

# Ron Smith Care Centre

@ Elphin Lodge



September 2020 No.61

## Coronavirus survivor at 103!

After 14 days in isolation, 103-year-old coronavirus survivor Kitty Venn is back in her pretty room at Ron Smith Care Centre in Lyndhurst just outside of Johannesburg.

"It is exceptionally remarkable that someone of her age has survived a pandemic that has ravaged old ages homes throughout the world," says Dr Christina Eleftheriades, who cared for the centenarian during her time in the care centre's isolation facility.

Dr Eleftheriades is one of two in-house doctors with practices at the Rand Aid Association-run care centre. She and colleague Dr Carmella Mielke have worked tirelessly with Ron Smith Care Centre's dedicated nursing team to ensure Kitty and other aged residents who contracted the virus received professional yet loving care.

Kitty's daughter Carol Cunningham was in Australia when South Africa went into lockdown and is sheltering there until the nation's borders re-open. The news of her mom's illness left Carol feeling extremely anxious, given the distance separating them.

"Fortunately, the care centre's Sr



Kitty Venn.

Leanie Bessinger contacted us daily to report on Mom's condition, which gave us incredible peace of mind," says Carol.

"Huge thanks must go to Dr Mielke, Dr Eleftheriades and Sr Bessinger and her team who tenderly nursed my mom through this awful virus,"

says Carol. "They made her comfortable, administered her oxygen and for 24/7, nursed her back to health.

"Mom has always been a special lady with a heart of gold."

Kitty was born in Swakopmund, South West Africa. She grew up in Pretoria where her father was a magistrate. At the end of World War II, she married Oliver Venn, an air force pilot, and they raised their four children in Sandringham.

"Mom has 18 grandchildren and 30 great grandchildren who love her as much as she loves them," says Carol. "Elphin Lodge – the retirement village where Ron Smith Care Centre is based – was her happy home for over 15 years until she moved into the care centre four years ago.

Kitty was always active and, remarkably, played tennis until she was 89.

## 98-YEAR-OLD FINDS SOLACE IN MUSIC

Apart from Kitty Venn, a number of other Ron Smith Care Centre residents of advanced age have survived the virus, including 98-year-old Maria Roberts and 96-year-old Hymie Cohen.

"Maria had a very positive attitude through her journey with COVID-19. She had her small radio on all the time and provided music for the whole of the isolation unit. She is very strong willed," says the care centre's Sister Leanie Bessinger. "Her family from overseas and local family phoned her almost every day to see how she was doing. She missed her room in River Lodge 1 and was extremely happy when she left the isolation ward and returned to her room, where she enjoys sitting in the sun on the veranda."

"As at August 29, there were no active coronavirus cases among either staff or residents," says Matron Avril Maltman.

"Praise goes to our in-house doctors and our very dedicated nursing staff, as well as the residents themselves, who have shown remarkable resilience in what are extremely challenging times."



*Happy Women's Month*

Residents and staff of the care centre were delighted to receive tubes of Sorbet hand lotion as a special treat for Women's Month in August. The gifts were donated by resident Malcolm Shalakoff's family and were so welcome, as the constant sanitising of hands has made them very rough and dry! Resident Marie Diesel's beautiful smile was as welcome a sight as the gift itself! Pictured with her are Evelyn Shilubane and Heather Zipp.

## Hymie Cohen: COVID-19 survivor (96)

Hymie grew up in a small country town called Bethal, situated in Mpumalanga. He had a passion for horses and he wanted to be either a jockey or a vet when he grew up.

Unfortunately, he was not small enough to be a jockey and his parents could not afford to send him to university to become a vet.

Instead, he was fortunate enough to become an articled clerk at a local attorney firm in the town and he qualified as an attorney and eventually had a very successful practice in the district.

He was an excellent trial lawyer and defended a number of high-profile accused persons. At age 65, he 'retired' and came to live in Johannesburg where he joined one of his daughters and assisted her in her own legal practice until, at the age of 90, his hearing deteriorated.

He and Elaine have been married for 68 years and live together at Ron Smith. They have three daughters, 4 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.



## Birthdays

### RESIDENTS

3 Sept, Peter Kempster, RL3 (89)  
 4 Sept, Sannie Wucherpfennig, RL1 (88)  
 4 Sept, Victor van Eck, RL2 (86)  
 5 Sept, Josephine Kew, RL1 (89)  
 7 Sept, Heather Zipp, RL3 (87)  
 8 Sept, Joy Smith, CP (88)  
 8 Sept, Eleanor Motsepe, DC (77)  
 8 Sept, Irene Watson, RL1 (99)  
 16 Sept, Cathy Basterfield, LS (95)  
 16 Sept, Mariana Duvenage, RL1 (81)  
 20 Sept, Maureen Morrow, RL1 (91)  
 20 Sept, Robert Murray, RL3 (91)  
 21 Sept, Joan Gelman, CP (85)  
 23 Sept, Hilary Sidelsky, RL2 (82)  
 25 Sept, Christine Kincaid-Smith LS (78)  
 27 Sept, Winifred Wood, RL2 (93)

### VOLUNTEERS

3 September, Denise Stewart  
 9 September, Tracy Cornick

### STAFF

6 Sept, Ntombi Mapasa (RL1)  
 7 Sept, Lusani Mabulele (WL)  
 7 Sept, Dorothy Mashaba (Housekeeping)  
 11 Sept, Lungile Mhlongo (RL2)  
 11 Sept, Germinah Baloyi (RL1)  
 14 Sept, Siyakubonga Nazo (Kitchen)  
 14 Sept, Iris Radebe (Housekeeping)  
 15 Sept, Singathwa Siboto (RL1)  
 17 Sept, Felicity Rananga (RL2)  
 17 Sept, Mavis Pili (Cedar Park)  
 17 Sept, Mado Ndelela (Day Care, Special)  
 20 Sept, Nikiwe Thengwayo (Housekeeping)  
 21 Sept, Gloria Bengu (RL1)  
 21 Sept, Amanda Ndlovu (Housekeeping)  
 21 Sept, Vivacious Sibanda (Elphino's)  
 22 Sept, Brenda Ratema (RL1)  
 23 Sept, Phyllis Phillis (Liaison Manager)  
 23 Sept, Frans Masalesa (Driver)  
 25 Sept, Jane Ngwenya (Housekeeping)  
 26 Sept, Vivian Maphoso (Kitchen)  
 27 Sept, Nicky Ponco (LS)  
 30 Sept, Adolphina Mangwete (LS)

### FONDLY REMEMBERED

Jean Hart – RL3	Brian Sher (LS)
Salvyn Wald (RL2)	Phyllis Glass (RL1)
Betty Hood (RL3)	Rosalind Benjamin
David Wall (RL2)	(WL)



## Tucking in on Women's Day

Fresh Danish pastries, a firm favourite with the residents, was served on Women's Day as a special tea-time treat. Pictured is Jessie Pickard, looking forward to her pastry.

### GET TO KNOW ME:

## Dr Carmella Mielke

I was born in JHB, the younger of 2 daughters. My grandparents were very involved and we spent every weekend with them. My father is a chemical engineer – very serious and patient; my mother is a travel agent – a real firecracker with an energy and zest for life that is unstoppable! Our home was always filled with friends and family and laughter. My mom always wanted us to travel as she believed you learn about the world by seeing it.

I studied for a BSc degree and obtained a masters and honours in physiology. I then obtained: MBBCH (Medicinae Baccalaureus, Baccalaureus Chirurgiae) (WITS). I have also done the Diploma in Geriatric medicine.

I joined Rand Aid in 2017, taking over the practice of Dr Aviva Ruch, and then began attending to the care centre residents in 2018. My patients inspire me so much! Everyone has a story to tell and some wisdom to impart and I always feel privileged to be part of the treatment plan. If I can play a role in making someone better, I become inspired. My role model was definitely my late grandfather – I called him Zeida. He was a true giant – as we say in Yiddish – a real mensch (good person). He was kind, humble and always wanted to help others.

Nothing was ever too much for him and he made me believe that everyone is worthy. My love for geriatrics came from him.

I am blessed with a beautiful family – my husband, Greg, son David (5), baby Leyv (1) and Axel, our bull terrier! I am completely outnumbered by boys but blessed to be surrounded by 3 amazing humans who make my life worthwhile. My husband is extremely supportive and encourages me to work and learn.



I like to relax by taking my boys and the dog for a walk or watching them play in the garden. I also love to indulge in a bit of pampering – having my nails or hair done. I de-stress by doing pilates and boxing.

My family are my everything. I am so thankful for them as well as for my talented colleague, Dr Christina. She is the strongest, kindest person I know and not only is she a fellow working doctor at the care centre, she sometimes is like the 'wife' I need to look after me! I also have the highest regard for the special Rand Aid team with whom I have the privilege of working.

I am grateful to be on my chosen path in geriatrics and would like everyone to find hope in my belief that: "This [COVID-19] too shall pass."



Megan Weeks enjoys the **FRESH AIR AND SUNSHINE** on a walk with Lee-Ann Ramathibela (lifestyle assistant).