responsibility for loss or damage which may occur.

We advise against the purchase of delicate or woollen items which may be damaged during the laundry process.



Our place in the world

Alison Hume

We are three months into the New Year. Many of us have been talking about the New Year and what we hope to achieve. Many of us have created goals for fitness – I have anyway! I have other goals too. It helps me to remember that each of us has a unique contribution to make to the world. Sometimes it is hard to discover what that is.

I very much like what John O'Donohue writes about this:

“Though we know one another’s names and recognise one another’s faces, we never know what destiny shapes each life. The script of individual destiny is secret; it is hidden behind and beneath the sequence of happenings that is continually unfolding for us. Each life is a mystery

that is never finally available to the mind’s light or questions. That we are here is a huge affirmation; somehow life needed us and wanted us to be. To sense and trust this primeval acceptance can open a vast spring of trust within the heart. It opens up our lives to become voyages of discovery, creativity, and compassion. No threshold need be a threat, but rather an invitation and a promise.”

Somehow life needed us. Wow what a statement. Life needs YOU. The question for us is how do we give our vitality to life? The how is each of our unique contribution. The very special music you make in the world.

So now we have welcomed in a new year. I hope the year is fresh, new and full of opportunities for you.

Questions we are often asked

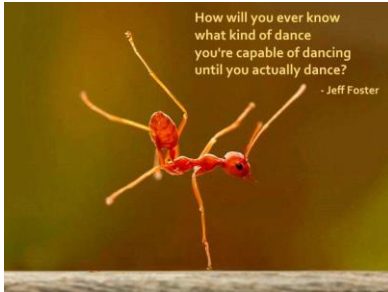
There are some questions or comments which come up regularly in our communication with family members. One we are asked most often relates to cleaning. Why do we not employ more dedicated cleaners as some other organisations do? Our caregivers would then be free to spend more time with our residents, providing more one to one care and interaction.

With the relatively low level of government funding for aged care, however, a balance must be achieved between paying staff as fairly as possible, and having as high a staff/resident ratio as we can. Added to this is the fact that small homes require more staff than one large rest home would. We would prefer to have an extra trained caregiver doing cleaning, than a cleaner who would have less interaction with the residents. This is also more in keeping with our homely philosophy of care.

The second question we are often asked is why we discourage live television in our lounges for people with dementia. There are good reasons for this. Some people who have dementia struggle to differentiate between what is real and what is not. This can sometimes trigger distress or behaviour of concern if programmes depicting violence or destruction are shown.

Also, people with dementia often cannot cope with a number of stimuli at one time. For this reason we prefer to encourage focused social interaction and participation in familiar homely activities. It is important for people with dementia to have times of quiet. Like many of us, they need peaceful times of reflection each day.

We have regular movie afternoons for our residents, and families are welcome to install a TV in their loved one’s bedroom if they feel they would enjoy having access to a television set.



A gentleman wraps a Christmas gift

The 'Invisible Miracle' of diversional therapy

When we think of Diversional Therapy, we may have visions of baking activities, outings, sing-alongs, craft and creativity. We imagine small groups of people sitting round a table, actively engaged in interaction with one another as well as with the facilitating person. And that's the way it often is for many of our residents.

However, when people are very unwell, nearing the end of life or have dementia, things are frequently quite different. The role of the Diversional Therapist is harder to define, as it can be far more difficult to engage people in group activities. The magic moments that make a day so special are harder to come by, and are more likely to occur on a one-to-one basis. It takes time, patience, concentration and a huge amount of empathy to establish a meaningful connection. Diversional Therapy staff become very skilled at modifying activities to meet individual needs every day, and often many times within a day.

That makes those magic moments, when they do come, even more special. For example hearing a resident repeat your name; the sound of a rusty chuckle; a brittle soprano singing the words of 'Jingle Bells'; unexpected applause from a member of the 'audience' on the other side of the room, whom you thought was fast asleep; the sharing of memories; being offered a biscuit still warm from the oven, because it is so delicious that the person wants to share it.

Jane Verity, an Australian Occupational Therapist working extensively in the area of dementia care, talks about Universal Emotional Needs. These are:

1. To feel needed and useful
2. To have the opportunity to care
3. To love and be loved
4. To have self-esteem boosted
5. To have the power to choose

The fulfillment of these needs is inherent in the planning for Activities Programmes for people who have dementia. Our Diversional Therapy staff receive regular education and coaching to assist them in applying these basic human needs within their activities. These become even more of a priority, and increasingly meaningful, in a setting with people with dementia, due to the frailty, compromised health and reduced cognitive capability of residents.

To a casual observer, perhaps busy themselves with personal cares or cleaning, it may seem that the Diversional Therapist is doing very little, or even nothing at all. However, every shared activity is precious and meaningful, even simply sitting, chatting with a resident while holding their hand, or looking out the window watching the birds at the bird-feeder. When working with someone who is very unwell, nearing the end of life or with advanced dementia, almost everything counts as an activity and is usually inspired to meet one or more of the above Universal Emotional Needs.

The small miracles our diversional therapy staff achieve are hard to come by, and the process is demanding, emotionally draining, exhausting, exciting, uplifting ... and, to the rest of us, at times almost invisible.



Decorative Pineapple, a creative afternoon tea treat our residents recently enjoyed



'Café Club' takes place every Wednesday and is a highlight of our week

We are on Facebook! Visit our website at

www.dementiacare.nz

to link to our Facebook page. 'Like' us and receive regular updates on our activities, news and views and links of interest!



Concerns and complaints: When things don't go according to plan

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 provide 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/complaints box.

Please ensure that any verbal complaint is made directly to either Kirsty or Charisma. 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) is 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.



Finding tomatoes

EPOA Satisfaction Survey

It's survey time again!

Please look out for our annual survey arriving in your letterbox soon. We ask that you make a point of setting some time aside to complete and return this important document.

The survey invites your feedback on every aspect of the service we provide, and is of vital importance to us in improving our care.

This is your opportunity to be actively involved in the care partnership and help to make life as good as it can possibly be for our residents and families.

The results of the survey will be published in the next newsletter.

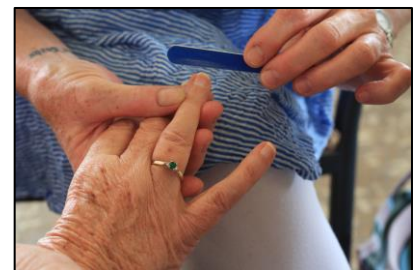
Flu vaccination

As the evenings grow cooler we ask you to begin thinking about the annual influenza vaccination which is offered free of charge to all residents.

We strongly advise EPOAs to take advantage of this to protect their loved one from the serious effects of the dangerous strains of influenza which are prevalent every winter.

Last year we had a death in our organisation as a result of influenza. There is a very clear correlation between those residents who struggle with persistent ill health over winter, and those who did not have the flu vaccine.

Please choose to vaccinate this winter, and help your loved one stay well!



The simple pleasure of a manicure