



Fall 2020

The Mirror

Reflecting Life at *Saint Mary's Home of Erie*

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A Sign of the Times



A Continuing Care Retirement Community

Levels of Care

Independent Living
Residential Living & Personal Care
Skilled Nursing
Short & Long Term Rehabilitation
Alzheimer's & Dementia Care
Adult Day Services
Home Care
Respite Care

Services & Amenities

On-site Nursing staff including
RN's, LPN's & CNA's
Catholic & Ecumenical Religious Services
Social Services
Support Services
Nutritional Services
Daily Recreational Activities
Beauty & Barber Services

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Our Mission

Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph and operated in the Catholic tradition, Saint Mary's Home of Erie is committed to an environment of loving to care where primarily seniors, their families, staff and volunteers participate in fostering an atmosphere of community.



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A Message from the President



Allen L. Bonace,
President/CEO

Shortly after the pandemic began, I taped a quote to the wall outside of my office and it still hangs there. It is a subtle reminder to those who walk past – myself included – that while our main task right now is caring for others, we can only accomplish that by first caring for ourselves. The quote reads:

"Remember that we as caregivers are the best predictors of how our residents are doing: they are watching and listening to us. When we take care of ourselves, we're showing them how they can take care of themselves, too." - Unknown

As you read this issue of the Mirror, I hope you come to understand just how much COVID-19 has demanded of those working in this field. With grace and fortitude in the face of adversity, our team has gone above and beyond what has been asked of them to care for our residents.

To put it simply, caring through COVID-19 is costly for all involved – mentally, physically, and financially. And frankly, it is not sustainable. After many months of facing the COVID-19 pandemic, communities like Saint Mary's are still confronting numerous challenges in regards to reliable testing, access to adequate supplies and ongoing restrictions. Still, one of the biggest challenges has been an emotional one: being firsthand witnesses to the impact on families and residents who have not seen one another for months.

Nevertheless, Saint Mary's continues to take action by speaking up and voicing our concerns. We participate in regional conference calls with other healthcare providers, collaborate with representatives from groups like LeadingAge, and advocate for more funding and support for senior living providers that will help protect older adults and the people who care for them.

In spite of this and all that is to come, we will do what we have always done: move forward. The times change and we must change with them so that our mission of "loving to care" can endure for the next generation of seniors.

We are grateful for your support, cooperation and trust as we care for your loved ones.

Take care,

Allen L. Bonace
President/CEO



Caring through COVID-19

Resilience key in adapting to change



A family and resident visit in the lobby of Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge.

163 days.

That is how much time has passed since we closed our doors to visitors in March and when the first resident finally sat face-to-face with their loved one again in August – albeit outside, six feet apart and for only twenty minutes.

A lot has happened in the past few months and the “new normal” continues to bring with it many new obstacles. Through a combination of swift action, resourcefulness and a lot of teamwork, we have shifted our thinking and adapted to the challenges of caring through COVID-19.

A Solid Foundation

Although no one could have predicted this exact scenario, back in the spring of 2019 Saint Mary's implemented an Emergent Infectious Disease Outbreak plan that would coordinate our response and provide direction in the event of a significant disease outbreak. In addition to this plan, each campus was already well equipped with an Infection Preventionist team member, two negative air pressure rooms, a stock of supplies, and High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) Filters. This preparedness plan provided early direction that helped keep the people who live and work here safe from the very beginning.

Saint Mary's built upon this solid foundation by quickly incorporating the frequently-changing guidance from local, state and federal regulators. Visitation was restricted, masking and temperature screenings became required for all persons entering the building, group activities and communal dining practices were halted, high-touch surfaces were cleaned and disinfected more frequently, supplies were conserved and monitored, and a plan was set in motion to conduct vital testing and contact tracing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



A ZIP wall barrier separates the COVID-19 wing at Saint Mary's East.

The Case Count

In the six months and counting that we have been under restrictions from COVID-19, Saint Mary's has conducted more than 2,000 tests among employees and residents. To date, there have been seven positive cases of COVID-19 within our Saint Mary's community, including four employees and three residents. The cases were contained to Saint Mary's East and all individuals recovered without the need for hospitalization. We prepared for this reality by having a contingency staffing plan in place and by establishing a secure and separate unit in our facilities to care for COVID-19 positive residents.

While even a single positive test result is one result too many, the low positive case count means that the percentage of cases determined from testing so far is less than 0.5%. This number is a testament to our efforts and reinforces that the strict methods we have taken to prevent the spread of transmission continue to be effective. However, they come at a cost.



Time and Money

COVID-19 is expensive and time-intensive and we are doing everything possible to meet its demands, including seeking out additional sources of funding and support. Saint Mary’s has spent over \$100,000 alone on testing materials and dedicated countless hours of labor to coordinate testing. This cost would have been higher had we not made efforts to coordinate with the Pennsylvania National Guard and CVS Omnicare, who helped obtain and underwrite some initial tests. Later on, not only did we face difficulties acquiring testing supplies, but time was against us – turnaround time for results at

Every one of the nearly 470 employees who work at Saint Mary’s is essential. We are fortunate that we never had to consider furloughs or lay-offs, thanks in part to receiving a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan. Twenty-four hours, seven days a week, our employees report to work even while potentially putting themselves and their families at risk.

The reality is that for many long-term care communities, without additional financial relief, these ways of operating are not sustainable and the toll they take on everyone involved will only continue to grow.

Our employees quickly rose to the challenge of finding creative solutions to keep residents engaged – we offered virtual visits so that residents and loved ones could connect over Skype and FaceTime. We utilized spaces in ways we hadn’t before – like the chapel, to broadcast morning exercise over the closed circuit television channel. Activities were held down long hallways, with residents calling “Bingo!” from their doorways. When communal dining was halted, our Dietary and Nursing Departments worked together in new ways to overcome the logistical and nutritional challenges of residents eating in their room. Snack carts and one-on-one visits became regular parts of our routine. And recently, to make visitations possible, employees from all departments pitched in – volunteering both during and after work hours. It cannot be overstated that these individuals keep us going. They are the heart and the backbone of what we do.

Moving Forward

Our commitment to honesty and transparency has never wavered. Our plans, status, actions and updates are shared on our website. We encourage and invite everyone to be part of the process by exploring what we’ve been doing and how we’re moving forward.

Today, socially distanced and controlled visits are going on inside our lobbies as resident areas are still off limits. There is no touching, no hugging. Families and residents are seated six feet apart from one another at the end of a long table. A timer set for twenty minutes keeps a watchful eye. Even though expressions are hidden behind facemasks, the eyes give it away. We know the smiles are there.

We have all come to recognize the signs of the times we are living in – facemasks and face shields, hand sanitizer, social distancing markers. Often less visible is a sign of the spirit, one of resilience. We do not know what comes next, but we know this spirit will carry us through. No matter how many more days lie ahead.



A team of managers from both campuses meets weekly via video call to discuss new information.



From behind plexi-glass barriers, reception employees screen staff members and visitors.

some points reached nearly 14 days. Additionally, products were backordered for months, distribution of products occurred on allocations only, and some products, such as gloves, now cost more than three times the amount they did pre-pandemic.

The Purchasing Department has worked tirelessly to find solutions and though they still face a number of obstacles, they have been successful in slowly building our supply of products and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to ensure our employees can do their job in a safe environment.

An Emotional Toll

Seniors living alone have always been at risk for increased social isolation, which can contribute to a decline in health. One of the major benefits of a community like Saint Mary’s is the opportunity for seniors to engage in life among peers. So when the solution became restricting visitations and limiting interactions in order to protect seniors from the virus, we unfortunately faced a new problem: loneliness and boredom.



Housekeeping staff frequently cleans and disinfects high-touch surfaces.



Non-direct care staff are asked to avoid travel through resident care areas to limit exposure.

Reflections

Employees reflect on the impact of COVID-19



Elvira

"I volunteered to work in the COVID-19 unit. Back when COVID-19 first hit everyone was scared, I was worried. And it's been tough, very tough. But

when I got the call that we had a resident who was being moved into that unit and I was needed, it was just like any other work day. I just thought 'that's my resident and I'm here to care for them, so that's what I'm gonna do.'" *Elvira Comic works in Residential Living and Personal Care at the East campus.*



Sue

"It has been challenging to keep up with the ever-changing and increased financial reporting requirements that

the pandemic has caused. But I am appreciative of my health and also very appreciative of my family!" *Sue Hauber works in the Finance Department.*



Debra

"The challenge of obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been real but we now have been able to build secure par levels. I

know working with Administration that they have made the safety of the residents and the employees their number one priority. There has not been a day when I have felt unsafe to come to work." *Debra Majewski works in the Purchasing Department.*



Malcolm

"Things are changing all the time, but I just try to do my work and go with the flow. I'm usually in Residential Living but I've been up in Nursing more to help set up the trays to be served and

delivered to the resident rooms. I appreciate my co-workers a lot and the residents. The residents are fun and I like to joke around a lot. I try to talk with them when I can and make them laugh, since they don't have visitors." *Malcolm Johnson works in the Dietary Department at the East campus.*



Debbie

"I am glad that I was able to keep working when so many people were out of work. It has been fun coming up with creative ways to keep residents busy and hopefully fulfilled. I have gotten to

know the residents more due to visiting everyone in their rooms, providing them with snacks or things to do." *Debra Greenwald works in the Activities Department at Asbury Ridge.*



Elizabeth

"I have always said that we treat residents like they are our family members. I think this rings true now more than ever as families have limited contact with their loved ones. It is a privilege to

know our residents on such a personal level and to have the trust of not just the residents themselves but their families." *Elizabeth VanHoozer works in the Social Services Department at the Asbury Ridge campus.*



Around Our Home

A look at how we have spent our time



Centennial Celebrations

Eileen Tracy, Saint Mary's East resident, celebrated her 100th birthday with a socially distanced party! Eileen's secret to living a long life? "Eat peanut butter!"



Jolly in July

Santa and his helpers brought joy to the residents through a Christmas in July celebration. Saint Mary's East employees dressed up and delivered small gift bags to residents – like Saint Mary's East resident Regina Horomanski!



Fire Up the Grill

To help keep spirits high this summer during the coronavirus lockdown, Dietary employees grilled special picnic lunches for the residents to enjoy!

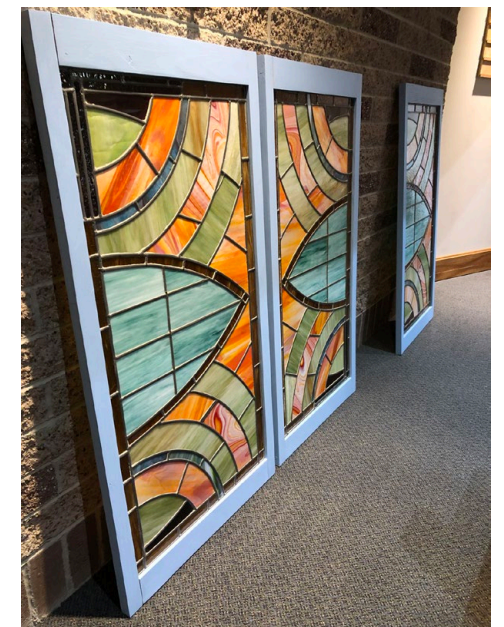


Green Thumbs

Residents at Asbury Ridge enjoyed the summer sun! Gerry Hoffman (pictured left) and Dave Dahlkemper (pictured right) were happy to get some fresh air and help with the gardening.

You've Got Mail!

Care packages received in the mail were a bright spot for our residents. Dorothy Manley was so excited to receive some patriotic decorations for her room just in time for the Fourth of July.



Divine Light

Stained glass windows, repurposed from the chapel at Saint Mary's East, were installed in the chapel at Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge. Residents will enjoy their beauty and the warm light of the Sun filtered through these windows will aid in inspiration and meditation.



Saint Mary's Rocks!

Employees noticed one morning that inspirational rocks lined the pathway to the employee entrance at Asbury Ridge. It was later discovered that the rocks were hand-painted by residents who wanted to show appreciation and encouragement for the essential workers at Saint Mary's!

Find us on

Saint Mary's Home of Erie is excited to join Facebook and connect with our community, families and employees while sharing moments reflecting life at Saint Mary's. Make sure to like us on Facebook to follow along and stay up-to-date.

Breaking Records

Erie Gives 2020 proved to be another record-breaking year! Saint Mary's Home of Erie received nearly \$25,000 from 154 generous donors – our most successful year yet. Thank you to all of our loyal supporters.



Thank You!

Celebrating our dedicated employees and their years of service

35
years

Debra Majewski
Darlene McDannel
Patricia Watkins

15
years

Jonathan Arrington
Suzanne Fletcher
Ann Iavarone
Amela Isic
Shari Liebel

Jadranka Spahic
Jean Trojanovich
Sean Turowski
Marybeth Veshecco

25
years

Sandra Minor
Maureen Murphy

10
years

Brian Andrzejewski
Sarah Caram
Elvisa Comic
Kimberley Dixon
Denise Hammill
Christopher Mahoney

Hazel McDowell
Shana Mihalic
Julie Mullooly
Tashonna Salter
Wesley Sanden
Sally Shea

20
years

Kathy Bennett
Enisa Berberkic
Christopher Kupniewski
Robert Orton
Tammie Pellegrino
Marybeth Renshaw
DeAndra Ward

5
years

Kristine Alonzo
Tameya Barnett
Brandi Browning
Michelle Celeski
RoseAnn Dobrich
Jean Douglas
Diane Ebert
Tonya Flook
Katherine Gustafson
Letita Hayes
Theresa Johnson
Taniesha Keith

Brooke Krawiec
Allahna Manning
Wendy Martin
Julie McCormick
Carolyn Meeker
Jennifer Saxton
Barbara Sowers
Rosa Toucet
Karen Walla-Brown
Emily Williams
Tachelle Williams



Get to Know Us

A familiar face takes on a new role



DEBRA PROCTOR

Director of Nursing, Saint Mary's East

- Recently transitioned to Director of Nursing from Director of Residential Living and Personal Care where she served for the past eight years
- Graduated with a Nursing Degree from Mercyhurst College in 2011
- Originally attended Jamestown Business College and went on to work in the Accounting department of a local business. Spent 15 years at Sherwin Williams as an Assistant Manager and a Manager
- Realized she wanted to become a nurse and enrolled in Nursing School after spending a lot of time with nurses that took care of her mother in her last 5 years of life. "I realized the impact they [nurses] had in the quality of my mom's life and I wanted to be one of those people."
- **Favorite thing about career:** Making a positive impact on a resident, family member, or employee's life.
- **Passions and Hobbies:** "My passion in life are my children and my grandchildren. I once heard that your children are the rainbows and your grandchildren are the pot of gold!"

A New Amenity

Gazebo, benches enhance resident lifestyles

Thanks to a generous grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission and Ministries Foundation, Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge was able to purchase a gazebo and benches for our campus. This project will enhance the health and well-being of the residents who live here by improving the existing outdoor exercise and recreation areas, which lacked shade and places to rest.

The recently installed gazebo and the soon-to-be installed benches will create an age-friendly outdoor environment that empowers residents to engage in a healthier lifestyle, as well as encourage the use of the surrounding exercise equipment by making the area more appealing to seniors.

It is well known that outdoor exercise and time spent outside can have a positive impact on mood and self-esteem particularly in older adults who are often isolated and limited to indoor spaces. With the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affecting the daily lives of so many, an enhanced area to enjoy the outdoors seems crucial.

Overall, we hope this new amenity will result in a better quality of life for the residents of Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge.



Pictured visiting the new gazebo are Joseph Murphey and Therese Woods, residents of Asbury Ridge.





A Continuing Care Retirement Community

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We'd love to hear from you!

Saint Mary's invites you to share your stories, anecdotes and thoughtful moments of the part we've played in the lives of you and your loved one. If you are interested in sharing your story, please send to Saint Mary's (Attn: Marketing Department) or email us at info@stmaryshome.org.

Please let us know if you have a change of address; the addressee is not at this address; you are receiving more than one newsletter; or you would like to be removed from the mailing list. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list please notify us by calling our opt-out voicemail at (814) 528-0194 or emailing optout@stmaryshome.org.

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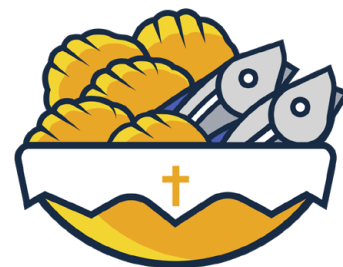
Find us on 

Save the Date!

December 1, 2020

Saint Mary's Home of Erie is participating in the sixth-annual #iGiveCatholic day, held on the same day as #GivingTuesday. Supported locally by the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Pennsylvania, this day brings the Catholic community together to give thanks and give back.

Secure, tax-deductible donations can be made to eligible Catholic organizations at iGiveCatholic.org. Please consider donating to Saint Mary's Home of Erie during this year's #iGiveCatholic day!



#iGIVECATHOLIC
#GIVINGTUESDAY

Visit iGiveCatholic.org for more details or call Saint Mary's Development Office at (814) 451-1316.