



July 13, 2020

Residents, Family Members and Neighbors,

On June 9<sup>th</sup> we informed our stakeholders that two residents had tested positive for COVID-19 which was detected as part of our routine testing of new admissions within our isolation area. As a result of the positive tests we commenced testing all residents and employees within the facility. We know many of you have been anxiously awaiting the results, and while we appreciate your angst, we sought to receive all results (including a few re-tests which were initially inconclusive) before communicating so that we could provide you with an accurate assessment. The results of our comprehensive testing are as follows: (i) the two initial positive residents were confirmed on re-test to in fact be positive; (ii) one additional resident tested positive; and, (iii) two employees tested positive.

While we always strive to be as transparent as possible, medical privacy laws and regulations limit our ability to disclose specific patient information, however, we can describe their status generally. Fortunately, all residents and employees who tested positive were and remain asymptomatic, and not exhibiting any of the classic indicators of COVID-19. Also, there is no evidence of community spread within the facility; each of the new positive cases work or reside in different areas of the building and none had any interaction with the first two residents to test positive. Each person who tested positive, including the first two residents, were outside the facility in the days prior to testing positive. While there is no way to know with certainty, we believe very strongly that each person was exposed to the virus outside of VOLH. The best news of all is three of the five individuals have recovered from the disease. The original two residents to test positive have subsequently produced two negative tests and have been safely discharged home. The third resident to test positive remains asymptomatic. One of the two employees has produced two negative tests and has been symptom free throughout and will be returning to work. The other employee remains asymptomatic, in good health, and is in isolation at home waiting to produce two negative tests. We are so very thankful for the continued good health for all who have tested positive.

Daily COVID-19 cases in Dallas County have increased more than twelvefold over the past one hundred days. While some of the increase is explained by an increase in testing, the percent positive rate has more than tripled indicating a rapid increase of community spread within Dallas County. We tried valiantly to keep the virus outside the facility, but the task has become much more difficult given the current magnitude of community spread. Having said that, we are not defeated. We remain encouraged, engaged, and even more committed to protecting our residents to the best of our ability. Our isolation area with its required testing on Day 4 and Day 11 performed as designed by completely protecting the general resident population from new admissions. Our nurses and caregivers diligent use of personal protective equipment (“PPE”) protected them from becoming infected or spreading the disease to others. And with all employees wearing masks and practicing social distancing, there was not a single case of the disease spreading within the facility. For that we are all grateful.

As we have indicated in prior correspondence, we are informed by experts in the field of infectious disease management, governmental and regulatory authorities, and we continue to learn from our own collective experiences. We are not afraid to get ahead of others when it comes to resident safety related to this highly infectious disease which has a disproportionate adverse effect on senior health. To that end our COVID-19 protocols are constantly evolving, and we would like to share a couple of our newest policy changes which are effective immediately:



## V I L L A G E S

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- We have created a dedicated COVID-19 isolation area strictly for those who have tested positive for the disease. This area is in addition to the isolation area where we quarantine new admissions for fourteen days. Like the isolation hall, this new area has its own exterior door, is separated by internal doors from the rest of the facility which are remain closed, it features its own dedicated staff, and no one may transition between the COVID-19 area and any other areas of the building. Staff working the COVID-19 area will do so in full PPE. No one will be discharged into the general population until they are symptom free for at least ten days and have produced at least two negative COVID-19 tests, consistent with CDC guidelines for healthcare workers.
- Given the very high likelihood that the third resident to test positive was infected outside the facility as part of seeking treatment in their personal physician's office, we will now require any resident who leaves the facility to be isolated like a new admission. Meaning, even our long term residents who call VOLH their home must isolate for fourteen days should they leave the facility for any reason.
- Team members working in the COVID area will be tested at least weekly. All other team members will be tested at least monthly; or more frequently should they exhibit any symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- We continue with our previous COVID-19 related protocols, and have enhanced their effectiveness by measures such as having a consultant review our N95 mask fitment, training our nurses to monitor mask fit so that everyone wears their masks as designed, and we have increased the frequency in which a third party sanitation company disinfects our isolation and COVID quarantine areas.

Thank you for your continued support. If you have contact with any of our nursing or caregiver team, please tell them what a great job they are doing of keeping seniors safe in these extraordinary times. Their job now potentially puts them in a position of putting their own health on the line each day to care for our community's seniors. We are grateful for their willingness to do this as part of their professional duty. Should you have questions or concerns regarding our COVID-19 protocols, please contact Executive Director Kelly Wolfe or Chelsea Sneed, Director of Nursing.

Villages of Lake Highlands Team