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Friday, May 22, 2020



Overlook remains COVID free

BY JASON BLEAU

VILLAGER CORRESPONDENT

CHARLTON – As of May 17, the town of Charlton had recorded 50 positive COVID-19 cases among residents; however, in the two months since the pandemic forced the community to join the rest of the nation in establishing social distancing protocols, not one positive case has come from the residents of The Overlook. The local retirement community serves more than 400 residents on Masonic Home Road. As of May 16, the CDC reported 342 nursing homes in Massachusetts with at least one positive COVID-19 case among patients or residents, but through diligence and careful preparation The Overlook has managed to remain off that list. Only two of the nearly 700 employees at The Overlook have been confirmed to have contracted the virus and according to Tameryn Campbell, the CEO of Masonic Health Systems and The Overlook, absolutely no residents have tested positive for COVID-19. Campbell said they have taken the health of their residents very seriously and calls their track record during the pandemic “no small achievement.” I am incredibly proud of the Overlook team and their heroic efforts during these unusual and difficult times. Their

tenacity, ingenuity, sheer grit, courage and true character have been undeniable in this crisis,” said Campbell. “I am deeply inspired by the way The Team has united and become closer, even in the midst of social distancing.”

After news of the COVID-19 pandemic sparked public concerns in early March, the Overlook shut down all but three access points to the Charlton campus and immediately implemented a screening process that included temperature checks for all employees before entering the building. In April, a checkpoint was set up in the main entryway further limiting access to the building and enhancing COVID-19 screening protocols. Those who failed the screening process were and still are prohibited from entering the property for the recommended standard 14-day waiting period to monitor for symptoms of the virus. The Overlook was also ahead of the curve in requiring face masks weeks before state and national leaders recommended the use of personal protection equipment on a regular basis.

Even though the Overlook has been at the forefront of the response to avoid the spread of the virus it was not an easy process. Campbell said there were learning curves and plenty of frustration as it seemed no one, including state and national leaders, was prepared for a pandemic like what has transpired.

“In spite of being well-prepared and positioned for an emergency and accustomed to responding to and caring for those with contagious conditions, nothing was in place to adequately prepare us or respond to the magnitude of the COVID-19 virus, the likes of which The Overlook, the state, the country and the world haven’t experienced in over 100 years. The lack of a unified or cohesive approach at local, state and federal levels, augmented by a broken supply chain and lack of available PPE to defend against the virus, wreaked havoc on our organization exacerbating an already untenable situation and placing our Team Members and Residents in the line of immediate danger,” Campbell said. “Bracing for COVID-19 is like holding back a tsunami with a piece of driftwood. It’s not if but when it will strike. We have been determined not to let down our guard in wrestling this invisible and highly invasive virus. Still, the unrelenting stress, long work hours, and uncertainty on multiple levels have taken a palpable toll on the Team.”

Even with all that in mind, Campbell said she is proud to say the Overlook has persevered through the challenges to keep its resident population COVID-19 free. Efforts have even been made to accommodate residents on site to ensure there is no need for them to leave the property including increasing its micro-store and offering produce, dairy products, bread, pet food, snacks and other food items for purchase on site while utilizing a point of sale software system rather than accepting physical cash. To further accommodate residents The Overlook even held a special Mother’s Day celebration where they gathered 350 photos with messages from family members, framed them and delivered them to the residents to make sure they felt some love from the outside world.

As Massachusetts prepares and rolls out plans to reopen Campbell said The Overlook will remain diligent and take what-ever measures they deem necessary to continue to preserve the health and well being of their residents until the pandemic is officially over.

“Our top priority, first and foremost, is the safety and security of our residents and team members,” said Campbell. “We continue to focus on what lies immediately in front of us. while also trying to remain one step ahead.”