

April 2009

Newsletter

Eckhart Tolle in his book "The Power of Now" shares this story:

A beggar had been sitting by the side of a road for over thirty years. One day a stranger walked by. "Spare some change?" mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old base-ball cap. "I have nothing to give you," said the stranger. Then he asked: "What's that you are sitting on?" "Nothing", replied the beggar. "Just an old box." I have been sitting on it for as long as I can remember." "Ever looked inside?" asked the stranger. "No", said the beggar. "What's the point? There's nothing in there." "Have a look inside," insisted the stranger. The beggar managed to pry open the box. With astonishment, disbelief, and elation, he saw that the box was filled with gold.

I am that stranger who has nothing to give you and who is telling you to look inside. Not inside any box, as in the story, but somewhere even closer; inside yourself.

Each of us holds the most wonderful treasures within us. I love to discover the mystery that is each person. I think this is why I so enjoy the company of the people who live in the homes we provide. It seems to me that as people get older, each person's essence comes to the fore. People become open and real. They inspire me and enrich my life.

I took a few days off and did some thinking over Easter. Easter is all about new life. I am reminded that there is new birth in our lives time after time – a beautiful flower, a new child in the family, an exquisite shell found on the beach, a touch, a gorgeous smile, autumn leaves, holding hands, a moment of feeling close to someone.

Thank you for sharing your loved ones with us. Each person is very precious and I am committed to ensuring that each person is cared for in a very loving way.

With love

Alison Hume

News:

Chris Booth

Chris is our operations manager. She is at Avonlea every week day. She is the person to talk with if you have any concerns at all. She is very approachable. Her office is very close to the nurses station in the rest home. Please ask staff to show you where her office is if you can't find her. Do not hesitate. She is at Avonlea to help you. Expect to hear from her every six weeks in a regular newsletter.



Concerns/Complaints

Enclosed please find our complaints process and a complaints form. Do not hesitate to use this if there is anything at all that you are unhappy with or concerned about. Family feedback is very important to us – it helps us to improve our service. If you are unable to resolve a complaint, or are still unhappy in any way, then consider emailing me. My email address is hume.ali@xtra.co.nz. I definitely want to know if there is something you are still concerned about. Advocacy Services can be very helpful. Do not hesitate to contact them if you are in need of some assistance with a complaint. Their phone number is (03) 3777501.

Family Survey

Thank you very much for completing the family survey recently. We have now collated the data collected. Results are enclosed.

Twenty two surveys were returned from Avonlea.

As a result of the survey, we are working on the following:

1. Diversional Therapy

We are very pleased to tell you that we now have the expertise and knowledge of Judy Cooper available for our Diversional Therapy team.

Judy has visited and met staff. She enjoyed meeting some of our residents also. She now coaches our diversional therapists once a fortnight offering exceptional skills and vast knowledge in diversional therapy. Judy Cooper led the work to establish the National Certificate in Diversional Therapy in New Zealand and is also the Manager of Motivational Therapies New Zealand.

We are honored to have her professional support and expertise on board.

2. Phone Calls

Several respondents said that sometimes the phone wasn't answered and that this was particularly a problem in the morning. I was surprised that the problem was at this time. It is the time when we have the greatest number of staff at work. The most senior caregiver in the rest home is the person who is to carry and answer the phone each day.

The operations manager is now checking her voice mail first thing in the morning, at lunchtime and before she leaves in the afternoon.

We now have a phone competency programme that all staff are undergoing. This includes how to answer the phone and how to transfer calls.

3. Laundry

It has come to my attention that staff have stopped using the personal laundry bags that were purchased for each resident. The use of these will be reinstated. We will be ensuring that each resident has a bag. This means that small underwear items and socks will be put straight into the bag when clothes are removed. They will be taken to the laundry in the bag, washed and dried while still in the bag. The bag will then be taken to the appropriate resident's room. Only at this point will the bag be opened. The clean clothing in the bag will then be folded and put into the drawers. This should attend to the problem of small items of clothing going missing or going into the wrong resident's drawers/wardrobe.

We have three staff members delegated to wash woolens at Avonlea. This should assist in having woolen clothing survive the wash. We do wash woolens in the washing machine on a special cycle. Please make sure that your loved one only has woolens that are machine washable. Any hand washing will need to be done at home.

4. Cleaning

Some people have commented that we have care staff doing cleaning. We do this for a reason. A person trained as a caregiver offers much flexibility. A cleaner cannot assist a resident who has fallen nearby. Someone employed as a cleaner may not respond to a resident with dementia in an appropriate way. We have caregivers working for additional time so that they can clean the rooms in the home in which they work. We like to include residents in this also. We try to run our small homes in a homely way. Unfortunately cleaning is part of running any home!

5. Maintenance

I have asked our operations manager, Chris Booth, to supervise our maintenance person. We have a person here at Avonlea each week to do maintenance.

6. Gardens/Grounds

Jims parents have been responsible for the Avonlea gardens for many years. Unfortunately his Mum hurt her knee at the end of last year. We now have regular help, each week, with the gardens. Murray Matheson is the person who now works on the gardens.

7. Privacy

The clinical manager has spoken to the registered nurses at their latest meeting and firmly reminded them that all conversations of a personal nature must occur in a private room. Often the best place for this is the resident's bedroom. A reminder about this has also gone out to all staff.

8. Security

Sometimes, particularly when they are unwell, a resident can become more difficult to manage. The way they are can change quickly. This is a symptom of their dementia. If you are ever worried about the safety of your loved one or yourself at Avonlea, please talk to Chris immediately. This is very important.

We have spent considerable money recently changing the front entrance way so that security is improved and so that the entrance way is welcoming. It has reduced our problems in this area. The back gateway is not to be used by visitors. We have done further training with contractors around the security of our residents and our gates. Please take great care when you are visiting. Please make sure that no-one exits through a secure door with you. Check with staff if you are unsure.

Family Support

People with close connections to a resident of Avonlea may find it helpful from time to time to share some of their struggles and joys with someone outside their immediate situation. Our family support person is available to you. She facilitates a monthly support group on the first Wednesday of the month at 11am, upstairs at the Home. Her name is Pam Barrett. I encourage you to be part of this.