

January 2021

Dear Eastern Star Community,

It has been a very productive and busy, yet uncertain time since I assumed the position of Administrator on July 1. Shortly after starting at NJESH, our new Director of Nursing Agustin "Gus" Guido III, BSN, RN, joined our clinical team. Since that time, he has been working diligently to get to know the staff, and improve the clinical services provided to our residents. He has already made a significant impact on improving the care and services and taking them to a new level.

Most of my efforts, and that of the department directors, has focused on COVID -19. Our paramount goal has been the safety and well-being of our residents, patients and staff. We have implemented multiple ways to communicate with residents and families including our VoiceFriend message system, weekly email updates, a monthly resident newsletter and FaceTime/Virtual visits. In addition to virtual visits, we established outdoor visitations in July, three days per week, where we observe these visits to ensure physical distancing is maintained. As the COVID 19 situation numbers lessened in our area, we implemented indoor visitation, per the governor's executive directive, 3 days per week by appointment.

By late November, prior to Thanksgiving, the positive cases in the community were quickly rising and we suspended indoor visitation a week prior to the governor's next order. This proactive approach has helped us mitigate the virus. Since 11/22/20, NJESH has had 3 positive staff cases and 3 positive resident cases. We have detected all of these asymptomatic cases through our weekly surveillance testing (more stringent than what is required in LTC) as well as use of rapid antigen testing supplies provided by the federal government. While we do not want any cases, we have fared much better than many neighboring facilities.

We are now planning for the COVID-19 vaccine clinics that will be held onsite in January 2021, with the first and second doses spaced apart by 3 weeks. Through the Pharmacy Partnership Program, CVS Omnicare will supply staff and vaccine during three onsite clinics currently being organized, Vaccines will be available to all residents and staff and are highly encouraged.

In early December, the NJ DOH spent a full day onsite conducting an Infection Prevention Survey. The inspectors looked at every aspect of resident care, meals, laundry, environmental cleaning procedures, supplies, observation and quarantine units, and staff adherence to proper infection control protocol. No deficiencies were cited, and we were found to be in full compliance with all of the regulations. This is a great accomplishment by our staff on all shifts. In the midst of this ongoing pandemic, of unprecedented nature, everyone exhibited all of the infection control knowledge and techniques they have been practicing. Kudos to our staff!

Another exciting thing to report is that in early November, our star rating by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services increased from a 4-Star to a 5-Star, overall rating! This increase in the rating was due primarily to all the hard work recruiting Registered Nurses to fill previously vacant positions. This rating is important to the facility as consumers routinely use these ratings to select a facility for their loved ones.

I would like to thank all of our Eastern Star members for their donations during the holidays as well as the Home's Birthday. Although, we cannot celebrate in the traditional fashion, your cards, gifts, and messages have really lifted the resident's spirits! We will continue to keep you posted regarding COVID-19 and ask that you keep all of us in your thoughts and prayers. Please know that we appreciate all that you do and your ongoing support of the Home.

I would like to extend best wishes for a healthy, safe and successful 2021!

Very truly yours,

Dr. Dawn Giakas
Administrator