



May 1, 2020

Dear Residents of RiverWoods Exeter, RiverWoods Durham and Birch Hill,

I heard this phrase the other day “we are all in the same storm, but we are in different boats.” That rung very true to me. I find it true of our different campuses and communities, true of the experience our staff and residents are having, and, even more granular, true based on your personality type, your individual style, and your family location and situation.

The various frustrations that we experience are incredibly personal. For those of us who are “control enthusiasts” this is a particularly hard time (trust me, I KNOW that one). But even though there is much we can’t control right now; we do still have a lot of things we “can do.”

We can get outside and take a walk (though some days we will get wet). We can call a friend, we can read, we can enjoy movies, or meals that are cooked for us by people who come to work every day to make our lives a little better. Many of us have also learned the pleasures of Zoom or Facetime to talk with friends and family who do not live with us, which has provided another way to stay connected.

And we have one another, from 6 feet apart. There are risks to living in community, but there are many great benefits. We have one another to talk with, complain or commiserate with, and we have one another to laugh with. We have a staff team that is looking out for our needs – cooking and disinfecting and nursing, but also creatively figuring out ways to change the way we deliver services and fun. That is what community provides. It isn’t everything we had three months ago, but it is what we have right now.

Today we expect the governor will talk about coming changes in the Stay at Home order. No matter what the governor announces, we will not make any changes right now.

In our Birch Hill health center, we have seen firsthand how insidious this virus is. We have had an additional confirmed positive health center resident case, and several others who have shown some level of symptoms. The “symptom set” for this virus is wide and varied, so our mindset is to treat everyone as if they were positive, with full restriction and PPE for protection. With no real treatment option, our only defense is to avoid, or contain, and with rising case counts in our areas, and the many complexities of the virus, both are difficult. Across all communities we need to continue to focus on your safety, through risk avoidance, to give science more time to catch up and provide testing and treatment options.

It has been eight weeks since we started adjusting to deal with this pandemic. And it has been hard for all of us. Our staff teams have kept their social circles very small (for many of us, YOU are our social circle right now), and they have dedicated themselves to pivoting and adjusting as our operations have changed, sometimes daily. Even as we have continued to meet your daily needs, you have had to deal with changes in the “how” we meet them, with changes in dining, closures of common spaces, restrictions in activities and movement. We know it is a challenge, for some of us more than others.

Next week we will do voluntary testing for our independent living residents, and we will retest our Birch Hill health care staff. That will provide us more information. Right now, there is no “perfect” information, but the more we know, the better decisions we can make. If there are residents who test positive we will adjust and tighten up. If there are not we will breathe a small sigh of relief and keep thinking.

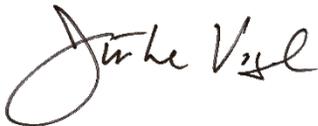
At RWE and RWD, the Executive Directors and I have started to talk with a small group of residents to understand mood and sentiment and to listen to what changes would make the most impact if we can find a **safe** way to lift certain restrictions. Next week, at Birch Hill, the Executive Director and I will be meeting with the Resident Council to begin the same discussions. We are also talking with other CCRCs around the country to hear what they are doing and how they are evaluating risk. More to come in the next few weeks as we continue these discussions and consider options. We don't have a lot of control right now, but there are things that are within your control. First, you can wear your mask whenever you are out of your apartment and around others. Remember that

these masks protect *others* from *you*, not you from them. It may not be fun, but you owe it to your friends and neighbors to wear a mask. Second, you can work hard at the 6 feet of social distancing. It is hard, but you can do it. And third, you can work to maintain your patience, with us, and with one another. There are restrictions in place right now, they are designed to keep you safe, and to keep others safe too. We don't want to risk all the hard work that you have done this past eight weeks by having anyone not adhere. It is just that important, and we need to stick with this.

There *will* be a light at the end of the tunnel, but for now, we have to stick with this. Every day that we stay safe, and tight, is another day that we give scientists to work on better and faster testing, an effective anti-viral, and a vaccine.

None of this is easy, but we are all in this together, and we are "all in" for you.

Thank you and stay healthy my friends!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justine Vogel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'J' being particularly large and stylized.

Justine Vogel
TRWG CEO