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## *Will the Pandemic Lead to Better, Safer Long-Term Care Facilities?*

*Contributed by Amy Boyer, Village Manor Director of Nursing*

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to America's most vulnerable elders, in long-term care facilities. The New York Times calculates that staff and residents at nursing homes and other long-term care developments account for more than a third of coronavirus-related deaths in the United States. In some states, the toll is higher. Residents in Minnesota long-term care facilities represent less than 1% of the population yet comprise about 80% of COVID-19 deaths in the state.

"The elderly are the most susceptible to high risk, bad outcomes," says Robyn Stone, senior vice president at Leading Age, an organization that advocates for nonprofit aging service providers.



If ever there was a time to reform policies, practices and financing for long-term care facilities — especially nursing homes — this is it.

### **Nursing Homes: The Epicenter of COVID-19**

Nursing homes have been the tragic epicenter of COVID-19. There, residents are often frail, coping with multiple medical conditions, living in crowded buildings, making them highly susceptible to the coronavirus. Low-wage caregivers typically work at multiple nursing homes, hiking their odds of exposure to the virus.

"This crisis has hopefully made it clear to the general public and public officials that we have routinely underfunded long-term care for poor elders."

Yet the trauma from the pandemic extends beyond nursing homes to the wider ecosystem of senior living and senior care. COVID-19 starkly and cruelly reveals what the elder care community has long warned: America's long-term care system is badly frayed, poorly financed and vastly inadequate to meet the needs and ensure a good quality of life for America's growing population of older adults — especially lower-income elders.

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## ***“Pandemic”- continued from Page 1***

“This crisis has hopefully made it clear to the general public and public officials that we have routinely underfunded long-term care for poor elders,” says Robert Kramer, founder and president of Nexus Insights, a COVID-19 inspired advisory firm for rethinking aging. “I think this has brought out into the open a lot of public attitudes and public policy that sees people over a certain age as expendable.”

### **Why the Elder Care System Is So Troubled**

One reason America’s elder care system is so troubled: its ecosystem is sprawling and complex. On the payments side of the equation, Medicare covers few long-term care costs (although private Medicare Advantage plans often offer some services). Medicaid, the federal/state program that pays for long-term care services, requires impoverishment to qualify. Most Medicaid money pays for institutional care (think nursing homes), rather than in-home care. Assisted living, continuing care communities and similar facilities have a private-pay system; some well-off residents and families tap into long-term care insurance policies to pay for services.

Middle-income families have often found their earnings and savings inadequate to meet the steep costs of long-term care even before the pandemic further reduced household finances. The annual cost of a private room in a nursing home (national median) is over \$100,000 a year, according to the latest Genworth Cost of Care Survey. Only about 10% of Americans 65 and older have long-term care insurance.

Most older adults prefer aging in their homes with family support, but that isn’t always a practical or desirable choice.

### **A Pandemic Effect: Worsening Economics for Long-Term Care**

Due to the pandemic, the economics of long-term care will worsen.

For one thing, some families have become reluctant to put aging parents into congregate living facilities, fearful of the higher health risks from COVID-19 and worried that parents will be quarantined alone there.

For another, the price tag for living in a long-term care facility will go up. Expenses are on the rise with managements scrounging for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), coronavirus tests, cleaning supplies and staff.

Take the experience of Brookdale Senior Living, which operates over 800 communities nationwide. Management in a recent earnings call said it had spent \$10 million in the first quarter on its COVID-19 response.

### **How to Fix Things**

There is some recognition of the problem, though.

For example, Senators Bob Casey (D-Pa.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) have offered a bill to provide \$20 billion to help states, nursing homes and intermediate-care facilities (usually small, group homes) contain COVID-19. Leading Age has called on Congress to allocate \$100 billion in its next relief package to support aging services. And the House of Representatives Democrats’ new coronavirus relief bill, The HEROES Act, would let Medicare health care providers receive compensation for the additional COVID-19 costs they’re incurring. HEROES is an opening marker in a debate about the next relief fund and at least some relief may make it to President Trump’s signature.

***Continued on Page 6-see “Pandemic”***



# NOVEMBER



Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9:00 Morning Church (TV) 11:00 Balloon Toss 2:00 Movie 6:30 Coloring Fun	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Boxing 6:30 Dominoes	9:00 News <b>9:30 Resident Council</b> 11:00 Ball Toss 3:00 Singing 6:30 Movie	<b>8:30 Dr. Holmes on Radio</b> <b>10:00 Jason Kohler</b> 11:00 Boxing 2:00 Treats 3:00 Piano 6:30 Puzzles	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Crafts 6:30 Puzzles	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 10:00 Ball Toss 3:00 Gift Cart 6:30 Games	11:00 Ball Toss 3:00 Puzzle Time 6:30 Cinema Night
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9:00 Morning Church (TV) 11:00 Balloon Toss 2:00 Movie 6:30 Coloring Fun	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Boxing 2:00 Ball Toss 6:30 Games	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Resident Meeting 6:30 Puzzles	<b>8:30 Dr. Holmes on Radio</b> <b>10:00 Jason Kohler</b> 11:00 Boxing 2:00 Treats 6:30 Cards <b>VETERANS DAY</b>	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Fingernails 1:30 Library 6:30 Puzzles	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 2:00 Operation Christmas Boxes! <b>3:00 Gift Cart</b> 6:30 Puzzles	11:00 Corn Hole 3:00 Puzzle Time 6:30 Cinema Night
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
9:00 Morning Church (TV) 11:00 Balloon Toss 2:00 Movie 6:30 Coloring Fun	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Boxing 2:00 Ball Toss 6:30 Games	<b>9:00 News</b> <b>9:30 Memorial Service</b> 11:00 Ball Toss 3:00 Singing 6:30 Movie	<b>8:30 Dr. Holmes on Radio</b> <b>10:00 Jason Kohler</b> 11:00 Boxing 2:00 Treats 3:00 Piano 6:30 Coloring	<i>7:00 Morning Prayer</i> <b>7:30-9:00 AM Cafe</b> 9:00 Morning News 6:30 Games	9:00 Morning News & Prayer <b>2:00 Music</b> <b>3:00 Gift Cart</b> 6:30 Puzzles	11:00 Ball Toss 3:00 Puzzle Time 6:30 Cinema Night
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
9:00 Morning Church (TV) 11:00 Balloon Toss 2:00 Movie 6:30 Coloring Fun	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Boxing 6:30 Dominoes	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Resident Meeting 6:30 Puzzles	<b>8:30 Dr. Holmes on Radio</b> <b>10:00 Jason Kohler</b> 11:00 Boxing 2:00 Treats 3:00 Piano 6:30 Movie	10:00 Movie 2:00 Puzzles 6:30 Coloring <b>HAPPY THANKSGIVING</b>	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 3:00 BIRTHDAYS <b>3:00 Gift Cart</b> 6:30 Puzzle Time	11:00 Corn Hole 3:00 Puzzle Time 6:30 Cinema Night
29	30					
9:00 Morning Church (TV) 11:00 Balloon Toss 2:00 Movie 6:30 Coloring Fun	9:00 Morning News & Prayer 9:30 Travel Bingo 10:00 Boxing 6:30 Puzzles					

Available Daily:  
games, books,  
puzzles,  
movies,  
manicures,  
horseshoes, and  
more.

One-to-Ones Daily  
\*Activities Subject to  
Change

## Resident Birthdays

Didi Davis Nov. 2  
Sue Tracy Nov. 14  
Chris Hargrave Nov. 15



Thank you to Auburn Pharmacy for providing the birthday cake

## Welcomes

Mary Roesner

## In Memory

Muriel Cimler  
Lily Martin  
Verna Cook  
Jim Guilfoyle  
Elgene Sylvester  
Clayton Olson  
Shirley Wilson

## Discharges

## Staff Birthdays

Cathe Sacher Nov. 1  
Birgitte Mager Nov. 6  
Rebecca Gale Nov. 6  
Laura Collins Nov. 7  
Hannah Anguiano Nov. 10  
Anika Cox Nov. 13  
Dallas Pierce Nov. 14  
Cody Fischer Nov. 19



## Welcome to our Team!

Shawna Rangel CNA  
Laura Price LPN  
Morgan Reinertson Homemaker



## Speaking Up, in Light of COVID-19 contributed by resident, Luella Manning

My, My, here it is almost November and we are near to winter. We are still locked down here at Village Manor. No residents going out and no visitors coming, except for emergency.

It is hard, but we know the cause and comply with the rules, and so much "good" result.

With this much time gone by it is time to speak up. As president of Resident Council of Village Manor, I am speaking for our residents. We are getting along well as they can but do not complain.

We have a super nice staff, from Andy Sutter clear down to the laundry. Everyone pitches in and helps where they can - No complaints - "Everyone knows the war is on to stop Covid 19", Volunteers help where needed too.

Andy Sutter keeps us informed every day but the week end. He's so great to everybody and we all proud that he is our leader.

So, our hearts reach out for our leader. He knows how to lead us all and we really appreciate him.

Also thanks to all of the staff and we admire all of you.

Above all things, we are not forgetting all of the facilities that are fighting the Covid too. It's a very hard position to be in but "we are in this together" and we fight till the end.

We won't forget you. So, Wear One from coast to coast and Nation to Nation, we are grateful and "Thank You" and "Best Wishes" in your battle of the "Covid 19".

Sincerely  
Luella Manning  
Village Manor  
Abilene, Kansas

**PHOTOS FROM SOME  
ACTIVITIES, AND  
FALL IN THE AIR**



***A big thank you to Sue Tracy's son, Alex, and grandson, Brock, for bringing us numerous pumpkins for our fall display!  
We greatly appreciate it!!!***



**Even though these are trying times, we still want to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving**



## ***“Pandemic”- continued from Page 2***

“There will not come a time when we will return to the old normal.” Yet many of the expenses associated with battling the coronavirus will become critical costs of doing business in a post-pandemic environment. What’s more, paying for higher long-term care expenses will be tough for financially drained households and tax-starved governments. The bottom line? Business as usual for long-term care facilities isn’t an option. “There will come a time when we’ll see the pandemic in the rearview mirror,” says Kramer. “There will not come a time when we will return to the old normal.”

The clear and present danger is that numerous senior living and senior care operators go out of business and that policymakers reduce their support even more. That said, the unprecedented disruption also opens up the tantalizing opportunity for society and policymakers to address the kind of reforms that would improve the living standards and lifestyle of an aging population, most notably the large ranks of lower-and middle-income elderly Americans. “This has shaken things up enough that reform could happen,” muses Stone. “I think that the Phoenix rises from the ashes,” she adds, laughing.

### **A Look Into the Future of Long-Term Care Facilities**

What might reform look like? Congregate living won’t disappear as an option, but the settings will likely be redesigned with physical and mental health considerations in a post-pandemic society.

Two of the changes experts expect: no more shared rooms and reconfigured living spaces for comfort during periodic shelter-in-place moments. Private balconies or small private patios, for instance, would let residents safely get outdoors during quarantines. Also likely: The health care system will increasingly blend into senior care communities, from increased use of telemedicine (rather than in-person doctor’s appointments) to infectious disease control systems.

“There are changes we can make to make them [long-term care facilities] safer,” says Sara Marberry, a health care design knowledge expert and marketing consultant. “There are a lot of technology and products for infectious control in health care already; it will now permeate all kinds of senior living, including independent living.” Long-term care analysts also think congregate living managements will — finally — devote bigger budgets to training their professional staff and personal care workers. That way, the workers will be trained to be more knowledgeable about how best to keep infections at bay.

“We have learned from this that we need highly trained people, particularly real infection control and a whole system of care,” says Stone. Investments in technology will be essential. As telehealth and telemedicine become routine coming out of the crisis, they’ll both require good broadband access and devices in long-term care facilities.

### **How to Pay For It All**

How to pay for better design, workforce training and technology? There is no shortage of good blueprints, including policy models developed by the Long-Term Care Financing Collaborative and the Bipartisan Policy Center. Another place to look: Washington State’s universal public long-term care insurance benefit for residents which became law last year. Countries like Germany and Japan offer approaches to emulate, too. There’s no exaggeration in saying that the choices we make about how we treat our elders gets to the core of society’s values. In recent weeks, too many callous remarks have dismissed older adults and their pandemic-related risks of death as sad, but nothing to get worked up over.

But rather than framing the care of elders through the lens of dependency, think about how much they add to society. “I hope we’ll generate a really good vision of older adults in our society,” says Kramer. “What they contribute to our society. Not a dependency model.”

The question now is, will we take advantage of the pandemic-induced upheaval in long-term care to create a better life for an aging population?

That’s a challenge worth embracing.

*Source: nextavenue.org*