

Rand Aid review

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Rand Aid unites in the face of adversity

Rand Aid Association's staff and residents have shown their mettle during the national coronavirus lockdown by adapting and innovating to promote wellbeing.

More than two months into the lockdown, Rand Aid, which has a combined 1 848 residents and 448 staff members, recorded its first positive cases. Residents, staff and essential external service providers were affected. Rand Aid had a carefully formulated coronavirus risk management strategy in place and the necessary measures to track, trace, treat and isolate patients were urgently implemented.

By June 25, 26 residents and staff members across all Rand Aid properties had tested positive. Of these, five people were still fighting the virus, 19 had recovered and, sadly, two care centre residents had passed away. Rand Aid extends its deepest sympathy to their loved ones.

"The projections for COVID-19 infections show that they are likely to escalate in the coming months, which recent statistics indicate is now starting to occur," says Rand Aid CEO Peter Quinn.

"Despite the many precautions we have taken and put in place, we remain vulnerable to any person who unknowingly has the virus, as they may be asymptomatic. Also, as many of our residents have to visit hospitals and clinics and have various treatments and procedures from different healthcare providers from time to time, we had identified that the risk of infections was very real.

"We are extremely fortunate to have the assistance of the



local and provincial health departments, as well as the expert advice of our two in-house doctors," he says.

While Rand Aid has all the mandated health and safety measures in place and the wellbeing of its residents is

of paramount importance, heart-warming tales that speak of caring and compassion are unfolding behind the closed gates of its retirement villages and care centres.

These include programmes put in place to support the greater Rand Aid family both physically and emotionally, as well as resident- and staff-led initiatives that promote holistic wellbeing:

Rand Aid's **PHILOSOPHY OF CARE** towards its staff and the greater community is highlighted in an article on page 3.

CONNECTION WITH LOVED ONES – technology has been used to enable residents to maintain contact with their loved ones, despite physical visits not being allowed. More details can be found on page 4.

NEED TO TALK? Rand Aid's community care co-ordinators are just a call away. Find their numbers on page 4.

COMMUNICATION and CARING have been of the utmost importance from the start. Turn to page 5 to read about efforts to keep residents, staff and family members updated on all coronavirus developments, as well as efforts to show residents that they are deeply cared about.

ALL HANDS ON DECK – A high level of willingness to help where possible has been shown by members of the greater Rand Aid family. Find out more on page 7.

The **MASK-MAKING PROJECT** captured the attention of many residents and the results were wonderful. Read more on page 8.



Inyoni Creek village resident Dawn Kemp with some of the masks that have been made by Rand Aid's residents.

COVID-19 24-hour hotline number: 0800 029 999

Zero-data government website: coronavirus.datafree.co

Pioneering people-centred care

Ron Smith Care Centre became the first organisation in Africa to achieve Milestone

2 on the Eden Alternative® Registry recently.

Debbie Christen, Rand Aid's Manager: Recreational Programmes, who is very involved in driving RSCC's Eden Alternative journey, says it has been a privilege to engage with residents and staff and to help them find meaning, joy and purpose in their lives. **STORY ON PAGE 2.**



Ron Smith Care Centre pioneers personalised care

Whoops of joy rang out when Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) became the first organisation in Africa to achieve Milestone 2 on the Eden Alternative® Registry.

Founded in America, the Eden Alternative is revolutionising the way in which elders are cared for. The core concept is about teaching us to see places where elders live as habitats for human beings rather than facilities for the frail and elderly. Eden Alternative thus sees aging as a continued stage of development and growth and not as a period of decline.

Four milestones have to be reached in order to fully master the Eden Alternative philosophy. RSCC began its Eden Alternative journey in 2012, when a presentation was made to the Rand Aid board. At the end of 2016, after a process of physical, cultural, personal and organisational transformation, the criteria for Milestone One was reached and the care centre became only the second in Africa to achieve Eden Registry membership.

In 2018, it achieved registry renewal, which is required every two years. Currently, only four other South African organisations have achieved Milestone One.

The awarding of Milestone Two happened at a video conference because of the coronavirus lockdown in South Africa. Taking part were Rayne Stroebel, the Eden Alternative Regional Co-ordinator: South Africa; Magda Pienaar, the Executive Director; Yolande Brand, Certified Eden Educator, and RSCC management and staff. The conference ended in jubilation when Rayne announced that the care centre had met all the criteria for Milestone Two.

"This is a momentous event," said Rayne, referring to RSCC as an Eden Alternative pioneer.

"Not many other homes globally have sunk their teeth into the milestones the way RSCC has," he said. "It has been remarkable to witness the growth over the years. I have huge gratitude for the wise leadership that comes from every one of you."

He said that the Eden Alternative philosophy has filtered into the very fibre of Rand Aid Association.

The Eden Alternative difference

"The Eden Alternative initiative is truly excellent for Rand Aid and very necessary to ensure we bring the highest level of care and wellbeing to our residents," says Rand Aid CEO Peter Quinn. "I would like to thank each and every staff member at every job level and in every position, who collectively made an important contribution to ensuring our res-

"With such a narrow focus, it is easy to concentrate only on the requirements of a person's illness, age or disability and to overlook the social, emotional, spiritual and growth needs of the person. Often, their personal needs, preferences and dreams are not considered.

"The Eden Alternative philosophy has enabled us to see the person and not the patient. Each person who comes to live with us has a history, has memories, dreams, aspirations and a need to be acknowledged for who they are.

"Our home is now their home and we need to create a warm, loving and caring environment where each person can experience a life worth living. Our residents are not here to be treated and discharged; they are here to live in their new home.

"They must feel loved, secure, experience joy, feel they belong, must be able to participate in meaningful activities and make choices on what affects them most," she says.

Thanks to the Eden Alternative, RSCC has a more relaxed atmosphere, she says. "Families are free to visit any time; warm relationships between residents, families and staff prevail as well as a general spirit of optimism and hope.

The care centre is a place where residents and staff can have fun, where life can be enjoyed and where achievements are celebrated and losses acknowledged and shared. It has become a human habitat," says Zabeth.



Rayne Stroebel, the Eden Alternative Regional Co-ordinator: South Africa with Zabeth Zühlendorff, Rand Aid GM: Services and Advance Division at a ceremony in 2016 when Ron Smith Care Centre became the second organisation in Africa to become a member of Eden Alternative South Africa Registry. As a result of the coronavirus lockdown, a public celebration of the Milestone Two recognition could not be held.

idents' wellbeing. Each one is of equal importance and all are highly valued."

Explaining the care centre's success, Magda says that RSCC offers personalised care to their residents, which takes into account their holistic wellbeing and not just their physical care. "RSCC's care partners are committed; they work well together as a team and value relationships. They give recognition and celebrate achievements," says Magda.

She says she is inspired by the growth and development of individual employees over the years.

Zabeth Zühlendorff, Rand Aid GM: Services and Advance Division, says the care centre's Eden Alternative journey has been transformational. "Quality care has always been measured against objective criteria and standards that equate homes for older persons with hospitals or nursing homes, with a primary focus on nursing care.

Rand Aid runs a number of retirement villages and two care centres and although RSCC has pioneered Rand Aid's Eden Alternative journey, the philosophy of people-centred care is being spread throughout the organisation.

For information on Eden Alternative South Africa, please visit their website at www.edenalt.co.za. More can be learnt about RSCC at www.randaid.co.za.

Care philosophy during COVID-19 and beyond

When Rand Aid Association was formed in 1903, it gave assistance to the destitute, the aged and to men left jobless by the Anglo-Boer War. In 1929, it again stepped up to support people hard hit by the global financial crisis and depression of 1929. Today, that ethos of caring remains firmly entrenched in the non-profit organisation. Rand Aid – which runs four independent-living retirement villages, two care centres for older persons and a rehabilitation centre for men battling substance abuse – has gone above and beyond to assist staff members and the wider community during the coronavirus pandemic.

“It is really heart-warming to know what Rand Aid is doing over and above its normal welfare mandate,” says Graham Brokenshire, a resident of Rand Aid’s Inyoni Creek retirement village, who is also one of two village representatives on the Rand Aid board of management.

Many people have lost their jobs as a result of the national lockdown and this has impacted a number of Rand Aid’s over 400 staff members, whose spouses or adult children are suddenly unable to contribute to the household income. “Many of these families are on the breadline,” says Rand Aid CEO Peter Quinn.

As a **caring employer**, Rand Aid is presenting food vouchers to lower-salaried employees, to be redeemed at Shoprite Checkers stores. The vouchers will be given out for three months, after which the situation will be re-assessed.

“We hope this helps put nutritious food on the table and ensures the immune systems of our more vulnerable employees and their families are not compromised,” says Peter.

In addition, to lessen the risk of exposure to the virus on public transport, employees were given the option to be accommodated at the various Rand Aid properties. Sixty employees opted to say on site. These staff members receive three meals a day and have their laundry done.

“Our employees are very aware that they are at risk as they travel to work and back home on taxis. In addition, many live in densely populated areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain,” says Peter.

Winnie Mapekula, who is the receptionist at Rand Aid’s head office and who has been an employee since 2006, took up the accommodation offer from the start of the lockdown.

“Not only am I saving on transport

costs, but have avoided the risks I would have been exposed to by using public transport,” she says.

Ordinarily, Winnie leaves home at 5am and arrives at work after 7am. She takes two taxis to travel to work from her home in Kagiso, situated in the Krugersdorp area west of Johannesburg.

“Most people in my neighbourhood



Employee Emily Tshabalala accepted Rand Aid’s offer of full board and lodging during the coronavirus pandemic. Here Emily receives her plated lunch.

did not go to work in March, April and May because of the lockdown. However, given the nature of the work Rand Aid does, my work was considered essential. I would have been one of the few people on the streets at that time of the morning, and the thought scared me,” she says.

“Our accommodation at Rand Aid is comfortable and warm – everything is taken care of. Without having to face the stress of the commute during the pandemic, I have been able to focus better on my job and know that my risk of catching the virus is considerably reduced,” Winnie adds.

Another staff member who chose to stay at Rand Aid is Emily Tshabalala, who lives in Tembisa. She says because of Rand Aid’s gesture, she is not having to wake up at 4am to get

to work on time so she is well rested.

“Above all, I don’t have to worry about taking the coronavirus home,” she says.

Matron Avril Maltman, senior nursing manager at Rand Aid, says that since the start of the lockdown, absenteeism has been minimal. “Our staff members are extremely dedicated to their residents and their work. Many have chosen the safety of staying over despite being separated from their families.”

With schools being reopened on a phased-in basis, Rand Aid’s Wedge Gardens Treatment Centre hopes to resume the **soup kitchen** it runs at a local school, which has a high number of less fortunate students.

“The people undergoing rehabilitation for substance abuse at Wedge Gardens prepare the soup and then a Rand Aid driver takes it to the school. The project benefits hungry learners while also enabling our patients to take part in a meaningful activity that gives them a sense of purpose. This supports the rehabilitation process,” says Wedge Gardens manager Adèl Grobbelaar. Retailer Woolworths donates some of the ingredients for the soup and around 160 learners are fed.

Another outreach programme, led by residents of Inyoni Creek, saw **food parcels** being donated to the elderly women who are part of the Zamokuhle outreach programme run by Thembalami Care Centre. Ordinarily, these Alexandra women go to Thembalami three days a week, enjoying their meals there and taking part in social and recreational activities like knitting, crocheting and exercising.

Since the lockdown, the women have been unable to visit Thembalami and without the meals they get there, have been finding the going tough. Many of these women look after their grandchildren and battle to survive on their government grants.

The food parcels consisted of basic vegetables, samp, coffee, tea, sugar, tinned fish, baked beans, maize meal, oil and oats. In addition, Thembalami reached out to Alexandra-based NPO Rays of Hope to request additional food support for its Zamokuhle beneficiaries and 28 women received food parcels as a result.

“We hope to expand the food assistance initiative to the gogos and will see about getting our retirement village residents involved. Rather than having them buy non-perishable food – which would necessitate a trip to a store, we will arrange for electronic cash donations and make a bulk purchase,” says Peter.

Connecting residents and their family members

While the coronavirus pandemic will be remembered as a time of great suffering, it will also leave a more positive legacy – that of the pulling together of communities and the compassion and empathy that was shown to others.

At Ron Smith Care Centre and Thembalami Care Centre, the national lockdown created a heightened awareness amongst staff of how technology can bring comfort and joy to the elders in their care.

Seeing the impact on residents of their isolation from loved ones, and the sadness that came with the realisation that family members would not be able to be present on birthdays, staff members began using their personal cellphones to bridge the physical divide.

Eventually, WhatsApp groups were started in the care centres to keep families updated on the well-being of their loved ones and to facilitate the sharing of photos and information, while platforms like Zoom were used to enable friends and family to take part in birthday celebrations.

The families were very appreciative and started sharing photos of themselves with their loved ones. One family member messaged: 'Many thanks for this thoughtful initiative. We are so grateful for any news of our beloved and desperately missed mom'.

The initiative was so well received that Rand Aid decided to acquire tablets, linked to the association's data network, to enable both care centres to continue connecting families without staff members having to rely on their own devices.

This wonderful project must be continued throughout the pandemic and beyond. It has meant the world to our residents and their family members," says CEO Peter Quinn.

"Many of our residents' loved ones live far away or are unable to visit as often as they would like to because of the pressures of work. Now that we have realised what a positive impact social networking apps have on everyone involved, we are determined to carry on using technology to negate any loneliness or isolation our residents may feel," he says.

"The staff have to be commended because they started the initiative using their own phones. They were, however, concerned about the size of the phone screens and felt a bigger screen would serve the residents better," says Ayanda Matthews, Rand Aid's GM: Compliance and Social React Division.

Sr Leanie Bessinger from Ron Smith Care Centre explains that she was heartbroken by the prospect of people already separated from their loved ones, being denied person-to-person visits.

"Whenever I feel the need to reach out to someone, I simply grab my phone and within seconds, we are connected. When the lockdown was implemented, I noticed our residents largely do not have access to the technology most of us take for granted and are thus denied this privilege. I started using my phone to connect them with the people they were missing. The results were amazing – emotional but happy," she says.

"Physical separation can have a huge emotional impact on older persons. It has been heart-warming to see how technology can provide connectedness and enrich the lives of our residents. I am pleased that this will become a permanent feature in our care homes, even after the lockdown has ended," says Ayanda.

A willing ear from Sue and her team

Sue Prior, Rand Aid's community care co-ordinator, says that the lockdown can make people feel anxious and unsettled at times.

"What we often find in a catastrophic situation, such as this pandemic, is that people who have been dealing with a number of small difficulties and who may have just been managing to cope, find themselves overwhelmed when another burden is added or a support structure is removed. Then, their capacity to cope becomes compromised," she says.

Rand Aid's social workers are available to lend emotional comfort or just to chat when residents feel overwhelmed and to explore ways of normalising circumstances and putting in place resources for additional support.

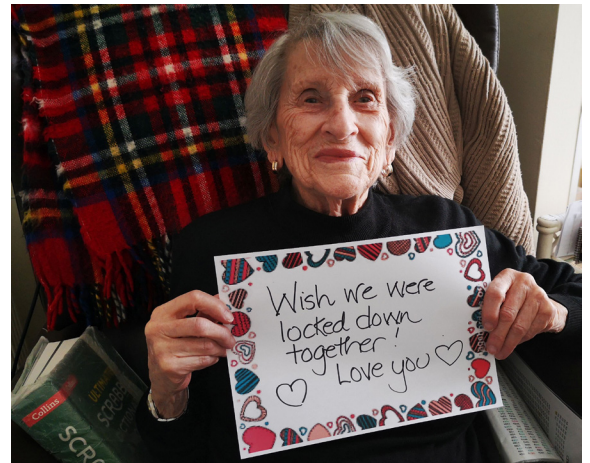
"We have worked hard to reach a point where we are an integral and trusted part of village life and as a silver lining in this extraordinary time, this is giving us new opportunities to interact with and get to know our residents.

"We are also better able to provide links between families, staff and residents in all the villages and care centres," she says.

On a final note, Sue reminds everyone that Rand Aid's social workers are available to lend emotional comfort or just to chat when residents or staff are feeling overwhelmed.

CONTACT:

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Ron Smith Care Centre resident Sylvia Lasarow with a loving message for her family.

Photographs, short notes and telephone birthday songs

In the early days of the lockdown, Debbie Christen, Rand Aid's Manager: Recreational Activities, began taking photos of all residents in the Ron Smith Care Centre and emailing them, with a short note, to family members who are unable to see their loved ones as a result of the lockdown.

This initiative, conceived by Zabeth Zühlsdorff, Rand Aid's GM: Services and Advance Division, was greatly appreciated by family members.

Resident Olive Jew's daughter was one of the people to receive an email. She responded, "You can't imagine how much having this beautiful picture of my beloved mum means

to me. Thank you for this thoughtful kindness."

"The appreciation from the family members is incredibly touching," says Community Care Co-ordinator Sue Prior.

She shared the response to this initiative from one family member: "I can't thank you enough for creating this platform. You have really made us feel less alone as we all share a common journey of caring for our parents."

At Inyoni Creek retirement village and other Rand Aid villages, office staff members phone residents on their birthdays and sing happy birthday to them, which affirms to residents that they are not alone.

Communication is a Rand Aid priority

Rand Aid's management team, community care co-ordination team, village nursing staff, occupational therapists, social workers and office staff have done considerable work in addressing the emotional and psycho-social challenges emanating from the COVID-19 crisis.

Core to Rand Aid's COVID-19 response has been constant communication with all stakeholders. "We are doing everything we can to ensure residents, their families and our employees are kept informed about relevant COVID-19 matters and the support mechanisms in place to ensure they suffer as little hardship as possible during this time," says CEO Peter Quinn.

Written communication includes weekly updates to village residents via newsletters or bulletins from the managers; and letters from the CEO and the community care co-ordination team sent via bulk email to residents and family members.

The letters contain information about Rand Aid's COVID-19 response and share tips about coping with all the uncertainty and change.

"We assist residents who are challenged by technology to learn how to video call on WhatsApp," says Inyoni Creek Manager Jenny Tonkin. "One resident couldn't believe that she could actually see her family in Australia."

To facilitate greater contact with residents in the retirement villages, village sisters and management teams reach out to residents via phone calls and house calls – although with the latter, the visit takes place on the doorstep and social distancing protocols are maintained.

Inyoni Creek's Sr Hannie Combrink – who never goes anywhere without first touching up her lipstick – wears a mask printed with bright red lips when she looks in on residents, which never fails to raise a smile.

Loved ones 'Zoom' in for 90th birthday party

Ron Smith Care Centre resident Shelagh Hawes celebrated her 90th birthday surrounded by love and in the presence of her family, despite visitors not being allowed as a result of the coronavirus lockdown.

Sister Leanie Bessinger made sure her birthday on May 19 was a memorable occasion by inviting her loved ones to join in via a Zoom meeting. The virtual presence of Shelagh's children and grandchildren – some of whom live in the USA – made her day.

"They were all absolutely delighted to be able to see and talk to each other," says Debbie Christen, Rand Aid's Manager: Recreational Programmes.

Messages of thanks

"Shelagh's granddaughter Lynn later sent a word of thanks: 'You have made a difference in our world. Thank you again'."

One of Shelagh's sons, Patrick, sent this message by WhatsApp: 'Very awesome pics of my mum's birthday! Thanks for a wonderful party. You guys are fantastic!'

"Messages, birthday greetings, pictures and videos continued to be received from her family for the rest of the day and she later had a video call with another relative who lives overseas," says Debbie.

"Her Lakeside family, which is the wing on which she lives in the care centre, sang Happy Birthday to her, after which she blew out her birthday candles and two enormous cakes were served. The lovely box of Ferrero Rocher chocolates she received as a gift, however, was reserved as a special treat just for her!"

"The care centre is making every effort to ensure its residents and their family members stay connected during the lockdown," says Sr Leanie.

Applications like Houseparty are also used to enable loved ones to join in on birthday celebrations.

"When resident Lorraine Lowdon turned 80, I had approximately eight family members on my phone who joined in when we sang happy birthday to her. Lorraine could see them and they could see her. After we sang, each family member gave her a personal birthday wish," says Sr Leanie.



Sister Leanie Bessinger and Shelagh Hawes during a Zoom gathering with Shelagh's loved ones on her 90th birthday.



Forever smiling... Sr Hannie Combrink of Inyoni Creek pays a quick visit to resident Kay Briggs to establish if she is well.

PHOTOGRAPHS EASE LOCKDOWN ISOLATION

Bella Tworetzky, a resident of Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre, turned 90 years old on April 9, 2020 – smack bang in the middle of South Africa's coronavirus lockdown.

Although none of her family members were able to wish her in person on the day, the staff on the River Lodge 3 wing where Bella lives did all they could to make her day special.

Cake, juice, a red rose and birthday card decorated the table when staff members gathered to wish her happy birthday.

Photos taken on the day were sent to Bella's family members, so they could feel included.

Daughter Nadine responded:

Thank you so much.

We are so overwhelmed by the amazing care, concern and goodwill that is being shown to our precious mom.

We really salute all your efforts and the gracious warmth and care shown to our mom, albeit we are new arrivals.

Thank you one and all.

May you all merit to continue in the wonderful work you so selflessly do.

As soon as lockdown is over, we shall come and thank you all in person.

Best wishes

Nadine Kramer and Eve Samson and families.

Mother's Day magical moments

Mother's Day made the separation of mothers from their children even more challenging. Thembalami Care Centre came up with a beautiful way to make the day special. They made hand-made Mother's Day collages for their lady residents. Each collage contained family photos and special messages from loved ones.

The staff at the care centre – which incorporates the Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) – emailed all family members who have mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers and friends at Thembalami and MODA, asking that they send photos and a heartfelt Mother's Day message.

These were presented to residents while they were enjoying tea and cake. "The ladies were touched and some grew quite emotional, which is understandable given how long it is since they have seen their loved ones because of the coronavirus lockdown," says Thembalami liaison manager Elize Raath.

Family members also clubbed in to raise funds for a lovely tea, while others dropped off baked goodies at the gate. "This was a gesture of love on the part of those whose finances have been severely affected by the lockdown," says Elize.

The 20 cakes and other savouries that were purchased were shared with the male residents, while all the ladies received a chocolate and either hand cream or body wash as a little gift. Hand-made bookmarks were also presented to the female residents.

Resident Lesley Paine sent a letter of thanks to care centre manager Esme van der Walt the following day: "A huge thank you to you and all the ladies for the tea yesterday, it was so special."

"It was a beautiful afternoon enjoyed and appreciated by all," says Elize.

At **Inyoni Creek** retirement village on Mother's Day office staff attached printed greetings to a variety of chocolates and these were handed out to residents; **Tarentaal retirement village** handed out treats of hot chocolate sachets with a message attached. "We hope this gesture warmed their hearts during these challenging times," says Tammy Neilson, Tarentaal's manager.

At **Ron Smith Care Centre**, families posted their greetings to their loved ones on the WhatsApp groups and staff sent out a video, which included clips of individual residents responding with loving messages of their own. Every single family sent

their thanks and appreciation. "Thank you, Lakeside staff for the fantastic video and allowing us to share Mother's Day with our special moms and allowing us to join in, even though we are not there. You are all very special to us," was one response.

"We are generating a lot of love and gratitude through the WhatsApp groups and they have become a wonderful platform for residents, families and staff on which to interact," says Debbie.



Tarentaal manager Tammy Neilson and committee member Helen Edwards prepare Mother's Day treats.



A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES - Thembalami Care Centre resident Doreen Calder's (94) day was made on May 8 when her daughter Jenny Fraser visited. Although they were not allowed to touch and had to stand metres apart, Doreen was left much happier after seeing her daughter, whom she had been missing terribly after seven weeks.

Chair exercises get bodies working

Thembalami Care Centre resident Brian Croley is promoting active aging among fellow residents.

He holds exercise classes in the spacious occupational therapy room a couple of times a week, enabling residents to work on their flexibility and balance.

Brian has always maintained a personal fitness regime, running marathons and doing other exercise when he was younger and later walking to keep fit.



Elphin Lodge residents Nan Clarke (left) and Dorothy Ainscow (right) enjoy their exercises at Station 3.

Exercise circuit gets Elphin residents moving

A resident of Rand Aid's Elphin Lodge retirement village is encouraging fellow residents to get up and moving during the coronavirus lockdown.

With outdoor exercise now allowed before 9am, Nan Clarke, a South African Seniors Fitness Association instructor, has set up an exercise circuit for fellow residents to enjoy.

Exercise stations are situated at five of the complex's outdoor benches. Participants are given a map showing the location of the benches and what type of exercise should be done at each bench, plus movement instructions which are designed to work on warming up, breathing and balance, stretching, flexibility, cardio and cooling down.

Social distancing during exercising is in place and only two people may use an exercise station at any given time.

Nan has been working one-on-one with some of the residents, showing them how to do the exercises correctly. She says the circuit takes about an hour.

She encourages more residents to take part, as exercising with a friend – albeit a distance apart – is a lot more fun than doing it alone.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to get moving and to enjoy the fresh air and sunshine in a safe environment," says Debbie Christen, Rand Aid Manager: Recreational Programmes.



Johanna Lubbe, Brian Crosley (exercise instructor) and Patricia Maki.

All hands on deck - residents and staff get stuck in



MODA resident Shaun White working in the care centre's vegetable garden.



Barry Waldeck, a MODA resident, has volunteered to look after the chickens, herbs and seedlings.



Manager Esme van der Walt gives resident Nigel Coote's hair a wash.

"It has been heart-warming to see how residents have supported each other and how individual residents have found worthwhile and impactful ways to contribute to our coronavirus (COVID-19) response, from shopping for those who cannot do so themselves to alerting us to those who need an extra little bit of help and cooking meals to share," says Zabeth Zühlsdorff, Rand Aid's GM Services and Advance Division. "Equally heart-warming is the buy-in we have had from staff across all levels," she says.

Avril Maltman, Rand Aid's Senior Nursing Manager, says chocolates with a thank you card were recently presented to all Ron Smith Care Centre residents and staff. "We wanted to let our residents know how much we appreciate their compliance with the lockdown regulations and to show our staff how greatly we value their dedication to the care of our residents."

Looking good is linked to feeling good and with beauty salons closed, staff have stepped in to lend a hand. "Our Ron Smith Care Centre nursing staff and porters have turned their hands to hairdressing, manicures and pedicures," says Matron Avril.

With hairdressing services being disrupted by the lockdown, Thembalami Care Centre staff also rolled up their sleeves and assisted residents who are unable to take care of their own hair, by washing and drying it for them.

Practical assistance is given to all retirement village residents too, with shopping organised on their behalf and, when requested, meals from the central kitchen delivered to their homes. Where necessary, residents are assisted with laundry services and additional housekeeping support is provided to frail residents who still live independently in the villages.

With Thembalami Care Centre and Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) residents unable to go on their usual weekly shopping trips, staff members are ensuring that they are still able to get the items they need. Lara Hurwitz and Pumla Kota take each resident's shopping order, which is then sent to the local Pick n Pay. Another staff member, Lerato Semenya, makes sure all the monies are in order.

Occupational therapist Corlia Schutte took to initiative to develop the Survival Kit for all Rand Aid residents. The kit is a pack of activities and exercises to help keep boredom at bay and to encourage residents to keep fit. New kits are regularly distributed.

Thembalami liaison manager Elize Raath has set herself up as chief storyteller, with residents gathering happily around her while she reads to them from a book containing short stories. As they enter the magical world between the covers of the book, they are able to forget all about the coronavirus for a while.

Thembalami residents themselves have stepped up. Two residents of MODA, Barry Waldeck and Shaun White, are looking after the chickens and greenhouse herbs, and vegetable garden, respectively.

"They were a Godsend when our garden service was unable to operate because it was not deemed to be an essential service," says manager Esme van der Walt.

"We have an extensive vegetable garden and Shaun and Barry have done their best to look after it. Shaun has put up a sign saying: 'Shaun's Office' in a little lapa nearby and has books there to learn from. Barry has done great work looking after the herbs and seedlings in the greenhouse and after the egg-laying chickens," says Esme.



IMPROMPTU DANCE SESSION - An impromptu dance session saw Thembalami Care Centre residents and some staff members loosening their muscles, swinging their hips and letting go of their inhibitions in the gentle winter sunshine on May 19. Those residents who did not feel like dancing, watched the fun while smiling and clapping along. Even wheelchair-bound residents participated by moving their heads and hands in time to the music. Pictured are residents Theuns de Bruin (left) and Claude Burn. In the background are resident Bill Keenan and liaison manager Elize Raath, a-shaking and a-moving.

Soup to go, with love

The Tarentaal Residents Committee treated fellow residents to lovely home-made soup on May 15. Because of social distancing, they were unable to enjoy the meal together and residents instead collected their soup to go.

Residents were allowed to come into the hall one at a time and had their hands sanitised by social worker Ulricka Beukman.



Toni Rogers, singing and dancing with the housekeeping staff.



Resident Gladys Mashaba shows her appreciation.

Easter joy at Tarentaal village

Tarentaal retirement village driver Samson Mogadi and the village's trusty golf cart – aka the Bunny Express – gave Mr Delivery a run for its money on April 9, 2020.

Determined not to let the Easter weekend be a lonely and uneventful time for residents, management of the Rand Aid village organised a wonderful surprise.

Samson slowly drove the Bunny Express – which was loaded with hot cross buns – from block to block and the traditional Easter treats were handed out to all residents. Keeping a couple of metres away because of social distancing, the housekeeping staff accompanied the Bunny Express, singing and dancing for the entertainment of residents.

"We felt we had to do something special for all our residents during the challenging lockdown," explains deputy manager Laetitia Goosen. "Residents felt very special and some became quite emotional."

All Tarentaal's office staff and management were involved, as was Rand Aid social worker Ulricka Beukman.

Mask-makers uncover Rand Aid goodwill

Rand Aid's mask-making project gave residents the opportunity to take part in meaningful activity during the lockdown.

"Many of our staff travel to work in taxis and they feel vulnerable," says Sue Prior, Rand Aid's community care co-ordinator. "At the start of the lockdown, face masks were so scarce that we decided to ask residents to make fabric masks that can be washed and reused," says Sue.

An appeal was put out to the residents in all the villages for fabric and bias binding, along with a template for making the masks, and magnificent masks soon began pouring in.

"Those residents who have a machine and sewing skills eagerly embraced the opportunity to be creative, and those with materials to donate told us they had been able to do a long overdue 'cupboard clear out'," says Sue.

"The donation of material, skills and time by residents is priceless in that it is bringing peace of mind to so many. In a time when many feel helpless, this exercise is giving such a sense of purpose to our residents while filling a valuable need."

Thembalami nursing personnel saluted

International Nurses' Day is celebrated around the world on May 12, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

Known as the 'Lady with the Lamp', Florence was involved in nursing people during a cholera outbreak and later she took care of the ill and wounded during the Crimean War in the 1850s.

Working on the frontlines, the conditions she faced were so horrific that more soldiers were dying of infectious diseases like typhoid and cholera than from battle injuries.

This year, Nurses' Day around the world had extra significance, given the tremendous sacrifices being made by healthcare workers battling the coronavirus pandemic. At Thembalami Care Centre in Lombardy East, a ceremony was held to show management and residents' appreciation of the wonderful work being done by the 53-strong nursing team. The 124 residents of Thembalami – which incorporates the Max Ordman Deaf Association – receive wonderful care from the committed team.

On International Nurses' Day, manager Esme van der Walt arranged beautifully decorated tables outside the dining hall, where the function was held.



Manager Esme van der Walt lights the lamp of Matron Paulina Namoto, who is the heartbeat of Thembalami Care Centre's nursing team.

Taking centre stage was a large candle and alongside it was a lamp symbolising Florence's lamp. Also laid out was a smaller candle for each member of the nursing team.

The ceremony started when the head of the nursing team, Matron Paulina Namoto – who has been at Thembalami for over 30 years – had her lamp lit by Esme.

One by one, the professional, enrolled and auxiliary nurses walked in and lit their candles from the lamp's flame. With Matron Paulina taking the lead, they repeated the Nurse's Pledge together before

making way for the careworkers, who also lit their candles and recited their pledge.

Resident Adrienne Bass thanked the nursing staff on behalf of the residents and afterwards, everyone sang the national anthem before social worker Lara Hurwitz closed proceedings with Queen's 'We are the Champions'.

Outside the hall, on the noticeboard, the names of all nursing staff members had been printed and attached to pretty pieces of material, in honour of their commitment.

A second ceremony was held for those working the second shift.

"Many residents thanked the staff profusely for the way they are being taken care of, how protected they feel and how they appreciate every little gesture," says liaison manager Elize Raath.

"In turn, the staff said they felt humbled and appreciated."

Our mission: To provide the best possible care on a holistic basis to all people accommodated in our facilities — focusing primarily on less advantaged senior citizens, both ambulant and frail, as well as men suffering from substance abuse.

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