

Transcript
Coronavirus Q & A – Episode 10
June 5, 2020



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Friday, June 5, 2020. Welcome to Ed Brubaker, Living Branches President/CEO. And we're here again with one of our weekend videos. I think we should call them weekend, not Friday, because that's when people see them.

Edward Brubaker: That's right. Friday already. Wow!

Alex Metricarti: A note for persons that do like to check the test results on the website. We are going to be revamping the way we display these. As we are testing more and more people and people are changing from positive to negative and negative to positive, it's getting harder to track all of that. So just to summarize, in Living Branches, the only place where we have residents testing positive for COVID is Dock Terrace. This week we did test residents in Park View at our Souderton campus. We had previously tested residents in Health Care at Souderton. Of course we have tested residents in Harmony House at Dock Woods. Everyone there is negative, so the only positive cases we have at Dock Woods in our Health Care areas there (Dock Terrace). Unfortunately we have had a significant number of persons pass away in Dock Terrace, which is difficult for residents, family, and staff, of course. But we have some, perhaps, maybe more positive news coming out of Dock Terrace with the results of testing we've done there. And Ed, I know we were just talking about this in our coronavirus response team meeting, but we retested 20 people in Dock Terrace who were negative or who had shown symptoms before and weren't showing them now. And of 20, 18 are testing negative for the second time. So we can officially talk about those persons as being recovered.

EB: Yes that's right. And that is very positive news and what we were hoping for. It was what we experienced in Harmony House a few weeks ago and then it was a matter of time until we got there in Dock Terrace. The numbers of persons that we have that are still waiting for the first of what we hope to be two tests, and hopefully both negative, I think we have around 8 persons in that category. So hopefully over the next week or two, they will get to the point symptomatically that we can say, it's now time to take them to their first test – hopefully to their first negative test, and then hopefully their second negative test, so we can get to the place where we can say Dock Terrace is all negative at that point in time. So we feel like we're getting to that place, but hopefully it will be soon. But it has been quite a journey to get there.

AM: I did appreciate the story that we heard today of the resident who was in Dock Terrace who had previously tested positive and then tested negative and as he was getting his second test, he was hoping very much that test would be positive so he could continue to stay in Dock Terrace as he's having such a good experience.

EB: Yes, I think it was specifically on one of the wings of Dock Terrace, and he's a fun man, and he really appreciates the good care and didn't want to leave his friends, and so he did get his wish. But eventually we hope that he will also test negative and get back to a bit more normalcy at Dock Terrace.

AM: I think everyone will be ready for that.

EB: Yes. Absolutely.

AM: This is the part where we talk about questions from families and residents. And I've received a lot of questions this week and they have all been around one topic. And that is: When can we come and see our parents? Or when can I see my kids or my grandkids? And so visitation is, of course, is the big topic that people are interested in, especially as Bucks county and Montgomery county are now moving to yellow in the pandemic guidelines. So why don't we talk about that a bit.

EB: Sure, absolutely. The thing we have to remember, though, is red, yellow, and green mean different things for us as a retirement community, as a place serving seniors, than the general community. And if you go to Governor Wolf's reopening plan website, you will see that each category – red, yellow, and green – each says: restrictions in place for congregate living. As for us, we would consider congregate living to be primarily focused on Health Care (skilled nursing), and Personal Care, and of course, Personal Care memory support (Harmony House and Park View). So when you look at that, just on the fact of it, it means nothing is changing even through green. And so it's easy to think about green and say that means go, right? That means going back to where we were. And absolutely not. Even for the general public it doesn't mean that either. There are still restrictions in green. So there will be additional phases of green, if you will, too. Having said that, as we think about that, we are focused on what are the things we can change and frankly for us, in Health Care and Personal Care, really nothing between red and yellow. And as our medical director, Dr. Haimowitz, said, "we're red." The rest may be going to yellow, but as far as the rules for us, it's red. That's hard. We don't like to hear that. We don't want those restrictions to be on. But even going to green, the virus is not gone. There are still residents, many residents and staff, who have never had the virus. And so we need to be aware of that and try to protect people as much as we can. We're trying to manage the reality of the physical needs and emotional needs of everyone here – staff and residents. But also balancing that with safety concerns, too. So, we do have a task group working on that – a sub group of the coronavirus response team – and working on some things. I would also note, there won't be huge changes for Residential Living, either. We're working at those things and should in the not too distant future be able to announce some things. But I would also reflect that some local communities, during the past months, in Residential Living were much more restrictive than we were and so they're just starting to get to where we are now. I know one where they could not leave campus. Period. End of story. And so we never got to that point and I think it's been OK

for us. But the bottom line is we are still in restricted times and we wish it were otherwise, but the virus is still here, even though it may feel like it's not.

AM: After this today, I'm going to go to the Dock Woods campus to film a video with some of our infection control people where we will be reminding staff members to make friends with your facemask because you'll be wearing it for a significant portion of the future.

EB: Yeah that's exactly right. These things are not going away anytime soon. I think the worst thing that could happen is that we think green means go and everything is OK and we start not doing the things that are just smart – physical distancing, wearing a mask, all those kinds of things – washing our hands – that a *huge* thing. And so we just need to be aware of that as we move forward. To be attentive to those things that – to be honest – especially washing hands and keeping your hands off your face – those are good things pre-COVID, as well, we just didn't do them as well as we should have.

AM: I think the other danger with negative test results is that can also lead to a sense of complacency.

EB: Oh absolutely. And as we know, you can have a false negative. And so if you think, "Oh I'm negative." And you have symptoms, but "oh the test said negative," you need to pay attention to your symptoms, too. But also recognize that negative doesn't mean freedom. It means you're negative at that moment in time of the test. So it's really important. The other thing I would note, too, is we actually implemented a plan for our staff, in planning for their vacations this summer. And so they need to fill out paperwork that they've never had to fill out in the past to look at going on a vacation. And so there's been a few that probably are going to need to make changes to their vacation. A lot of it has to do with air travel and those kinds of things still being problematic from our perspective. But people are still able to go to other places, as well, particularly if they're driving and that kind of thing. But I guess the point I want to make is, from a working to protect our residents, we're trying to have another level of review. And it's partly a reminder, as well, to staff to say: Think about these things. Be safe. Be careful. Think about how what you do could impact what goes on here. So that's something we're doing.

AM: That's a really good point. As we talk about moving from red to yellow to green, that makes it sound like it's only one direction. And it is entirely possible that we could be in yellow or in green, and based on what's happening in the county or even in our own campus, we're going back to more restrictive areas.

EB: That's exactly right. I think in the news we hear that as well. We don't think about that as much because we think it's marching in the other direction, but yes that's absolutely correct.

AM: I think it will be interesting – physical distancing or social distancing seems to essentially have been abandoned as so many people are out in the streets protesting or marching. It will be interesting to see if there are spikes in cases based on what's happening there. I've seen a lot of people wearing mask, so perhaps it won't be.

EB: I didn't see quite as many masks at the lake of the Ozarks on Memorial Day weekend. And that's the thing. We've heard stories about family interactions with the birth of children and you just do something and then you think later, "ooh!" That was unprotected contact and it can come back to bite you. So we just need to be very, very aware.

AM: This has been an amazing week in the United States when we look at what's happening in the news. And we talk a lot of times about how Living Branches is an oasis, but for all of us, it just seems like there's an awareness of justice and equity issues that maybe is unprecedented, at least in my lifetime. What are you seeing and thinking?

EB: As I was thinking about this week and these past months and this year – all these kinds of things – a lot of thoughts go through your mind and a lot of emotions. This has been a very emotional time. It can be hopeful at times, too, when you think "wow we're making some progress." But then it can be frustrating as you try to navigate forward with all kinds of differing things going on. This has been a very long – I would say – three months for all of us – staff and residents. And I know for myself. And gauging my own emotions – my wife would be able to reflect on some of that and myself, too, as I evaluate that. This morning, for some reason, it hit me pretty hard. But I would also reflect on that and say it's a combination of things, too. It just feels in our country, for a while already, we're focusing too much on what divides us as opposed to what brings us together. And that, from my perspective, is very disheartening. And I think we all have some responsibility to work at that. So that's been going on for a period of time. And then of course coronavirus these last few months has been unbelievable. I've never experienced anything like this in my career – ever. And most people could probably say that. So as I think about 2020, it's been quite the ride to date. So you have those things going on with coronavirus, and I want to share something that a friend sent me about reflections on the year, so maybe I'll read that. And I also want to reflect on what's been happening more recently, like in the past two weeks. And part of the reason I want to reflect on that is the reality is we live in this wider society. We have persons of color who work for us, who experience things on a day to day basis that I never experience as a white male – ever. We need to acknowledge that. We need to recognize that and say this is happening. But first I want to read this. It looks like Leslie Dwight had written it:

What if 2020 isn't cancelled? What if 2020 is the year we've been waiting for? A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw that it's finally time to force us to grow. A year that screams so loud finally awakening us from our ignorant slumber. A year we finally accept the need for change. Declare change. Work for change. Become the change. A year we finally band

together instead of pushing each other further apart. 2020 isn't cancelled, but rather is the most important year of them all.

I thought wow.

AM: That's nice.

EB: I read that and that was not what I was thinking about 2020, I can assure you of that. Some of the things we've been observing over the last couple of months with coronavirus, but couple that with what has been going on in this country for some period of time, and I frankly feel the need again, as a white male, to declare right here on this video, that what I experience in this great land of ours is very different than many persons, and particularly persons of color. And I just feel like I need to acknowledge that. I'm not forcing other people to. But I need to. My experience is different. I'm in the position of power. And it was driven home to me in so many different ways. When you see the killing of this black man, George Floyd. And what impact does that have on black persons in America? Very different than the impact it has on me. And I think we need to find ways of putting ourselves in the shoes of other people. This is not about politics. In fact, this is not going to be a political discussion because it's not about politics. This is about justice. This is about mercy. This is about doing the right things. And I really, really do believe that. I feel we need to acknowledge that, though too, because these things impact our organization. They impact our relationships and we need to be aware of that. It's interesting, I was watching a video Malcolm Jenkins has done. And frankly, I was disappointed when he left Philadelphia because I thought he was a great football player, but I also admired him because he was a person that spoke for what he believed. And I will have to admit many times in my own life, I've hesitated to speak because I didn't want offend or I didn't want come across incorrectly, but I always had this respect, frankly, for people like him. And when I was watching that video – this man, by all intents and purposes, has been a very successful football player. He probably makes more in a game than I make in a year. But his deep sadness, his deep sadness on that video because of the injustice that I will never experience in this country just really hit me, very hard. The other thing that hit me – probably a year and a half ago – was Gwen Eagleson who is a resident of Living Branches on the Dock Woods campus, she had recommended *The Color Purple* at the Theatre Horizon. It was playing in December 2018. And so Lucy and I had gone to that and it was amazing. I said to Lucy, "When Brandy comes home from Tennessee for Christmas we need to take her to that play." And we did. And it was emotional. You know, it's one of those things I kind of joke, "You're feeling emotion and you're trying to hold it back and you look around, did anyone see that?" That kind of thing. And that's what I experienced because it was powerful. It was an all Black cast. I talked with some of them when we were there with Brandy on the second to last night. It was powerful in just speaking with them about the connections they made with each other in the cast, as well. It was just amazing. But it reminded me again that I will never have that experience in this country, about that kind of experience in how other people relate to you. The story was not just about race relations – it's about a whole lot more, but it just reminded me again. And just recently there was a video that came out from Theatre Horizon with the cast and we want to share that today as the ending for this video. I know this video took a little bit of a different track this week, but I really do feel that it

is important for us to acknowledge what is going on in the world. My role as the leader of Living Branches, as we see sometimes in sports – “stick to sports.” No. We as leaders, we as people in society, we can speak into things as we see fit. And I, as a leader in this organization, have some level of responsibility, I believe, to point out things that we need to work at in this society, that we need to work at in this organization. So it’s just been kind of an interesting and emotional week for me. Our daughter lives in Philadelphia and a lot of things were going on there. And so, this song from *The Color Purple* is what we want to end with this week. It’s powerful and one of the things for me, that’s so powerful about it is that it talks about God being in all of us, being in all of us. And I think that’s what we as Christians would claim to believe, but if you think about, if you think about God not being out and about there, but God is in all of us. I hope that makes a difference as to how we treat each other. And so we want to end with this video and certainly if you have any reflections before we go into that, but it’s a pretty powerful message.

AM: I think that may be exactly the thing that disturbed me the most about the video we saw of Mr. Floyd and the officer on his neck. They clearly didn’t see him as a human being because you could never treat someone that you valued as a human that way. And if we as Christians believe that God is in all of us, we can’t behave like that.

EB: That’s exactly right. You really can’t.

AM: Well I’m looking forward to seeing this.

EB: Thank you. Alright, that is the end of our video but we do want to end with this message of hope, but also of love and of God being within each of us. Enjoy and have a good week.

[Celie]

Dear God, dear stars, dear trees, dear sky

Dear peoples, dear everything

Dear God

God is inside me and everyone else

That was or ever will be

I came into this world with God

And when I finally looked inside

I found it

Just as close as my breath is to me

[Company]

Rising (rising) (rising)

Like the sun

Is the hope that sets us free

[Celie]

Your heartbeat

Make my heart beat

[Celie & Congregation]

When we share love

Like a plate of corn

Like a honeybee

Like a waterfall

All a part of me

Like the color purple

Where do it come from?

Now my eyes are open

Look what God has done

[Company] [(Celie)]

It take a grain of love (grain of love)

To make a mighty tree (mighty tree)

Even the smallest voice (smallest voice)

Can make a harmony (harmony)

Like a drop of water (drop of water)

In the river high (river high)

There are miracles (there are miracles)

For you and I (For you, and you and I)

Like a plate of corn (like a plate of corn)

Like a honeybee (like a honeybee)

Like a waterfall

All a part of me (all a part of me, yeah)

Like the color purple (like the color purple)
Where do it come from (where do it come from)
Now my eyes are open (my eyes are open)

[Celie & Company]
Look what God has done

[Celie]
I don't think us feel old at all
I think this is the youngest us ever felt, yes

[Celie & Company]
Amen