

**Transcript**  
**Coronavirus Q & A – Episode 35**  
**January 15, 2021**



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Friday, January 15, 2021. Welcome to you and welcome to Ed Brubaker, our President and CEO. Nice to see you in person again!

Edward Brubaker: Yes, good to see you. And I guess you must have had positive news if we're in person.

AM: No I had negative news!

EB: Negative, positive news.

AM: Yes. I am very glad to be back. No one in my family caught Covid. Life is good.

EB: So according to protocols you were allowed to enter the office again.

AM: Correct. Let's hope they're correct.

EB: I hope so – cause if they're not, you know who I'm going after – and it's not you. Dominic are you listening?

AM: He'll be thrilled. We're being a little light hearted today and in a way we've have lots of good news to talk about. So let's start as we always do with a recap of Covid cases on our campuses. I'm very pleased to be able to say that for our residents, there is no one that is currently testing positive for Covid.

EB: Yes that is very good news. And it's been a while since we've been able to say that. And we're not sure this will be able to hold even with the positive news we'll report in a moment about the vaccine and the percentage of vaccine – but yeah, we're in a different plan than we were. Having said that, we're still in twice-weekly testing of Health Care workers because the positivity rates in Montgomery county are above 10% and also in Bucks county are above 10% - in fact, Bucks county is higher than Montgomery county. And of course, The Willows of Living Branches is in Bucks county. So in Personal Care we're doing every other week testing of staff.

In Health Care we're doing twice-weekly testing of staff. So while the other numbers feel really good and we celebrate, we're still very much in this pandemic. And certainly if you read about other states – California in particular – this is not over yet. So I think that's the risk, too, as we talk about the good news of the vaccine. This doesn't mean we can all put our masks away and hug and kiss each other again. It means that it's going to take some time, but we're moving in the right direction from our perspective.

AM: Well, and while we don't have residents testing positive on our campuses, we do have staff persons who are positive on all campuses. I think there are eight at Dock Woods, four at Souderton, and three at The Willows. So it does continue to impact us. And many of those are positive because they were tested. They're asymptomatic, but that of course is how you get to cancel the spread, so we're going to continue to do that.

EB: Right, exactly. And the CDC would note that asymptomatic spreaders are known to be a significant way that it is spread. So we just need to pay attention to that. It's important to do that.

AM: Well this past week has been all about vaccines at our campuses. Maybe just to recap – at Dock Woods we have had clinics where we've been able to vaccinate staff, Health Care residents, Personal Care residents, and Memory Care residents. Yesterday at Souderton we had our first clinic there where we were able to vaccinate staff, Health Care residents, Personal Care residents, and Memory Care residents. And we do now have a clinic scheduled at The Willows which will be next Friday where we'll be able to vaccinate Personal Care residents. So that's a step up from where we were last week.

EB: That's right. And I think last week we were reporting that we discovered, or CVS discovered, they had additional doses and so we scrambled to vaccinate Personal Care – I think it was last Friday at Dock Woods. So we could do it in a more scheduled fashion this week at Souderton in the clinics there yesterday. So that was nice – when you have a little more time to plan. And now of course next week at The Willows. So yeah, we're really pleased to be able to have the ability to have Health Care residents who choose or who are able to get it – Health Care, Personal Care, and Memory Care. So we are still working on Residential Living and we'll have a report about that, too, but we're feeling good about where we're at at this moment in time.

AM: We've made progress with the percentage of persons being vaccinated. As we talked about last week, our residents want the vaccine. There's hardly any question about that at all. And so educating staff has been a large portion of what we've been doing over the last few weeks. And that's showing some promise.

EB: Yeah that's right. I think we are doing things as far as accountability. So we're reporting in and we can follow up - and not throw people up against the wall if they haven't gotten the vaccine, but to say what can relieve your fears or address your concerns etc. So we really want to try to do that. But being real clear too that we want you to get it. I'm not going to change that desire. But people may not choose to get it and that's their choice. But it is our recommendation that people do the research and figure it out. So we do strongly encourage staff and residents to get it. Having said that, there's more and more places that I'm reading that are going to require staff. It is certainly far from the majority at this point in time, and we're not at that point - that could change in the future - but we're not there at this point now. I know a local facility started being non-mandatory and I think it appeared that maybe the administrator was not happy with the less than 50% sign up, and so frankly, wrote some fiery memos to staff and made it mandatory and they're now terminating staff. So we're trying to thread the needle and find a balance. We know that people need to learn. We want to encourage them. And we really hope that the vast majority of staff, and residents, but staff particularly will get comfortable to the point of doing it. Having said that, we're hovering right around 70% at this point in time, which is higher than some other local facilities. So we're pleased to be where we're at now. But I really hope that we can get beyond 80%. But I also know this next 10% is probably going to be harder than the first 70%. But we're continuing to work at it and strongly encouraging - get the information, do the research, do the study and figure it out.

AM: One of the things we're trying to do with education is that Kathleen Roberts, our director of dementia care strategy, made some contacts with her friends at Penn - University of Pennsylvania medical system actually, and ended up connecting us with Dr. Drew Weissman, who is, as you well know, one of the co-inventors of the mRNA technology that is used in the vaccines. So he's going to come and speak to our staff persons, which I just love.

EB: Yeah that will be next Friday and we are hoping the technology works that we'll be able to record it and make it available on our website and maybe to other organizations as well. Because it is a new - not a new technology - it's the first time it was used for vaccines - but people are really astounded that you're getting a 95% efficacy rate. I personally believe, although I'm not a scientist so don't take it from that angle, but the mRNA technology - the teaching our body to fight the disease is probably where medicine is going and so they are suing this for other treatments as well. So for people that have the old view of vaccines, the Pfizer and Moderna is really taking a different approach and so people need to study that and look at it. If they're concerned about side effect and long-term, I understand that - we can't fully predict all of that. But at the end of the day, help me understand what the long term effect of Covid is - not just the people that are dying, but living. We have staff that have lost loved ones close to them. We have staff that have been out of work for months because of the side effects. I understand the questions about the vaccine, but we can't forget the fact that Covid itself produces some very harmful side effects, too. So it's like which are you going to be more concerned about. I for one, put my faith or whatever - I shouldn't say faith - my confidence in the vaccine because I certainly would rather have the vaccine preventing me from getting Covid. Having said that, I also fully recognize there are no guarantees about anything in life.

AM: I've also heard you frame the question around: alright, if you are hesitant about the vaccine, what is your other plan? Because we can't stay like this.

EB: That's right. So for those people who say let's just do it as is, that's not really a plan to be honest with you. So we believe the vaccine is the best plan. Part of it for me is getting to herd immunity, typically thought of at 70-80% - part of it for me, too, is: am I going to be part of that team, if you will, to get us there? Or am I going to be in the other 20% that depends on everybody else to get us to herd immunity. So for me, I've gotten comfortable with it and I absolutely say, I want to be part of the team that gets us there. Having said that, each person needs to figure things out on their own, quite frankly.

AM: For questions from residents today – this question is probably from 15 residents that I've spoken with or emailed. I know you have had calls, other staff have had calls. What they want to know is: When can Residential Living residents be vaccinated? What is the plan? And I feel like we need a breaking noise ticker tape noise or something like that, because we actually have something we can talk about!

EB: Yeah, we do. This is something that I've reflected to people – the last year has taught us to make decisions on the fly and learning things by the minute, by the hour, by the day and responding to them. I think that will be good for us to use in the future, but that's just the reality. There's new stuff all the time. So what we know today, may or may not be the things we need to follow tomorrow. And so the positive news is, and I think our industry has been putting pressure on – we now have dates that will be communicated to the Dock Woods residents for Residential Living. I think even as we speak some of the memos are being prepared and going out for next week. So we're very excited about that. So that is kind of the last area to get vaccinated. And I know Monique is working on it for Souderton as well and we're hopeful that we'll be able to do it there. At that point then all people who are interested – staff and residents – by the time those clinics are underway will really have been able to do everyone in Living Branches, who chose to and are eligible. So that's very exciting to be at this place. I know I have a phone call this afternoon with Rep. Malagari. He's giving me updates on some things and I'll be able to let him know the things we're experiencing too. Because I know our residents having been pressuring us – I get it and rightfully so. But we're really glad that we anticipate this is the way it's going to be. It's wonderful news actually.

AM: It's going to be a logistical nightmare from the perspective that we're going to have multiple clinics happening next week, but right now it is looking like Thursday and Friday of next week we'll be vaccinating Residential Living residents at Dock Woods and residents in Dock Manor at Dock Woods. I know Souderton has been very concerned about when that's going to happen for them and I know Monique is talking to CVS. You're talking to Representative Malagari. People are putting pressure all over the place. So we're hoping soon we'll be able to make an announcement about Residential Living at Souderton as well.

EB: That's right. And I've reached out to Montgomery county as well and I haven't heard back from them. But yeah, we're hopeful. I think things are looking up in that regard.

AM: From a resident perspective, it is so much easier to be on campus instead of having to go someplace. So that is our hope – that it would be at Souderton.

EB: My point is driving six pharmacists to our campuses is much easier than have 350 or 1,000 residents drive to the pharmacy. Logistically it should – it will be complicated to pull it off, but it's where we need to be so it's nice to be able to do that.

AM: Let's hope common sense will triumph once again and we can get that to happen. Please check your mailboxes, check your email if you're a Residential Living resident or family member because we will be sending communication that frankly, you should have already received by the time you're watching this video. Good news there.

EB: That's right.

AM: Final closing thoughts for us?

EB: I guess, the thought I would have today is it will be interesting to hear Dr. Weissman next week talk about the research he did, and his colleagues did on mRNA technology. And how that works in this regard. And again, our technology works, we do want to make that available for people to watch – residents and interested parties in the wider community as well. Because I know he's a strong believer that the vaccine is how we get to the other side of this, but he's also a strong believer in the approach to use mRNA to have in the vaccine this way instead of live virus. So it's a different approach from previous vaccines, so I think it's just important for people to learn and develop and understand this. And why we do believe it's our best hope to get to the other side of this. I know people don't agree, because I've had phone calls and meetings with people that don't agree with everything I've said. And that's ok. We can disagree. But we still in Living Branches, and I, Ed Brubaker, as CEO of Living Branches, still believe – I still strongly believe the vaccine is the best way to get to the other side. And to those people don't agree with that – they are absolutely entitled to their opinion, but my question is: what is your plan? What do you feel the best plan is then, if you're not agreeing with this one? I understand the perspectives, but we can't just kind of say: we'll, we're going to get through this. I don't know how, but we'll somehow figure it out. SO I believe God has given us intelligence, he's given us brains. He's given scientists brains. And so we need to use those brains just as we do in many other areas of life. We all drive cars, right? Or most of us do, except for Amish. But we use that technology that some smart person developed. I'm looking at this much in the same way. So get the knowledge, do the research, get comfortable, and if you can't, well, we're all entitled to our opinions.

AM: Ok great. Thank you. Thank you for watching. If you have questions, please send them to [coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org](mailto:coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org) or visit our website at [livingbranches.org/coronavirus](http://livingbranches.org/coronavirus) for more information.