



October 2, 2020

Dear All residents of RiverWoods Exeter, RiverWoods Durham and Birch Hill,

TESTING- RESULTS

As you may remember, on September 21 we had a RWE health care staff member test positive for COVID-19. Since that time, we have tested the health care residents and staff from all three RWE campuses twice through the State testing program, and once through a commercial lab. The results of those tests yielded positive results for two health care residents at the Woods campus, and one positive result for a health care resident at the Ridge campus. The Ridge resident has now tested negative twice, leading us to believe that the initial test may have been a false positive. No additional staff members tested positive. We are grateful that this seems to have been a very contained issue.

The Birch Hill community, as a member of Hillsborough county, participates in the State surveillance testing. The last results from the current round of testing, done every 10 days, were received yesterday, and all were negative.

RiverWoods Durham, as a member of Strafford county, is not a part of the State surveillance testing, so we mirror the state guidance but test through a commercial lab. This last round of testing was all negative too.

TESTING – FUTURE

Currently the State provides surveillance testing for nursing homes and assisted living communities in Rockingham and Hillsborough counties, meaning they provide the test kits for free and also cover the costs of a courier and the lab work. This process will change before the end of October and the state will, going forward, provide a set amount of money for a set amount of testing. We have already established a commercial lab relationship, and will be able to get 24-36 hour results for future testing. This will continue at least through the end of the calendar year.

We now have four BD Veritor rapid test machines, two at RWE and one each at BH and RWD. These are highly accurate for people with symptoms, which is good as we enter cold and flu season and more symptoms will appear. And we await an order for BIAxNOW tests, which are

very inexpensive rapid testing devices. They are not yet commercially available, but we expect them in the next several months.

We have also completed our first round of wastewater testing. This passive test allows us to monitor for virus that is shed in human waste. We are working with a PhD scientist from UNH and have just received our baseline results. This testing is still “science in progress” so it does not provide definitive “yes/no” results, but we will use the results to look for trends that may lead us to do more widespread testing. If nothing else, COVID-19 is certainly broadening my vocabulary of sciencey words. We intend to do this wastewater testing twice weekly going forward.

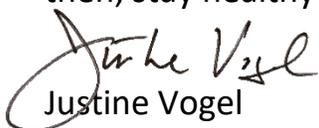
OTHER

We are definitely aware that many people would like the campuses more open, to allow for visitors and indoor dining. These past few weeks, with a few positive cases at RiverWoods Exeter, we have been reminded of our risk averse nature and the desire to stay vigilant. For now, we do not have a definitive time frame for indoor visiting, but I would suggest it will be no time soon as the flu season comes upon us and case counts in New Hampshire increased in September.

Dining is definitely next on our list of things to consider. What we hear is that you miss it, you miss the opportunity to dine with your friends, and the social aspects of the interaction. Our concerns are likely obvious (spacing, no mask while eating, clustering of people), but we are making plans to reopen dining in a very staged way over a several month time frame. This is the kind of thing you want, we want, but we want to be cautious. Think November(ish). It’s coming, but not very quickly.

The State is beginning to make plans for vaccine distribution. That is good news. New Hampshire’s Department of Health and Human Services has been uniquely effective in terms of organization and communication. It is our expectation that health care workers and seniors will be the first group to receive the vaccine when it is available, and that is good. I read a letter written by the CEO of Pfizer last night, and he said, “we will move at the speed of science.” That is exactly what we want. Good science and a working vaccine as soon as we can, and not a minute before.

As we have said many times, every four weeks things improve; and I think it is safe to say that we’ve learned plenty in the past four weeks! More to come, but we are making progress. Until then, stay healthy my friends!


Justine Vogel
TRWG CEO