

REPORT FROM LUTHERAN SENIORLIFE FEBRUARY 2021

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many unprecedented challenges to everyone, creating a crisis atmosphere for all of those committed to providing life-sustaining services to their clientele, the creative responses to those circumstances are what Lutheran SeniorLife believes defined this past year.

In fact, “Connecting Through Crisis” was adopted as the theme for Lutheran SeniorLife’s annual report to supporters, and it was inspired by the seemingly endless creative initiatives by staff to meet the needs of populations served.

The mission statement for Lutheran SeniorLife revolves around the Gospel message from the Book of John chapter 10, where Christ promises to provide for life, and do so abundantly. Hence the driving force behind every goal of Lutheran SeniorLife is to provide **Abundant Life**® opportunities.

Those efforts took on a myriad of forms, yet the appreciation expressed by all showed the value of working hard to make certain that those opportunities took place. Despite the challenges, more than 14,000 people were served through Lutheran SeniorLife programs and services during the past year.

Lutheran SeniorLife recognizes that many who need our services may be anxious about entering care programs during a pandemic. Lutheran SeniorLife initiated the “Wear Wash Watch” web page to assure individuals that the organization remains a trusted partner for care – especially during a pandemic.

Borrowing the *www* acronym from the worldwide web, wearwashwatch.org became one of the most frequently visited pages on the Lutheran SeniorLife website. It sends the message that Lutheran SeniorLife continues to be at the forefront of creating a safe environment, and also provides updated information on the latest health information, vaccines and related and relevant news. And while safety measures achieved new heights this past year, Lutheran SeniorLife still placed a high priority on providing **Abundant Life**® opportunities, and gained public recognition for its quality of service.

The NRC, a national health-care intelligence firm, recognized Lutheran SeniorLife with its 2020 Customer Approved Award.

Passavant Community, a Life Plan community in Zelienople, Pa., that includes a continuum of all levels of care and services, was recognized as a top performer in US News & World Report’s list of Best Nursing Homes. More than 15,000 facilities nationwide were evaluated.

For the tenth consecutive year, VNA (Visiting Nursing Association, Western Pennsylvania) was voted the #1 provider for home health care by readers of the *Butler Eagle*, a newspaper serving the region. Despite the pandemic, VNA served an average of more than 700 people daily.

At St. John Community, a Life Plan community of Lutheran SeniorLife in Mars, Pa., two RoseCrest employees received awards by the Pennsylvania Assisted Living Association. In fact, these employees represent half of only four awardees honored statewide.

RoseCrest, part of the St. John continuum, offers assisted living with memory support, the first facility in Pennsylvania that was certified several years ago to provide those services. St. John Community also

includes St. John Specialty Care Center, which offers skilled and assisted living and personal care, and Overbrook Pointe, a 51-unit independent-living apartment community.

Lutheran SeniorLife is in partnership with several local hospitals to provide LIFE (Living Independence for the Elderly) services at four locations in western Pennsylvania: LIFE Beaver County and LIFE Lawrence County, in partnership with Heritage Valley Health System; LIFE Butler County, in partnership with Butler Health System; and LIFE Armstrong County in partnership with Armstrong County Memorial Hospital (ACMH). Pennsylvania residents who are eligible for skilled nursing and participants in the Medicaid program are eligible for LIFE services at no charge. The program is state funded.

These activity centers, as well as the Valley Care Adult Day Center in Ambridge, Pa., were forced to close for several months due to elevated infection rates in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler and Lawrence counties. However, the staff were incredibly creative with ensuring that program participants were safe, healthy and connected. Calls, care packages and more than 30,000 meals were delivered to frail seniors at home in these counties.

Lutheran SeniorLife also operates a Health & Wellness Ministry through the Southwestern Pa. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ministry office is located at the same site as the synod office.

While the annual Health & Wellness Ministry gathering was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, a blessing video, which included a message from Bishop Kurt Kusserow, was produced to offer encouragement and appreciation to clergy and volunteers who participate in health and wellness-related activities throughout the synod. Ministry activities continued at more than 30 congregations this past year, driven by the creativity and concern of congregational leadership and volunteers.

The SilverSmart™ technology program at Lutheran SeniorLife strives to identify the most state-of-the-art technology to help seniors live life to the fullest.

While often times this program identifies new technology and implements it well before it is popular on the market, this year it was the coordination of “virtual visits” using already existing technology for residents and families during the peak of the COVID-19 restrictions that was most appreciated by staff and residents. Though viewing family members on a screen, through a window or across the length of a banquet table never quite replaced the joy of face-to-face visits or real-time hugs, these visits became a very important highlight for family members during the past year.

And as “social distancing” became an often-used phrase during the pandemic, Lutheran SeniorLife emphasized that while *physical* distancing was a critical component of preventing the spread of COVID-19, *social* distancing needed to be minimized. Social interaction and the support of alternative visiting options provided the best support that could be offered during difficult circumstances.

Whether that was through a virtual video interaction, programs presented online or via other electronic means or the use of e-communications, the goal was to help participants stay socially connected during the necessary time of limiting physical interactions.

This was all being done in the midst of PPE (personal protective equipment) shortages, safety precautions, adjusted business programs, etc.

Lutheran SeniorLife honored volunteers through virtual presentations. We thanked employees with appreciation meals. And the community supported those efforts through financial and related contributions. One example: more than 8,000 facemasks were donated, most of which were hand-made by those who support us, during a time when they were difficult to obtain.

Despite the pandemic, the leadership of Lutheran SeniorLife envisions new and exciting options to continue to provide **Abundant Life**[®] opportunities for all those it touches through its continuum.

While this report details many of our recent milestones and achievements, it is not exhaustive. To receive the latest news and updates on services, be sure to follow us on Facebook (@LutheranSeniorLifePA) and visit our website at lutheranseniorlife.org.

This report is an opportunity to remind all of you – our friends and partners – that the aforementioned accomplishments are a direct result of your efforts to help us succeed. Your prayers and your gifts of time, talent and treasure impact the thousands of individuals who need our programs and services. We are humbled and grateful for your support and partnership.

And during a year that included the special challenges of a global pandemic, all of that support has never been so important nor more appreciated.

As we reflect with gratitude on how He has provided, we also look to the future, to identifying new and innovative ways to ensure that everyone with whom we connect – those we serve and those who serve – will experience their own **Abundant Life**[®].