



Our Home



A message from Rona and Micah

We would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous 2023!

As always, Christmas was a very special time here at our home, with residents delighted to help with decorating the Christmas tree and taking part in traditional activities and crafts. We would like to thank all the family and friends who came to our home and enjoyed our family gatherings, spending time with loved ones and friends old and new.

As some of you may have noticed, we have had a focus on maintenance and minor refurbishment in the first three months of 2023 at both the Lodge and the Home. This has brought with it some noise, disruption and inconvenience, and we thank you for your patience and understanding during this process.

Our new cook Maima Tyrell has joined our team. Maima gained her cooking skills working for the New Zealand Army and Salvation Army, and is a passionate and talented cook. We also welcome new care staff to our team, with two new Registered Nurses also on their way to join us soon from overseas.

We had another COVID-19 lockdown at the Lodge recently and we thank staff for their hard work in ensuring this did not spread across to the Home. Thanks also to our families for once again being so understanding with the restrictions.

We are all enjoying the extra freedom of the relaxed COVID-19 restrictions for staff and visitors. Although we no longer require staff, friends and family members to wear masks inside our home, a negative RAT test is still required before entering the home.

If you feel unwell or have any cold or flu-like symptoms, we request that you do not visit until you are completely symptom-free again.

Our residents are enjoying the familiar pleasures of the summer season, van outings and spending time relaxing and tending the gardens. We also had an ice cream truck visit for a few hours which was thoroughly enjoyed by residents, families and staff.

As usual, summer brings warm and settled weather which can become uncomfortably hot for some of us. The use of hats and sunscreen and regular fluid intake for hydration are a priority, and we focus on special hot-weather activities such as popsicle making, floating flower petals in cold water and bathing the residents' hands in the water, arranging beach pebbles in cold water, aromatherapy oils or food colouring in cold water bowls, cool foot spas/baths, ice creams, making paper fans, and making smoothies together.

We would like to thank Sonia Cushing and the Team Koru staff and children from Christchurch East School for sharing photos, plants they have grown and a video clip singing their favourite songs recently.

We remind you that we hold a family support group for family and friends every second Wednesday of the month at 11am in the Lodge. This is an informal and supportive forum for sharing the challenges, joys and sorrows of having a loved one in residential care, and offers an opportunity to explore the dementia journey with others. This is independently facilitated by Nicky Bishop from Workplace Support, and we encourage you to come along for a cuppa and a time of sharing.

We look forward to a wonderful year ahead together, and hope to welcome you often here at our home.

We do things differently, and it works.

March 2023

Greetings from Andrew Sheard

New COVID testing system

We would like to invite all families/regular visitors to take a few RAT test kits home and complete the test at home before visiting the facility. Just bring the completed test in with you when you come, and we will check it and dispose of it for you.

We believe this will make things easier and more convenient for you, and save time when visiting.



A feast for the eyes! – perfect summertime fare



Heading off on a van outing on a glorious day

Summer is one of my favourite times of year with long evenings making it possible to catch up with people close to us, complete a few long-forgotten projects or just relax. I hope you have all enjoyed the holiday season and found some time to relax and recharge.

I've enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with my family over the summer and reflect and refocus for 2023.

Our residents have loved summer, making the most of the settled weather to shed a few layers of clothing, sit out in the garden with friends, get out and about into the community, or even just relax with the door open enjoying the fresh air. I've been loving the photos shared on our Facebook pages showing many special moments – biting into an apple picked fresh from the tree; trips to the beach; a visit from the ice cream truck; catching up with favourite pets; neighbourhood strolls, and of course plenty of traditional Kiwi barbecues.

I really enjoyed seeing some of the pictures from the Christmas gatherings last year. Many of you attended and as I visited the homes over the Christmas period I heard a number of stories describing how much the gatherings were enjoyed by residents, their whānau and friends, and staff. I know the team at Levin were very disappointed that their gathering could not go ahead due to COVID-19 cases.

Last year presented many challenges, from ongoing COVID-19 cases among residents and staff to the staffing shortages which continue to affect aged care homes nationwide. This makes it even more important for us all to get together, share our experiences and enjoy time with family and friends.

I would like to thank you all for your support as we've worked our way through these challenges. I know restrictions on visiting your loved ones have been tough and we will continue to see some of this in the coming year as well. Your patience with the restrictions, messages of support and even putting your hand up to help if needed is so much appreciated.

There is a lot to look forward to in 2023.

Last year we renovated and extended some of our homes, rolled out a new website (dementiacarenz.co.nz) and looked at ways we can further improve the cultural support we provide for residents. We will be continuing with this work over the coming year.

All of these initiatives are about creating an environment that is happy, peaceful, accepting and welcoming to all. This is what our Vision and Values are all about and is the foundation for the work we do, supported by the passionate and committed staff teams who are at the heart of the service we provide.

Together we wish you and your whānau all the very best for the year ahead.

Supporting family and friends

Magic Moments from our homes

Mary overheard two residents talking: "I am flying to England this afternoon for the Queen's funeral."

"Be sure you get a return ticket in case you don't like it there."

One of our female residents were admiring my outfit of the day. She was touching the fabric, looking at the colour of the top, and was looking at my mask. She asked me whether she can touch my mask. I said yes, then she told me "This was not in fashion when I grew up. Now everyone wears it. It must be expensive!"

One resident that does not talk very often had a full on conversation with me and did a quiz the other day as well. She got 8/10 answers too. It was one of the first times this has happened in one year.

DL went outside the garden and picked flowers and then he gave it to two of our pregnant staff members saying "Flowers for you and your baby. Praying for a safe delivery."

I was giving medication to a resident who is usually resistive, when she suddenly smiled brightly at me.

I was showing the group household items and asked a gentleman what the photo was. He responded correctly and I asked what do you do with it. He answered "You eat the bloody thing!" The humour that peeks through with him makes my day every time.

A resident who never speaks finished her drink. She pointed out to the jug and said 'please' to the staff.

While our Diversional Therapist was doing a flower arranging activity with our residents, AM came and hugged her and then kissed her then she whispered "Thank you so much dear and we all love you!"

Many of us working for Dementia Care NZ have been discussing the need to support families and friends of those we care for, in their journey through dementia. It is, for many, a difficult experience without familiar signposts or landmarks. It can be easy to get lost on this journey without direction, support and a companion.

The diagnosis of dementia can be extremely difficult to accept, and the subsequent decline of our loved one is heart-breaking to behold. This is not what we expected or imagined the last years of our life to be.

However, as I spend time with people living with dementia, I see people who are busy in meaningful activity. I see people laughing, dancing, chatting about their lives. I see people enjoying their twilight years with things to look forward to and pasts to reflect on and remember with pleasure and pride. It is clear that there are many moments of joy.

Dementia Care NZ has offered supportive education sessions to families and friends in the past, called 'Sharing the Journey'. We reluctantly stopped running these groups as families and friends seemed to find it difficult to find time in their busy lives to come along.

Many of our facilities offer an independently facilitated, confidential support group for families and friends. Ask the manager at your facility for details. Local Alzheimer's Societies also offer support groups for families and friends of people in the community with dementia.

Our Registered Nurses and senior staff, as well as the GPs who visit our facilities, are also a source of support and knowledge and would be happy to discuss anything with a family or friend.

I am also happy to meet with any family and friends and share any knowledge and experience about the dementia journey. I travel to all of our facilities on a regular basis. Ask the manager at the facility if this is something you would like. We don't want anyone to feel that they are taking this journey alone.

Simon Hamley, Education Coordinator

The joy of caring



Our Admatha whānau gathered together on Christmas day



A new member of our team meets Merlin the therapy dog



Lending a hand in the garden together

Since we moved into the newly-created Regional Clinical Manager roles in mid-2022 we have embraced many opportunities for growth, sharing and collaboration. Every day is day of learning, finding answers and solutions, updating information, advocating for others, and making sure everything is working well. There is sharing, energy, and much joy.

Being in this role, we have both learned the importance of always being prepared for anything, knowing that you can learn, adapt, implement and improve. Key to this is the importance of self-care in making sure we're able to care for others, and encouraging our team-mates not to lose sight of their own wellbeing in focusing on that of others.

We each have our own allocated homes which we're responsible for. We visit them regularly to provide clinical support to the team and meet with residents and their families. We come to know them well. Between visits, we spend lots of time connecting with our clinical managers and Registered Nursing teams via phone and Zoom. We are never far away. We are closely connected with the events, challenges, joys and achievements that make up their daily lives.

While spending time within the homes, we see our team engaging with residents so naturally that it seems the residents are part of their families and the facilities are an extension of their homes. The care, love and pride of every member of our team shines through. It is humbling and inspiring.

There have been many challenges and changes in aged care over the past few years. We have needed to be proactive, adaptable and creative. Changing times call for changing strategies. In the face of ongoing Registered Nurse shortages throughout New Zealand, the way we use our caregiving team has needed to adapt to continue delivering the highest standard of care to our residents. A new Registered Nurse Support role has been introduced in our homes to compensate for this shortfall. The RN Support staff are overseas-trained nurses with extensive nursing skills and experience. Employed as Level 4 Caregivers, their qualification opens a window of opportunity to become Registered Nurses in New Zealand, and we are committed to supporting them on this journey. In turn, we rely on their knowledge and skills to ably support our care team and ensure the appropriate care, comfort and safety of our residents.

We feel privileged to be part of this amazing team and look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with residents, families, staff teams, clinicians and allied health services to provide our residents with the very best care possible.

If you happen to see us during your visits with your loved one, please come and say hello. We would love to meet you!

Urmee Rahman and Arrah Bagtang, Regional Clinical Managers