



Millvale House  
LEVIN

# Our Home

## A message from Katherine and Maria

Time has indeed flown fast as we now entering the second half of the year. Our team here at Millvale House Levin is preparing for the coming cold months to provide a warm and cosy atmosphere for our residents.

The past few months have been very memorable as we experienced the unprecedented uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to us. It has been a unique time for us as we learned more about our residents and colleagues while maintaining our small bubble here in our home to keep everyone safe. The families have been kept up to date with regular Facebook posts and phone calls from us. They have also been given the opportunity to stay in touch with their loved one via telephone and video calls.

Our dear residents were able to enjoy a number of sunny days during autumn. They enjoyed participating in outdoor activities such as gardening, feeding the birds, picking flowers, having afternoon tea under the big umbrella or under the tree, or simply enjoying the warmth of the sun and the gentle breeze. As always, we ensure all our residents have applied sunscreen for skin protection and offer them refreshments to avoid dehydration.

Some of the residents prefer to stay indoors though and take part in hand crafts and arts with the help of the staff. The Christmas lanterns hanging in the lounge were made by resident and staff during these craft sessions and have been left in place as a reminder of the fun we had together preparing for the yuletide season together. We all recall with such joy the spark in our resident's eyes as precious memories were rekindled by the presence of their loved ones at this special time of year.



For our staff team one of the highlights this year was the surveillance audit which occurred in March. There were some recommendations given by the auditor but overall, we did well. We would like to thank the team and the senior management for the support they gave us during this time.

Easter Sunday was celebrated with delicious treats such as hot cross buns and Easter eggs. The residents also had a fun time painting and colouring decorative eggs and bunnies. A few weeks later we commemorated the Anzac day with many hand-made poppies decorating our home.

Early this year a new member joined our group of volunteers. His name is Vegus and he visits every fortnight providing canine therapy to our residents. Our residents always enjoy playing with Vegus and petting him. We are all looking forward to his visits again once visiting restrictions are removed.

We are all looking forward to brighter days ahead as we embrace a new way of living. We would like to thank the families for their understanding and support during these challenging times. Lastly, we would to express our deepest gratitude to all our staff for working hard to keep everyone safe in our home.

We do things differently, and it works.



*Residents enjoyed taking part in preparations for Anzac day*

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*This year because of COVID-19 we will not be holding our usual mid-winter Family Gathering.*

*Instead, we are planning a special celebration together in Spring.*

*We will contact you with further details soon*

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*We enjoyed a quiet and gentle time honouring the true spirit of Anzac day*

## Reflections

Andrew Sheard, Managing Director

Warmest Greetings to you all.

I imagine that, like us, you may be experiencing a myriad of thoughts and feelings right now – disorientation, relief, frustration, worry, moments of peacefulness. We are feeling increasingly confident that we have ‘dodged a cannonball’. But what lies ahead? In some ways, our intrinsic belief in the safety and predictability of life has been shaken. Who would ever have predicted this would happen? Yet it has – and we have survived it.

For us in our aged care ‘bubbles’ it has been in many ways ‘business as usual’, with some important differences. We have missed our families very much. You bring a breath of fresh air, laughter, peace, love and happiness with you on every visit. Welcome, welcome back – and thank you for your understanding and fortitude in staying away when it was necessary for the health and safety of all.

For our staff it has been a challenging time which has tested them to the limits. As essential workers they have needed to keep coming to work 24/7 – at a time when the rest of New Zealand was able to stay safely at home in their bubbles, playing board games and doing virtual pub quizzes. As well as caring for our residents, our staff have needed to keep themselves and their family safe and isolated. They have come to work when sometimes they have felt afraid and concerned about their family at home, or their family far away in a distant land. They have just kept going and done what was needed to play their part. I thank each and every one of our team for all they have done during this time.

Once again I have been reminded that, like Aspen trees, we are all separate yet connected. Above the ground Aspen grow as individual trees. Below the ground, they have an interconnected set of roots. They have a common root system. At the same time, each tree is both an individual tree and a part of a living community. When one Aspen tree gets into difficulty, it affects the whole grove of trees. We are a bit like the Aspen trees. Every person in the world is inextricably linked. As with the trees, what happens to one of us affects all of us.

May we take care of each other. We need each other.  
May all people be cared for and know they are loved.

# Zooming and Skyping

Simon Hamley, Education Coordinator

In these recent weeks of isolation in New Zealand, more and more of us have had to rely on technology to keep in touch. I have always been a frequent user of both Zoom and Skype and have used these to provide education sessions to each of our facilities around the country. A major focus during the past few months has, of course, been the global pandemic and how our management team can ensure that our staff adopt safe and appropriate infection control practices to keep everybody safe. All of our staff were already well versed in all aspects of Infection Control, but it was very useful to reinforce and build on these skills and knowledge. We have practiced putting on gowns, goggles and masks to prepare for any eventuality.

My overall feeling from these Zoom sessions was how calm and resilient all of our staff have been during these months. This impressed me enormously, as fear and anxiety have been as contagious as the virus itself. I have also been aware of how reliable all of our staff have been during these times. An incredible group of people in my opinion.

My thoughts have been with all the residents and families during this time, particularly with those who visit regularly and for residents who haven't been able to understand the reasons that their family and friends have been unable to visit, so we have also used Zoom and Skype to help families stay in touch with their loved ones.

I have missed being able to visit each facility and meet with staff in person, but hopefully that will change quite soon. Whilst 'virtual' meetings for education work well there is no substitute for face to face meetings.

## Magic Moments

- ❖ Before the lockdown, one of our residents went to his father's funeral. During the trip we talked about memories of him and their time together which he will always cherish. It was amazing that as we got close to the church, we got lost with the GPS maps but the resident himself directed the way as he vividly remembered growing up in the area. He did enjoy his time with brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and on the drive back home requested we grab McDonalds on the drive through.
- ❖ A resident took great pride in reciting the names of all the care staff, and also correctly identified their nationalities!
- ❖ A resident entertained her fellow residents by playing her ukulele
- ❖ Early one morning, when I informed a resident that I have to check her blood sugar level, she told me that 'I love being here because you always look after the people even though you are busy'.

# Alone Together: Reflections on a Pandemic

Arah Cartagena, National Clinical Manager

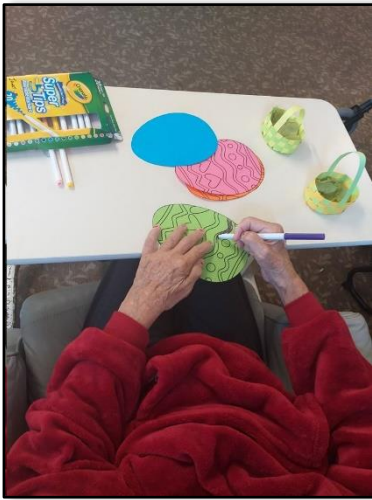
During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic we've been hearing advice about the importance of maintaining "social distancing", that is to keep a distance of 2 meters away from other people. This turn of phrase is confusing since this is about keeping physically distant instead of socially distant from one another. Indeed, during times of increased uncertainty and worry, it becomes more important to stay connected and be socially closer than ever.

We are social beings. We have prospered largely because of our social attributes. By using language, non-verbal communication, attunement to social cues, empathy, we survive and thrive. Socialization is deeply embedded in humanity's DNA. It is by being together that we become more than the sum of our parts.

Being socially connected also has positive effects to our well-being beyond the obvious mental and emotional benefits of lowered anxiety and depression. Our immune response becomes stronger and we are able to recover from physical disease more quickly, inflammatory responses in our body is decreased. Having strong social connections may even increase a person's lifespan.

During this unique time, we strive to maintain and enhance the social connections of residents and staff in each of our homes despite the challenges that physical distancing brings. With face to face visits being limited at present, we encourage phone calls or video calls, through Skype or Zoom, with your loved ones to keep in touch. Group activities in the homes, like communal dining, cooking groups and other social clubs continues to be facilitated while maintaining physical distancing between each person. By continuing to promote connectedness and building on the strength of our relationship we, as a community, will overcome this pandemic.

I believe, through these challenging times, by finding ways to keep supporting each other and maintaining and strengthening our social relationships we will emerge kinder, more empathetic, more caring, and more united. Together, we will get through this.



*Easter was a time to explore creativity and connect with familiar traditions*



*With lockdown finally relaxing, we look forward to welcoming our canine friend Vegas back into our home*