



October 14, 2021

Dear Residents, Family and Friends:

Welcome Nursing Home has been highlighted often by the media throughout this pandemic. You may find this unusual – we are a single facility, owned and operated for 76 years by the same family in a small rural town, representing a small percentage of the total number of residents served in long term care facilities across the state of Ohio. Why are we featured? We are in this unique position because our fierce leader, Jill Herron, Owner-Administrator, has served as the President of the Ohio Health Care Association over the last year and half. OHCA was founded in 1946 to meet the needs of the state's growing number of long-term care supports, services, and professionals, which today totals more than 100,000 exceptional men and women who care for Ohio's most frail and vulnerable citizens. The Ohio Health Care Association has always been regarded as a leader in long-term care. In 1949, OHCA and a group of nursing facility providers in Indiana joined to form the American Health Care Association (AHCA), which now serves nursing facilities in all 50 states through its state health care associations. AHCA is the recognized, national voice for the long-term care profession and OHCA is pleased to be the only charter affiliate of AHCA. The Ohio Health Care Association is one voice that represents a broad spectrum of long-term care providers. Following in our fathers' footsteps, Jill has volunteered and selflessly served the membership for over 12 years and was elected President, her term beginning in May of 2020.

Her leadership across the state, and in our building has allowed our story to be shared throughout the pandemic. In her elected role, she has been the voice of a thousand members, and we are very proud. Some of you may have seen the clip from 19 Action News that was featured on Monday October 11, 2021 (<https://www.cleveland19.com/video/2021/10/12/could-staffing-shortage-nursing-homes-hit-crisis-level-with-vaccine-mandate-2/?outputType=apps>). To offer perspective, the interview was given over a week prior to its airing, and many of the clips shared focused specifically on Welcome, although the discussion covered the concerns of the Healthcare Industry as a whole.

We want to assure our residents and families, that although we do share these staffing concerns with our other Health Care providers, we are working diligently on a plan to prevent a staffing crisis in our facility. Our priority is and will remain to be a center of excellence to provide for wellness of body, mind and spirit. Our leadership team has taken action in many ways to prepare for a worst-case scenario since the specifics of the vaccination mandate are still unknown. We have partnered with local educational institutions to help us fast track new employees to become State tested. We have embraced the new role of temporary STNA to increase the access to direct care employees. In our 76 years of service we have never resorted to utilizing staffing agencies to provide care to our residents. We now have contracts signed to provide us this leverage if necessary, including one that is dedicated to

providing long term staffing placements. We have partnered in a new way with HealthPro-Heritage, our rehabilitation company to provide additional direct care time to residents. Our Human Resource Department has created new career options to support our direct care staff by alleviating tasks not requiring certified skills. The use of social media platforms for job opportunities has already increased our applicant pool. We are designing an alternate schedule that utilizes 12 hour shifts to decrease the number of slots to fill, and we have already embraced creative scheduling to support our team and their work/life balance. We have discussed the potential of freezing new admissions to limit the overall census to maintain our staffing ratios at what we feel are acceptable and manageable levels. These, and many other tactics will be implemented as necessary as part of our Emergency Staffing Operations Plan. We plan and prepare for the worst and pray for the best.

This pandemic has presented us with challenges we could have never conjured. Our team has handled each and every one of them with strength, grace, and courage. I expect none the less with this new concern. I appreciate your continued faith in our team. Our Healthcare Hero's have servant hearts, the desire to give, love and serve our residents. We will continue to be "People Helping People" despite the barriers we face. Please feel free to reach out if you have questions or concerns. We strongly believe transparent discussions and communication deepens trust and strengthens relationships.

Stay Well,

Heidi J. W. Freas MS OTR/L

Director of Quality Assurance