

Family Newsletter

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A message from Sharon and Carolyn

Warmest Greetings to you all!

It's hard to believe that Christmas has come and gone and that we are now almost a quarter through the year. Time travels so fast!

I'm sure you will all agree what a fantastic summer we've been having, although the gardeners amongst us will be crying out for rain! Despite the lack of rain, thanks to our irrigation system our raised gardens are mostly producing quite well. There have been strawberries, tomatoes, and plenty of salad greens and herbs. One of our residents in Nikau loves to go to Toetoe each day to collect mint for his cup of tea.

It's been lovely to hear so much music around the facility of late. We have entertainers who visit weekly and the residents love to join in with the songs they know so well and even enjoy a dance or two. The Diversional Therapists and care staff also spend some time singing with them in the homes. We have been blessed with regular visits from the new church at Lindale coming fortnightly to sing in each of the homes. They sing a variety of songs of praise as well as the familiar old songs.

We understand how frustrating it is to come and visit your loved ones only to find their clothes have gone missing from their rooms. Our policy is not to lock wardrobes and drawers or to store their



clothes in our locked cupboards, as we feel the residents have a right to access their belongings whenever they wish. It's important to think about whom we are trying to please and what is best for our residents. While it may be that others are going into the rooms and removing belongings, very often they are doing the same thing also, such is the nature of dementia! To assist us please ensure that all your loved one's clothing is named – preferably with sewn on name tags as these last the best and work better with dark clothing.

Hand massages and manicures are an important therapy for our residents; it's very therapeutic to receive a manicure followed by a massage with lovely fragranced hand lotion. If you are looking for a gift for your loved one then a manicure set and hand lotion would be very useful.

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

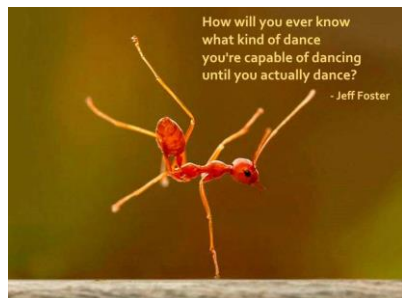
There are some questions or comments which come up regularly in our communication with family members. One we are asked most often relates to cleaning. Why do we not employ more dedicated cleaners as some other organisations do? Our caregivers would then be free to spend more time with our residents,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



Enjoying the homely activity of cooking

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:

- 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

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.



Piano playing is an activity which brings joy to us all



Rest and reflection in beautiful surroundings

We are on Facebook! Visit our website at www.dementiacarenz.co.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 Sharon or Carolyn. 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.



Familiar homely activities provide exercise and enjoyment

EPOA Satisfaction Survey Flu vaccination

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.

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