

**Transcript**  
**Coronavirus Q & A – Episode 25**  
**September 25, 2020**



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Friday, September 25, 2020. I'm here today with Edward Brubaker, Living Branches President/CEO. Hello, nice to see you!

Edward Brubaker: Good to see you, Alex. And September 25 – I think that means next week is October.

AM: I don't know how that's possible.

EB: It's amazing.

AM: Time is flying.

EB: It certainly is. And we can't go trick-or-treating this year.

AM: In Royersford we have officially announced that we're going to let people do whatever they want. So you can come to Royersford and trick-or-treat.

EB: Oh I can! Can I wear a mask, then?

AM: You must.

EB: I guess a mask has a different connotation now.

AM: I think it does! We're a little bit lighthearted this morning. It's a fine thing to be. We have good results to talk about from our testing in Harmony House. Perhaps you'd like to share that.

EB: Yes we do. We went through the process of testing – a two week process - the 14-day quarantine, shutting things down. We were sad that we needed to do that but we're very

pleased that we were able to get through that testing. We had a staff member that was testing positive, which is why we needed to go into lockdown in the first place. And I'm glad to report that we didn't have anyone else who tested positive. Obviously we still need to go through the protocols because you need to go through that quarantine process and get out of the incubation period, but it is a very good thing. I can't say exactly why that was, but I do know this: in the beginning of the pandemic it was not until early April when the protocols changed to wearing a mask. So we have been expecting and requiring that in appropriate situations and most of what we do at work is in that category, other than this filming where we can be distanced. But we're doing that and I personally – I don't have the entire proof – but I believe that makes a huge difference. Does that mean it will never happen again as a larger break out of COVID? I don't know. I'd like to think so. But we don't really know what the future holds. But I am pleased to say it was one person and the rest were all clear and tested negative in all of the testing we did. And we had to do two cycles. So it's very good news.

AM: I was especially pleased that now this is twice that we've had that result at Living Branches. We had a case earlier this summer in Park View, where we had one person who tested positive and it didn't spread. And then we just repeated that at Dock Woods.

EB: That's right. And we haven't done a study on it so we can't say with 100% certainty, but when you look at what happened in the beginning and what happened now, I'd like to think that we learned. And certainly mask-wearing is a big part of that.

AM: Agreed. So we are super pleased with those results. I do just want to say that we continue to have a staff member at our Souderton campus who is experiencing COVID in their family. And we should still request prayers for that situation.

EB: Absolutely. It's a very sad situation. It did not connect with us as far as contracting COVID – that's not where it originated. But yeah, very sad and challenging situation. And while we won't go into detail or give names here, if people could remember them that would be very helpful.

AM: Also, more things that happened this week. I didn't get many questions from residents which maybe is an indication that this is kind of like the new norm and everybody is trucking along with what they need to do. But one thing that happened this week that will be providing new information for us in the coming weeks is that DHS has released some revised guidance, especially around the issue of visitation. So maybe talk a little bit about what our process is to digest that information and then – it's really interesting to see this coming out now.

EB: Yes. We have the coronavirus response team who will review these things ultimately, but we have a reopening or easing of restrictions task force that would work at those things. And basically what we do is we study what comes out from the state and how we want to implement

those changes within our organization. And certainly it's positive news when we can reopen things. As we were talking before recording, it is interesting because just because something is allowed or things are eased, doesn't necessarily mean it's safe. We can't assume it's safe and it doesn't mean we need to worry about this or that. It just means that in balance, the risk-reward equation, if you will, given the surrounding communities and the risk profiles, that it makes some sense to ease it up. But we were also talking earlier, too, that raising children – you can keep them safe – life would be much more boring and uninteresting - if you kept them in the house in a bubble. But that's no way to live, either. And so this is really trying to continue to find that balance. But we also recognize that different people have different risk tolerances, too. So I know people in the community that are still quarantining in their home. Some of whom have real good reason to, others who are just feeling like that's the best thing to do. And then you have other people who go to events or rallies or whatever the case may be without masks on. So you really have a disparate approach to it. So that's the challenge sometimes, because we have residents, particularly in Health Care and Personal Care, who their own personal risk profile may be different from what the state's requirements are. So living within that and trying to make sense of it because part of the challenge because it's the reality of living in community. Living in communities that have regulatory bodies overseeing them. And so we just need to continue to work at it recognizing that there's always going to be that tug and pull. But we absolutely want to find ways that the restrictions that are in place can be eased, because it's just important – the health and well-being, the emotional health and well-being of those that live here.

AM: And so we have that happening on one hand and on the other hand we're seeing news out of Massachusetts that people are being criminally charged in nursing homes for allowing COVID to spread.

EB: That's right. I'm not sure if it was a VA home or where, but 78 people died there. Which sounds like a lot and it is a lot. But I suspect it was a couple hundred beds in their facility. I didn't read all of the details of the story. But it just makes you wonder and think about things when you read things like that. I don't know anything in the details of that without reading it, but it's that balance. Because those of us that are conscientious, and I believe we have a lot of conscientious people in Living Branches, so we're certainly not purposefully doing things incorrectly. But it does cause some anxiety around that when you read what's happening in the industry. Having said that I'm not going to pass judgement on that other than to say that reading those things does affect your psyche as well because you never want to do those things that create a lack of safety for our residents. But we do need to balance the risk and reward equation as well.

AM: And then to add in – for us, I know the conversations that we have in coronavirus response team and with others in Living Branches community, “what is best for our residents?” is always at the heart of every question that we're asking. But when you say now we have government oversight, government opinions, government ideas coming in and they seem to change a bit it does make people a little nervous.

EB: It does. And we're trying to navigate through that and I think the best way to do that is through the wisdom of more than one people. The wisdom of a group can discern that. And I think that's why it's very helpful to have different people around the table on the coronavirus response team. I suspect it would be no surprise to people that you might be less risk averse than others on the team and so you advocate for that side. And that's very helpful. And it's helpful to have the persons that say, "well no, wait a minute, what about this?" And so together we can really find what that appropriate place is.

AM: It feels good. I suppose it's also good news I guess, that we should announce that we're getting to a point that it's time to shift our schedule of video releases.

EB: That's right. We had been doing these almost every week for quite a few weeks now. And sometimes you weren't available or I wasn't available. So it wasn't 100% every week, but things are changing. The newness of the situation is not there. Announcing the new things that are happening are not there. So we're looking at going to biweekly and I may only come once a month just because we want to keep people informed, absolutely, but even when we have a situation like in Harmony House, we have the protocols down, we have the communication processes there and ready, and so it's not something we have to announce as something new. It's just invoking what we have in place. And so, yes all good things come to end or come to a place of change. We just need to keep working at that and looking at that. Absolutely want to keep people informed though, but the new information is not as much rapid fire as it had been early on in the pandemic.

AM: So we won't have a video next week. We'll be back the week after that. If there's anything emergent of course we'll send out emails and put information on our website. Of course if anyone has specific questions please feel free to email them to [coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org](mailto:coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org) but it feels good to be out of the churn and excitement of this. And now we're settling into this and we know what we're doing and you know what we're doing and here we are.

EB: By saying this, this is far from over. We're six months in and I've said much to people's chagrin, probably at times, it could be another six months or more. But it's like anything in life. When you experience a crisis and then it becomes something you live with for the long term, you get acclimated. And it becomes the new reality that you need to deal with. So it's not over by any stretch of the imagination, it's still serious, we still need to pay attention, but it's more paying attention within life goes on. And we have a much better sense of what we're doing at this point.

AM: Absolutely. Thank you and we'll see you in two weeks!