



Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.

CONNECTION



Summer 2020, Vol 4, Issue 1

A Message from Our CEO

Meet Our Medical Team

Participant Spotlight

The Challenge of
Social Distancing

Dealing with COVID-19



*Kacey Douglas, AGNP and
Sarah Simpson FNP-BC at
our Alternative Care Site*

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Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.

Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. Connection is a free publication for all members of the communities we serve.

Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E., a nonprofit organization, has four convenient locations. To find out more about our nonprofit mission and services to the community use the contact information below:

Kalamazoo Location:

445 West Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Battle Creek Location:

200 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 103, Battle Creek, MI 49017

Portage Location:

800 East Milham Avenue, Portage, MI 49002

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Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.'s **Website** has a fresh new look! Visit us online today at:
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Surviving the Pandemic

A Message from Laura Ferrara,
Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. CEO



It seems that COVID-19 has consumed the news outlets and overwhelmed our thoughts over the past few months. As a healthcare organization, our attention has definitely been absorbed in this subject matter as we have taken creative steps to continue to care for those who have been entrusted to our organization.

I am very happy to report that on a national level there are considerably fewer COVID cases within the PACE program as compared to those in the same age category outside the PACE model of care. This speaks to the value of a model like ours that is home based and that is not fee for service based, but one in which we have the flexibility of meeting the participant where he or she has the greatest need and in the best way possible.

Statistically, within our region, PACE organizations experienced a death rate of less than 2% of COVID positive cases compared to the average Michigan nursing home death rate of nearly 27% of COVID positive cases.

I believe the reason for this significant difference is based on several factors including the reduction of exposure to COVID because PACE participants have chosen to age in their own home instead of a community residential environment where they would be more susceptible. Additionally, we have taken appropriate steps to keep their exposure

to a minimum which speaks to the flexibility and adaptability of the PACE model of care. When the way we normally provide care was no longer an option because of the pandemic, we creatively have given our participants the flexibility to receive the care they needed for COVID in the way they wanted.

Within this issue of our newsletter we will be exploring the efforts made by our local PACE organization to protect our participants from this virus which has contributed to considerably fewer cases per capita than the national or state average. I am a personal believer that the human spirit will always persevere and rise above trauma and catastrophe. There have been many examples of this throughout our organization as we faced the COVID-19 pandemic with the unique model of care provided by the PACE program. Because we practice a participant-first model of care, everything we are doing is centered around protecting our participants who happen to be the most vulnerable during this novel virus outbreak.

Throughout these pages we are very proud to share with you the challenges, accomplishments, and heroic efforts of our staff at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. over the past few months. Thank you for your continued support of our organization as we care for the medically complex older adults within the communities we serve. ■

Within this issue of our newsletter we will be exploring the efforts made by our local PACE organization to protect our participants from this virus which has contributed to considerably fewer cases per capita than the national or state average.

Meet Our Medical Team



**Elizabeth Warner,
MD, FACP,® CPE**

Medical Director

Elizabeth Warner, MD, FACP,® CPE, began her role as Medical Director at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. in December of 2019,

bringing a wealth of experience to the organization. A graduate of the University of Minnesota and Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, Dr. Warner completed her Internal Medicine Residency at the Kalamazoo Center of Medical Studies. Upon completion of her residency, she was a Primary Care Internist at Bronson Internal Medicine Oshtemo and Bronson Medical Group where she served for twelve years providing longitudinal comprehensive care to a 1,400 patient panel.

In her eighteen years with Bronson, she also served in leadership capacities as Primary Care Medical Director for Bronson Healthcare Group; Medical Director, Continuous Improvement Support, for the Bronson Healthcare System, and clinically as an internist with Advanced Illness Management at Bronson Methodist Hospital and at Bronson Commons, a skilled nursing facility.

In addition to her current responsibilities, she is an Associate Professor at the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine; Facilitator for the Cleveland Clinic R.E.D.E. to Communicate® courses; Faculty Member at Catalysis, a non-profit organization focused on educational programs and resources designed to transform healthcare; Faculty Member at the College of Engineering, NEXUS, University of Michigan; and is the Founder and President of Warner Well Being LLC, with a mission to accelerate change efforts and empower learners to transform healthcare systems into ones which are joyous, sustainable, and effective for all.

Dr. Warner is certified through the American Board of Internal Medicine, is a member of the American

Association of Physician Leaders® (AAPL) and the American College of Physicians® (ACP). She was elected into Fellowship of the ACP (FACP®) in 2009, a distinction earned from colleagues who recognize the recipient's accomplishments and achievements over and above the practice of medicine, and received her Certified Physician Executive (CPE) designation through the American Association of Physician Leadership® (AAPL). Dr. Warner has been a speaker and facilitator at several national and regional conferences.



Peter D. Schmidt, MD

Clinical Physician

Peter D. Schmidt, MD, is a clinical physician at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. Joining the medical provider team in September of 2018, Dr. Schmidt began his medical career in private practice in Melbourne Florida and has also served as Medical Director at Citrus Memorial Health Foundation Inc. as well as HCA Physician Services, both in Citrus Springs, Florida. Prior to his current position, he practiced at Bellin Health Iron Mountain and the Dickinson County Hospital, both in Ironwood, Michigan. Dr. Schmidt received his Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the University of Toledo and his Doctor of Medicine Degree from the Medical College of Ohio. He fulfilled his Family Practice Residency at Saint Vincent's Medical Center in Jacksonville, Florida. He is licensed to practice medicine in Florida and Michigan and has been Board Certified through the American Board of Family Medicine since 1997. Dr. Schmidt specializes in geriatric medicine, smoking cessation, and minor surgery.



David Halley, MD

Clinical Physician

David Halley, MD, is a clinical physician at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. Joining the medical provider team in February of 2019, Dr. Halley began his medical

career in 1998 as a Family Physician augmentation to the USS Bataan with Fleet Surgical Team TWO based in Norfolk, Virginia. He also served as Staff Family Physician at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, California. Immediately prior to his current position, he was a Physician at Borgess Family Medicine for over fifteen years, serving as Physician Leader for much of his tenure there.

A graduate of Michigan State University, he earned his Bachelor of Science with honor in Physiology and his Doctorate of Medicine from the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. He also completed Family Practice Residency at Michigan State University Kalamazoo Center for Medicine Studies. Dr. Halley is Board Certified through the American Board of Family Practice and is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians as well as the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians.



Wendell Diggs, PA

Physician Assistant

Wendell L. Diggs, PA-C, joined the clinical team in 2008 and serves as a Physician Assistant at Senior Care Partners in Battle Creek. Earning his undergraduate

degree from Western Michigan University in Medicine, Wendell went on to become certified as a Physician Assistant (PA-C) through the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). Receiving further training in the science of acupuncture, he, in addition to his PA-C responsibilities, is the resident acupuncturist for Senior Care Partners participants both in Battle Creek and Kalamazoo.

Wendell is a member of the American Academy of Physician Assistants as well as the Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants. He also has a longstanding relationship with the Western Michigan University Physician Assistant program serving as a Clinical Preceptor since 1997. Additionally, Wendell is involved in onsite training of first and second-year medical students from the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine through the Longitudinal Clinical Experience program as well as training the Internal Medicine, Med-Peds, and Family Practice residents doing their geriatric rotations at Senior Care Partners.



Julie Noteboom, MSN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner

Julie Noteboom, MSN, FNP-BC, joined the medical team at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. in April of 2020 as a Nurse Practitioner in the Portage center where she

provides primary medical care, evaluating and treating participants with ongoing and episodic illnesses.

Beginning her career as a Registered Nurse on the Cardiac Floor of Bronson Methodist Hospital, Julie also has extensive experience as a Field Nurse with Visiting Nurse Association of Southwest Michigan and as a Nursing Supervisor at Fontbonne Manor. In 2003 she began serving as a Nurse Practitioner at Borgess Extended Care where she cared for residents of the skilled nursing and assisted living facilities as well as to those residing in independent apartments, providing oversight and medical management of acute and chronic health conditions.

Educationally, Julie received her Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Michigan and studied nursing at the University of New Mexico and Kalamazoo Valley Community College where she received an Associate Degree in Nursing. She earned her Master of Science in Nursing from Grand Valley State University and is a Family Nurse Practitioner – Board Certified (FNP-BC) through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (AANC), a subsidiary of the American Nurses Association. Additionally, she is a member of the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP).



**Kacey Douglas,
MSN, AGNP, CWCN**

Adult Geriatric Nurse Practitioner

Kacey Douglas, MSN, AGNP, CWCN, serves as an Adult Geriatric Nurse Practitioner as well as a Certified Wound Care Nurse

in Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.'s Kalamazoo and Battle Creek clinics. Joining Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. in 2014 as a clinical nurse, she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from Shepherd University and also obtained advanced

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Meet Our Team – continued from previous page

training through the WebWOC Certified Wound Care Nurse program where she became a Certified Wound Care Nurse. She is also a graduate of Maryville University where she earned her Master of Science Degree in Nursing.

Kacey has extensive experience in skin and wound care, developing and implementing organization-wide skin and wound care standards and protocols at two facilities. She also has a strong background working with medically complex older adults as well as serving the opposite end of the age spectrum as a Pediatric Sexual Assault Examiner at the Medical University of South Carolina Department of Violence Intervention and Prevention as well as the YWCA of Kalamazoo. She is a member of the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Society (WOCN), the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP), and the Michigan Counsel of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP).



Dorita Cline, MSN, FNP-C

Nurse Practitioner

Dorita Cline, MSN, FNP-C, joined the Kalamazoo Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. clinical team in April of 2019 as a Nurse Practitioner. Having worked as

a travel nurse immediately prior to her current position, she has also served as a Registered Nurse at Bronson Battle Creek as well as Battle Creek Health Systems with an emphasis on emergency care and has obtained numerous Emergency Department related certifications. She also served as a Preceptor for new hire Registered Nurses and Emergency Medical Services students.

Educationally, Dorita received her Associate of Applied Science in Nursing from Jackson Community College, Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Utica College, and Master of Science in Nursing from Simmons College. She was a President's Award recipient while at Utica College. Additionally, she obtained the designation of Family Nurse Practitioner – Certified (FNP-C) through the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board (AANPCB) and is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).



Amanda Pentland, AGACNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner

Amanda Pentland, MSN, AGACNP-BC, joined the Kalamazoo Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. clinical team in January of 2019 as a Nurse Practitioner.

Amanda received an Associate degree in Nursing from Southwestern Michigan College, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Michigan – Flint, and a Master of Science in Nursing from Walden University, graduating with high honors from all three institutions. Additionally, she received her Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner (AGACNP-BC) designation through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

Prior to her current position she was a Registered Nurse in a hospital setting as well as in home health care. She was the recipient of the Excellence in Nursing Award in 2015 and the Excellence in Clinical Practice 1 Award in 2017 from Borgess Pipp Hospital and has served as an Adjunct Clinical Instructor at Kellogg Community College. Amanda is a member of the American Nurses Association (ANA).



Lisa Woodruff, GRN-BC, ANP-BC

Nurse Practitioner – Behavioral Health Specialist

Lisa Woodruff, GRN-BC, ANP-BC, joined the medical team at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. in August

of 2019 as the organization's Behavioral Health Specialist. In this role she provides neurobehavioral healthcare to participants suffering from dementia and other psychiatric diagnoses at all the organization's locations.

Lisa began her nursing career in 2006 at Bronson Methodist Hospital where she was a Charge Nurse. Immediately prior to her current position, she served dual roles as a Nurse Practitioner at Southerncare Hospice and Bronson Lakeview Neurobehavioral Health. Educationally, she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Western Michigan University and her Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Adult Nurse Practitioner from Michigan State University.

Lisa has also obtained designations as a Geriatric Registered Nurse – Board Certified (GRN_BC) and an Adult Nurse Practitioner – Board Certified (ANP-BC), with both certifications being received through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Additionally, she is a member of the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurse Association (GAPNA), the American Nurses Association (ANA) and the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP).



**Sarah Simpson,
FNP-BC, ACHPN**

Nurse Practitioner

Sarah Simpson, FNP-BC, ACHPN, joined the Kalamazoo Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. clinical team in July of 2019 as a Nurse Practitioner. Sarah, an Advanced Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse (ACHPN), has over two decades of nursing experience in oncology, internal medicine, neurological critical care and geriatrics. She became a Board Certified Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP-BC) in 2009 through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and has extensive experience in the management of chronic, complex multi-system disease processes in older adults.

Beginning her nursing career at Bronson Methodist Hospital as an oncology nurse, she has also served as a Nurse Practitioner in Neuro Critical Care as well as functioning as a Hospitalist Nurse Practitioner. Immediately prior to her current role, she was a Nurse Practitioner in Geriatric Medicine at Bronson Methodist Hospital. Sarah is a graduate of the Bronson School of Nursing, earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Western Michigan University, and a Master of Science in Nursing from Michigan State University. She is also a member of the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP).



Rachel Rang, MSN, AGNP-C

Nurse Practitioner

Rachel Rang, MSN, AGNP-C, joined the medical team at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. in March of 2020 as a Nurse Practitioner in our Albion center where she provides medical care, evaluates and treats participants who experience ongoing and episodic illnesses.



Rachel began her career at the University of Michigan Main Hospital as a Registered Nurse in Cardiology and Medical Telemetry. Subsequently she served in a nursing capacity at Henry Ford Allegiance Health in the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit and Chelsea Community Hospital Surgery Center where she provided care to preoperative and postoperative patients. After becoming a Nurse Practitioner, Rachel provided medical management of pulmonary patients at the Pulmonary Clinics of Southern Michigan, followed by work at the Specialty Eye Institute where she performed history and physicals for surgical patients. She has also served as an Adjunct Faculty member at Jackson Community College where she facilitated the clinical experience for nursing students and was also a Jackson Community College and Michigan State University Leadership Clinical Preceptor.

Rachel earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Eastern Michigan University School of Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing from the Maryville University Graduate School of Nursing. She is an Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner – Certified (AGNP-C) through, and a member of, the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) and is also Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certified. ■

PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT:

Dayle Keller's Story



One Participant's Connections to Actress and Singer Dale Evans and the Apollo 11 Moon Landing Mission

Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. participant, Dayle Keller, has an intriguing background. A native of southern California, she has an interesting connection to actress and country singer, Dale Evans, as well as the Apollo 11 mission that put the first man on the moon.

Born in Los Angeles, Dayle grew up in the Long Beach - Lakewood area, living there until she was about 30 years old. She said, "My dad told me the story of how he dated Dale Evans in the 1920's (before Dale began dating and eventually marrying Roy Rogers) and that's where I got my name. I was named after Dale Evans." However, Dayle changed the spelling of her name when she became tired of teachers in school thinking she was a boy based on her original name of "Dale."

Although she grew up very close to the beach, Dayle said, "I wasn't a surfer girl, but I dressed like one. For my 16th birthday I wanted a surfboard, but I didn't get it. We lived only a half block away from the beach. I could see the beach from the kitchen window of our upstairs apartment. But even though I grew up living very close to the beach, I hated the sand. I liked the water, but I didn't like the sand sticking to my feet when I got out of the water. I liked the beach atmosphere, but I didn't like to be actually on the beach."

She continued, "It was always sunny and the weather was always good. You can't beat 72 and sunny 90%

of the time. There is no such thing as humidity in California. I didn't know what humidity was until I moved to Michigan. It was a shock to the system."

Growing up in the Belmont Shores neighborhood of Long Beach, Dayle said, "Second Street ran through all of Belmont Shores and every kind of shop, every kind of store, and every kind of restaurant that you would want was within walking distance on that street. On Friday, you would park your car and you wouldn't move it all weekend. You walked anywhere and everywhere you wanted to because everything was right there.

After graduating from high school, Dayle became an Information Operator. She conveyed, "I was one of those gals that you would talk to when you called 311 for information about a phone number. I had nine huge telephone books at my station that I would use to look up telephone numbers. This was before computers. They were the same telephone books available to the public with the very tiny print. I had telephone books for nine different counties. Sears was one of the most requested numbers. I bet we got 90 calls a day asking for the phone number for Sears. Eventually, many of the local numbers I knew by heart. We just sat there with a headset waiting for the calls to come in."

Dayle also met the love of her life, a Michigan boy, while living in California, "I tell everyone I picked up my husband in the pool hall on Long Beach. He was on the USS Hornet, which picked up the first man on the moon. While he was stationed in Long Beach, he had a weekend pass to get off the ship and happened to be in the pool hall the same night I was there. I was working nights at the phone company at that time and would usually go to the pool hall during my break to eat dinner. One night when I was there, he was also there. I had a quarter on the pool table, and he joined me in a game of pool. I met him in March, and we got married in August. He was getting ready to go to Vietnam, so we ran away to Las Vegas to get married before he shipped out."

"My husband, Gene, was one of five crewmen selected out of 4,000 men aboard the USS Hornet to retrieve the Apollo 11 capsule from the waters of the Pacific Ocean when it splashed down. Once

PACE Saved My Life!

on board the ship, the astronauts were taken to an Airstream trailer that was on the ship. President Nixon as well as the Navy band were also on the ship. Because Gene was part of the crew which pulled the capsule out of the water, he was able to stand right next to the trailer where the astronauts were housed while the photographers snapped their photos that would appear in newspapers across the country. There was also a book created showing the men pulling the capsule out of the water and my husband was in the pictures that were in the book."

"My husband and I attended the grand opening of the Apollo 11 display at the Smithsonian Institute commemorating the 25-year anniversary of the mission. The capsule, the Airstream trailer that housed the astronauts while they were on the Hornet, and many other things associated with Apollo 11 were on display. It just so happened that there was a group of school students there at that time touring the Smithsonian. Somehow, they found out that Gene was part of the crew that pulled the capsule from the water. So, much to our surprise, these children began lining up to get Gene's autograph. He probably signed autographs for over an hour."

"Then, Ted Koppel showed up. He was there to record his Nightline program on the ABC television network to commemorate the 25-year anniversary of the Apollo mission. He also heard that Gene was part of the recovery crew and interviewed Gene on Nightline as they discussed the events of the Apollo 11 mission."

"A number of years after the Apollo 11 mission, my mom was in charge of a parade in downtown Long Beach and Buzz Aldrin was there. I was able to meet him and told him my husband was part of the crew on the USS Hornet that retrieved the capsule from the ocean. So, he gave us an autograph that said, "Gene, thanks for the pick up! -Buzz Aldrin." We had that framed. We also had many newspaper clippings and photos from the Apollo Mission framed and they were displayed for years in our dining room along with Buzz Aldrin's autograph."

While in California, Dayle gave birth to her first two sons, Eugene Leonard Keller III, named after his father and grandfather, was born in 1970 and Jason

Astronauts Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Buzz Aldrin are welcomed home by President Nixon aboard the USS Hornet.

Dayle's husband, Gene, was part of the team to retrieve the Apollo 11 capsule from the Pacific Ocean.

was born in 1972. In 1978, just before her husband's discharge from the Navy, Dayle flew from California to Michigan with her boys to set up housekeeping in Kalamazoo, Gene's hometown. Then, upon discharge, he came home. Upon her move to Michigan, Dayle began working at Meijer for the next 12 years. Dayle commented, "When I started it was just a small store. I was there when they made the huge expansion to become the store it is today." During those years, Dayle and Gene welcomed a third child to their family, David was born in 1982.

After more than a decade at Meijer, Dayle went to work for Gentiva Home Health Services where she started as a receptionist, but quickly moved up within the organization to work in a Human Resources role. During her eight-year tenure with the organization, she was in charge of scheduling all the nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and nurse's aides.

Dayle also worked as the Administrative Assistant to the Director of the Census Bureau in Kalamazoo for the 2000 census, opening the Kalamazoo office and hiring enumerators to cover the southwest Michigan region. She related, "I also had to check their work

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when they brought it back in everyday because nothing was computerized then, it was all on paper. Then the paperwork was transferred to Detroit for further processing.”

Unfortunately, Dayle's husband passed away in 2005. She explained, “One night we went to bed and I kissed him goodnight. I stayed awake to watch television while he went to sleep. After a while I noticed I couldn't hear him breathing and tried to wake him up. But he had died in his sleep right next to me.”

Over the years Dayle has had both hips replaced and has developed some problems with her right leg. It got to the point she wasn't able to depend on her leg to maintain her balance standing or walking. It would often give out on her and send her tumbling to the floor. As her balance worsened, she had physical and occupational therapists come to her home to try to help her maintain her ability to walk and care for herself.

However, Dayle's desire to continue to care for herself diminished as the weeks and months progressed. She conveyed, “Before I came to PACE, for three years I was in my bedroom on my back in bed. There was no reason for me to get up. I was like a vegetable in that I just laid there all day and all night. It was awful. My brother would bring me meals and all I did was eat, sleep and watch TV. I wouldn't even brush my hair or put makeup on. I had very little interest in caring for myself. I was at a point where I thought, ‘Why bother to do any of those things?’ I had given up. I gave up on everything.” “It was scary,” she said tearfully.

She continued, “When I was in the hospital before starting at PACE, I hadn't brushed my hair from August until March, and I have long hair. One of the aides at the hospital came in to brush my hair and it literally took her hours to brush my hair out because it was so matted.”

The physical therapist who worked with Dayle suggested to her caregiver brother that they should explore the services provided by Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. Dayle said, “We followed his advice and called the PACE program. They were so wonderful to us! I qualified for the program and started at the Portage center on April 1st of 2019, the day they opened the Portage facility.” “That was

the best thing that ever happened to me because it got me out of bed and I was able to be with people again,” she said with tears in her eyes. “You don't know how much that means to me.”

“When I had my initial meeting with my care team at PACE, they asked me about my personal goals as I started the program. My personal goal was to not allow my leg to become atrophied and lose total use of it. My goal was to be able to get up and start walking more. Since being in the PACE program my mobility has greatly improved. I can now get out of my bedroom, walk across the dining room, out the front door, down the steps, and into my wheelchair so I can get on the bus. Then, when the bus brings me home, I am now able to walk up the stairs to come into the house. The physical therapist at PACE actually had stairs that they would have me practice on at the center. After some time on those stairs, it got to be much easier.”

Even the other participants were inspiring to Dayle. She explained, “When I first started coming to PACE, I noticed one of the ladies who was always dressed very nice. She always had on a sharp blazer and wore earrings. I thought to myself, ‘I can do that.’ So, I started wearing earrings and putting makeup on and wearing my jewelry. It makes you feel better. I was inspired by one of the other participants and I hope I am an inspiration to others.”

“I have made many friends at Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. and have become especially close to two other gals who are my best friends there. Years ago, we all worked at Meijer together and we have had a great time reminiscing about our working days and all the people we knew in common. They call us ‘The Golden Girls’ at the center. Even though we haven't been able to be at the center in recent months because of COVID, I still talk to them on the phone every day.”

“I can't wait for the center to open back up! I'm very anxious to see my friends again. The socialization has been a lifesaver for me. Being out and being with other people is everything to me. There is always something to do. The workers at the center are awesome! They keep us busy and entertained throughout the day. They always go above and beyond the call of duty. No matter what you need, they are right there for you. You couldn't ask for a better bunch of workers. I will say it again, PACE saved my life!” ■

The Challenge of Social Distancing

Social isolation is defined as an objective state marked by few or infrequent social contacts.



Much has been said in recent months about social distancing, especially for aging adults. Horrifyingly sad photos have emerged on social media of seniors isolated in nursing homes while family members peer through the window with saddened looks of disconnection as both parties desire human and family connection. On the outside of the window, family members long to be able hug the frail body or kiss the wrinkled cheek of their loved one. While, on the inside, the elderly person yearns for the same interaction. As humans we need that connection and without it we can be affected, not only emotionally, but also physically.

While strong social connection is protective of health, a lack of social connection carries the risk of loneliness, anxiety, depression, physical illness, or, in some cases, early mortality. When placed in the context of the current pandemic, the progression of events may unfold in the following manner:



The PACE model of care has recognized the risks associated with social isolation and has built into their care platform a component to engage participants in significant forms of social interaction. However, for the physical protection of our participants, these opportunities have not been available to most of our participants during the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to Alexandria Lueth, Director of IDT Operations for Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E., "During the pandemic we have seen a definite increase in the number of calls to our on-call nursing staff and more people are experiencing levels of anxiety and depression they did not experience before. So, while right now we have to be deliberate about

keeping participants away from others to keep their risk for exposure to COVID-19 low, we also have to balance that with not allowing them to fall prey to the risks associated with social isolation. And that is sometimes a complicated balance to achieve."

Not only is there risk of anxiety, depression and failing health among participants due to social isolation, but there is also a significant increase in caregiver burden. Lueth explained, "Many of our calls that go out from our social workers or other team members are not always to the participant, but sometimes to the caregiver. During the pandemic we have increased doing caregiver burden screenings and then offer interventions based on their needs. For a while, we weren't able to place participants in respite care to give families a needed break because the respite homes were not accepting anyone due to the pandemic. Fortunately, many of them have now opened back up to receiving respite participants. Getting our participants into a respite has given some caregivers that time they need. And, we have also been able to safely bring a few participants at a time into our centers for a few hours during the pandemic to help alleviate significant caregiver burden in the home. In some instances, this has given caregivers the break they needed."

Laura Ferrara, CEO of Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. said, "While there is no ideal situation, especially for older adults with medically complex conditions, during this time, Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. continues to provide the highest quality of care to keep our participants engaged, thereby reducing the potential effects of social isolation. The outreach of our social workers, Recreational Therapy staff, as well as our medical and home care teams has been phenomenal, enabling us to stay closely connected with our participants. This vividly demonstrates the effectiveness of the PACE model of care and goes well beyond any traditional healthcare model existing today." ■

The page features several 3D-rendered virus particles, likely representing COVID-19, scattered across the top and sides. These particles are spherical with a textured grey surface and numerous red, triangular protrusions. The main title is centered at the top, with 'DEALING WITH' in grey and 'COVID-19' in large red letters. Below the title, the subtitle 'Collaboration has been the Key' is written in grey.

DEALING WITH COVID-19

Collaboration has been the Key

The COVID-19 pandemic. Those are words we have grown weary of hearing, yet they have become a household term. To many it means masks, social distancing, staying at home, restaurants closed or very limited in service capacity, businesses shuttered, schools shut down, working from home, or possibly hospitalizations. Unfortunately, for some, it has also meant the loss of a loved one. Healthcare systems around the globe have been on high alert and many densely populated areas have suffered the brunt of the ravages induced by this novel virus.

Leading Healthcare Provider

Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E., as a leading healthcare provider to older adults who are most susceptible to this virus, began taking action immediately as news reports of the spreading pandemic began appearing on the airwaves. "From the very beginning, even before the Stay Home, Stay Safe order was initiated, we were starting to respond," said Alexandria Lueth, Director of IDT Operations for the organization. "The first thing we did was to enact our emergency preparedness policy and establish the Urgent Response Team (URT). That team has been responsible since the beginning to create the organization's response to the pandemic. This team is a multidisciplinary, multi-site based team, so we have representatives from all our locations and all disciplines to help with the planning. That has encompassed anything from participant screening on a daily basis to the protocols for testing to the management of participants who are symptomatic. It also includes how we manage our overall response to the situation. Will we have employees work from home or in the center and if they are in the center, how are they doing that safely?"

Dr. Elizabeth Warner, was in her 95th day as the newly appointed Medical Director for the organization when news of COVID-19 began circulating the globe. She remembers, "As COVID hit the country and Michigan, we marshaled resources and teams to start understanding and working through the developments which literally were happening day by day. As we were learning more about the virus and risks to older adults, we had to assess our current processes and policies and how they needed to be updated or changed to address the unique risks of COVID. There were many very important conversations happening in different parts of the organization."

Collaboration Has Been Evident

The display of collaboration has been evident throughout the organization during the pandemic from the administrative "behind the scenes" offices to the frontline care of participants and everywhere in between. Dr. Warner remarked, "I have had the pleasure of working with wonderfully collaborative teams in the past, but I have never worked with an organization that has this degree of collaboration and spirit of teamwork. One of the reasons I joined Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. was because I believed that the organization walked their core values. Not just talked them, but actually walked them. Their behaviors actually aligned with the words that they espoused. And, it has been a really gratifying experience to see that borne out to be true, both in the mundane and also in the pandemic and challenging spaces that we've worked in."

The PACE model is built on participant centered healthcare and that came shining through in many ways during these crisis months. Senior Care

Partners P.A.C.E. CEO, Laura Ferrara, said, "We've given our participants the flexibility to receive the care they need for COVID in the way they want. Outside of PACE, the normal treatment would be to take them to the hospital, then they would stay in the hospital until they recovered enough for discharge or, regrettably, until they are deceased. Unfortunately, because of hospital protocol during the pandemic, they would have to be there alone. They wouldn't have their loved ones, their family or their spouse with them. Instead, we have given our participants a completely different option by enabling them to have their family close to them, which they would not have been able to do in the hospital. So, during COVID, we have done the same thing we usually do, just at a different level."

Ferrara added, "Our entire staff has continuously gone above and beyond to care for our participants in very unique ways. When we've needed somebody to care for a participant, even if they were COVID positive, we've had many staff members step up and volunteer to provide care for them. We've had people very willingly say, 'sign me up' and were willing to care for very sick participants. They readily said, 'Teach me what I need to know and do and I will do it.' To my knowledge, we have never had any problem filling even overnight shifts. Our staff have made many, many personal sacrifices to care for our participants and I could not be more proud of this organization." Lueth concurred, "I've never heard 'We can't' or 'We won't' from any staff member which is a real testament to our core values."

Community Involvement And Support

There was even community involvement and support as the mandate for mask wearing became crucial. Several individuals were making masks in their homes and donating them to Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) also was interested in helping frontline workers, so they began designing and making N95 quality respirators and face shields using 3D printing technology. Using furnace filters for the respirator piece, they also used bungee cords to adjust the fit and weather stripping to seal the plastic. Dr. Warner commented, "It was a brilliant design. When they are cinched and tight, the seal is fantastic and it doesn't require fit testing for a particular size of face. KVCC donated 200 of these masks to us and our team has been



using those preferentially due to fit and comfort. I personally haven't used the N95 respirator, I've been using the KVCC manufactured respirators when caring for participants in the Alternative Care Site. And, our nurse practitioners, nursing teams and PCA's are using them as well. We've even contacted KVCC and given them some design recommendations based on our use and they have modified their design accordingly. These contributions by community members as well as KVCC have been greatly appreciated."

Participants Were Asked to Remain at Home During the Pandemic

Normally each of the four Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. centers would be bustling with activity in the day center, clinic, and physical therapy facilities. However, for their safety, participants had been asked to remain at home during the pandemic. While the Battle Creek and Portage centers remained open, participants coming to one of the centers was rare. With the exception of a few participants who occasionally came to the center for the clinic, physical therapy, or respite care, almost all care was being provided in-home, by telephone or via video. Lueth commented, "While most of our care over the past months has been done remotely, we are now bringing more participants to the centers while maintaining proper

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social distancing. This is helping to reduce the loneliness factor which can have a negative impact on participants. However, before we bring anyone into the center we must have informed consent and we weigh the risk versus benefits of having them in the center and we do that very thoughtfully.”

She continued, “When the risk of staying at home outweighs the risk of potential exposure at the center, we will bring them to the center for care. For example, we have a participant who went from a very active, upbeat, happy participant in our memory care room prior to the pandemic, to lying in bed all day long at home, depressed and starting to get contractures due to staying at home. His emotional and physical wellbeing was drastically impeded by not coming into the day center, so through discussions with his DPOA (Durable Power of Attorney) and our staff, everyone felt like it was better for him to come here and he’s doing great now.”

Creative Out-of-the-Box Thinking

Taking services to the homes of participants has required creative out-of-the-box thinking by each department. Recreational Therapy create activity kits which are delivered to participants in their homes to help with cognitive stimulation and mind-hand coordination. Physical Therapy and clinic personnel use the telephone, video, or in-home visits to provide necessary care. According to Lueth, “CMS and the State of Michigan is now allowing us to perform video assessments as another way to reduce physical contact. We’ve also implemented some technology tools. Fortunately, we were able to quickly obtain some grant funding to purchase some technology and have determined the GrandPads are the best fit for our participants. So, we are currently seeking additional grants to



be able to make sure each participant has one. We recognize that using some form of remote technology will go beyond COVID and can be meaningful and useful for many of our participants on a long term basis.”

Opening of the Alternative Care Site

One of the most significant accomplishments for the organization during the pandemic was the opening of the Alternative Care Site at the Portage center clinic. In fact, Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. was the first PACE program in the nation to implement a dedicated Alternative Care Site. Dr. Warner explained, “On April 10th, we had a participant who was diagnosed COVID positive and had just lost her husband to COVID. Knowing she needed 24 hour care, we evaluated her in her home on a Thursday evening and determined we had enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for a PCA (Personal Care Assistant) to be with the participant overnight. That is a really hard thing to do because when you’re in your full PPE, you can’t eat, drink or use the restroom. A 12 hour shift in full PPE is not sustainable for humans. So it became very clear that we needed to have the participant somewhere other than her home because we would not be able to serve her there. So in the span of nine hours, we obtained approval from the CEO and Leadership Team and began preparing the site to become an alternative care site where we would care for COVID positive participants who chose not to be hospitalized. We were able to provide 24 hour nursing care, personal care and medical care. We had licensed staff there at all times and our medical staff was there 12 hours per day, Monday through Friday, and on-call 24 hours a day.”

Nurse Practitioners, Kacey Douglas and Sarah Simpson, were the main medical team representatives at the Alternative Care Site (ACS) for the three months it was open to specifically care for COVID positive participants. Sarah recalled, “The first three days, Kacey and I were at the ACS 24 hours a day. We slept on air mattresses whenever time permitted. But, if we weren’t sleeping, we were caring for and monitoring participants. Kacey added, “It was definitely stressful, but very rewarding at the same time. Because of our exposure to COVID positive participants we were not able to be around our own family members. I couldn’t even go home after being at the ACS for the first three days and had



Kacey Douglas and Sarah Simpson work with a participant at the Alternative Care Site.

to stay at Sarah's home for two weeks. But, if I had to do it all over again, I would without hesitation." Sarah wholeheartedly agreed and added, "I'm sure the RN's and Personal Care Assistants (PCA's) who worked closely with us in the ACS would say the same thing because we were all there to help our participants through this health crisis."

Dr. Warner added, "The work all these folks did at the ACS was so beautiful and mind blowing to me. I've been brought to tears more than once just watching one of our PCA's gently guiding one of our participants with dementia, who likes to wander, back into her room and do this same thing 40 or 50 times a day. It was astounding to watch the level of care and compassion shown by our entire staff inside the ACS as well as those who care for participants in their homes."

Returning to a More "Normal"

Regarding the process of returning to a more "normal" schedule at each of the four centers in Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Portage and Albion, there is not a definitive date at this point. Lueth explained, "Unfortunately, we can't flip a switch and just return to normal. We're working on plans for a safe reopen that are in line with the governor's safe restart plan. And, as we move through the phases of reopening I've been describing it as a dimmer switch. We will be slowly ramping things back up, making the safety of our participants and employees our primary concern. And, our participants will be able to choose when they are comfortable coming back

to the center. We will definitely be increasing our monitoring from an infection control perspective, as well as increasing our environmental hygiene, making sure hand hygiene principles are practiced. Masks are now a part of life and I don't know how long that will be a part of our life, but I do know it will be longer for our organization and our participants because of their chronic health conditions and age."

According to Dr. Warner, "Our participants are going to be sheltering for a lot longer than the rest of the population because of their vulnerability and our 'routine' and 'regular' will look different. While we've never closed the centers or the services we provide, we have had to find the appropriate balance and we have had to weigh the risks of having a participant come to the center versus staying at home. That's a dance we will have to do with every participant every day. The primary factor driving bringing more participants back to the center for more 'normal' activities is safety. We must keep our participants safe. The benefit will have to outweigh the risk. That's the same litmus test we abided by even before COVID. So, the overall strategy remains the same, we just have more extenuating factors now that must go into that decision making process."

The Executive Leadership Team has been highly complementary of the response of the staff throughout the entire organization during the pandemic. Dr. Warner said, "I want to acknowledge the Herculean effort that has happened in every nook and cranny of this organization to be able to think differently about how we deliver care, how we keep participants and staff safe, how we obtain the necessary equipment and supplies we need, how we very rapidly come up with new protocols, processes and policies with various iterations, and how we continue to make sure our staff is paid while working from home." Ferrara added, "I couldn't be more proud of how our staff has come together during this time for the sake of our participants.

We are a team of highly collaborative professionals that have proved we

can weather the storm and keep our participants safe. While this adversity has tried our resolve, we have proven our resiliency and adaptability as an organization in an amazing way!" ■



What is "PACE"?

PACE stands for "Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly." PACE is a long-term comprehensive health care program that enables frail elderly adults to live at home and in their communities for as long as medically and socially possible. Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E. is the official PACE program for Calhoun, Kalamazoo, Eastern Van Buren, Southeastern Allegan, and Southern Barry counties in Michigan. Our many services are designed to help older adults stay in their homes, and be part of the community where they live.

CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION



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SYMPTOMS AWARE



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