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## The Palace at Coral Gables residents find silver lining to pandemic restrictions



Sisters Doris Cynamon, 91, (right) and Helen Scharps, 93, are knitting blankets for newborns in the NICU at area.



Margaret Steel, 89, practices on the piano. Prior to the coronavirus shutdown, she enjoyed piano lessons offered.

BY JANIS EHLERS

As the corona virus pandemic continues to restrict visits by families and friends to Senior Living Communities and limit residents' ability to venture out, there are older people making use of these unprecedented times and finding fulfillment.

At The Palace at Coral Gables, an active retirement community in South Florida, social director Pamela Parker finds the pandemic has a silver lining. While she and her team have channeled their creative resources to developing activities residents can enjoy while social distancing, the residents have adapted their interests and discovered new pursuits.

Margaret Steel, 89, for example, played the piano as a child. Prior to the corona virus shutdown, she enjoyed piano lessons offered by an instructor who came to The Palace.

With nonessential visitors barred, the instructor has not been able to teach at the community since February. However, Margaret has continued practicing every day. She's finding great satisfaction in her improvement.

She also spends her time helping Parker coordinate the community's "Voting-by-Mail" campaign. Steel calls her neighbors to remind them to request their ballots for both the August primary and November general election.

Sisters Doris Cynamon, 91, and Helen Scharps, 93, are founding members of the community's Knitters Club. They have been knitting blankets

for newborns in the NICU at area hospitals. Although the hospitals are not accepting blankets at this time, they have knitted almost 100 to be donated once restrictions are lifted.

Known as the community's "Cookie Lady," Sandy Davis, 87, has continued baking cookies.

She loves baking and treats the staff and neighbors to special homemade cookies from recipes she has collected over the years. Davis also has baked cookies with the community's chef for local first responders. Chocolate chip, raisin oatmeal, pecan clusters and thumbprints are among her favorites.

The community's in-house TV channel is used for fitness programs, college-level lectures through Osher Lifelong Learning, entertainment and a Palace creation, Virtual Cabaret.

Parker employed technology and arranged for entertainers - who typically appear live on stage — to tape their shows from their home studios. The shows are replayed on The Palace's in-house TV Channel 95 for residents to watch in the privacy of their residences while social distancing.

"It's a win-win. We're giving our residents something special to look forward to and continuing our tradition of providing great entertainment twice a week, including a Saturday night show," she said. "The entertainers are paid, which is very important for these gig workers."

With social distancing often tied to feelings of isolation, residents at The Palace have the advantage of

never truly being alone.

"One-on-one visits from our Social Department ensure they are mentally and emotionally stimulated," Parker said.

Doris Kushman, 96, continues her daily exercise by walking indoors around the community's plaza. An avid reader, she enjoys the "Read Along Book Club" that is now broadcast on The Palace's in-house TV channel. Parker's engaging voice brings book chapters to life, and currently, participants are reading *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett.

Discovering inner talent has been fulfilling for Dr. Stanley Slesnick, 93. The retired obstetrician-gynecologist never had time to write during his long career in Newbury, NY.

Having moved to The Palace, he began writing autobiographical stories. He's penned over 100 articles, many focused on family and his youth and sprinkled with memories from his medical practice.

"These are certainly challenging times, but we're so happy how well our residents are adapting in weathering the corona virus pandemic," Parker added.

The Palace at Coral Gables is an Independent and Assisted Living Community for active retirement living with luxurious amenities and services. To learn more about The Palace at Coral Gables, please call 305-445-7444 or to view a list of The Palace Group's Senior Living Communities, visit [www.ThePalace.org](http://www.ThePalace.org).