



Dear Residents, Family Members and Friends,

I am really enjoying writing the weekly newsletter. I hope you look forward to reading it each week and are getting a sense of what is going on here. This update is going to family members listed as the primary contact for each resident. Please feel free to share this information with anyone else who might find it helpful. The weekly update is posted on the website at www.baldwincarecenter.com if other family members would like to read it. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about the weekly information.

In the last newsletter I mentioned that we would be receiving testing kits for both residents and staff in the Baldwin Care Center. We have received the testing kits. Residents and family members were contacted for permission to complete the testing. The testing is not mandatory. All staff were strongly encouraged to submit to testing. The test is a simple nasal swab test that should not cause discomfort. The tests are sent to a lab in Madison for processing. The results are then communicated to the Baldwin Care Center. Dr. Kathleen Findlay, Medical Director and two nursing staff performed the tests for the residents and staff on Wednesday, May 20th. We will keep you posted regarding the results of the testing. If there are residents or staff who test positive for COVID-19, CDC guidance will be followed which would include strict isolation of residents during the course of the illness and at least 10 days off of work for staff who test positive. I have also ordered testing supplies for the residents and staff of both Birch Haven Assisted Living and Birchwood Apartments. I anticipate that we may be testing there as early as next week. I want to mention again how lucky we are to have Dr. Kathleen Findlay onsite daily at the Baldwin Care Center and Andrea Blegen onsite at the Birchwood Apartments and Birch Haven Assisted Living to be able to assess residents regularly and make sure they are getting the best medical care possible.

On Monday, May 18th the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Quality Assurance issued an update regarding visitation and long term care communities. In part, the notification indicated that “People who live in our nursing homes, assisted living communities and the staff and caregivers are at high risk of contracting COVID-19. Their safety and wellbeing continues to be a top priority for DHS. When a resident or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the potential for rapid spread can be extremely high and life-threatening and asymptomatic individuals who are COVID positive can spread the virus. In order to minimize spread, we ask that long term settings remain vigilant about minimizing the numbers of people entering the buildings from the community. DHS information is consistent with guidance from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). RESTRICTIONS ON VISITORS – Facilities should restrict all visitors and nonessential health care personnel, except for certain compassionate care situations, such as an end of life scenario. Facilities should notify potential visitors of the need to defer visitation UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE (through signage, calls, letters, etc.)” Baldwin Care Center has been vigilant about restricting visitors according to the guidance we receive. Family members should know that if those guidelines are breached, the resident will be placed in 14 days of strict isolation, unable to come out of their room at all with staff needing to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that remains in short supply to provide care to those residents. I know that this message is a difficult pill to swallow, but understand that we are just the messengers. Staff who work in long term care are incredibly compassionate and this guideline tears at our heartstrings when we have to enforce it. We appreciate your understanding during this difficult time.

On May 18th, CMS issued guidance titled Nursing Home Reopening Recommendations for State and Local Officials. There are somewhat complicated phases that nursing facilities need to advance through before beginning to relax any restrictions. The first step is that all residents and staff have received a base-line test. That task was completed this week. The facility will be awaiting the results of this testing. The facility will keep you posted as we begin this process. At this time the restrictions remain in place that only allow visits for end of life situations. Please let me know if you have questions regarding this.

Since the release of the list of facilities with positive cases was published the news media has incorrectly reported some information specifically about the Baldwin Care Center. If any of you get your news from WQOW in Eau Claire, inaccurate information was reported. They reported that if a facility was on the list, that there would have to be two or more positive cases. The criteria for a nursing facility to be on the list are to have one positive resident, employee or contractor. This misinformation caused quite a problem for the facility. Family members, business people and other residents of the campus became alarmed and thought there was an outbreak of COVID-19 in the Baldwin Care Center.

Nothing could be further from the truth. As has been reported in previous newsletters, the Baldwin Care Center appeared on the list because according to St. Croix County Public Health, there was still a case open. That case was the employee who tested positive at the beginning of April and has not returned to the building since. You can't always believe what you hear on the television or radio or read in the newspaper. Inaccurate information also appeared in the Eau Claire Leader Telegram. I did write a response to the inaccuracies reported on WQOW. They indicated it would appear next to the story in their digital format. It is very unfortunate because the damage has already been done. I appreciate those of you who contacted us so that we could verify the information.

This past week we did have a casual call resident assistant who works in Birch Haven test positive for COVID-19. The employee had not worked since April 22nd, so there was no exposure or risk to the residents of Birch Haven Assisted Living. It may be the case that when we test all residents and staff in the upcoming weeks that there could be a positive result for a resident or staff member. That is one of the reasons for the testing. We want to make certain that there are no asymptomatic residents or staff who may have it and possibly spread it to others. The facility will let everyone know if we do have a positive test.

The class being held to train nursing assistants is going very well. This week the students continue with the classroom portion of the course. Next week they will begin the clinical portion of the class. They will be completing the entire course at the end of May. The students may then begin orienting to a nursing assistant position in either Birch Haven Assisted Living or Baldwin Care Center after completing the class. The students will be able to take the exam to become certified when that testing becomes available.



This week I would like to express our gratitude to Lindsay Veenendall. She brought hand painted cards for all of the residents in the Baldwin Care Center. I knew she was a fabulous employee, but I had no idea she was an incredibly talented artist. I forgot to mention in a previous newsletter that Glenn Meyer had brought the tow trucks to celebrate his Mom's birthday. They really lit up the neighborhood! Everyone was treated to birthday treats also. Doris Hansen's daughter brought bagels from Buddy's Bagels. They were delicious. George Schlegel's family brought in donuts for the staff. We really appreciate all the goodies we have been receiving. I would also like to mention a milestone anniversary for Brian and Marlene Hurtgen. They have been married for 61 years! That is as long as I have been alive, so I recognize that is a very long time. Congratulations!

Eileen LaFavor, Administrator

