



19 May 2020

Dear Residents/Family Members,

We are now two months into a new reality. Social distancing, screening/testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) are now commonplace. Many of you are now experts on compliance and assist some of us who occasionally still have lapses in how we react to this pandemic. We must continue to make every effort to stay safe. This point was brought home poignantly this past week as we said goodbye to one of our AL residents for the last time.

Currently, we have two AL residents who have tested positive, one (1) is in the hospital, while the other is being cared for at the Hallmark in a specially designed isolation unit with exclusive staff coverage. Both appear to be doing well and anticipate receiving additional testing within the next couple days. As mentioned last week, we are aware of one (1) private sitter who tested positive. This individual is currently recuperating at home. This morning we were notified of our first positive test for an AL employee. This employee originally tested negative on May 5<sup>th</sup> and has not worked at the community since May 8<sup>th</sup>. She was re-tested on May 12<sup>th</sup> related to symptoms that developed since her last day worked. Those results returned a positive result this morning. This employee is also resting at home and will be re-tested prior to authorization to return to work.

Hallmark has decided to test ALL employees and has a test date set this week. We are also requesting that those of you with private sitters have them tested as well. We have developed a new sitter log-in and will refuse entry for those sitters unable to provide proof of testing by May 22<sup>nd</sup>. A letter went out from our CEO, Sheryl Callahan, last week detailing this information, so I do not anticipate any surprises with this requirement.

We are not currently testing independent residents without signs or symptoms; however, we are leaving that as an option pending results of our continued testing efforts.

### **Food Service Update:**

Last week, we met with the dining committee. As a result, we determined that additional communication may be helpful during the upheaval. Some of you may have noted some changes in the menu and/or items being served. Like many other businesses, our supply chain has been affected by the pandemic. We maintain contracts with three (3) general food vendors, along with a handful of “specialty” vendors. Across the board, we are experiencing supply shortages and substitutions. The dining services team is committed to preparing quality meals; however, we do anticipate continued changes for the foreseeable future.

Dining continues to make deliveries and supply carry-out orders from noon-2p for lunch and 5:50-7p for dinner, Monday through Saturday and 11a-1:30p for brunch and 4:30-5:30p for dinner on Sunday. Orders may be called into 713.622.6637 (NOTE: this phone is not monitored between 2-3p) or by coming down and placing your order with a server.

Deliveries and carryout are delivered in a variety of containers (plastic, Styrofoam, etc.). These containers are NOT intended for microwave use. If you plan on re-heating food, please place food on a microwave/oven safe container for re-heating.

As a reminder, the a la carte menu is still available, in addition to the daily special(s). Please see your server to get a copy of the a la carte menu to take with you.

Finally, some of you have questioned dates placed on some food containers. Occasionally we prepare more of a product than is ordered on a particular day. Using proper storage techniques, these prepared products may be good for several days after preparation. We use dating to ensure we do not exceed the useful life standards. We also may use dating when troubleshooting issues you may have with some specific items. (Example – a complaint related to a wilted salad; however, the date is over a week old).

I periodically receive communication from residents and loved ones of the Hallmark family. Many times, it consists of appreciation, concerns or some sage advice. Almost always, there will be communications with differing points of view, and this pandemic is no different. In light of that, I thought I would share an excerpt of one of these communications without identifying the original sender.

*“Observed: A group of six or seven of our residents sitting together at the cross area in the garden where there are benches and walkers could be used. No masks. No distancing. At the “Work of our Hands” Saturday, they are usually two feet apart not wearing masks. On last Saturday, there was a large group of 11 for the “cocktail time” and people were sitting appropriately until more people arrived and distancing became impossible. Last night, there were two groups of people during cocktail hour that kept the numbers smaller until several ladies arrived that didn’t comply with masks or distancing.*

*During these four events, I have heard:*

*“This is a committee meeting.”*

*“My face has Rosacea.”*

*“This is all political.”*

*Now, I know there are other issues:*

*mental health, hard of hearing, visual problems, short term memory problems, dementia, political misinformation, the need for socializing.*

*BUT...*

*These “little old” ladies are no longer cute, precious and adorable. It’s pretty much the same women who do not distance or wear masks. They are not helping my sense of security in living here. These women’s behavior impacts us. Signs are not working. While many of the residents have been excellent, some have not internalized the message. **Can management think of some way to figure out how change can happen to keep us safe?”***

In contrast, I’ve received other communications questioning why the Hallmark is denying visitation and outside trips.

My point in sharing this excerpt is, there are always differing viewpoints. However, there is also a very real pandemic out there and our responsibility is to look out for each other and do whatever we can to mitigate its potential affects. I reflected in the first paragraph about losing one of our own this past week. Let's continue working together to hopefully make that the only casualty related to this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Harold Ermshar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Harold Ermshar  
Executive Director