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Palace employees go 'above and beyond' during Hurricane Irma

BY JANIS R. EHLERS

It often is said that it takes a village to raise a child, but it also takes a village to ensure the safety and wellbeing of seniors during a natural disaster such as Hurricane Irma.

At The Palace Group, owners and operators of 7 South Florida senior living communities, the "village" of employees played a critical role in delivering exceptional care, peace of mind and a sense of normalcy for the communities' 1,200 residents.

"Having gone through all the hurricane seasons since 1980, and particularly through Hurricane Andrew, which affected our Homestead and Kendall communities, we have firsthand experience dealing with hurricanes and understand how devastating they can be," said Helen Shaham, president of The Palace Group.

"It was 'all hands on deck' for Hurricane Irma with 50 percent of our staff opting to bring their immediate family members to our communities to ride out the storm," Shaham added.

While each Florida senior living community is required to have a hurricane preparedness plan ap-

proved by the respective county and the Florida Health Care Association, every community has its own individual policy and procedures.

"It was The Palace team exceeding residents' and families' expectations and truly made the best of a bad situation," Shaham said. "Everyone worked together to keep residents' daily routine as normal as possible. From exercise classes to trivia and hurricane-themed activities, our programs continued uninterrupted."

At The Palace Coral Gables, for example, the maintenance team ensured backup generators powered the luxury rental community, allowing for entertainment director Pamela Parker and her team to plan a spectacular Luau. Residents donned leis and feasted on Hawaiian food prepared by the culinary team.

On Monday, Sept. 11, as employees of The Palace Royale assessed hurricane damages, team members halted their duties to ensure 85-year-old Arlene Krone was able connect with her daughter wanting to wish her a happy birthday.

Another daughter of a Palace resident — Maureen Magrath — also praised the team's efforts to aid in

communication between residents and families, saying: "I called Louise, a Palace nurse, and she gave me her personal cell phone number so I could check on how my mom was doing during the hurricane. This was very kind and above and beyond."

Employees of The Palace at Home, a Medicare-certified home health company, also played a critical role in ensuring residents' wellbeing. When local pharmacies stopped delivering medications due to the deteriorating weather conditions, a staff member drove to six different pharmacies, enabling residents to have much-needed medications.

"This is the dedication that exemplifies The Palace team. Many of our employees have been with us for decades and truly view our seniors as more than just residents. It's one of the things that distinguishes us from our competitors," Shaham said. "Now that our communities are 100 percent back to normal, we're all that much closer than ever before."

To learn more about The Palace communities or to schedule a tour visit www.ThePalace.org or call 305-270-7000.