



April 16, 2020

Dear Birch Hill, RiverWoods Exeter and RiverWoods Durham residents,

Unfortunately, today we have some hard news to share. We have an employee in our Birch Hill community who was feeling ill and has now tested positive for COVID-19. This staff member was last on duty on April 11 and is safely isolating at home. We have notified the Department of Public Health and are following all procedures recommended by the Center for Disease Control.

We don't anticipate this will cause any change in our operations right now. The health care teams at every community have been wearing medical masks since April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and they have recently begun wearing goggles as an added protective measure, and in accordance with CDC guidelines. We are doing cleaning and disinfecting of our common areas four times per day, our employees and residents are wearing cloth masks, and even our health care residents are wearing cloth masks to the degree they can tolerate it, and we are working to maintain appropriate social distancing. That is all helpful, but we know this virus is very creative in how it spreads, and that makes it incredibly challenging to pinpoint the root source.

This news is difficult for all of us, but not entirely unexpected. We have been fighting against a virus that is hard to predict and with a community spread that is advancing; New Hampshire's "case count" reached 1,139 as of yesterday. If nothing else, this news underscores our need to stay committed to maintaining the six-foot social distance as much as possible, wearing our masks when we are in a public setting, and keeping a very tight social circle. This was important a month ago, but now it is even more critically important. Our first goal was to keep the virus out of the communities, and now the goal is to contain and stop any spread.

The Governor's plan to test all long-term care workers that was announced Tuesday delayed our ability to *immediately* begin testing all our staff this week, but we anticipate that our staff testing – *system wide* – will begin Friday. We have

worked with ConvenientMD to get our testing done now, as they prepare for this statewide testing, because we are already organized and ready to go. We will continue to have any staff that show signs or symptoms of the virus tested separately; but our goal is to have *all of our staff members tested*, even with no symptoms.

The process for testing has changed a bit now that the State is involved, as the MIT Lab's capacity was too limited to be a good option. CMD will use commercial labs to do the testing. We expect results will take several days post test.

We also plan to have our health care residents at Birch Hill tested this week, with other health care and independent living resident testing options available in the coming weeks.

I am sure you will join me in providing positive thoughts and prayers to our staff member, with wishes for a full and speedy recovery. Linda Phypers, Birch Hill's Executive Director, will provide more specific community updates to the residents and staff at Birch Hill, and to quote Linda, please *"remember and practice compassion for each other during this period of challenge to our community. We will get through this and we will be a stronger community. We've already learned that when we work together, and put the larger group before our own self, we can do amazing things."*

We will keep you informed as we know more.

Stay healthy my friends,



Justine Vogel  
TRWG CEO