



Avonlea
CHRISTCHURCH

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Family Newsletter

A message from Kirsty and Charisma

Warmest greetings from us both as we near the end of another busy and happy year at Avonlea.

As the weather is improving it has been fantastic to see the residents getting out into the garden again. We have particularly enjoyed watching the lawn golf quickly becoming an activity favourite. Our Avonlea garden club is set to resume next month and we're sure the residents will enjoy being part of this.

We would like to encourage visiting family members and friends to utilise the garden with your loved one. There are so many things to enjoy whether it's smelling the flowers or just sitting being together. The wheelchair is also available if you would like to go for a walk outside Avonlea, with many nice cafes close by.

Recently Firoza attended an education day which is held annually in Papaparamu for our Diversional Therapists. During this time she learnt about creating meaningful memory boxes for our residents, and over the last month Avonlea Diversional Therapists and residents have been busy creating and decorating individual boxes full of items that are special to each resident. Thank you to the families who have helped to provide little treasures to go into these.

We would like to thank family for their cooperation during our recent closure due



to rotavirus. Avonlea was very lucky to recover from this outbreak quickly without anyone getting seriously ill.

As some of you will be aware Avonlea has recently installed piped music throughout the homes. If you would like to listen to a special CD with your loved one, please ask as we have a CD player that can be used. We hope you will enjoy the restful ambiance this gentle age-appropriate music provides.

We hope that you will join us for our Christmas gatherings, and look forward to welcoming you at Avonlea often during the summer months. We wish you everything of the very best for Christmas and the coming year.



*You are very warmly invited to join us for our
Christmas Gathering*

*Tuesday 16th December 2.30-3.30 pm Awhi Whanau, Hoa
Pumau and Mahal*

Thursday 18th December 2.30-3.30pm Aroha Ofa and Rudo

Choosing gifts at Christmas time



Rummage boxes are easy to compile and can also provide an opportunity for reminiscence



Fiddle cushions are fun to make and can reflect the interests and personality of the recipient



Large-piece jigsaw puzzles reflecting adult interests are available over the Internet

The tradition of giving a gift at Christmas time can be challenging when your family member or friend has dementia. The Alzheimers Association has shared the following excellent suggestions for gifts suitable for every level of care. Early stage games and activities should reflect the person's interests and challenge them to exercise their brain as well as their body. Later stage gifts should concentrate on providing comfort while stimulating the senses.

In the early stages

1. magnetic reminder refrigerator pads
2. Post-It notes
3. a small pocket-sized diary or notebook
1. a calendar featuring family photos – write special family occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries
2. a clock with the date and time in large type
1. an outing to a movie, play or concert, sporting event, museum or possibly an organized holiday shopping trip with friends and family
2. favorite musical CDs or CD with compilation of favorite tunes
3. VHS/DVD collection of favorite movies
4. activities such as scrapbooking or other craft projects

In the middle to late stages

- scented lotions
- a fluffy bathrobe in a favorite color
- a soft blanket or throw to keep warm
- track pants
- comfortable, easy-care snuggly tops – fleece is excellent
- bedsocks with non-slip soles

- shoes with Velcro ties
- wrinkle free nightgowns, nightshirts and robes
- favourite chocolates with soft centres

Music. Research shows that music has a positive impact on people who have dementia, bringing them back to good times, increasing stimulation and providing an opportunity to interact with family members. Buy favorite CDs or burn a CD full of musical favorites.

Framed photographs or a photo collage. Copy photos of family members and friends at photo centers, insert the names of the people in the photo and put in frames or in a photo album created specifically for that person.

Fiddle aprons, cushions or activity lap pillows also make wonderful gifts, especially if they reflect the interests and preferences of the recipient. If you are not handy enough to make one yourself, they are readily available over the internet, for both men and women.

Jigsaws are also excellent gifts, and here again, age-appropriate jigsaws with large pieces are available on the internet.

Perhaps the most important gift of all is time. Even though a person has dementia and may not remember your name, they will still be happy to see a familiar face and have visitors spend time chatting with them or taking them out for a walk or drive.

Time spent quietly being together is always special, and a good visit will leave you both with a feeling of satisfaction money could never buy.

Visiting a person with dementia

As the Christmas season approaches, we remind you that although visiting a person with dementia can sometimes be a challenging experience, it doesn't have to be so hard. These strategies may help to ensure the best outcomes for your visit.

1. Be aware of common characteristics of the dementia type your loved one has

Being educated may help to relieve any feelings of anxiety that may exist for you.

Be prepared to 'go along' with stories positively, rather than arguing with the person if their story doesn't seem logical or relevant.

Remember that the person may be at another time and place in their mind, and confused about who you are. As hard as this can be to accept, remember that their 'happiness in the moment' is what is important. Keep in mind that their unusual or 'out of character' comments or actions are a symptom of their dementia.

2. Be self aware

What we are feeling and thinking is often more apparent to the person with dementia than any words we may use. Be in a positive frame of mind when visiting, and be prepared to laugh together!

3. Go at the person's pace

People with dementia often need more time to respond. Use slow and gentle motions and make sure you have the person's attention. Sit at eye level with the person, using good eye contact.

4. Communicate with staff

Try calling before your visit. This is a good way to gauge how the person is doing, what time they are most alert and if they are even there!

5. Arm yourself with a 'visiting kit' of ideas and activities

6. Reminiscing is one of the most valuable and meaningful activities for a person with dementia, as often their long term memory remains intact. Bringing the family photographs can trigger memory, which in turn empowers and validates the individual.

7. Learn to be comfortable with silence and changes of mood

Dementia can cause abrupt changes of mood and difficulty in communicating. Allow time, and be patient.

8. Develop an 'end-of-visit routine'

Try to leave at meal times as the person is naturally interested in another activity. Ask a staff member or carer for help. They will be able to divert the person gently when you leave.

9. 'Look after you'

Ensure that you have support to help you process your feelings about the changes you are experiencing, and to arm you with knowledge about what to expect.

Join a dementia awareness group, or contact your local Alzheimer's organisation.



The Avonlea gardens offer many opportunities for spending enjoyable time together



Assisting with familiar homely tasks promotes a sense of purpose and value

Come into my World

Among our greatest organisational strengths are our outstanding staff team and comprehensive ongoing staff education programme. The cornerstone of this is our Best Friends Approach to Care course, which teaches staff to connect with each person as they would a very best friend. A 'best friend' accepts you as you are, believes in you, respects you, really listens to you, jokes with you and loves to hear you laugh.

We have recently developed a new education programme building on the Best Friends Approach to Care course, which we have called Come Into My World. This is based on the premise that to truly appreciate the experiences of a person living with dementia, it may be necessary to leave our own reality, suspend disbelief and enter another world: the world of the person who has dementia.

The programme incorporates many of the principles of Virginia Bell and David

Troxell's 'best friends' approach, and also includes some new skills. It explores possibilities and encourages staff to share knowledge gained in their own journey in caring for someone living with dementia.

Skills and approaches include using reminiscence to help the person retrieve previous coping mechanisms, using genuine eye contact, matching and mirroring emotions, looking for meaning within the context of conversation. Role play is used to enhance learning during the programme.

Some of our staff team have enjoyed participating in this course lately.

The course encourages staff to explore their own reactions and behaviour, and develop new approaches and strategies to help them enter the world of the person living with dementia.



The homely activity of baking and decorating gingerbread men provides a valuable opportunity for reminiscence

Wellness support

We have recently created a new position in support of our Diversional Therapy teams in the South Island.

On her return from maternity leave Donya Nee will take up the key new position of Wellness Support Advisor, assisting the diversional therapy teams in meeting the needs of our residents through meaningful and creative activity programmes in the South Island.

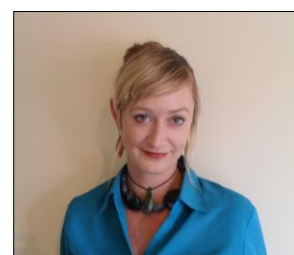
We have identified key staff members in each facility with skills and experience in focusing on the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD). These staff members are our BPSD support people. As Wellness Support Advisor, Donya will work closely with these support people in meeting the needs

of people with dementia in managing BPSD.

Donya will also continue to utilize nonviolent crisis intervention training and expertise in running regular training programmes for staff, enhancing the care, safety and wellbeing of all on a daily basis.

Donya's appointment to this pivotal new role will promote a holistic approach in meeting the needs of our residents on an individual basis and ensure staff are supported, guided and empowered to meet these needs in a professional, caring, homely and loving manner.

We look forward to developing this role further as time progresses.



Donya Nee

Doing what we can

Alison Hume

I have been feeling a deep concern about recent events in our world. The uprising of terrorist groups is of particular concern. All living beings are dependent on each other. I have shared my thoughts with a number of people lately. All people I have talked with have expressed worry and have said things like, "I don't know what I can do about it" or "there is nothing I can do." I too have been feeling similarly. Powerlessness threatens and we need to remind ourselves that we affect each other. The choices we make and the things we do count. Collectively, our efforts add up. We can create a more peaceful world.

Our Vision and Values at Dementia Care NZ include a statement at the very end:

"In these ways we enrich each person, the community and the world."

I meet with every staff member and talk about the importance of giving care that is congruent with our Vision and Values. Always, we talk together about how we can make a difference to the world by giving loving care just where we are. We must never underestimate the impact we can have.

DCNZ is shaped by our people, our residents, their families and our staff team, drawing on beliefs that have come from all over the world. What an opportunity: to know each person really well and to be with each person as if that person is our very best friend.

This means that we:

1. try to understand each other and accept each other,
2. hold each other with deep respect,
3. enjoy each other in every possible way.

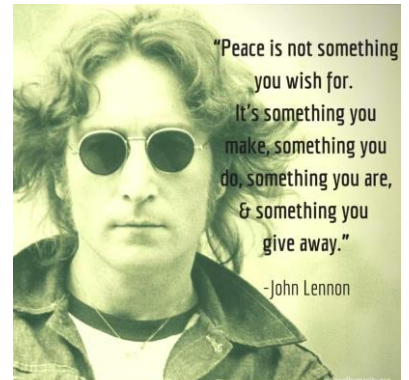
The small homes in which we offer care to residents and our close knit staff teams help us with this. As with a family, our residents and our staff team are able to help each other to manifest who we are in the world. We experience exhilarating moments of full aliveness as we watch our residents and each other rise up again and again. We aspire to great things, and compassion and love abound. As Rumi says "When you do something from your soul you feel a river moving in you, a joy." But, we are flawed – if you are anything like me, I have these inexpressibly beautiful moments, and then it is very possible, in the very next moment, that I will do something hurtful. It takes some understanding to realise that this is part of our humanness and this too is to be expected and accepted.

It is my belief that by actively appreciating and loving the people we are closest to day by day we will find more compassion and care about humanity everywhere. Transformation will occur through love. Hazrat Inayat Khan says "There is no greater power to inspire than the power of love. The desire for service, gentleness, tolerance, kindness, forgiveness, all come from love."

It was John Lennon who said "Peace is not something you wish for. It is something you make, something you do, something you are and something you give away."

May we have peace in our hearts.

May we have peace in our world.



Enjoying the summer together

Now that the weather is improving it is wonderful to see more residents out and about in the garden enjoying the sunshine, be it walking, sitting with a friend, or gardening.

Activities are a large part of our resident's lives, and it is much easier to connect with someone if you're sharing an activity together. Family members who plan their visits around an activity often find that the visit is more successful and a time they remember with great pleasure.

With this in mind we have put together a few ideas for outdoor activities you could plan to do with your loved one:

- Get the hose out and water the garden, or get out the rake or a watering can; this can be a fun activity filled with lots of reminiscing.
- Do some hand washing, walk to the line, and reminisce. This practical and productive activity will enhance your loved one's self esteem and sense of purpose. Talk about the sunshine on your face, the feeling of the water. Your facility will happily provide the equipment needed.
- Make sandwiches and a thermos of tea or coffee; find an outside seat for a picnic.
- Gather flowers during a walk through the garden. Stop to smell the flowers, and talk about the colours. On your return create a flower arrangement and invite other residents to help.
- Weed the garden, or plant some veges
- Bring or pick roses and lavender to make potpourri
- Sit outside with your sun hats and a good poetry book to read together
- Take a drive to the river to feed the ducks
- Bring a freshly picked rose and enjoy the scent together, gently reminiscing
- Sit together near a window where you can feel the warmth of the sun on your backs.

A word about outside activities: the sun's rays in NZ are very powerful. We would like to remind you of the advice given for outside activities. The cancer society reminds us to 'slip, slop, slap and

wrap' at all times (slip into a shirt and clothing that offers good protection or into shade, slop on some sunscreen, slap on a hat with a wide brim and wrap on a pair of sun glasses).

We will do all we can to help you make this summer a special and memorable time filled with magic moments for you and your loved one!

Important

We would like to remind you of the vulnerability of our elderly residents. The danger influenza and gastric infections pose to vulnerable elderly people is extreme. They can and have proved fatal. Please take advantage of flu inoculations for yourself and your loved one, and before entering always use the hand sanitiser at the entrance.

Important: Please postpone your visit if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:-

1. Temperature
2. Sneezing, runny nose, cough, sore throat
3. Stomach ache, body ache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea (for 48 hours after you are symptom free).

Naming clothes

Please remember that all new items need to be clearly marked with the owner's name before they arrive. This is especially important at Christmas time, when many lovingly chosen new items are given as gifts by family members. We discourage expensive woollen items, which are easily damaged in the wash. Please select easy care clothing wherever possible.

Outing reminder

If you intend to take your loved one home for the day or afternoon over the Christmas period please discuss this with a Registered Nurse so that medication and comfort requirements can be arranged.

For safety reasons outings of this nature first need to be discussed and approved by the EPOA.