



Millvale House  
L E V I N

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# Family Newsletter

## A message from Rhea and Dianne

Summer is now far behind us. With the turn of seasons Millvale House Levin has had its fair share of changes. This year we have farewelled both residents and staff. We will surely miss them as well as their families and friends. As the saying goes, the only constant is change.

We've also met new friends and families and we warmly welcome them to our Millvale family. There are quite a few new faces on our staff team too who are already working well alongside us in delivering the vision and values of Millvale House.

Some of you may have noticed some changes in the home. We are in the process of transitioning from the old colour scheme of creamy yellow to a light shade of mint green. We've also added some colour in our Haumarū seating area outside by the deck with the addition of a lovely big orange umbrella, and replaced all the awnings in our Haumarū home in readiness for summer.

Over the last few months we have had many reasons to celebrate, with lovely hangi food brought in on Waitangi Day, and Chinese New Year celebrated with a Chinese food tasting and the lounges decked out with beautiful coloured Chinese lanterns. March saw us celebrate



St. Patrick's Day with bunting, flags, 'the wearing of the green' and some wonderful live Irish songs. Easter, Anzac Day and Mothers' Day were also special occasions which we celebrated with craft activities, reminiscence, interesting facts and stories.

Last summer our Aroha Nui garden yielded a harvest of broad beans, tomatoes and strawberries. We are already planning this season's veggie garden, and warmly invite everyone to join us in this shared project.

We remind families living outside the Levin area that they are welcome to visit out of our normal visiting hours if this is more convenient. Please just give us a phone call first.

Lastly, we would like to thank our families and friends for allowing us to look after their loved ones. It is a privilege and a great pleasure.



*You are warmly invited to join us for our*

**Winter Gathering**

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2.00-3.00 p.m.**

## Supporting families

A significant focus of this year's Business Plan is a project called , 'Supporting Families'.

Our goal in the work we do is to provide care in a homely atmosphere in which each person's body, mind and soul is nurtured so that they are able to experience moments full of wonder and fulfillment in their life journey.

Family involvement, support and education are a vital part of this. It is important that we do all we can to make appropriate resources available to support residents/ EPOA/families in areas pertaining to the care of elderly people, dementia, continuing and end of life care.

In practical terms some of the initiatives we are working on include:

- Ensuring families feel supported and have a support person available to them
- Making information and resources available to families in a variety of formats
- Consulting and informing families about important matters related to our facilities and the services we provide
- Staff having the opportunity to hear from family members about their experience of the dementia journey.

We hope to have some specific and exciting new initiatives to share in future newsletters as the project progresses.



Our beautiful, bright new sunshade

To you, it's just a hearing aid.



To me, it's a precious link to a world that slips further away from me every day.

A poster campaign is being used to remind staff of the importance of caring for residents' belongings

## Caring for residents' belongings

In our last newsletter we reminded you of the importance of ensuring that all items of value are fully insured and clearly marked with the owner's name, as we cannot take responsibility for loss or damage which may occur.

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

We are very aware of the distress caused to residents and family members when occasionally a woollen item slips through to the laundry and shrinks beyond recognition, or an expensive hearing aid is lost.

We have recently launched a hard-hitting awareness campaign to

remind our staff of the importance of caring for our residents' possessions.

We have produced a series of seven posters focusing on the most frequently damaged items: glasses, woollen garments, dentures and hearing aids. The posters appeal to our natural sense of empathy to communicate in a way that is powerful and memorable.

They are displayed in the staff toilets, where they have a captive audience!

We are alternating the posters on a regular basis to keep the interest and freshness of the campaign alive.

We hope to see a marked reduction in incidents of loss and damage as a result of increased awareness.

*Gifts of love ...*



*In your hands for safekeeping.*

## Sharing some magic moments ...

“One of our gentlemen so enjoyed the entertainment today! I observed him sitting between two friends. At one stage all three of them were up dancing and after that one sat quietly tapping both his knees in time to the music. This continued for the whole session.”

“A resident was watching the bowling with his wife. Although he does not usually participate, we gave him two skittle balls to hold. Suddenly out of the blue he said quite plainly: “Excuse me!” It was clear he wanted a turn. He bowled

both balls on his own, including one nice long roll. It was wonderful to see his sense of achievement and enjoyment, and his wife was so proud of him!”

“Some food had fallen on the floor at lunch time and I was on hands and knees picking it up from under the table. Two gentlemen were watching me. One said to the other, “Look at her! She must be hungry – she’s getting food off the floor!” The joke had the two of them chuckling away and put a big smile on my face too!”



An elegant afternoon tea to celebrate Mothers' Day

## Battling the winter blues

This winter we have had an increased focus on the importance of flu vaccination in safeguarding the health of our residents.

There are three components to this:

1. Flu vaccinations for residents. Every year we advise families of the importance of taking advantage of the free flu vaccination to keep their loved ones well over the winter months. Vaccination is proven to decrease the chances of elderly people becoming seriously unwell over winter.
2. Flu vaccinations for staff. Free flu vaccinations have always been available to our staff team. This year we have been very strongly encouraging staff to make the choice to vaccinate, with an organisational poster awareness campaign and information in staff bulletins and on our Facebook page. Next year we will be taking this

further, with formal in-house education sessions early in the year explaining the advantages of vaccination, and dispelling some common misconceptions about potential risks. Our aim is to eventually have 100% staff vaccination at all facilities.

3. Family vaccination. If visitors have also been vaccinated, this provides further protection to our residents and staff within the ‘community’ of the rest home. We are all very aware of the risk of infection from family and friends. We encourage all visitors to:
  - Have the flu vaccination, and
  - Refrain from visiting if at all unwell
  - Make use of the alcogel hand sanitizer on entering and leaving the home.



Residents enjoyed following the life cycle of the monarch butterfly over the summer months

We are on Facebook! Visit our website at  
[www.dementiacarenz.co.nz](http://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!





## 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.



Easter baskets made with the help of our diversional therapists

## 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 or 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:

1. Buy for fit, not size

2. Try out the shoes on a variety of surfaces before buying
3. A firm heel cup provides support when walking
4. Low, wide heels provide more contact with the ground and prevent slipping
5. Thin soles with tread reduce risk of slipping
6. A wide, deep toe box allows room for toe movement and comfort
7. Choose laces, buckles or Velcro that hold the foot firmly.



A practical shoe that ticks all the boxes

## 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 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.



Beautiful crocheted poppies and flowers made by our residents for Anzac Day

## Thoughts on living and dying

**Alison Hume**

*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.

Our impulse may be to fight ..... to do everything possible until the doctors say that there is nothing more that can be done. We may make no choices and fall back to a default position, just doing something!

We cannot visualise how our lives will end - there are often surprises. Our ending is not controllable but we can make choices even though these will be more and more constricted as time advances. 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. Being what we have made ourselves, no matter the limits or travails we face" 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. This surprised me at first, but after some contemplation, I really identify with this. When choosing a rest home for a family member, we may well ask the question: "Is this a place I feel comfortable leaving her?" instead of "is this a place 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. Some transformation is probably necessary. In aged care, we collect data and measure falls, weight loss, medication use, infections and all manner of other things. We are audited against criteria relating to these things. Increasingly, these things are getting the attention. I feel sad about this. 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 help transform the health system and aged care so that we focus on helping people to achieve what is most important to them at the end of their lives.



**Notice of pending fee increase  
for non-subsidised residents**

The Government increases maximum contribution for residential fees annually in July. Under the Social Security Act 1964, the term 'maximum contribution' is defined as "the maximum weekly amount (GST inclusive) that any resident assessed as requiring care may be required to pay for contracted residential-care services provided in the region."

Once advice of the Government increase is received at our accounts office we will notify you. Please note that the gazetted increase may not be made available prior to 1 July so there may be a 'catch up' period.