



Covenant Living Special Update

Terri Cunliffe / April 10, 2020

Introduction

It was just over a month ago that our normal day-to-day operations came to a screeching halt and our focus shifted to coronavirus prevention. In an attempt to minimize the impact of coronavirus in our communities, we initiated a “no visitor” policy and other preventive measures. We were introduced to new terms like “quarantine” and “self-isolation”. At first, greeting with a hug or a handshake was replaced with elbow bumps, then no greetings were allowed within six feet. Sometimes I wonder what the “post-coronavirus” world will look like. Do you think about that? How will we greet a good friend or a new business colleague?

Covenant Living leadership around the country continues to track and respond to new guidance associated with the coronavirus. Although, the day-to-day and minute-to-minute changes appear to be slowing down ... a bit. But no matter the pace of change, our highest priority continues to be the health and safety of our residents and employees.

I continue to be impressed with how residents and employees are meeting this challenge head on. Residents, you have exhibited patience, support, encouragement, and appreciation despite the inconveniences and impacts to your daily routines. Employees, you have exhibited courage, positivity, compassion, love and even greater commitment to finding new ways to create joy and peace of mind for the people you serve – every single day.

I love the photos, videos and stories I’ve seen and heard from the communities, and how staff and residents continue to engage in life together – only, 6 feet apart!

The news reports can be frightening and unsettling. Personally, I have stopped watching or reading anything related to the coronavirus, except for a few reliable sources about virus precautions, and a few business-related resources that discuss the potential impact on the economy or business operations post-coronavirus. One thing is certain, we know our world and the way we conduct business will change. We just don’t know exactly how much.

Notification on COVID-19 Test Results

As COVID-19 testing becomes more accessible, we can expect to see the number of positive cases in our communities increase. Last week, I mentioned four communities where either staff or residents tested positive for COVID-19. This week, we have two more communities. To date, none of the impacted communities have had more than a few cases, with the exception of one community. If you haven’t been notified of a confirmed COVID-19 case in your community, then your community has not had any confirmed cases.

At the time of a confirmed case, residents, employees and family members at the impacted community are notified in writing by the Executive Director. As each new case arises, your Executive Director will inform you. If you are not feeling well, please stay home and contact your community nurse and physician as soon as possible.

When you hear about positive cases in your communities ... whether it's the first case or fifth case ... don't be alarmed. Be assured, the staff at your community is taking all of the necessary precautions to prevent further spread of the virus, and the impacted individual is under quarantine. I encourage you, when you receive that letter, to take a few minutes to pray for that person and their recovery. Then pray for them every day. God knows who you are praying for, even if you don't, and we know the power of prayer!

A few weeks ago, I asked residents with personal caregivers visiting your apartment, to ask the following questions every day upon their arrival:

1. Are they exhibiting any flu-like symptoms – a cough, fever or headache?
2. Have they been in contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
3. Have they traveled out of the country in the past 14 days?

If you suspect your personal caregiver is not well, please contact your community nursing staff so they can help.

Dining Services: “No-Touch” Meal Delivery

You have heard it again and again ... preventative measures are critical to mitigating the spread of the virus. One new practice you may have already noticed in Residential Living, is the “no-touch” meal delivery. Our dining staff have been trained in proper hand-washing technique, hand sanitizer, gloves, and non-medical masks. “No-touch meal delivery” means a member of the dining staff will knock on your door ... loud enough for you to hear ... to indicate that your meal has arrived. Then, they will leave your meal outside your door, but within reach from your threshold. If you are expecting a meal, but don't hear the knock, we encourage you to check outside your door around the time you expect the meal to be delivered. And I'm sure, if the dining team has something special planned, you will be notified through your in-house television station, so you don't miss any dining staff antics.

As part of the effort to make your life more engaging during this time of physical distancing and self-isolation, the community dining and activity teams are collaborating to create “Theme Day” programming and meals. It could be a Hawaiian day or a day when everybody wears one color. In fact, April 9 is Purple Day! For those Minnesota Vikings fans ... like me ... this is a great day ... and a fun way to stay connected, only in a “physical-distancing” kind of way.

Masks to Prevent Spread

You may have noticed that I mentioned the dining team wearing masks. Last week, I reported that the World Health Organization was recommending that people only wear face masks if they are sick or caring for someone who is. Well, that changed the very next day!

The CDC now recommends that everyone cover their face with a mask or cloth when visiting places where people congregate ... such as grocery stores ... whether or not you are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms.

However, leaving the community is highly discouraged, for your safety, and for the safety of the residents you live with. Any time you leave the community, you increase the risk of bringing the virus back. If you do leave the community, wear a mask. But remember, wearing a mask only prevents you from spreading germs to others. It does not prevent others from spreading their germs to you, so it is still important to maintain physical distancing of at least six feet, regardless of the mask.

For everyone's safety, we are working hard to secure medical masks and other personal protective equipment for our employees at all communities.

Covenant Living Business Update

A couple of business-related items.

First, you may be wondering about the status of the results from the Resident Satisfaction Survey you completed in January. The survey results that are normally communicated to you about now, will be delayed until we can gather together in resident meetings again.

Second, some of you have asked about the financial impact of the coronavirus to Covenant Living. As you would expect, there are unplanned expenses related to the additional employee benefits I mentioned last week and virus-related supplies. We are right now in the process of recasting our budgets to capture these expenses. For those of you who are interested in financials, we will provide more information near the end of April, in a video separate from the Weekly Update. Be assured, Covenant Living entered the coronavirus situation on solid financial ground. As prudent stewards of our finances, we will remain on solid ground. I want residents and employees to know the conservative fiscal approach we've always taken has helped us to bear the impact.

Pray for Those Impacted

In your daily quiet time, I encourage you to pray for the staff in our communities, and especially in healthcare. The majority of COVID-19 cases at our communities are in healthcare. And like you see on the news, the staff caring for these residents are wearing face masks, gowns and gloves. Sometimes, this can make our staff unrecognizable to residents, creating additional angst and uncertainty. For us ... the people we serve are extended family, and it is challenging and frustrating to try to express from behind a mask the compassion and love we have for the residents we serve. Pray for the health of our staff and our leaders as they too are impacted by the virus. Pray for God's protective hand on their families when they go home. And when you see them, thank them for their courage, compassion and love.

I have received several notes and emails from residents at our communities. And I want you to know that I love hearing from you! Every one of your letters has thanked and praised the work of your community staff and leaders. As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, it is clear to me that God has prepared Covenant Living for this crisis by leading the right people, with the right skills, to our communities and the Central Office. You have affirmed that through your notes and emails. Please continue to keep in touch, I love hearing from you!

Celebrating Easter

Finally, as you're watching this, we are heading into the Easter weekend. For Christians this is our most important holiday – yet this year will look very different from Easters in the past. But even though we won't be gathering around the dinner table with family, our dining teams are working on a special meal for you to celebrate in your home.

And despite being “physically distanced” from our families and friends, the significance of Easter remains the same ... to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1st Peter 1:3, Peter writes “praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new birth, into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Let us all keep the story of Easter as one of renewed hope and new life.

May we stand together, strong in faith, and reach out with courage and hope to bring God's redeeming love to those around us. God of life and hope, fill us and all people with the abundance of your love. Christ's resurrection gives us hope and we can confidently proclaim that he is risen.

He is risen, indeed!