



Honoring All

Recognizing Our Own

ADVISOR
The magazine of LeadingAge New York | Summer 2020

leadingage new york CELEBRATES

- 4** Dedicated Employees Volunteers
- 6** The Stuff Heroes Are Made Of
- 8** Make. More. And A Difference!
- 12** Through It All A Sense of Team
- 14** Profiles in Courage: Loretto's Healthcare Workers Give New Meaning to the Term Heroes
- 16** Nascentia Health Thanks Staff for Commitment
- 18** The New Jewish Home: Smile Like A New Yorker
- 20** Peconic Landing: Thank You All
- 24** Julie Winegarden
- 25** Phenomenal Presbyterian Residential Community Staff
- 26** Friendly Senior Living Communities Recognition
- 28** VillageCare – Rising to The Challenge for Those Who Depend on Us
- 30** Wayne County Nursing Home Applauds Staff

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Adviser is published twice yearly by

LeadingAge New York

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Latham, NY 12110-1431

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Founded in 1961, LeadingAge New York represents more than 400 not-for-profit, public and mission-driven senior care providers, including nursing homes, senior housing, adult care facilities, continuing care retirement communities, assisted living, home care and community services providers which serve approximately 500,000 people across New York each year.

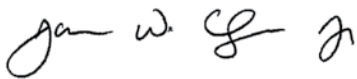
Non-Profits Have the BEST Workforce!

While we have tossed the word hero around a lot over the past two years, I cannot think of a more fitting word to use in describing the workforce at LeadingAge New York mission-driven member organizations.

They are the people who are in their business for more than money. They are deeply committed to serving the most vulnerable, a fact that was abundantly clear during the pandemic.

People in all roles really stepped up to the challenge. They put their fears, exhaustion, their own family worries and more aside to ensure residents were safe, comfortable and engaged. They assumed new roles, they took on greater workloads, they made themselves available to families like never before. They held hands to provide comfort and grieved over lost residents and colleagues to COVID-19 and to the mass exodus of workers from the field. They did not allow negative publicity to divert them from their work in keeping people healthy and safe. But they did not just endure, they excelled, under the most difficult conditions.

I wish we could give an individual award to each person working in the field but instead have opened this issue of LeadingAge New York Adviser to allow our members to celebrate their amazing people. These are the true heroes of the pandemic. Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to some of New York's most vulnerable residents.



James W. Clyne Jr.
President and CEO



Dedicated & Employees Volunteers



Episcopal SeniorLife Communities is blessed with a group of dedicated, compassionate staff members and volunteers who make an impact in seniors' lives each and every day.



Solveyga Yurgevich

Kathy Witherspoon

Janelle Stratton, RN

Amanda Teugeman

Ann Czebatol

Although we were unable to celebrate with a large gathering again this year, we recognized our amazing workforce in November with various events and activities, and special recognition was given to those who received annual employee awards and are celebrating milestone years of service. We also celebrated the Generations Award recipient. This annual award recognizes individuals or organizations who provide outstanding volunteer service and is the highest honor ESLC bestows on those who care about our residents. Congratulations to all who were acknowledged—your dedication to ESLC is commendable!

Ashley Woods · Beatrice Place · Brentland Woods · Episcopal Church Home · Center for Rehabilitation ·

Canon St. Julian Simpkins
Employee of the Year

Solveyga Yurgevich

Environmental Services Worker
at Seabury Woods

EXHIBITS:

Positive relationship with
residents and staff;
Dedication to their job and ESLC

Solveyga takes extreme pride in her work and has been a dedicated housekeeper at Seabury Woods during the pandemic. Despite this challenge, she ensures the building is in pristine condition and does so with a smile on her face, never complaining nor seeking recognition. Solveyga takes time in her busy day to develop relationships with residents and it is not unusual for her to spend extra time assisting them with small tasks. She has also built meaningful relationships with her coworkers and consistently shows them kindness and support. Solveyga is a hardworking, dedicated employee and often volunteers in other departments once her shift is over. She is a true asset to ESLC!

Catherine Johnson
Caregiver of the Year

Kathy Witherspoon

Resident Care Assistant
at Brentland Woods

EXHIBITS:

Dedication, Loyalty,
Caring to those in need

Kathy is a shining example of what an RCA should be. She is reliable, kind, organized and knowledgeable...and is fun to be around! She pays keen attention to resident likes and dislikes, and goes above and beyond to provide excellent care. Kathy promotes independence with those she serves while showing respect to everyone. She is dedicated to ESLC, often picking up extra shifts and even openings at other sites. Kathy is compassionate, advocates for residents and provides emotional support to those in need.

Austin E. Hildebrandt
Award of Honor

Janelle Stratton, RN

Nurse Manager
at Episcopal Church Home

EXHIBITS:

Friendship, Compassion,
Generous Spirit, Inspiration,
Conviction, Support to those in need

Janelle is the embodiment of this award. She is a friend to many, and exhibits compassion and kindness to those around her. Her actions and interactions with residents, their families and fellow staff demonstrate a true love she has for them in her heart. Janelle is committed to ensuring residents stay connected and informed, and she can often be seen using her own personal iPad or phone to facilitate virtual visits between residents and family members. She is patient, selfless, humble, and her humor and calm presence are a true inspiration.

Loren J. Ranaletta
Award of Honor

Amanda Teugeman

Vice President of Healthcare
Services/ECH Administrator

EXHIBITS:

Faithfulness, Creativity,
Self-confidence, Sincerity

ESLC is blessed to have Amanda's steady and faithful leadership. As the leader in our response to COVID-19, she led us through incredible uncertainty, and she did so with confidence, grace and thoughtfulness. There have been many occasions where Amanda used her creativity and compassion to determine the best course of action for keeping us safe while caring for the beloved residents. Amanda is dedicated to the mission of ESLC and is authentically concerned about the welfare of others. There is a sincerity and kindness that surrounds Amanda, and she is an inspirational leader within the organization.

Generations Award

Ann Czebatol

Volunteer and
former ECH Nurse Manager

EXHIBITS:

Dedication, Compassion,
Vision, Volunteerism

Ann has volunteered for more than six years, contributing 770 lifetime hours with 330 of those in 2020-21 alone. Her dedication during the pandemic is admirable, and has been integral in keeping residents and families connected through the facilitation of virtual visits and offering help in many other areas as well. Ann has strong ties to the organization—she was a former registered nurse manager and her late mother was a resident on the same floor at ECH where she served for many years. In addition to her commitment to ESLC, Ann also volunteers for Meals on Wheels and at a local soup kitchen.

The Stuff Heroes Are Made Of

If there was an award for the Unsung Heroes of COVID, those on the frontlines at Gurwin Jewish Nursing & Rehabilitation Center would most assuredly be front and center.

While hospital healthcare heroes throughout the pandemic were justifiably recognized and honored for their heroism, their equally skilled and devoted counterparts at skilled nursing facilities have largely remained invisible, but for the negative news stories about nursing homes and the ravages of COVID-19.

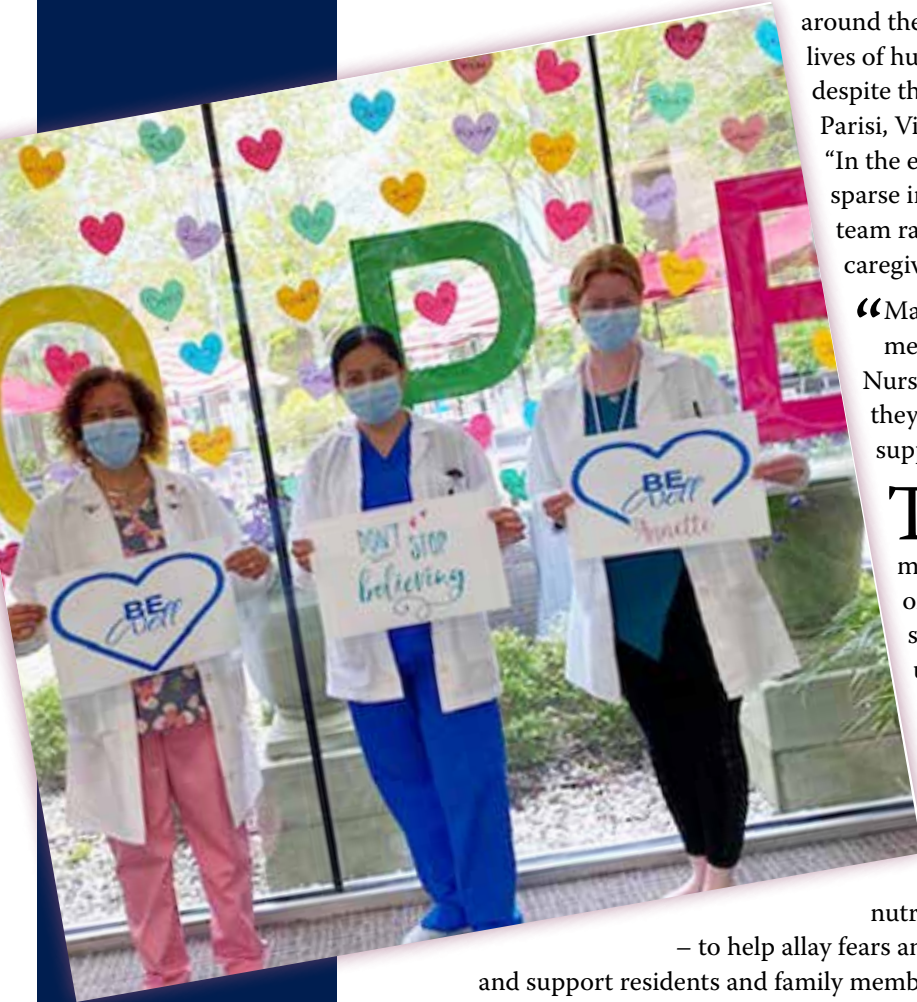
“Our staff – doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, housekeepers, PTs/OTs/RTs, social workers, engineers, just everyone – has worked around the clock over the past nearly two years to protect the lives of hundreds of elderly and medically complex older adults – despite the great risk to themselves and their families,” said Joanne Parisi, Vice President and Administrator at the Gurwin Center. “In the early days of the pandemic, when PPE supply concerns, sparse information and great fear were rampant, the Gurwin team rallied around our residents, serving not only as essential caregivers but as lifelines for residents and their loved ones.”

“Many of our staff came to work despite their own family members being ill,” said Lynette Rutherford, RN, Chief Nursing Officer. “Many became ill themselves, but as soon as they were able, they came back to care for their residents and support their coworkers. It was truly inspiring.”

The heroism was evident during those darkest days among our devoted clinical and non-clinical team members who, after learning only days earlier that one of their own coworkers had succumbed to the disease, still volunteered to staff our newly created COVID-19 unit. They realized the great risks, but understood the greater need to be a calming, caring, familiar face to their beloved residents. Clinical staff in non-clinical roles returned to their roots, acting as direct caregivers when staffing might otherwise have been compromised due to illness. Every department pitched in – housekeeping, finance, public relations, admissions, nutritional services, engineering, reception, human resources – to help allay fears and offer hope, doing whatever was needed to inform, calm and support residents and family members.

When nursing homes were closed to visitation by the NYS Department of Health, our innovative team created new virtual programs to benefit our residents. Grants were secured to launch a successful new telehealth program to conduct virtual health visits for individuals in our many care programs, helping to safeguard the health of our residents/clients in the safety of their own homes. In addition, Gurwin’s Therapeutic Recreation staff secured iPads and other devices to keep residents connected, then spent the bulk of their time visiting one-on-one with residents, conducting more than 50,000 FaceTime visits and delivering Gurwin “Gram Grams” from families to their loved ones. They, along with nursing staff, social workers and our chaplain, remained at the bedside, dressed head to toe in PPE, during the final hours of those residents who fell victim to the insidious disease, facilitating virtual final goodbyes, visits, praying with and giving solace to the residents and their families.

“It was and continues to be the most challenging time any of us could imagine, and yet, we came through,” said Stuart B. Almer, President and CEO of Gurwin Healthcare System. “Our staff rose to the occasion in a very difficult situation. They put caring for our residents first, and their selfless determination to protect our residents during these unprecedented times is the stuff that heroes are made of.”







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Through It All, A Sense of Team

Of all the things she experienced during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic at Island Nursing and Rehab Center on Long Island, Alexis Browning, CTRS, says the hardest part was not being able to hug one another. “There were so many things that were hard, but our residents need to be touched,” she said. “We all just needed a hug, and we couldn’t do it.”



But what she and her colleagues in Therapeutic Recreation could do was entertain both the residents and staff in any way they knew how. “We tried to provide a distraction, holding random dance parties and holiday parades. Anything to make someone smile,” she said.

Always a tight-knit family, the team at Island became closer during the pandemic, worried about one another and doing what they could to help. “There were no job descriptions,” said Joy Vonurban, LMSW, Director of Admissions. “Everyone just pitched in and did what they had to do. Things changed every day, we had to help each other.”

And help they did. Tim Wintz, Director of Engineering, Security and Housekeeping, slept in a camper to keep his own family safe but laid awake most nights worried about how best to keep the staff – his Island family – safe as well. “We tried to improvise with PPE when we had to, and went anywhere we could to get supplies,” he said. “The thing that stays with me, though, is the way everyone pitched in and did what we had to, doing our best to keep our residents and each other safe. I don’t think we could have had a better team at that time, I really don’t.”

As often happens in times of crisis, food became a comfort, and Lorie Halstead, RD, Director of Nutritional Services, said her team was committed to not only feeding the residents, but the staff as well. “Our team was great even prior to COVID, but now we’re even closer,” she said. “This just brought out the good in everyone. We fed people; that’s what we know, so that’s what we did.” As did families and other local groups, for which the staff was extremely thankful. “There are a lot of generous people,” Halstead said.



Through It All, A Sense of Team... Continued from page 12

On the nursing units and within the rehabilitation team, staff was devastated by loss, but uplifted by kindness and the ability to be there for residents who were like family to them. Certified Nursing Assistant Pearl Maier said she and her colleagues challenged their fears, knowing they were necessary in the war against this unknown enemy. “It was so hard. We were losing residents who had become part of our family. We were afraid. We didn’t know anything about COVID. We still don’t know everything.” Maier chokes up talking about the days working on the unit in PPE she brought from home. “I needed to know I was doing everything to protect myself and my residents,” she said. “I just needed to do everything I could for them.”

The constant fear and loss were difficult, says Guendalina Norris Lopez, RN, Assistant Director of Nursing, who spent much of her time educating the staff and keeping them current with the constantly changing regulations and information about the disease. “I thought about leaving the field once I was able to catch my breath, and I know some others did, as well,” she said. “It was a psychological challenge to keep everyone focused and positive. It took a toll.” But for her, like for many others, it was the team that showed her it was worth the effort.

The fierce concern among the staff for all of the residents and each other was incredible, says Nicole Sanders, RN, Unit Manager/Nursing Supervisor Staff Education. “We felt so badly about our residents who were sick, and those who passed, but we were also so worried about each other...especially Bernice.” Bernice Asare Kyere, RN, Unit Manager/Nursing Supervisor, was late in her pregnancy in March 2020, working long hours like the rest of the staff amid concern for her baby and herself. “But I couldn’t let that stop me from caring for the residents and helping our staff,” she said. “We are a team, and I had to do my part.” Her baby, Jonelle Mensah, was born in May 2020.

Administrator Audrey Marchand, RN, joined the Island team in late 2020. “I wasn’t with them in the first dark days of the pandemic; however, I see how they work together now, how they love our residents and care about each other,” she says, noting she is sure that this fostered sense of family is what got them through. “If you can call it a reward, then this is the reward of COVID – we were reminded of the strength of the team and learned we can do anything if we do it together.”



Profiles in Courage: Loretto's Healthcare Workers Give New Meaning to the Term Heroes

March 13, 2020 is a day that will not be long forgotten. It's the day Loretto closed its doors to visitors, despite public ridicule that this wasn't serious enough to do so [yet], and began an enduring journey, with a steadfast commitment to caring for our elder residents at all costs; despite the challenges, fears, uncertainty of what was to come.

For more than 20 months, our 2500 employees have continued to come to work – they missed meals at home with their families, they were not home for their children to help with home schooling, they sometimes went without basics, like toilet paper or milk, because by the time they got home, the shelves were bare at their local grocery stores. Each day, they donned their masks, their goggles, their gowns and gloves, and put their best foot forward.

Reflecting on those days, it may seem cliché, but we are tremendously proud and humbled by the heroic efforts we witnessed on our frontlines on a daily basis. The CNA who refused to go home at the end of a shift until he had connected all his residents to a loved one by facetime – often using his own device given lack of available technology. The fellow staff member who stepped in to watch another employee's children on an off-shift when all the childcare centers closed so she could still come to work to provide for her family.

The administrative assistant who manned the beauty salon for weeks to wash and style the hair of several residents' so they felt presentable for their family window visits. Members of our ancillary teams who came in on the weekends to pass meal trays, or just to sit with residents so they didn't feel isolated. The manager who drove around and picked up employees in his own vehicle so they could still come to work when buses and other transportation they had relied on wasn't available. The hands they held of those we lost when family members could not be with them in their final hours. Every loss weighed heavy on our hearts. These residents are like family to each of us.

There were laughs too – 80s Dress-Up days, root beer float breaks, impromptu toy giveaways for those who couldn't get to the store to make sure they had gifts from Santa under their trees. The dozens of Christmas cookies, baked by neighbors and donated to staff who worked shifts through the holidays. The video shout-outs from local celebrities to simply say "thank you" to our hard-working staff that ran on our employee Facebook pages to let them know our community is proud of the work they are doing.



Profiles in Courage: Loretto's Healthcare Workers Give New Meaning to the Term Heroes... Continued from page 14

And, the millions of nasal swabs... no one was tested as regularly as our employees.

Simple acts of kindness that make such a difference. Just saying thank you doesn't seem to be enough, and yet, it's what's most important.

We salute every one of our 2500 healthcare workers for truly making every day extraordinary.



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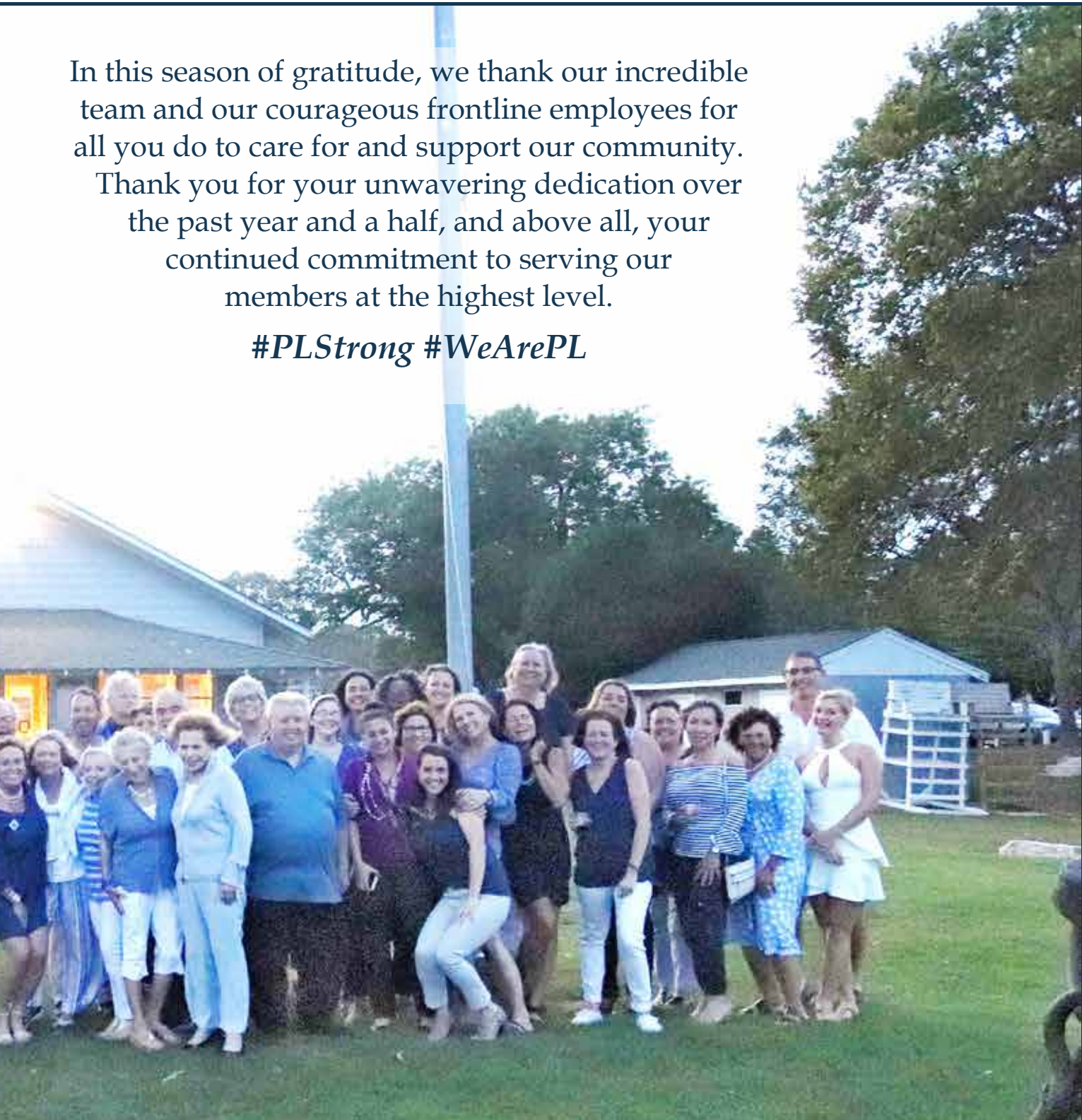
"Alone we can do so little..."

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In this season of gratitude, we thank our incredible team and our courageous frontline employees for all you do to care for and support our community.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication over the past year and a half, and above all, your continued commitment to serving our members at the highest level.

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Julie Winegarden

The People Inc Senior Outreach Team would like to nominate Julie Winegarden to be recognized in the December 2021 issue of LeadingAge New York Adviser. Julie has been a part of the People Inc Team since June of 2012 in the position of Chore Worker. In her position, Julie provides support and assistance to the Older Adult Population to maintain independence in their homes. She provides assistance with housekeeping and errands as well as other tasks they might need. Julie has provided this assistance for almost a decade, and has done so with extreme compassion for others and the people she serves. Julie has especially been an integral part of our team during the recent pandemic by continuing to provide needed supports to our clients as well as filling in when co-workers were unavailable.

Julie has developed lasting relationships not only with her co-workers and clients, but also family members of some of her clients, past and present.

One client stated, "It has been wonderful to have such a kind and caring person assisting her. She looks forward to Julie's arrival".

Another said, "Julie is a hard worker with a strong work ethic. She goes right to work when she arrives, and does her work well. Julie is genuine and friendly, and a wonderful person to have in my home. She is a true gem!"

It is with sincere gratitude that we recognize Julie, and what a tremendous asset she is to our Team and the People Inc Agency as a whole.



PeopleInc

Phenomenal Presbyterian Residential Community Staff

It is an honor to work alongside the people we do at the Presbyterian Residential Community. The staff in this facility are all PHENOMENAL. They care and treat the residents like their own family. Often you will see the aides, housekeepers, case managers, dietary staff enriching the livelihood of those that reside here by visiting them, sharing stories, helping out however they can.

Staff never complain if we happen to be short staffed but instead volunteer to be the solution. The employees and residents treat each other with respect and dignity. The families of the residents recognize the amazing care and compassion that their loved ones receive and make their appreciation known with many thank-yous and gifts of Food!

Our HHA supervisors are the best of the best. They put in extra hours and a lot of effort to keep the residents and staff safe and happy. No matter what comes along, everyone is willing and ready to go “forward and do their best. We love our “PRC” work family and extended resident families that we get to be a part of everyday.





FRIENDLY SENIOR LIVING

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Friendly Senior Living Communities Recognition

An Open Letter to Team Friendly!

Dear Team,

Nearly 500 employees work in the Friendly Senior Living communities – Friendly Home, Cloverwood, Glenmere and Linden Knoll – and every one of you is an all-star! Always devoted to serving our residents with excellence and compassion, during the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing today, you are shining even stronger and brighter than ever.

Recalling the early days of COVID, Friendly Home Nurse Manager Donna Hill, R.N., said, “Some of the staff were afraid. They didn’t want to bring COVID home to their families or risk their own lives, but they did so because they knew it was the right thing to do and what we should be doing as healthcare workers.” Eugenia Capobianco, Director of Dining Services at the Friendly Home, said: “You can’t fight things by yourself. You need a team. We said to ourselves, ‘We’re in this together. We can do this!’.” And the loved ones of those we serve expressed their gratitude throughout the crisis as well. In just one of the many, many messages we received, a Glenmere family member wrote: *Please convey to the staff how much we the families appreciate their efforts to care for our loved ones. We recognize the especially difficult circumstances under which they are working.* To us, all of these statements capture the spirit of teamwork and perseverance that permeates throughout the Friendly Senior Living continuum, highlighting the essence of what makes Team Friendly so special.

Our Life Enrichment teams on both the Friendly Home and Cloverwood campuses were innovative and creative in keeping residents engaged when their loved ones were not allowed to visit. Environmental Service employees tirelessly cleaned and sanitized per strict protocols to ensure the health and safety of residents as well as fellow co-workers. Likewise, thanks to our Building Services team, furniture was rearranged to ensure social distancing, and hand sanitizers were installed throughout both campuses. Social Workers spent countless hours communicating with residents and families, answering their questions, addressing concerns and providing much needed reassurance. Human Resources made Friendly Senior Living staff their top priority, whether with well-earned recognition, resources to help them meet challenges in their personal and professional lives, or organizing the huge undertaking of employee COVID testing. Our friends in Information Technology established programs for scheduling window and Zoom visits, tracking testing, and logging visitor information. The Finance team provided critical assistance with ordering supplies and seeking government funding to offset spiraling COVID-related expenses. All hands were on deck to help sanitize and deliver items to residents from their loved ones, assist with Zoom and window visits, spend time with residents to ease their loneliness, and perform a myriad of “other duties as assigned” during the crisis.

We couldn’t be prouder or more humbled to be part of such an amazing, hard-working and dedicated team. Together, we are building a bright future for our residents and ourselves. Thank you for your commitment, partnership and support!

Sincerely,



Glen Cooper, President & CEO
Friendly Senior Living



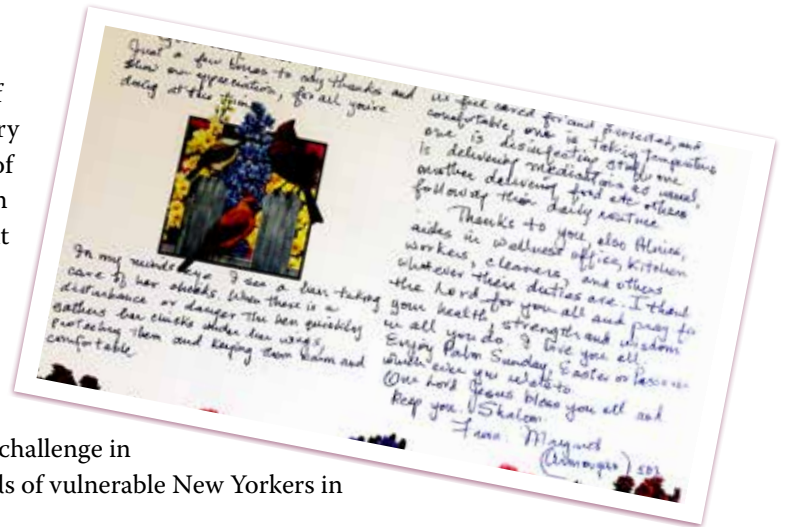
Richard Finn, MBA
VP & Executive Director
Cloverwood Senior Living



Michael Perrotta, VP & Administrator
Friendly Home

VillageCare – Rising to The Challenge for Those Who Depend on Us

The past year and a half will stand out in history books as a period in time of the unknown. What began in January 2020 as a distant virus from abroad quickly shifted to being the main focus of all Americans in staying healthy and safe. VillageCare and its dedicated staff met the challenge in caring for tens of thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers in a time of crisis.



When such challenges occur, heartwarming stories of people who rise up to the occasion, going out of their way to help those in need are told. VillageCare is proud to share just a small sample of the amazing and heroic acts demonstrated by our staff during New York City's greatest time of need.

VillageCare at 46 & Ten is an Assisted Living Program. During the pandemic and citywide lockdown, residents were among the populations most vulnerable to contracting and suffering from COVID-19. It was extremely important to socially distance our residents beyond State requirements to ensure the residents' safety. As a result, staff members from around the organization stepped up to help ease the burden of loneliness during these times by volunteering as part of a buddy system. Staff members would call the residents during their off times to discuss a wide variety of topics that interested the resident. Holidays presented an opportunity for staff to design custom greeting cards to help put a smile on the face of our residents.

In another example, a resident found themselves in dire need of a new mattress. However, the business that usually delivers to the facility has closed due to restrictions on business at the

time. Unable to let the resident suffer uncomfortably, Wolfgang Cuesta, a staff member in the maintenance department sprang into action. He had convinced the business owner to open his shop briefly so Wolfgang can come in his own car and pick up the mattress. This amazing act of kindness left the residents eternally grateful.

The staff at VillageCare Rehabilitation and Nursing Center sprang into immediate



VillageCare – Rising to The Challenge for Those Who Depend on Us ... Continued from page 28

action from the onset of the pandemic that called for new and aggressive protocols to be put in place at the facility to ensure the safety of patients and their families, and the staff. Working closely with federal and state agencies, the VCRN leadership team worked feverishly to secure adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), while reconfiguring the facility's floor units to promote social distancing to avoid any spread of the virus throughout the facility. As these supplies were in high demand it was important for the facility to keep track of supplies. Eric Rochman, a VillageCare Business Analyst at the time, who has since been promoted, used his advanced knowledge to develop new protocols as well as created a modernized and electronic supply monitoring system to ensure staff had access to much needed equipment.

VillageCareMAX is a Managed Long-term Care Plan. Serving over 17,000 members created quite a challenge in ensuring all members were healthy and safe during the darkest times of the pandemic. The pandemic not only created opportunities for acts of heroism, but also encouraged VillageCareMAX to fast-track a new telehealth care program to accommodate members without having to leave the safety of the homes. During the early stages of COVID, the care management team was focused on serving members with the same detailed attention as prior to the shutdown. This was challenging, however, as the team would normally have made home visits. To address this need, VillageCareMAX has partnered with a care management technology platform to create a telehealth program that brings the care right to the members home – virtually.

Our dedicated Member Services ensured that our members were safe during the pandemic. VillageCareMAX had sent care packages to members' homes consisting of sanitizers, vitamins and supplements, as well as masks and other forms of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). When the city was under lockdown, calls were made to members to make sure they were safe, and as soon as the lockdown had ended Care Managers helped members receive the flu shot, COVID Vaccine, and preventive care visits that included dental, vision, and audiology all in the safety of their own home.

While only a few names were mentioned in this article, VillageCare has recognized hundreds of individuals that have gone out of their way to ensure the health and safety of individuals we serve. VillageCare remains truly inspired by the ways our organization has risen to meet this challenge - with flexibility, resilience, courage and, most importantly with a caring heart. We thank our entire staff, working as one across the organization for their great dedication as we continue to make this one of our finest hours.



Wayne County Nursing Home Applauds Staff

Wayne County Nursing Home would like to recognize the Social Work department. Jen Morris, Cherie Yager, and Lynette Spaziano are our three social workers. When combined, their years of employment at the nursing home is twenty six years. Also included in the social work department is our admission coordinator, Ellen Powell, who has worked at the nursing home for twelve years. Their longevity is just one example of how this fine group of ladies are truly dedicated to their residents. They all have amazing patience and compassion for the residents and their families.

When staff have an issue, it is often the social worker who they first go to for help. The same is true of families. Often social workers are the first to hear of a family complaint and receive the brunt of their frustration. This is not always easy if you consider that they weren't the one who made the mistake. Ellen does an excellent job advocating for individuals needing placement and working with area hospitals. It takes skill to balance these needs with the needs of the facility. It is not unheard of for the social workers to pick up items they know the resident would enjoy from the store while on their own time or stop and pick up a resident's favorite snack or drink on their way in to work. They've always been great team players and pitch in to help other departments. This is especially true during the pandemic when they regularly help serve food, clean rooms, track down delivered packages, and do laundry. Jen, Cherie, Lynette, and Ellen do all these tasks gracefully without expecting any "thank yous." However, our gratitude needs to be expressed. Thank you ladies for being you- for being a great resource to all the residents, staff, and families. You make a difference in the lives of those around you and help make Wayne County Nursing Home a true loving home for the residents.

Photo Caption: Left to right: Lynette Spaziano, Cherie Yager, Jennifer Morris, and Ellen Powell.





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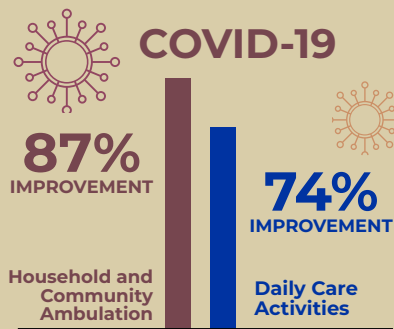
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Through the many challenges that were faced during this pandemic, we are proud of the care and outcomes we provided to our patients and the deep partnerships formed with our customers and operators in crisis management.



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