

Dear Residents and Families:

We would like to thank all of you for your continued support, compassion, and grace during this trying time of COVID-19. We are humbled by your understanding as we navigate through the rules and regulations from MDH and CDC in keeping our residents safe. It is hard to believe that we have been dealing with a global pandemic for 6 months. We are proud to say that we remain COVID-19 FREE at BLHCC. We know that this pandemic is still a threat to our facility and those who are entrusted in our care and we take that responsibility very seriously.

Some of the updates that we have received include the following:

- In June, all staff and residents at BLHCC were tested for COVID-19 three weeks in a row by the MN National Guard. All 3 rounds of testing revealed negative results for COVID-19. Recently, CMS has issued a regulation that states all care centers must complete outbreak testing, testing for those with symptoms **and routine testing for staff**. This regulation indicates that our staff will need to be tested at a frequency based on the CMS COVID-19 positivity level in the county. Renville County currently is at 3.7% indicating our staff will need to be tested on a monthly basis for COVID-19. A case rate above 5% will initiate weekly testing and above 10% will initiate twice a week testing. In order to comply with this order, our staff will be tested in September. At this time, residents **are not** included in the routine testing but would be tested if symptomatic or if an outbreak is identified.
- As you have probably heard in the news, LTC facilities will be receiving antigen testing machines. This will give us the ability, at our building, to test residents and staff who have symptoms. We received our machine last week and are working on developing policies for proper use.
- MDH has been working on the re-opening of facilities for visitors. They have divided visiting into 2 levels. Our facility is currently operating at a Level 1, which means, that we will continue with Essential Caregiver Visits, Compassionate Caregiver Visits, Outdoor Visits and Window Visits. Our doors will remain locked for outside visitors and the general community. At any time we receive a positive COVID-19 case, all of these visits will be suspended until further notice. Our facility has decided to remain in Level 1 based on the number of cases in our community and surrounding counties. We are hopeful with the new testing requirements and community compliance with COVID-19 precautions we will eventually be able to transition to Level 2. In the meantime, our goal is to support an Essential Caregiver for each resident and assisted living tenant. If we have not contacted you about this, we will be in touch in the near future. Please know in the future, essential caregivers may be included in the routine testing. We are waiting for guidance from MDH.
- It's hard to believe we are in the month of September. Over the summer your loved ones have experienced a meal of fresh sweet corn, were visited by area pastors for worship, had a week long County Fair experience, and were able to re-start some of their group activities. We have seen the toll this pandemic has had on your loved ones and our staff. We were so happy when MDH released guidance to allow activities to begin again. In the future, our Activities Department will continue to offer socially distanced group activities, church services, monthly entertainment and much more.

We appreciate all of you who have reached out via phone, zoom, or the other form of visits. The residents and staff miss seeing all of you, but those small gestures go a long way.

Mark Rust
Administrator

Kendra Hiles
Director of Nursing