



Avonlea
CHRISTCHURCH

Family Newsletter

September 2017

224 Lincoln Road
Christchurch
8024

Phone/Fax:
03 338 0202

E-mail:
om@avonlea.co.nz

Web:
www.avonlea.co.nz

In this issue:

- A message from Charisma and Sue
- Introducing Andrew Sheard, Managing Director
- Accompanying loved ones to appointments
- Magic Moments
- The end of life

A message from Charisma and Sue

Warmest greetings to you all! As the days start to get longer, we are glad to farewell winter and welcome spring. Whilst we are excited that spring is here, we do not forget that winter at Avonlea was full of many special moments, like our Mid-Winter Family gatherings. Our residents find great enjoyment in these gatherings, and it was wonderful to have many of you there to experience them with us.

We continue to work on providing new exciting additions to our activities, and with so many residents coming from a farming background we are trying to focus on things that bring back wonderful memories. We recently have brought in baby chicks and watched the amazing response and delight from residents, and will be bringing baby lambs over the next couple of months. In Ofa we have our bicycle garden area and in Hoa our Tree of Life is enjoyed by all. We have added a raised veggie/herb garden, and now that spring is here we are enjoying planting this with residents' help.

We hope everyone is enjoying our "Memory Room" and will continue to develop this area into a sensory room.

Our therapy puppy Merlin is a big boy now at sixteen months old, and fulfilling his early promise of having a gentle, calm and



very settled nature. It is wonderful to see how much he loves his weekly visits on Wednesday afternoons, and what a firm favourite he has become with our residents.

We encourage our staff to bring their own feeling of home to Avonlea, we hope this shines through every day. Love, laughter and friendship are hallmarks of our home.

We now have our own Avonlea Facebook page which will showcase the special times we enjoy together here. We encourage you to visit and like the page, which you can find by googling Avonlea Dementia Care Facebook.

With winter finally behind us we look forward to the warmer weather and to sharing happy times with you and your loved one in our sunny gardens.

Find us on 

Avonlea Dementia Care now has a Facebook page!

We warmly welcome visits, "likes," questions and ideas from the families of our residents.

Find us by Googling: *Avonlea Dementia Care Facebook*

Introducing Andrew Sheard, Managing Director



Andrew Sheard:
a family man

As I introduce myself in my new role as a Managing Director of Avonlea, I aim to do everything in my power to value and support each person: resident, family member and employee, connecting with each person with respect, honesty and integrity.

I have been fortunate to have the guidance and mentorship of Alison and Jim for many years, as I have filled various different roles within the organisation.

I grew up with Mum a nurse and Dad a biochemist with many years' experience in the hospital sector. These strong links have given me a sound understanding of, and connection with, the healthcare environment.

I started out with Dementia Care NZ in 2009 with a position as Operations Manager at Aberleigh Rest Home, which soon extended to managing Tasman Rest Home in Nelson. Moving into the organisational management team, my involvement extended further as my role of Project Manager evolved, working closely with Jim on building projects in Nelson, Blenheim and Kapiti.

A grass-roots understanding of aged care, coupled with a passion for excellence in care delivery and deep empathy and respect for the elderly

underpin my new position. People matter to me. I enjoy my regular visits around our rest homes, and the personal connections they bring. I am enormously grateful for the loyalty and support of our organisational team, with their skills and experience. Together with our amazing staff at each facility, we form an outstanding team which I am proud to be part of.

As a family man myself, I understand the importance of family in our lives, and value the strong sense of family in our rest homes.

One of the aspects of my role I enjoy most is meeting every new staff member and talking about our vision and values. Staff share many 'magic moments' at these sessions, and I love hearing what makes this work so special for each person. I recently heard how caregivers at one of our rest homes are working on a basic vocabulary of Korean in order to communicate in a meaningful way with a resident who doesn't understand English.

The way ahead is full of challenge, opportunity and new friends. If you see me out and about please come and say hello. I'd love to meet you.

Accompanying Loved Ones to Appointments

Our residents attend outpatient appointments for many reasons, all of which serve to improve their lives in one way or another.

All of our residents require an escort to these appointments. Please don't be surprised to receive a phone call from one of our Registered Nurses asking you to accompany your loved one to such an appointment.

Having a family member escort a resident has many benefits, as at these appointments your loved one's health

and family history is discussed and there are decisions to be made. If you are happy to attend the appointment but feel concerned about how you will cope, please do not hesitate to discuss this with the registered nurse (RN), who 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.



Bottle feeding Lucy the lamb

Magic Moments

Below are some of the special moments staff from all our facilities have shared with us over the past few months.

It was amazing to see the look on residents faces while they had a visit from Lucy the lamb. Some gently stroked her ears, some cuddled her, and many asked questions such as her name, who owned her, and what breed she was. Residents eagerly lined up to bottle feed Lucy. But what struck me most was one lady who was once a farmer. She kept Lucy in her arms and cuddled her and both of them fell asleep for about 15 minutes. The visit of Lucy the lamb made her so happy.

Two residents are playing a card game. They are also talking about the past. They enjoy each others company. This is now a daily happening.

Residents at the rest home love 'Cheese Toast Tuesdays'. They keep asking for one more piece until they are satisfied. They all look forward to cooking club on this special day.

For two consecutive days, a resident has remembered and been calling me by my name!

I spotted a newly-arrived resident receiving two little eclairs and I encouraged her to eat them both up, to which she replied "I know who you are and that you want me to put on weight." I replied that I did indeed and she took another mouthful!

A resident saw me standing holding a cup of coffee. The resident walked to an empty chair and offered it to me, and then sat beside me on a vacant lazy boy. This courteous,

gentlemanly gesture really touched me.

I visited a resident in her room and when I came in her face lit up and she said "You're here! Thank you for coming! Can I give you a hug?"

A female resident's face lit up during her special birthday afternoon tea when the Diversional Therapist handed her the parcel from her sister. "It's really heavy," she said. "Thank you to my sister for sending this over." She then blew out the candle on her cake, staff and other residents sang the birthday song for her, and she shed a tear and then hugged every staff member who was there.

Meeting a female resident in the passage. She approached me, hugged me and said, "I love you."

A resident came up to me looking worried. He said, "How are you? Have you been doing okay?" to which I smiled and answered, "Yes, I am perfectly fine". He then smiled and said "That's good" and walked away.

As I arrived early at work one morning, a resident approached me and guided me to the window, where the sun was rising through scarlet clouds. "Look at the sunrise!" he said. "Isn't it amazing?"

We have one resident who does not speak most of the time, but one evening when I tucked him into bed he suddenly said: "That's very nice of you. Thank you," and he smiled. I felt deeply moved by the realisation that no matter what one's state of mind, love and compassion are always just beneath the surface, and they are what define us.



A visit from recently-hatched baby chicks brought great delight to our residents



A big pile of freshly laundered towels is a welcome sight for the many residents who love to lend a hand with familiar chores

The end of life

In our culture we have much sensitivity regarding the end of life. Even when a loved one is very elderly and frail, we can be hesitant to raise the subject of their approaching death.

The reality is that none of us will be here forever; and, as the saying goes, “you only die once”. We have been alongside many people at the end of their life journey, and we understand the importance of helping them to achieve, as much as possible, a “good death”.

But what is a “good death”? In our experience, it is one which respectfully accommodates the priorities and wishes of the person themselves and their family. Very often, central to this is information and communication. We might wonder, how will I know when the end is near? Will I be told? Is death painful? Will I be able to be with my loved one in the days and nights leading up to their passing, and at the time of their death? Usually people do not want their loved one to die alone. Yet at the same time, death is the great unknown and many people are fearful of a process they do not understand.

We very warmly encourage conversations about the end of life, particularly in relation to your wishes and those of your loved one.

Knowing what is important to each resident, and what his or her wishes are for the future, takes the guess work out of how best to care for each person as the end of life approaches.

We have developed a “Thinking about your loved one’s quality of life” questionnaire to encourage conversations with residents and their loved ones about what matters most to them in terms of their future care and treatment choices at the end of life. We will be happy to spend time with you and assist you with the completion of this important document.

For us, death is part of the continuum of life. It is a familiar friend. We would love to talk with you about how you would like this process to be for your loved one. It is entirely appropriate for you to raise this with us. Earlier is better than later, as none of us knows what the future holds.

Rest assured that you will be very welcome to be with your loved one for the days and hours leading up to this important time, and we will support you in making this journey one you feel at peace with.



There is variety and interest in an assortment of familiar items to investigate



Making bird feeders is a purposeful project enjoyed by both men and women

We promise we will give your loved one the very best of care.
We promise we will appreciate, respect and love your special person.
We will be honest, open and trustworthy.
This is the work we have chosen to do.

Jim Haines and Andrew Sheard, Directors