



Bob enjoying a game of pool



Mary Ann in the dining hall

Stepping Forward Back to Normal

Some eight months ago, we were introduced to an unwelcomed, uninvited visitor that changed our way of life: COVID-19. Today, this novel coronavirus seems no longer novel, no longer new. It's old and tiresome. Masks, distancing, monitoring—we know the drill.

At the time this newsletter was prepared our Residents had been COVID free for months and our most recent round of testing had revealed no new cases among our staff. Since then, we have had two positive staff cases and backtracked on group gatherings. We remain vigilant and would like to share with you some Residents' thoughts about the last months.

Fran S. is one of many Residents who was missing opportunities to join others to do the various daily and monthly activities. For her, the activities themselves were less important than the chance for conversation and camaraderie. "Before this coronavirus, I'd meet friends for lunch," she explains, "and we'd gather and talk."

Earlier in the year, for four months,



Fran sporting her Cubs gear

Residents had to eat all meals in their rooms. In July, the dining room finally reopened. Although they must still sit only one person to a table, Residents are delighted to be together again—none more so than Fran. Now that she can make the trip down the hall each day, she is able to catch up with friends.

When reviewing the past several months, Bob K. remarks that "God is good and takes care of all my needs." He sees coming to St. Mary's as an act of Providence. A teacher over the years, he started a Bible study class here.

COVID may have initially slowed down activities, but it has not slowed down the ever-ebullient Bob, who is back to delivering lectures on Tuesdays and teaching one of our staff English as a second language.

For Mary Ann H., our steps toward normal activity have meant more actual steps. After a hospitalization in the spring, she was unable to walk. But through intense physical therapy, she can now walk around without support. Exercising on the stationary bikes is one of her favorite activities. "I have to get in my exercise," she says. She wants to be ready to wave to her family when they have pizza—her guilty pleasure—delivered to the front desk.

"We are living in a moment of shared history," Bob observes. "For my father's generation, it was WWII; for my generation, Vietnam; for a younger generation, 9/11." He adds, "Soon we'll be talking about before COVID-19 and after COVID-19."

We're not there yet, but we're stepping forward back to normal.

Volunteering at a Distance but Staying Close

St. Mary's Home has always been blessed to have many selfless individuals volunteer their time to lend a hand. They come to support various activities, take on innumerable tasks, and share their hearty spirit.

Unfortunately, once Coronavirus showed up, we immediately closed our doors to visitors, families, and friends. But thanks to our new Volunteer Coordinator Tayler Liedke, following updated health guidelines, we have been able to re-engage our eager helpers.

While our volunteers were unable to join us physically over the past several months, we made sure to keep them informed and involved from a distance. One of Tayler's goals was to check in with volunteers regularly, as she knew they missed us just as much as we missed them.

Our good news is we have been able to welcome back several volunteers deemed "essential," and all of them

agreed to undergo the same weekly COVID testing that our staff must undergo.

Since coming to St. Mary's, Tayler has been devising activities that allow volunteers to participate actively and safely. They have turned their hands to such tasks as fixing up furniture for donations, peeling vegetables outdoors, sewing nametags in clothes, and delivering the odd piece of scrap metal to be recycled.

While these volunteers have been working at a few arms' length, others have been operating virtually to help.

First-year law students from DePaul University created video performances to share favorite short stories, poems, and songs –much to the delight of our Residents. Students majoring in exercise science at Loyola University Chicago developed short videos to help our seniors with special seated exercises. Students at St. Josaphat School are starting a pen pal letter



Sheffield Neighborhood Association grilling lunch for the entire Home



Buddy's Helpers dropping off breakfast writing project with our Residents.

We appreciate the contributions of so many caring individuals, who are volunteering at a distance but remaining close to us. We are blessed.

Thankful Smiles Behind the Masks

Changes the coronavirus pandemic has brought are many. But as a Home, Residents, Staff, and Little Sisters have come together as a caring community, together stronger.

We are thankful for our Residents. They prepared handwritten notes to express their gratitude to our entire staff, who were surprised by and appreciative of such a loving gesture.

We are thankful for the incremental steps toward more normal activity. Starting in midsummer and throughout the days of nice weather, our Residents began reuniting with their loved ones –albeit at a safe distance outside and protected by face masks.

We are thankful activities continue to ramp up, with songs in our garden, visits to our ice cream



shop, Bible study, and more. This October, Residents are carving out time for Halloween fun, which features pumpkin decorating, a costume contest, and spirited games

of bingo. They're sure to be goblin wickedly delicious "Spooky Snacks" from the traveling BOOze cart. The month also delivers the new "Traveling Nail Salon" to make the rounds, offering manicures, hand massages, and parlor chitchat. And November brings Thanksgiving and a cornucopia of events, including crafting of the Gratitude Tree and a slice of pumpkin pie – or two!

Most important, we are thankful so many of you have been so generous with your financial gifts, donations of much-needed supplies, and prayers. Your support enables us not only to provide the best care to our seniors, but to rise up to meet the challenges of this relentless pandemic.

Behind our masks are many thankful smiles.

Who's That?

Given that all staff must wear a mask throughout the day, one could be forgiven for not realizing many new faces are around St. Mary's. Since the summer, we have welcomed 29 new essential workers as additions to our family, each one dedicated to serving our Residents with personalized care, respect, and love.

"The new hires, and the gifts they bring," says Mother Julie, "remind us that even situations that seem so dark can, like the death of Jesus, be the source of new life." She adds, "We never would have planned on so many changes among our staff, but they are now part of charting out a new future, and we thank God for them."

Our new facilities manager Marc Desciscio hails from Omaha, where he earned his MCSE certification from Creighton University. He brings with him a career of nearly two decades in real estate development and facility management, with experience in new commercial construction and rehab projects. He can be seen walking about the Home with energy and purpose, often being summoned to a new task mid-stride.

With an extensive background in running activities in memory care settings, Maggie Olofson takes on the new position of Life Enrichment Coordinator. With a B.S. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism from the University of Illinois, she is currently working on an M.S. in Recreation Therapy from Indiana University. Maggie is hard at work developing engaging and rewarding activities, all with an eye toward following health guidelines –and having fun!

Taylor Liedke joins us as the new Volunteer Coordinator. After earning her degree in Elementary Education from the University of Delaware, she moved to Chicago to complete a year of service with Mercy Home for Boys and Girls. She then served as Volunteer Program Director at Franciscan Outreach, where she ran a long-term program for young adults from Germany.

New masked faces can also be seen in Administration, Nursing, Housekeeping, and more, including Development, whose staff stand ready to help you support the Little Sisters.



Marc in a rare moment of stillness



Maggie planning exciting activities for our Residents



Taylor coordinating with our volunteers

MOTHER'S MESSAGE



On a morning news program I heard in early October, the anchors asked the celebrity guest, "How is the staying at home going?" The guest answered, "Not well!" The anchors thanked her for what they said was the most honest answer they had received in six months! All of us are still figuring things out as we go along. We wonder what will come tomorrow, and yet we aren't always sure what to do today.

Jeanne Jugan grew up in very uncertain times, too, in the aftermath of the French Revolution. She had to learn how to adapt to what life presented and find the best way to respond. Our Residents, over the course of their long lives, have had many experiences that caused them to stretch and grow, too. We have been amazed over the past months to see how they have responded to the changes in lifestyle imposed by COVID. Life goes on, just in a new way. Their resilience inspires us to work hard to accept and adapt to this new world in which we are living, so that we may continue to build the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We thank God for the gift of our Residents, St. Jeanne Jugan, and all of you who help us continue our mission of service today. God bless you!

God bless you.

Mother Julie

WAYS TO GIVE

Recurring Gifts: If you donate online, you can choose to schedule donations to repeat automatically at a frequency that works best for you.

Matching Gift: To make your donation go even further, check to see if your employer has a matching gift program.

AmazonSmile: Sign up for AmazonSmile and designate Little Sisters of the Poor of Chicago as your charity, and a portion of your purchases will be donated to us.

Gifts of Stocks, Bonds, and Other Contact dvchicago@littlesistersofthepoor.org for information on how to make a transfer.

Planned Giving: Consider leaving a legacy of providing for the elderly by choosing Little Sisters of the Poor of Chicago as a beneficiary of your will or trust.

Honorariums or Memorials: Give a donation to honor a special person in your life, to recognize a significant achievement or anniversary, or to remember a loved one.

For more information, contact
dvchicago@littlesistersofthepoor.org



For 2020, we had to cancel our golf outing, our most important fundraiser.

So we ask for your support.

Please consider a generous gift at this time.

We look forward to seeing you, God willing, at Habits on the Green next summer!



Practice the 3 W's with the Little Sisters
Wear your mask ~ **W**ash your hands ~ **W**atch your distance
~ Keeping our family and yours healthy ~