Shirley Bethke, Gardens resident, receives her COVID-19 vaccination as part of the first inoculations at Episcopal Homes.

Photo Credit: Cindy Iverson
Dear Friends,

As I sit to write this letter, the thermometer shows a balmy -6 and a wind chill of 25 below zero predicted for tonight. Yet the sun is on my shoulders, the days are getting longer and I trust spring will arrive soon. I am approaching 2021 with this same optimism.

I am so pleased that by the time you read this, all of our residents and staff will have had the opportunity to be fully immunized. Residents stepped up without hesitation, and we are continuing to encourage all of our staff, family and friends to seek out trusted information and similarly come forward when it is your turn to be vaccinated. We know vaccination is the quickest way to getting back to being the open, vibrant community that we all cherish.

I look forward to things getting back to normal, when our dining rooms and pub and Otto Hall are buzzing with activity. We are all yearning for “normal.” By following requirements from MDH and the CDC, the day will arrive when we can come together, shake hands, give hugs and share stories again. As soon as it is safe to take the next steps, we will do so!

Episcopal Homes is now exploring how the innovations we embraced in 2020 might strengthen our services to older adults post-pandemic. How might technology continue to shape our connections? What new services added quickly in response to the pandemic may be sustained to help elders’ live safely at home? How might our spaces and programs be reconfigured to better accommodate clients with special needs, like Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s?

Despite the overwhelming challenges of 2020, I marvel at all the things we learned, at all we were able to accomplish and how your ongoing support makes me hopeful for this coming year. I look forward to working with all of you to bring out our best as we move into spring and this time of re-birth.

Sincerely,

Marvin Plakut
President and Chief Executive Officer

Episcopal Homes is pleased to share that residents at all 10 of our buildings including Becketwood Cooperative have now had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19. There was great excitement amongst all the residents about not only receiving their shots, but having so many people to look at lining up for the various clinics.

Employees at all locations also gratefully lined up to be immunized, spurred on in part by our internal “Victory Vaccine Over Covid-19” campaign. Essential and compassionate caregivers as well as a few volunteers were also inoculated as part of a “stand-by” list so as not...
COVID-19 Communications
Since the new year we have continued our regular communications to reach residents, families and staff in new ways. Regular communication methods for our COVID-19 status include:

• 2:00 p.m. Thursday, Marvin’s update video posted to our COVID-19 webpage, Facebook, YouTube and internal cable channel 3.1
• A Daily Case Dashboard including number of tests administered and current active cases on www.episcopalhomes.org/COVID-19
• A weekly video staff message from Marvin each Thursday
• A weekly written status update to families, residents, and staff each Friday
• Ongoing communications from building managers on changes that affect our elders

For the latest COVID-19 updates, including our case dashboard, please visit www.episcopalhomes.org/covid-19

Unexpected pieces of beauty
We are so grateful to the many, although they have been unable to physically come through our doors, that have sent hand and heart crafted items in their place. These tangible reminders that we are cared for have been so appreciated.

Deb Englehard is one of our fabulous volunteers who has spent hours designing, crafting, and assembling gorgeous, intricate cards for our residents. Each three dimensional card is designed in layers; think seven. For each of the batches of 90 cards, she spends an hour on each, painstakingly trying combinations in her home studio to get each card just right. Each one is a work of art.

In addition to cards, Deb has brightened our holidays with treat bags thoughtfully customized for each resident, including sugar and sugar free options, religious and non-religious themes and a variety of appealing designs. Deb credits her wife, her dedicated craft space, and her mother as essential to her process. As the daughter of a mother who lived in Assisted Living, Deb knows firsthand how important these unexpected pieces of beauty can be. During Covid, she used this process as a way to turn outward to bring joy and connection to us.

Written by Stacy Dunn, Volunteer Program Director

To get involved with volunteering at Episcopal Homes, email Stacy Dunn at sdunn@episcopalhomes.org

Terri, Iris Park Commons Housekeeping Supervisor, proudly signs her name after receiving her vaccination.

Victory vaccine over COVID-19

To waste any doses. With the low positivity rate in the county and with no reported resident cases of Covid for weeks, scheduled visits for residents have been taking place again. We still are practicing our very best masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene to keep our residents and staff as safe as possible.

This Episcopal Church Home resident was moved to tears on Valentine’s Day from Deb’s amazing handiwork. She shared Valentine’s Day is her absolute favorite, and she was overwhelmed by this kind gesture.
Shirley Bethke had no hesitation about getting her Covid shots. She had been listening to experts at the CDC and Dr. Fauci and knew it was necessary. “The number is something like 70 percent or more of us have to be immunized for life to get back to some kind of normal,” Shirley shared, “and I knew getting vaccinated was the right thing to do.”

She is hopeful that by this summer the Terrace Grill and Watters Pub will open up fully so she can meet friends and relatives there. Shirley, who now lives in the Gardens, previously lived at the Terrace so there are many folks from there she wishes she could visit.

Shirley is active at Episcopal Homes, serving as the President of the Resident Council and as a member of the Resident Board and looks forward to those re-starting. For now, she takes advantage of the exercise program, Bingo, and a horse race game they play on her floor.

While Shirley spent many years at the Great Northern Burlington Railroad as secretary and then staff assistant to the Vice President, she took some time away to teach classes in Spanish, bookkeeping and shorthand at Minnehaha Academy. She liked teaching, but the railroad lured her back with an offer she couldn’t refuse. She continued to teach in various ways, including on a three-month speaking tour for the railroad from Minneapolis to Seattle.

Shirley was an easy choice when Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) asked if they could interview a resident receiving their vaccination. She did great, even at 7 a.m. when morning host Cathy Wurzer called to interview her the day after her first shot. She spoke to her audience like a teacher; “Everyone should be serious about getting vaccinated. If you are hesitant or afraid, do your homework and talk with your doctor or some other medical person you trust.” We hope all will follow Shirley’s lead so she and her friends can enjoy the things they enjoy most.

Nothing would brighten Donna Nordstrom’s day more than if her work lifts your spirits. Donna has lived in Iris Park Commons (IPC) since June 2017, and she’s a prolific seamstress. From welcoming staff babies with handmade bunting and crib quilts, to gifting friends fabric “envelope” clutches and card holders, to creating over 75 face masks in 2020, Donna’s vibrant spirit shines through in the colorful material she uses and the generosity with which she shares the abundant yield of her creativity. “We all need something for an outlet. I love to give. It makes me feel good.”

Rather than allow the disappointment of last year’s canceled holiday market deter her, Donna continued to sew. She created her own pattern for over-the-shoulder bags out of leftover flannel, and produced more of her popular “walker bags,” unique and stylish pouches that attach to walkers as an alternative to purses. Many IPC residents bought bags for themselves, and purchased Donna’s embroidered dishtowels and plush Christmas trees to send to family as presents during a time when it was difficult to get out to shop.

Donna loves to keep busy working at her sewing machine in the sunniest part of her IPC apartment. You’d never guess she began to practice her hobby at high volumes just 10 years ago when she found a discarded sewing machine in the dumpster at her previous retirement community. Most of what she knows is self-taught and many of her patterns are original. Donna brings an energy of determined hopefulness and homegrown beauty to our community through her personality and her creations.

Written by Leah Welch, Chaplain & Spiritual Life Coordinator

Make Iris Park Commons your new home!

✅ Committed to CDC and state best practices
✅ Carefully planning fun activities with safety in mind
✅ Ready with experienced help, 24/7

Call 651-632-8858 for more information or contact Bethany at bburns@episcopalhomes.org
Community Addresses unanticipated needs

Our best laid plans for 2020 could never have predicted the reality we faced or how our community would step up to support one another. With your help, unrestricted gifts to the Foundation grew five-fold in 2020 over 2019, a year when contributions peaked during our 125th anniversary.

Your generosity allowed Episcopal Homes the flexibility to respond to unanticipated needs throughout its communities by establishing two new funds.

The **COVID Emergency Fund** enabled us to quickly adopt iPads, headphones, and microphones to support resident virtual visits with both loved ones and physicians. Enrichment staff across our communities were empowered with technology; distanced programming broadcast via new television channels or through Zoom let residents participate together, though apart. Your donations, complemented by grants from Bremer Foundation and the State of Minnesota, provided a lifeline as we worked in new ways to promote health and combat loneliness and isolation.

The **Employee Emergency Assistance Fund** allowed us to make small grants directly to support staff in crisis in 2020 with your gifts totaling $35,000. We are setting an annual goal of raising $50,000 to continue these efforts. The majority of support workers in long term care communities like Episcopal Homes earn $35,000 or less annually. This makes it challenging to build emergency savings. These grants will allow employees to navigate financial setbacks that can impact their family and work stability while they continue their dedicated daily care of our residents.

Your gifts to these funds, as well as our ongoing Creative Ventures, Active Living and Spiritual Life Funds, support the wellbeing of our elders and staff as we strive for hope and resilience in 2021.

**Stand By Me: Creating a Love Story**

Joey Clark, our friend from McPhail School of Music, became an unwitting matchmaker when he introduced the residents of Episcopal Homes to the dancers of Collide Theatrical Dance Company on a warm summer evening last year at a jazz concert held in the Episcopal Homes gardens. Residents fell hard for the dancers; social distancing is the only thing that could keep the budding sweethearts (six-feet) apart. The bewitched parties hoped for another rendezvous, but cupid was no match for Covid.

When all hope to kinder the relationship seemed lost, help arrived in the form of a Minnesota State Arts Board grant that Collide received. Collide contacted Kristin at Creative Ventures and the two collaborated to stoke the embers of love. Collide dancers partnered with Episcopal Home residents to discover their stories of love, heartache, romantic mishaps and joyful infatuation.

To be safe, all canoodling took place over Zoom. Shy at first, laughter, songs and stories were soon eagerly shared. Then our clever Collide dancers wove these tales of love into a magnificent dance they named “Stand By Me.” Virtual performances were aired February 12, 13 and 14 as a Valentine to all, resulting in viewings being extended until February 27.
Honoring by Giving

Thank you to all who honored family, friends and loved ones through a recent memorial or tribute gift. The listing below reflects gifts given from Oct. 1, 2020 – Dec. 31, 2020.

Gifts Given in Honor Of:
- Audrey Bremo
- Marion McCarthy
- Gloria K. Delano
- Tom and Kristen Delano
- Sine Duus
- Anna Duus
- Episcopal Church Home Staff
- Judith Moore Goff
- Episcopal Homes Staff
- Ellen and Peter Brown
- Nancy Foster
- Robert and Molly Campbell
- James Groener
- Byron and Pam Crouse
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- DeeDee Luger
- Rosa and Sean Lundy
- Jane Livingston
- Dusty Mairs
- Lisa Henry
- Nurses, Shabbazim, Cooks, & Social Workers
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- Mildred Olson
- Nancy Lededa
- Grady Shapiro
- Marijo and Gary Hickok
- Geralda Stanton
- Leah Harvey
- Shirley Stowe-Holland
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- Jean Wayne
- Helga Thurston
- Thomas Forrest Thurston
- Ellen Watters
- Kathleen Watters
- Peggy and Milton Wright
- Susan Armstrong
- Jean Wylie
- Mark and Margo Dickinson

Gifts Given in Memory Of:
- Irene Beatt
- Mark Beatt
- Pauline Brooks
- Gayle Reynolds and Paul Windschitl
- Larry Brown
- Wendy Brown
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- Charles Woelcke
- Richard and Susan+ Guion

We strive for accuracy when preparing these lists and apologize for any errors. We invite you to notify the Foundation office at 651-632-8854 or foundation@episcopalhomes.org to bring corrections to our attention.

Please support future Creative Ventures programming with your gift to the Episcopal Homes Foundation. Creative Ventures is funded entirely through your generosity and the generosity of our artist partnerships. https://bit.ly/3rXRAKX

Luckily, this is just the beginning of the romance. Stay tuned as Episcopal Home residents and Collide dancers are busy making plans for their next rendezvous!

Written by Kristin Aitchison, Creative Ventures Director

NeighborCare to the rescue!

Four NeighborCare clients received their vaccination at Episcopal Homes. NeighborCare provided their rides and Karen Vento, NeighborCare Director, sent them home with soup after their second shot. Karen received a call from Texas the next day from a client’s daughter saying her Mom very much appreciated the meal. She said Mom said it tasted great–thanks Episcopal Homes Culinary team—and that she was thrilled with the whole event. Kudos to Karen and her team for providing this neighborly support!

To learn more about NeighborCare services, www.episcopalhomes.org/neighborcare

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at HOME

At Home is a quarterly publication of Episcopal Homes. Episcopal Homes is a non-profit organization serving older adults by enriching lives and building community since 1894.

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Isabella House Memory Care coming soon to Episcopal Church Home

Kat Young came to Episcopal Homes in 2020 and is now part of the team transitioning Isabella House into skilled memory care. After joining the Episcopal Homes family in August, she had a brief role as a Life Enrichment Assistant at the Gardens before moving to Memory Care Coordinator at the Episcopal Church Home. "It's been an exciting process to re-imagine the household as a fully-fledged memory care community," says Kat and she looks forward to using her music background and “out of the box” programming approach to create a community that engages and excites its residents every day. The new Isabella House will be updated with dementia-specific aesthetics, safety measures, and specially-trained staff. Engagement programs will be tailored to specifically target the dimensions of wellness and personalized needs of Isabella’s elders, including access to plants, animals, regular music programs, dementia-specific intellectual programming, and more. “I’m so excited for our elders to be immersed in a space built especially for them, and can’t wait to share it with all of you,” shared Kat.

Kinder Village is excited to announce it has earned a Parent Aware Four-Star Rating! This hard-earned honor demonstrates Kinder Village uses school readiness best practices to ensure our kids are prepared for kindergarten. Learn more about Kinder Village at www.KinderVillage.org or contact Kristen Tonda for more information at 651-272-4974.