



Massachusetts PATRIOT

Massachusetts Life Care Residents' Association (MLCRA) SUMMER 2020

The Residents' Advocate-Management's Friend www.mlcra.org

PANDEMIC LIFE IN MLCRA COMMUNITIES

by Lauren Hale, MLCRA President



As part of MLCRA's goal of communication among members, the MLCRA board put together a survey to learn how different retirement communities are handling the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Early this summer, we sent the survey to the presidents of the Resident Associations or Resident Councils in the sixteen MLCRA member communities. We are happy that all sixteen communities responded and we thank you for your participation.

*The survey covers many areas including **communication with management, visitor policy, dining, housekeeping, mail and other deliveries, and programs.***

There were many similarities in how we lived in our individual communities during the pandemic. There were also some differences. The survey responses may give you some new ideas that could be adapted in your own community.

We hope there will not be a "second wave" of the virus later this year but, if there is, we should be better prepared than we were the first time. We are also moving toward a "new normal". Some of what we learned during these past months may help us.

1) How has your management communicated with residents during the coronavirus pandemic? Please list all communications tools that have been used.

Management in all sixteen communities distributed paper notices to residents throughout the pandemic. Most communities also used email and phone calls. Eight communities used closed circuit TV to broadcast reports from members of their management as well as information about each day's programs and meal menus. Eight used Zoom for announcements and updates. Five posted information on their resident website.

2) Has your Resident Association or Resident Council been consulted about actions taken? If so, how?

Three Resident Association (RA) presidents responded that management did not consult with them. The other RA presidents reported various degrees of interaction.

In one community, the RA president and vice president met weekly in-person with management. In other communities, resident associations met regularly by Zoom or phone with management. Sometimes residents had to take the initiative to make sure their voices were heard. One RA president commented that "we intruded".

All facilities had to follow state guidelines. There were limited options about how to implement the guidelines. Resident associations used their meetings with management to discuss COVID procedures, make suggestions and ask questions.

Three RA presidents reported that their resident committees, such as dining, health, and programs met by Zoom. Residents in (*cont'd on next page*)

Survey (*cont'd from p. 1*)

one community formed a medical advisory group to help residents cope with the deluge of information at the beginning and to reinforce management recommendations.

3) Have residents been informed about COVID cases in independent living and other levels (assisted living or nursing home) in your community?

Fifteen communities responded that management reported the number of COVID cases to residents. Some put the information on their community's website.

Information about cases in nursing homes and assisted living was also available on the website of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Information (DPH) about independent living was not on the DPH site.

4) If residents or staff have tested positive, has your community done contact tracing?

Eleven responded that contact tracing was done in their community. Three said they did not know or were not sure how extensive contact tracing had been. One said that tracing was stopped because many residents felt it was an invasion of their privacy. One RA president answered that no resident or staff had tested positive.

5) Has your community prohibited non-essential visitors, including family?

Non-essential visitors have been prohibited in all communities. In most cases, only caregivers have been allowed to visit residents.

6) How have essential visitors and staff been screened upon entering the community?

All facilities require visitors to have their temperatures taken. Many also have a questionnaire about visitors' general health and

recent travel. Some ask visitors to use a hand sanitizer. Staff and visitors in one community are given stickers to put on their name tags. A different color sticker is used each day.

7) Were residents asked not to leave their apartments? Starting when?

Residents in fourteen communities were asked not to leave their apartments, starting between mid-March and early April. In communities that have cottages as well as apartments, cottage residents were usually less restricted.

8) If residents have been allowed to leave the community, how have they been screened upon their return?

All communities checked the temperature of residents who were returning to apartments after a short absence. In five communities, residents were asked to self-quarantine if they were gone overnight.

9) What areas of your community have been closed off to residents?

Most communities closed common areas such as meeting rooms, fitness centers, pools, workshops, and libraries. Some also closed mailrooms and stores. Others allowed residents access to mailrooms and stores but limited the number of residents who could be in those areas at one time. One community allowed residents to continue borrowing books from the library but stopped leaving daily newspapers on the reading table.

10) Were your dining rooms closed?

Dining rooms were closed in all sixteen communities.

11) Were meals delivered to your apartments or cottages? What meals were delivered? Breakfast? Lunch? Dinner? (*cont'd on p. 8*)

WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Board of Directors of MLCRA voted in three new members at the June 24, 2020 board meeting. Please join us in welcoming them to the MLCRA Board



Terry Barton moved to Lasell Village from Western Massachusetts almost two years ago. She taught math at Western New England College (now University) in Springfield, Massachusetts. While living in Southamptn, Massachusetts, she was a member of several town committees, a trustee of the Edwards Public Library, and a member of the board of the Smith College Student Aid Society. Terry chairs the Food Service Committee at Lasell Village and enjoys gardening and painting.



Allison Dolan moved to Brooksby Village in 2017. She worked for about twenty years at various positions at Eastman Kodak in Rochester NY, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology as the HR Director for the IT Department, and at Massachusetts General Hospital as a privacy project manager. At Brooksby Village, she is a co-leader of the Parkinson's Support Group, treasurer and membership list coordinator for the Garden Club, Garden Patch Administrator, and member of several crafting groups.



Caroline Jacobs, originally from Lincoln, England, has lived at the Commons in Lincoln, Massachusetts since 2010. She worked at Harvard University for more than thirty years, mostly at the Business School in a variety of positions, including Director of the Advanced Management Program. At the Commons, she is has been president of the Resident Council for the past two years and secretary for the previous six years. She has also been involved in Hospitality, Fitness and the Gardening clubs.

One couple's experience with the coronavirus

by Peter and Jean Stringham, Lasell Village

Around May 1st we came down with the COVID-19 virus. This began a very strange chapter in our forty-eight year marriage. We're sharing our experience here in order to help others to understand and try to avoid this new illness.



We live happily at Lasell Village in Newton. We have no idea how or where we got the virus. Only two people in independent living had it at that time, and we don't live

near them. We had been wearing masks and following guidelines of social distancing, hand washing etc. The good news is that we did not give the COVID-19 virus to anyone because we took all the recommended precautions.

At first we just felt some vague symptoms but when Peter got a fever and a slight cough he knew to get tested. That took two phone calls to doctors to arrange a time and location for the test. Twenty-four hours later we got the results; he tested positive and we were told to isolate ourselves, drink plenty of water and to get plenty of sleep. Jean came down with the same symptoms a day later. We were told to check our oxygen level and temperature daily.

All we could do for the first week was sleep. It felt as if someone glued us to our bed. We felt too weak to get out of bed. We drank water, got our fevers under control, and coughed. We tried to eat but we lost our sense of taste and smell so eating was less enjoyable. The first three days were scary because we didn't know if we were going to get better or worse. What direction would it take? Once we started to feel a little bit better, we were relieved to think we weren't going to

die or need to go to a hospital.

What helped us get through this for the past two months?

- Daily phone calls from our Wellness Center checking on our temperatures and oxygen level. They lent us an oximeter.
- Nutritious meals delivered to our door.
- Mail delivered.
- Trash picked up.
- Phone calls and cards from many residents so that we never felt alone.
- Knowing that we had a huge back up of help if we needed it.
- Communication, education and entertainment via closed circuit TV, computers and Zoom.

This experience taught us the value of living in a caring community and having loving friends and family. We appreciate everyone and everything that got us through this ordeal. We are grateful that we didn't get sicker and need to go to the hospital. We are thrilled that we are alive! Our hearts go out to those whose friends and family members have died.

We hope that people will continue to practice the guidelines to protect yourself and everyone you care about.

- Wear a mask
- Keep a safe distance
- Wash your hands

It may become tiresome but it is worth it. ●

Photo: Caroline Schastny,, Lasell Village

STAYING CONNECTED DURING THE PANDEMIC

by Eunice White, Orchard Cove

Normally, Orchard Cove offers residents a variety of programs throughout the week, ranging from lectures, vocal and dance programs, all of which are held in the Ballroom. When special programs are not available, films are shown.

During these unprecedented times of COVID-19, Orchard Cove offers programming on Channel 918, a closed-circuit Comcast channel which is available for viewing by anyone who has a television set. Each week, a flyer, "Upcoming Programs" is sent out to each resident listing the programs that will be shown each day.

Each day starts with a physical workout program offered by the Orchard Cove Fitness staff titled, for example, "Cardio Blast Workout", "Soup Can Workout 2.0" (where participants use soup cans from their own kitchens as weights), and other similar programs. At 3:30 p.m. each afternoon, there is an additional fitness program, such as Tai Chi or Chair Yoga. In addition, each day there is a variety of other offerings such as a documentary about Frank Lloyd Wright or Three Tenors in London conducted by James Levine, or a program such as BBC Presents: Tenor Lestyn Davies and Lute Player Elizabeth Kenny Live from London's Whitmore Hall.

There are a variety of Zoom programs (on computers and smart phones) such as "Race and Policing" with Attorney Jeff Robbins, Meditation with the Orchard Cove Rabbi, Torah Study, and Nature Notes with Sean Kent (from the local Audubon Society in Canton). Additionally, periodically, there is a book club meeting. All residents are emailed Zoom program information the day before each program. All of these events are listed in the flyer, "Upcoming Programs".

So, in sum, there are many offerings every day and there is just about something for everyone, certainly enough to keep us all engaged every day.●



THE WORLD THROUGH VITAL COLOR

In July residents of Sophia Snow Place in West Roxbury were treated to an exhibit of watercolors and pastels by resident artist Barbara Stahler-Sholk.

Barbara loves to paint. "I love the vibrant colors and I love to express my views and feelings through the painted medium. My political activism is also very important to me and I often like to express political themes in my art. My next project will be the illustration of a children's book..."

To see more of Barbara's work, visit her website at:

<http://www.barbsvitalcolor.com>

The Morning Show at Lasell Village

by Jean Stringham, Lasell Village

At Lasell Village we view a popular program for and by residents on our closed circuit television Channel 918. Starting in late March 2020, our Education Department and Activities Department organized a new series called “The Morning Show”. It airs live at 10 a.m. each week day and a taped version is rerun at 12:30 p.m.

The show has included over 60 episodes, mostly of residents or staff describing something of interest. Topics have included travels, literature, memoirs, history, concerts, and art exhibits. While the pandemic is keeping us at home, this show is a definite asset to help keep us interested and informed. We learn about topics but also each other’s interests and expertise. The shows are especially useful for new residents who moved in after everyone began wearing masks. “Oh, that’s what you look like” is a common statement after a resident appears on 918 without their mask.



Photo: Bob Gorn

Some examples of shows:

- Thirty residents took turns reading The Declaration of Independence on July 4th
- Concerts by our residents and also talented young adults starting off

in June. We learned about the use of high technology in the apparel industry.

The Morning Show begins with a photograph taken by one of our residents. Usually the image is from around our campus, especially near our pond and our garden area. These photographs are a bright and colorful way to start the day. (Two photos that appeared on the show accompany this article.)

Next we learn about the schedule for the day and what else is available. The president of Lasell Village speaks about once a week giving various updates and topics of interest. The Morning Show is both educational and fun. It builds a sense of community which is what most people seem to value about living in retirement communities. ●

their musical career.

- Travel photos from around the world
- A grandson in Vietnam spoke on Zoom about his work as a diplomat
- A resident physician updates us about the coronavirus

We also hear from faculty and staff at Lasell University. The University librarians showed us how to access books and movies online through Kanopy. A professor of Ethics, Diversity and Inclusion spoke following race riots in the country



Photo: Irene Cramer

Standing Up. Speaking Out *by Patricia Walsh, Sophia Snow Place*



Residents Joan Tobin and Carmen Dillon in front of Sophia Snow Place

During the past three months residents of Sophia Snow Place in West Roxbury have been making their voices heard on the important social issue of racial injustice by holding protests in front of their building on heavily-trafficked Centre Street.

Wearing masks, standing/sitting six feet apart, and carrying signs, they greeted the hundreds of cars heading down their busy street, and received enthusiastic responses from drivers who tooted their horns, cheered, and gave them thumbs up.

Residents also sent letters to legislators, including Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Governor Charlie Baker, and several news outlets.

“We have seen much historical and institutional racism during our lives, and we pray that we will see these necessary changes in our own lifetimes,” the letter read. “We want no more George Floyds to mourn. This is why we must act.”

Responding in a letter, Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins said, “Your sage wisdom, lived experience and valuable guidance will help push today’s movement forward, and force the change we seek.”

Last September the residents also rallied in support of the Global Climate Strike.

For pictures and coverage of the demonstrations, go to:

<https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2020/07/06/elderly-protesters-rally-against-police-brutality-its-been-going-on-for-so-long-it-has-to-stop>

Photos: Tori Bedford / WGBH News



Survey (*cont'd from p. 2*)

Three meals a day were provided for assisted living residents.

Four communities delivered one meal—dinner—to independent living residents each day. Five communities delivered two meals—either breakfast or lunch and then dinner. Independent living residents in six communities had the option of receiving breakfast, lunch and dinner. In some cases, this involved additional charges. In one community, dinner was delivered at midday seven days a week and lunch was delivered three days a week in the late afternoon.

Residents in one community, which had a cocktail lounge before the pandemic, could request wine or beer with dinner. Wine was delivered in unopened splits and beer in unopened bottles. In another community, wine was offered one evening a week.

12) Were housekeeping services suspended? Starting when?

Two communities did not suspend housekeeping services. Twelve suspended services in independent living units, beginning in mid-March or April. Two suspended services in independent living on May 1. Housekeeping continued and intensified in other parts of the community.

13) How was mail delivery handled in your community?

In eleven of the communities, U.S. mail was delivered to a central place. Staff sorted the mail and delivered it to residents' apartments. In four communities, residents picked up their mail as usual in the mail room. One community gave residents the choice of picking up their own mail or having staff deliver it to their apartments. One community required outgoing mail to be sealed only with tape and given to a receptionist.

14) How were other deliveries handled?

In all communities, deliveries for apartment residents were left at the front desk or other central place. Some facilities disinfected the outside of the packages. Staff then brought them to residents' apartments. In one community, residents could pick up their packages in the lobby.

15) Were residents discouraged from doing their own grocery shopping? If so, how were they able to get groceries?

Residents in twelve communities were told not to go grocery shopping. In the other four communities, some residents chose to do their own shopping and some did not.

Residents in all communities used delivery services such as Peapod and Instacart. Families could also bring groceries to a designated entrance, where they were usually sanitized and then delivered by staff to residents. Staff in some communities shopped for residents in local supermarkets. Seven communities had in-house stores, where residents could buy groceries

16) What activities or programs have been conducted during this period? We are very interested in how virtual programs have been used. We are also interested in any activities available for residents who do not use computers.

One community continued regular programs in the auditorium with a maximum of ten residents, distance seating and masks.

Nine of the sixteen communities used closed-circuit TV during the shutdown. Programs included fitness classes, meditation, lectures, concerts, and movies.

Twelve of the sixteen communities used Zoom for activities such as meetings, book groups, lectures, memoir writing, (*cont'd on next page*)

Survey (*cont'd from p. 8*)

and exercise classes. Daily Zoom programs were a resident initiative in one community. After all regular programs were cancelled, residents organized a daily Zoom meeting. Staff then facilitated other activities on Zoom.

Zoom and similar systems played an important role during the pandemic. All residents, however, do not have computers. One community arranged FaceTime visits for residents without electronic devices. Some communities distributed books, DVDs and puzzles to residents.

In two communities, strolling musicians roamed the buildings so that they could be heard in all apartments. The fitness instructor in one community held exercise classes on individual residential floors.

17) Are residents, staff and visitors required to wear masks?

Masks are required in all our communities.

18) Did residents make masks for other residents, staff or outside groups?

Residents in eleven communities made masks. Most were given away for free. Some were sold to benefit charity.

19) When did your community begin to restore some of the services suspended during the pandemic?

Communities began restoring some services with restrictions in June. Most have been following state guidance but lagging behind a couple of weeks.

Many communities began restoring housekeeping in June although some waited until July. Residents wearing masks and social

distancing were allowed back into libraries, mailrooms and meeting rooms. Limited salon services were restored at the request of residents with pandemic hair.

Exercise classes, concerts and other activities moved outside during June. One community has allowed outdoor dining for groups of four with social distancing. Indoor communal dining has not begun as of the end of July.

20) Other Comments

Several RA presidents complimented the efforts made by staff to adapt to new duties during the pandemic. Residents in one community took up a special collection to thank staff.

Some commented that the pandemic had brought home the importance of technology in keeping families and friends connected. They would like communities to do more to help residents to use technology and they want MLCRA to support that effort.

Some worried about the effect on residents of long-term isolation in their apartments or cottages. One of the attractions of retirement communities has been the opportunity to socialize with other residents. That personal contact was lost for several weeks during the pandemic. ●



Photo: Debbie Austin, Southgate.

MLCRA Board and Resident Associations

MLCRA represents thousands of older residents throughout Massachusetts. Its membership includes individual resident members and 15 Resident Associations.

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Sophia Snow Place
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Springhouse, Jamaica Plain

Sweetwood of Williamstown

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The Massachusetts Patriot

The Massachusetts Patriot is the quarterly newsletter of the Massachusetts Life Care Residents' Association (MLCRA). As the residents' voice, the Patriot covers news about Massachusetts retirement communities, monitors laws and regulations that affect residents of retirement communities, and serves as an advocate for residents' rights. Readers are encouraged to send letters or articles by email to:

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**Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association
MLCRA Membership Application for 2020 (Please print)**

Date_____

1st Member's Name _____New____ Renewal____

If a couple, 2nd Member's Name _____New____ Renewal____

Street_____Apt. #_____

City_____State_____ Zip Code_____

Email_____ Telephone_____

Retirement Community_____

1-year membership: \$15.00

Couple: \$25.00

5-year membership: \$75.00

Life Membership \$150.00

Total amount enclosed_____

Please make checks payable to MLCRA, and mail with this form to:

Jean Stringham
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130 Seminary Avenue, #114
Auburndale, MA 02466-2661

Or give them to your MLCRA Representative.

Thank you



Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association

Lauren Hale, MLCRA President
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NOTE: The date next to your name on the mailing label above indicates when your membership expires.

<p>Join MLCRA now to maintain your quality of life!</p>	<p>What is the Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association?</p> <p><i>The voice of residents of Continuing Care Retirement Communities</i></p> <p>The Massachusetts Life Care Residents Association (MLCRA), founded in 1998, is a state-wide non-profit volunteer organization. It represents individual members and resident associations located in non-profit and for-profit retirement communities known as Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) or Life Care Communities. These communities are also sometimes referred to as Life Plan Communities. They provide facilities and services for independent living and assisted living/skilled nursing care or both.</p> <p>The general purposes of MLCRA are communication, education, advocacy, and collaboration with members, resident associations and other organizations to support the well-being of seniors living in retirement communities. MLCRA is the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Continuing Care Residents Association (NaCCRA).</p> <p>MLCRA recognizes and respects the common interests of residents and management. It supports efforts to promote a mutually beneficial relationship. When the interests of management and residents occasionally diverge, MLCRA serves as the residents' advocate.</p>
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