

New hub for Wairarapa Masonic Village



Residents at the Wairarapa Masonic Village get a sneak peek at what the new and improved village hub has to offer.



Irene Bull, Village Manager, says her goal before she left Masonic Villages was to see the hall, which is now 30 years old, refurbished.

“The previous one was just tired, and we needed to bring the recreational hall up to residents’ expectations,” says Irene, “so it has been completely gutted and is now well designed with lovely furnishings.”

The new village hub as residents now call it, has also received additional fittings, such as ramps and automatic doors. The existing portico has also been closed in and is now where the main office sits.

Residents were able to get a sneak peek of the new building when the local brass band offered to entertain one summer evening, which they normally do around Christmas time. The band used the new deck as their stage and residents collected on the lawn before them, however the concern about rain grew and the crowd moved inside the building for a short while until the skies cleared again.

“It worked really well as a stage,” says Irene, “and I can see that happening again, especially for musical events or anything for that matter, on a nice evening. The residents’ social club AGM will be the first gathering held in the new hall and from then on there will be something

every day. We have quite an extensive programme planned which we are very excited about.”

Irene says that she, as well as the other support staff, has struggled in the past trying to maintain a suitable temperature for residents when in the communal space. Now that the new hub is also equipped with heating and cooling facilities, she doesn’t anticipate that being a major issue any more. “It is, and will be, so much more comfortable for everyone,” she says.



Irene Bull, Village Manager



What can YOU do about the rising anxiety around COVID-19?

The increasing possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak in one of our villages has caused increased anxiety for many, including residents, families of residents and staff.

Val Leveson, Auckland-based Counsellor says there are many safe and effective ways to support residents even when you are restricted from visiting them.

Family

“If you have a family member in a village, the most important thing to do is let them know you are there for them, and only a phone call away. This also goes both ways in that you should be making regular contact with them to show that you are thinking of them and you care about how they are doing.

“Residents may feel that they are missing out on important family milestones during this time so make sure to keep them updated with what is going on in your own life as well as the lives of other family members.”

Masonic Trust villages and care facilities will have different restrictions in place at different times, depending on what’s happening with Omicron, in particular, in the community.

“If you are able to visit a family member who is in a village or a care facility, I encourage you to take the time to teach them how to operate technology,



whether this be a phone or another device, in particular how to make a video call. This will prepare them if there are any lockdown restrictions imposed and you aren’t able to see each other face to face,” Val says.

“In the scenario that you can’t visit but want to connect with them as much as possible, you could deliver items that you know they’ll like, such as their favourite food or any item that might encourage them to take up a new hobby for example, knitting supplies, books, or puzzles.”

Staff

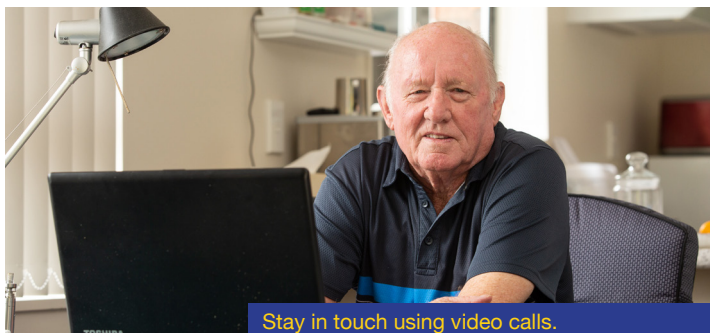
Val’s advice to staff is similar. She says because staff interact with residents frequently, they are most likely to be the first to identify when someone is struggling with the impact of COVID-19. “Anything extra you, as a staff member, can do could make all the difference,” she says.

“Be empathetic and be kind,” says Val, “some residents may have frayed nerves and are feeling more frustrated than others. Their autonomy and control has been further reduced by the spread of Omicron, so acknowledge how they are feeling and let them know that grief is okay.”

If, because of Omicron, some residents are more confined than usual, and their movements are more restricted, that’s something that the more active residents will likely be disappointed with, and they may start to feel restless.

“Encourage residents to get fresh air even if it is multiple laps within the premises. Any sort of stimulation is good and if this means they meet other residents while doing it, even better.”

One last piece of advice: Val says don’t forget to ask residents how they are doing during this time. “Have a laugh with them when you can.”



Stay in touch using video calls.



Masonic residents out walking.



Reading books is a good activity for stimulating the mind.

Residents

Val believes residents should consider what this time is giving them rather than taking from them.

“Take one day at a time and evaluate what you have accomplished during the day that you otherwise wouldn’t have; this could be as small as organising your wardrobe!

“You could also start a new project to be shared or gifted once you are able to reconnect with family and friends again. You could knit something for a grandchild, read or even write a book, learn a language, or do anything you can that you’ve ever dreamed of doing.”

It is important to remember that you are not alone during this time. Many people are going through similar grief, although some may express it more or less than others.



Spend time with other residents who are positive and proactive.

“Don’t be in denial about how you are feeling, acknowledge it, and look forward to when you are able to do the things you love again. You might find that you are in a position to help someone else through similar grief by sharing your feelings.

“Also remember that your loved ones are only a call away and if you need help to contact them, a staff member would be happy to help.

“Monitor the negativity that you may receive from some residents who might be more dismissive about the matter. Surround yourself with residents who help you cope and who are more proactive rather than passive about getting through these times.”

It is also important to remember that village management would only impose restrictions to keep the residents and staff safe.

If you feel that you need to talk to a professional about how you are feeling, you can contact Lifeline on 0800 543 354.



Gardening is a great opportunity for fresh air.



Anne McLean (left) with resident Barbara Peacock

Planning for the future

Anne McLean says it's not just about the model of care, it's how you provide it.

Anne McLean, General Manager at Masonic Care, says her top priority is to continue to provide excellent supportive care while planning for the future with the increasing ageing population in New Zealand.

"We are preparing for the tsunami of demand with workforce challenges," she says.

Anne's career experience is set up to oversee just that. Formerly the General Manager of Conectus, owned by the University of Auckland and the largest research and development company in Australasia, Anne took part in significant work, turning outputs of research into real business development strategies.

Before that, Anne's position as Director of Health for Niue meant she was responsible for overseeing the leadership and management of Niue's

health system, as well as providing strategic direction for sustainable health services into the future. She has also worked in various health-related roles across New Zealand and the United Kingdom, including in DHBs.

Anne understands the expectations of existing and new residents are changing, and it is something she is planning for, while also hoping to expand Masonic Care.

While expanding so supply can meet demand, Anne recognises that, in time, existing facilities will also need upgrading such as room size, new ensembles and additional amenities.

Technology is also on her radar as a strategy to keep up with the resident population increase. "We need to consider how technology can be utilised in everyday activities to make things easier for our residents. Appropriate medical appointments via video call can save time and avoid the need for residents to travel."

"It's not just about the model of care, it's how you provide it," says Anne. "You can't just put gadgets in front of older people and expect them to know how to use them. This will take time and require patient support."

It has been difficult for Anne to meet many of the residents as she is fairly new to the role and is extremely cautious about moving around the care facilities during the pandemic, but she is very excited to do so.

Anne says, "My favourite part of any role is interacting with the customers and staff, in this case the residents, managers, nurses, cleaners, cooks and the board. I love talking to people from all walks of life, at all different levels.

"It also means I can get the whole picture of how the organisation runs and what part it really plays in the world. I like the variation between staff, residents, and villages, and it is something I am keen to explore further when I am able to."