

**Transcript**  
**Coronavirus Q & A – Episode 8**  
**May 22, 2020**



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Friday, May 22, 2020. I'm here again today with Ed Brubaker, Living Branches President/CEO, and we're here for another one of our weekly round-ups, I guess as we are saying now. Let's start with something a little more light-hearted this time. I hear that you, of course as am I, an Eagles fan. And I hear this week have an opportunity to make fun of those Steelers.

Edward Brubaker: Yes we do! Someone was saying that Ben Roethlisberger got in trouble with Governor Wolf for filming himself get his hair cut and his beard trimmed at a barber shop in the Pittsburgh area, or something like that. I don't want to get in trouble with Governor Wolf so my hair is still growing. It is getting to be a bit of a pain. I was threatening to maybe cut it over the weekend myself, so we'll see what happens. But it's one of those things that we're all in this together. And I think part of it is that when we see someone in a position of power or authority, I know the mayor of Chicago caught some grief a few weeks ago for getting her hair done as well, and when we see sports figures or whoever, people that are looked up to, we tend to call them out if they're doing something that doesn't seem like it's in keeping with what we're supposed to be doing. So, that was kind of humorous. I'm sure none of the Eagles would be doing that kind of thing, so it's just those doggone Steelers on the other side of the state.

AM: Of course! A few weeks ago I had a correction to make. Would you like to make a correction this week?

EB: I don't know if I would say a correction, but maybe just some additional information. I talked about the video we played at the end – the beautiful song that Jen and Sophia Lacher had sung – but there were also some other people in that video – the musicians. They were amazing because some of them played two instruments on the video at the same – well maybe not the same time – but they were both recorded. So Rich Moore was playing two different guitars, Mark was on guitar and keyboards, and Gary was on the drums. I did want to recognize them in addition to Jen and Sophia. I thought they all did such a great job.

AM: I heard a lot of positive comments about that song, so I'm glad we could recognize them.

EB: If anyone didn't hear it last week, just skip to the end of the video from last week and you'll see the lovely song about trust and giving our cares to God during this time.

AM: Very timely. Well let's take a moment and update where we are with our coronavirus testing at Living Branches. We continue to have no staff persons or residents at The Willows of Living Branches testing positive. At Souderton Mennonite Homes we have one staff person who has tested positive and is still out on quarantine. We'll talk about other testing at Souderton in minute. At Dock Woods, the only place we have active coronavirus cases right now is in Dock Terrace which is our skilled nursing area and we did do additional testing this week. We had three more residents test positive and eleven test negative within that same testing. So we were pleased with that. I was reflecting to someone today that it seems like we're seeing with our coronavirus tests that almost, at least the residents in Dock Terrace who have tested positive, have almost a bell curve. So there are a group of them that basically have no symptoms, a few who have no symptoms, a few who have pretty severe symptoms, and then a much higher group in the middle who have maybe one or two symptoms in the beginning and now are maybe getting better. So we're talking in our coronavirus response team meetings now about the fact that it may be time next week to look at retesting residents in Dock Terrace and Country Cottage (a wing within Dock Terrace) that initially tested positive and were asymptomatic or had one symptom and now are resolving. So that's great news.

EB: Yes it's very good news. We want to do that as part of our testing strategy like we did at Harmony House, where we had a negative test and then a second negative before we feel we can say, not that it's over, but that it's more under control.

AM: This week's really exciting news, knock on wood, with testing is at Souderton Mennonite Homes in Health Care. There we tested all residents out of an abundance of caution and a desire for knowledge. I'll let you share the results.

EB: We actually don't have all the tests back because there were two that we either need to redo or rerun – we're not entirely sure yet. But 64 of the 66 came back negative. That is really, very positive news. The challenge is that that was then and what happens next week or the following week we don't know. We want to celebrate that and say that's very good news. The other thing we know is that we do things fairly standard across Living Branches, so what might have been the thing that happened at Dock Terrace – I think we talked about this two weeks ago – what happened at Souderton – and so we're not fully knowledgeable about why all that is, because we do common things with HVAC, cleaning protocols, that kind of thing. Having said that, though, we are very happy and very pleased that that was the case at Souderton and we'll take that good news.

AM: Absolutely. And before everyone who is a family member of a resident in Health Care at Souderton emails me, this does not mean we are starting visitation. Unfortunately our campuses are still – I mean, all of us in Montgomery county – are still in red orders which means no visitation in nursing homes. But,

EB: Yeah that's correct. And I think even in yellow there's no visitation in nursing homes. This is really hard and very difficult. The challenge is what's going to be that thing – or I shouldn't say thing, but that person that may bring it in. Is it a visitor? Is it a staff member? Is it someone else? And so this is something we're talking about in coronavirus response team and our need to be developing a plan over time. We recognize we need to have something put together, to have some way to visit. But we do know visiting is not going to look anything like it did in February anytime soon.

AM: We'll be making announcements about that as things change. The big news I guess this week across the state, is that the state has released their comprehensive list on nursing homes, Assisted Living facilities, and Personal Care homes within the state of Pennsylvania, and how many COVID cases they have. I have to laugh at that, because two of our Personal Care communities aren't even on that list. It makes me question their data. But it's been all over the news. Would you like to talk about that?

EB: Sure. That is a challenge. Not that I'm looking to defend the state here, on the other hand, the amount of data that was being collected was huge. My feeling is they probably rolled it out too quickly and didn't think through making sure and maybe responded to pressure – I don't know what all happened. But the point is there were some inaccuracies. Even in some of our data – not as major with us as some other places. One of the challenges is – and frankly, frustrations for us – and we've talked with our legislators and I don't know that anything will be able to change – but there are so many places, literally, where we are inputting the same date – to the federal government, to the state government, to the county government, to the local municipality overlap all over the place. It's really, really frustrating. So we don't quite know where they got their date in the first place. But we do know we were just added another place where we are to input data on daily basis last week from the state. Saying we need to start last Saturday and we got the information at Souderton after 5:00 p.m. on Friday night. I'm not sure if they realize we're doing other things than collecting data, but let me tell you, we are. And that really is disheartening to me, to be perfectly blunt about it. And I really hope that can change for the future. I'm not convinced it's going to change much during this pandemic. But having said that, yes, they did go through that process. For us, part of me says, "well, bring it on," because our data has been on our website for weeks and weeks. We have not looked to hide any of our data. Sometimes, as we admitted in our video the other week, we made an error. And that wasn't something on the website, but we made an error in what we said in the video. And so we really believe strongly that we need to be transparent. And I've said this multiple times on these videos. So we want to make sure that we are transparent in what we do, so we've been that way. And so the fact that it's now on the front page of the Inquirer, I would say hurts a little bit, because there it is in black and white for everyone to see, not just those looking at our website, but at the end of the day it is what it is. I think the other thing to say, too, is that it's easy then to start looking at the number of deaths and the number of COVID positives and start making judgement calls about those facilities. And I would say my challenge to all of us, myself included, or all of the viewers, is to say, you really need to get more information before you can make the judgement call as to whether that is a good facility or a bad one. I can tell you this: both Dock Terrace and Souderton Mennonite Homes are 5-star rated facilities, staffing and everything else. So when you go on the governmental websites, we staff heavier than most

facilities. These are excellent places. Our staff works hard. One place we had it and one place we didn't. I'm sure there are reasons if we could ever work to figure them out as to what may have contributed to that, but it's very difficult, and so you can't really say one is a higher quality than another facility. But having said that, it is what it is. It's not out there. Unfortunately it wasn't all correct data. We'll deal with it. But it's not going to change how we behave, meaning we were transparent before, we will be transparent in the future, because really we believe that's the right thing to do. That's the best to build trust – to be transparent and straightforward with the data.

AM: And maybe we should point out, too, that as these weeks go by, presumably they are going to keep releasing and updating this information. So if there are times when what is being reported at the state level disagrees with what is being reported on our website, I would feel pretty confident saying our website is more accurate.

EB: Yes, that's right. Because we even know that at Dock Terrace, at that moment in time, the numbers were correct for residents, but I think it had zero or an asterisk or something for number of staff positives and that's not correct. But go to our website and it is correct.

AM: I've had a couple people this week making comments about what are we learning about COVID. We've talked about the fact that it's a challenge because this is a brand new disease. And so we don't know a lot about it, no one knows a lot about, and people are wondering what are we trying to do to learn, to talk to experts – like who are we reaching out to and who is assisting us in this journey.

EB: That's a good question and a good point. The reality is there are some experts, I think, but even the experts are learning. I mean, there's new symptoms. Over the last three months – stomach issues, or other things related to that were not part of it. If you recall, at one point they said the lack of sense of taste became a symptom. So there's things like that that are changing all the time. And frankly, when you think about it – when it's something you've never seen before you're going to learn things along the way. So that's the reality of this. We are trying to get as much information as we can. A few weeks ago there was an article about a facility, this was actually very early on, and Dr. Josh saw it in the Inquirer and said to our medical director, Dr. Dan Haimowitz, "Hey do you know this person?" and we had a phone conversation with him to try to learn from him. They had some experiences early on and so we were able to learn from him. We spoke with the medical director at Canterbury in Richmond, VA who had a large outbreak at the early stage. And so we had a conversation with him as well. And all of these people are very willing to speak to you. I mean we want to learn together. We've been reaching out to the county department of health, or I guess they call it, office of health, now, or something like that. Through Merewyn Sheeran, our infection control preventionist, we've been reaching out to them regularly. We just had a phone call a week ago with them. Unfortunately they couldn't give us a lot of new information about testing (that's also coming out in the news), but together hopefully we can work at some things. But we do find that we need to forge forward and come up with our own plan because it's certainly not being given to us as a template, "here

just follow this X Y and Z.” The other thing, too, more recently, and this hasn’t happened yet, but the CDC had given some people to the state of Pennsylvania department of health, and we’re going to avail ourselves to have a visit with them. What I’m most enthused about is, number one, they were originally just going to come to Souderton for whatever reason they were on their pick list, but they’re willing to come to Dock Woods. And we want them to come to both campuses. And we want them to see what’s going on. I want to know, “Are you seeing any differences? We like to think we’re similar, but what things are you seeing as an outside party?” The other nice thing is they said they’ll actually go onto the unit and my ears perked up with that because unfortunately a bunch of other persons from other regulatory bodies, etc. have tended to come in, sit in a room, look at our policies, and say, “Oh that looks great.” Well... that’s one way to look at things, but you really need to eye ball things out on the floor. What’s going on? Are people donning and offing their masks and PPE correctly, and that kind of thing. So I’m not sure exactly – we haven’t set it up yet, when that visit will take place, but hopefully in the next week or two. Those are things we’re trying to do. We’re reading articles, we’re sharing best practices, I’m on phone calls all the time, as are other members of the coronavirus response team – just trying to understand more and how do we learn together? Because we certainly are into this together.

AM: And then a question from a resident this week. Ethel wants to know, her family is making summer vacation plans and so what recommendations do you have for her as a resident?

EB: Part of that may be determined by what level of care you live in, such as Residential Living, what some call Independent Living, is different than Personal Care, which is different from Health Care. I think one of the biggest things is: be smart. Hanging out on the boardwalk in Ocean City without proper physical distancing and without a mask – I wouldn’t recommend it, to be perfectly honest with you. But if you’re going to the beach, maybe you have your own beach home there or have rented for the week and you’re going to appropriately distance yourself from others, your with people you know – maybe they’ve even been tested and you know they’re COVID negative, you know, there’s things like that you can do. I personally would not recommend flying on an airplane, but there’s people that do that all the time. But you need to make your choices there, too, because we’re even looking at that from a staff perspective. And frankly, staff, at this point in time anyway, if they’re going to get on a plane, that’s going to have consequences when they return to work as well as far as being out of work. So there’s those kinds of things that we are looking at. But read what you think is safe. Do the appropriate safety things. But frankly there’s no danger – I shouldn’t say no danger – but the danger is less when you’re outside is less than when you’re inside, particularly if you have the appropriate physical distance.

AM: Great! So now we’re going to do something a little bit different this week. We have an opportunity to do a giveaway to help support a local organization. And this is going to be a reward for residents for watching all of these videos and watching to the end.

EB: Or others a well – staff members or the general public.

AM: Yes, so tell them a little bit about what our idea is.

EB: Well MHEP, which is the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania, they have a wonderful facility in Harleysville and they have a dinner and movies – I think they're calling it – fundraiser a week from today, May 29. We worked it out with them that we could get some discounted tickets, 10 tickets that we could give out as a way to publicize their wonderful organization and their unique fundraising event. So if you don't win, you can still buy a ticket on their website, but it's just another way to partner with another conference related ministry in Franconia Conference and kind of a fun way to celebrate May next week. So we are going to give away 10 tickets and in a moment you'll tell them how they can win that. But again, if you don't win, feel free to go on their website and buy tickets for a pulled chicken dinner and then you have access to a number of movies you can watch online over the weekend, including movies by John Ruth and other people. So a great way to support a local organization.

AM: And it's worth noting that the dinner is a chicken dinner you can go get or they will bring to you at Dock Woods or Souderton Mennonite Homes to pick up. So if you're watching this and you're my mother and you're living in Michigan, it's not really going to help you to get that dinner but the movies are a digital download, so those can be enjoyed by anyone. I think we should have our audience respond to us by answering a question. So why don't we say that in order to win these tickets, what people will need to do is go email me at [coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org](mailto:coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org). We will pick 10 people at random from those who email in by Tuesday at midnight. When you email, answer this question for us: which Steeler were we making fun of at the beginning of this video? Any spelling of his name will be fine. Go ahead and email that and let us know how many tickets you would need – one or two – and we will pick the winners Wednesday morning and send you back an email with more information. I think it's a great way, like you said, to support a local organization and hopefully do something a little bit fun.

EB: Best of luck to everyone as you're sending in your answer to which Steeler we were making fun of at the beginning of this video.

AM: And next week we'll need to pick on an Eagle I guess.

EB: Maybe the New York Giants, or the Dallas Cowboys.

AM: Yes of course! Thank you all for watching and we'll see you next week.