

As Seen In...

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Holiday Caravan Brings Families Together

BY CHARLIE HUDSON

Moving up through a company to take on higher responsibilities is often a goal. With years in different organizations in the health care field and seven years in The Palace Group, Giulia Covella was looking forward to taking her position as the new General Manager for The Palace Gardens of Homestead. There are always transitions to work out, but business and management training does not include preparation for a pandemic and months of lockdown. "My first year has been exciting," Covella acknowledges.

Careful protocols to ensure safety of the residents and the workforce have resulted in few COVID-19 cases. Although physical health measures are top priority, quality of life is important as well. This can be especially true during the holidays and Sunday, December 20, 2020, the staff pitched all in for, "An Enchanted Holiday Caravan Car Parade, allowing families to celebrate the season with loved ones from their decorated vehicles."

There were lights, decorations, music, costumes, cookies, and hot chocolate to enjoy. Kim Hart and her sister Susan Sorrentino were at the Palace to celebrate with their parents, the Penders. Hart said, "Of course it's been hard. We're a big, close family and this is the first time we've canceled Thanksgiving dinner since our parents couldn't come out. But look at this evening; the Palace has done an amazing job keeping our parents safe and now we can celebrate Christmas together safely."

Charles Pender said, "The Palace is really going all out to celebrate, and we really appreciate it." His wife Mary chimed in, "Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God Bless America."

"We had a small drive-thru at Halloween and wanted to do something bigger for Christmas to have it as similar as possible to a regular Christmas," Covella explained.

As for daily routines, they have adapted many of their activities through Zoom and have continued to be creative with events like themed cocktail hours with staff and residents in costumes. In September they were able to have "glass visits" and they were the first facility in the area to partner with Eversound Technology to enhance the visits. A press release from the company describes this advance. "Residents in senior living communities are finally able to safely reconnect with family and friends following the COVID-19 surge. The visits are made possible by a new two-way



Families decorated their cars with Christmas lights to add to the glee of the celebration.



Susan Sorrentino as the Grinch and her sister Kim Hart standing, came to celebrate with their parents, Charles and Mary Pender (center). Giulia Covella, Palace Gardens Manager, (in front) joined them.

communication technology launched this week by Eversound, allowing individuals to socialize through their window, from their balcony or at a safe distance outside."

From a what-comes-next perspective, The Palace Group has teamed with Walgreens Pharmacy for access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Long-term care facilities are the first in line, then assisted living. The Palace Gardens is in the process of completing required preliminary paperwork and obtaining consent forms. The anticipated schedule is sometime within the first week of January.

As much as everyone is hoping to return to regular visits as soon as it is safe to do so, Covella notes an important shift as the staff has assumed increased roles as companions. "This time has brought us closer to the residents and their families."

While no one can predict what the situation will be in two or three months, the holiday caravan did bring smiles and a sense of celebration for the evening

To learn more about The Palace Gardens, visit www.ThePalace.org or call 305.247.0446.