



Avonlea  
CHRISTCHURCH

# Our Home

## Warmest greetings from our Avonlea team!

The year seems to be whizzing by very quickly. The days are very short through winter, all the leaves are falling from the trees and are shedding their beautiful autumn colours. As a result, we've had many leaves in our garden that need to be swept up by our helpful residents. Nothing gives people more pleasure than reconnecting with the homely tasks they have always been responsible for, and seeing the results, and appreciation, of all their hard work.

We continue to recruit highly qualified and experienced Registered Nurses from overseas. As part of our commitment to staff development, Simon Hamley, our Training Coordinator, as well as other clinical and non-clinical team members, provides continuous training to keep their skills and competencies current.

With winter and flu season upon us, it is time to protect our fragile residents and our entire team at Avonlea. Our in-house general practitioner conducted a flu vaccination campaign both for our residents and staff.

We have been enjoying many activities at Avonlea over the past few months, from van outings to harvesting of our organic produce from our veggie garden over at Pyaar.

In celebration of Easter, we held an Easter egg hunt in the homes, since the weather did not permit outdoor activities. This was much enjoyed by our residents and staff. Traditional hot cross buns were also served and savoured.

Anzac Day was also commemorated by residents – homes were decorated with poppies, and red poppy pins were worn as part of the clothing on this day. During the historic coronation of King Charles III, some



residents and staff gathered to view the television broadcast.

Matariki will also be celebrated on our calendar, as a time to reflect on those who have passed on, celebrate the present with kai and spend time with whānau and communities, and look toward the future.

We'd like to thank those who joined us for our mid-winter family gatherings earlier this month. These are a great opportunity to enjoy a lovely afternoon tea while spending time with loved ones and strengthening new relationships. Often by learning more about our residents' families we discover how we can really be with the person, what interests they have had in their life, and their culture and values. All of this helps us to truly connect with and honour the special people we care for.

In keeping with the changing seasons, our menu, compiled by our dietitian, has also been updated from summer to winter. Winter warmers with hearty dishes, sides, and luscious desserts are prepared by our skilled cooks. It is always our pleasure to welcome you to the home of your loved one to share a meal with them.

Among the many wonderful residents here at Avonlea, we would like to recognise one of them. James Mohekey has recently celebrated his 103rd birthday, which was a very enjoyable occasion both for James and for everyone who celebrated with him.

As we continue on our journey together, we would like to thank everyone – residents, families and staff – for your trust and support in making the work we do such a pleasure and privilege.

We do things differently, and it works.

June 2023

## Greetings from Andrew Sheard

I'm enjoying the crisp wintry days as I go around our homes at the moment. The cool weather makes the hearty lunchtime soup on our winter menu smell all the better. Please do join your loved one for a meal or even just a cup of tea when you come in to visit.

We have run focus groups at several of our homes over the past month or so. These sessions are great for providing us with some feedback on what we are doing well and what we can improve on. This is something we did regularly before COVID-19 so it is great to have these sessions back up and running.

Involving residents and their whānau in care is a priority for us. The conversations we have guide us in the development of policies, the delivery of care and the monitoring of care. Family are our partners in care and we value your input very much.

We have received some great feedback and very useful suggestions so thank you to everyone who has been involved in these groups.

Do take care of yourself over winter. The early mornings are darker now and it is getting dark in the late afternoon. It is a time to quieten, to take note of the beauty that surrounds us. It is everywhere.

When I am outside at night I like to look at the moon and the stars. In the first light of day I am amazed to see some jonquils already. Going outside, noticing the ever-changing landscape outside changes the way I feel in a positive way.

Ngā manaakitanga

Andrew Sheard



*The joy of growing our own vegetables*



*Easter festivities: each home had its own egg hunt as well as an Easter decorations competition.*



*A very special milestone for James as he celebrated his 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday*



*Our Avonlea autumn harvest*

# Celebrating our wonderful nurses

## Magic Moments from our homes

I was on my rounds when I saw N sitting alone in her room, I asked her if she needed help. She asked me if I could help her go to bed. I assisted her and tucked her into bed. She then asked me: "Can I give you a kiss?" She kissed my cheek and whispered "Thank you for helping me my dear."

One of our residents turned 92 in April. The staff had decorated the lounge for her birthday with purple balloons, which we knew was her favourite colour. She told her son that the staff had read her mind. She was so happy to see the purple balloons everywhere.

One resident wears a very pretty necklace when her husband visits. I complimented her in front of him about it and she blushed. It was a moving moment between them. I loved being part of this.

When I returned from a couple of days off over the holidays, J instantly recognized my voice and started to get very animated hearing me talk to her. Although she no longer talks, her eyes spoke volumes.

One of our residents in the lounge was really restless and upset. Then A came up to her and patted her head and sat beside her. She then held the resident's hand and massaged it while she sang to her.

A staff member assisted a resident who was feeling cold, fetching a blanket and making him comfortable. He thanked her and said: "You must be an angel. What kind of angel are you? Come and tell me something about yourself."

All around the world, 12th May is the day we celebrate our dedicated and hardworking Registered Nurses. They work hard, guide, supervise, inspire and mentor the care team; approach each day with love and compassion; liaise with and support our families; and put their all into keeping our residents and community safe and healthy.

People who dedicate their professional life to this are characterised by their compassion, patience, sympathy for and empathy towards the people they serve. In our modern times, they also need to be highly knowledgeable and professional in their work. Nurses working at our nine rest homes undoubtedly demonstrate all of the above traits, and more.

Nursing is not a job, but a vocation. Working as an aged care Nurse is giving of yourself, heart and soul, working with others in a role that truly means something and makes a difference to the world, person by person and day by day. It is an important life pursuit.

On 12th May, we took the time to acknowledge all of the work our Nurses do throughout our homes, and say a genuine thank you.

To celebrate and show our gratitude, our homes held afternoon tea for our nurses and staff where they enjoyed a lovely cake and some home-cooked food and drinks. This was an opportunity to recognize our Nurses' unconditional services and letting them know that they are an integral part of our DCNZ team. It was their time, and also our chance to express our deep appreciation for all they do and are.

In addition, the directors and senior clinical team arranged a Zoom session to meet with the nurses and Level 4 RN support staff across all our homes to personally express their thanks and appreciation for all they do.

### **The history behind the 12th May Nurses Day celebration**

International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world every May 12th, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

Florence Nightingale was a celebrated English social reformer, statistician, and founder of modern nursing. She became well known for taking care of the wounded soldiers during the Crimean War, dubbed "The Lady with the Lamp" because of her habit of making rounds at night.

On this day, we felt privileged to thank all our incredible "Ladies of the Lamp" right across the DCNZ homes: for the hard work, dedication and the invaluable role they play in the lives of our residents and their whānau, each and every day.

*Urmeem Rahman and Arrah Bagtang, Regional Clinical Managers*

# The importance of being different



*Heading out on a van adventure together*

## Aged care sector update

We were pleased to get some additional Government funding to start to address the pay gap between Registered Nurses in aged care homes and nurses working in hospitals. However, there is still a significant difference and pay equity for our nurses has not yet been achieved.

We are still many nurses short across the aged care sector and we are doing everything we can to manage working towards recruiting, training and retaining new nurses to lead our clinical care teams. We have been fortunate to be able to recruit Caregivers who have been Registered Nurses overseas which has helped us to fill this skill shortage. Many of these Caregivers will be able to become Registered Nurses in New Zealand over time, and we are committed to supporting them through this process.

You will have seen a number of new staff starting over the first half of this year.

Following the Pay Equity Settlement of 2017, a fair pay agreement is also being negotiated with the goal of providing Caregivers with a pay increase. There is still some way to go in this process but we are hoping for an agreement to make Caregiving a fairly-paid career path.

As this is an election year these issues will be under more scrutiny than usual. We are hoping for good outcomes.

Several times a year I facilitate sessions with our staff about cultural awareness and respecting diversity. Much time is spent discussing Māori and Pacific Island culture, as well as staff sharing information about their own culture. I am always struck by how people become more animated and alive when talking about their own culture. I shouldn't be surprised of course, because our culture is at the very core of our being. I encourage staff in these sessions to remind themselves how proud they are of their own culture when they meet a resident or colleague from a different culture.

Despite this pride in our individuality, some of us spend our time trying to 'fit in', trying to be the same as others, perhaps from a fear of being ridiculed. When I was young, which is a long time ago I agree, it was extremely important NOT to fit in, but to be as different as possible. It was common for the clothes, hairstyles and behaviour to be as unique as we could make them. Thinking about this and the sessions I help run has led me to wonder about the importance of difference.

Human beings need to accept and respect the differences in others. This is particularly important when providing care for our residents, whose differences become more apparent as they are living in a communal setting. Accepting our own differences is an important part of this process, as accepting ourselves is a way of learning to accept others. And as we all know, loving ourselves (which can sometimes be the hardest thing of all) is a vital step in truly loving other people.

We live in a world where on one hand differences in gender, sexuality and culture are celebrated and encouraged, but on the other hand war and conflicts based on cultural differences are common events. Isn't being different from each other what makes life so interesting? For us all to be the same gender, height, colour, age and culture would be dull beyond belief.

It's interesting to consider why humankind seems to have such an innately negative view of differences. We feel suspicious of difference. We are often threatened by difference.

This can be true of the behaviour of some of our residents who have dementia. Sometimes the actions of our residents may seem 'different', unexpected or irrational. Yet if we look more deeply into the reasons underlying the behaviour in the mind of the resident and seek to understand why it is happening, this can result in an 'aha' moment of real connection.

This is at the core of our foundation 'Best Friends Approach to Care' training. This teaches us to look not for the ways in which we differ from one another, but the ways in which we are the same. Once we feel that sense of shared humanity, it sets us free to celebrate the differences in culture, appearance, attitudes and behaviour that make each one of us so unique and precious.

*Simon Hamley, Education Coordinator*