

**Transcript**  
**Weekly Update**  
**January 29, 2021**



Alex Metricarti: Hello! I'm Alex Metricarti, Chief Marketing and Public Relations Officer for Living Branches. Today is Friday, January 29, 2021. Ed Brubaker, President/CEO, is not available today so it is just me providing some updates for you. There is a lot going on at Living Branches this past week, so I wanted to be sure to keep you up to date.

Let me start with our roundup of where we are with Covid cases. Right now we still have one resident at The Willows of Living Branches who is testing positive. That person remains asymptomatic which is very encouraging. We have two staff persons throughout all of Living Branches that are testing positive. One of those is at The Willows and the other one is at Souderton Mennonite Homes. Dock Woods has no one testing positive right now.

As a result that we are seeing a decline in our cases we are working right now on updating our pandemic guidance. This is the guidance that we had earlier in the fall that said what we were doing for visits, for dining, for activities, and all those kinds of things. So we'll be updating that today and releasing it. Hopefully you'll get it before you see this video.

One of the challenges going forward is that our ability to reopen our campuses is entirely based on how many people we have that are testing positive for Covid. Right now Dock Woods has no one, so they are planning to reopen on Monday. Souderton Mennonite Homes still has a few people who we need to finish that 14-day quarantine and testing period. After that is done they will be looking to open up at various times next week. And The Willows as well – once they are done their quarantine and testing time, they will open up. So please keep checking your email. We will be sending updates describing what we are able to do.

Essentially, for persons in Health Care, Memory Care, and Personal Care, we are looking to get back to the facilitated visits that we were doing in common spaces within in the community – what we were doing in the fall before we had to shut down because community spread became so widespread. So that would be wonderful. We know everyone wants to visit in your resident's room, but unfortunately at this time we still have no updated guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health or the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services that might explain to us when and how we will be able to make that happen. So we are going back to our old guidance and putting back into place what we had in the fall.

For Residential Living, our campuses are still not open for visitors for Residential Living. What we are going to do is tie that reopening to the positivity rate in Montgomery and Bucks counties. Once that positivity rate gets down below 5%, then we will look at reopening our campuses for

Residential Living residents and visitors. Right now the rate in Montgomery County is 8%, which is down from 10% and higher just a few weeks ago. So the rate is dropping steadily and we are pleased with that.

But just a reminder it is elevated, so if you are a Residential Living resident out in the community grocery shopping or stopping to see family – something along that line – please make sure you are continuing good infection control practices – wearing your mask, practicing physical distancing, and using hand sanitizer frequently so that you can make sure you are not contracting the virus.

As I said earlier, the challenge with all of this is that if we get people testing positive again, we're going to need to close down that area of community life until people are no longer testing positive. So we want to be sure we are doing anything we can to keep infection to a minimum.

Speaking of masks and guidance, I had an interesting email from a resident at Dock Woods that I thought I would share a little bit about. This person was reflecting that there had been some changes in the new recently with regard to recommendations about face masks. We're seeing now that maybe cloth masks aren't effective, especially towards the new strains of the virus we're beginning to find. There are recommendations about doubling up masks. So this person was asking me, "What do you all recommend that we do?" So I asked this question in our coronavirus response team and I got an answer from Dr. Haimowitz, our medical director, and Merry Sheeran, our infection control nurse. What they both said is they do not recommend for daily use that people buy a KN-95 or any type of N-95 mask. The KN-95 which you can get – they're pretty readily available – they ride up on your face as soon as you start talking, which is our experience. So they allow a lot of air to come in that is not coming in through the mask. So they do not recommend a KN-95. What they do recommend is a plain old surgical mask, but you want to make sure it is the three-ply surgical mask. The manufacturer doesn't matter so much, but a three-ply surgical mask is their recommendation if you're concerned about which type of mask is best. They also suggest that you stay away from bananas or gators. You want something that fits fairly close across your face.

You might notice that I have on a fun t-shirt. You'll start seeing more of these shirts. We're giving these to staff once they have their second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. We have run two second-dose clinics at Dock Woods, so you'll start to see more of these. We're also ordering ribbons that go on staff name badges when they've had two doses of the vaccine. So hopefully that will be something a little bit fun while we're still continuing to remind people of the importance of being vaccinated.

If you have a moment and you would like to educate yourself – I feel like we've been doing a lot of education about the vaccine, if it is effective, if you need to worry, these types of things. We've been doing and trying to provide a lot of education providing that. We had a wonderful

opportunity last week. Dr. Drew Weissman, MD, PhD, is an infectious disease expert from Penn Medicine. He was instrumental in developing the mRNA technology that is the backbone of the Pfizer vaccine which is what we're all receiving. So we reached out to him. Kathleen Roberts, our director of dementia care strategy, was able to get ahold of his assistant at Penn through some of her contacts and he was very happy to come and do a webinar with us. So we had the opportunity to open that up to staff people, some persons at Penn, and some persons in the wider community, but to really have a great opportunity to ask him about the vaccines, how do they work, why do they feel they are safe, what do they know about any potential long-term side effects – some really good questions. That webinar is posted on our website on the coronavirus page. It's about 45 minutes and it's a Zoom meeting, so it's not the most exciting thing to look at, but the information is really – I thought – quite helpful if you want to get more educated about the vaccines.

And we are having Covid vaccine clinics all over the place right now. As we speak today, residents in Health Care, Memory Care, and Personal Care have already received or are receiving their second dose. We have a clinic coming up on February 4 at Souderton Mennonite Homes where residents in Health Care, Memory Care, and Personal Care will receive their second doses. February 5 will be a clinic at Residential Living at Souderton for first doses. And February 11 and 12 we'll be back at Dock Woods for Residential Living residents and Dock Manor residents. And then February 12 at The Willows of staff and residents. So a lot of vaccinating going on in the next few days and weeks, which we are just thrilled to see.

As you are all aware, this is something we are not requiring for staff or residents at Living Branches. So it is your choice whether you choose to be vaccinated or not. But we strongly encourage people to take advantage of this opportunity. We're not sure how people are going to be vaccinated if they're not getting vaccinated at our clinics and want to do so later. There have been a lot of rumors, but not a lot of facts. So if you're at all thinking about it, I encourage you to take a minute and educate yourself and take advantage to get vaccinated at one of these clinics.

If you have any questions about that, you can email [vaccines@livingbranches.org](mailto:vaccines@livingbranches.org). I would be happy to respond to your question or get the right person to respond, depending on what the question is. And in general, if you have questions about our Covid response and what is happening, check the website at [livingbranches.org/coronavirus](http://livingbranches.org/coronavirus) or email [coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org](mailto:coronavirusquestions@livingbranches.org).

I hope you have a great week. I can't believe it's just about to be February. It seems like time is flying, but that is wonderful because we are all, I'm sure, looking forward to spring and life getting back to normal. Thank you!