

Home Safe Home

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Postmedia Content Works

When Bev Millar and her husband moved into Oakcrossing Retirement Living last year, they knew they had found a very special home. What they have since come to appreciate, during the unprecedented global health crisis of COVID-19, is just how much Oakcrossing is truly “home, safe home.”

Throughout the pandemic, residents have experienced the security and comfort of their own home, with the added benefit of enhanced precautions wrapped around them to keep them safe and healthy. Bev feels management has always placed residents and staff as the top priority. “Oakcrossing Retirement is the right place for us. We feel so comfortable here,” she says. “When we first moved in, we were so impressed with the friendliness of the staff and residents.”

Months ago, as cases began to surge in Ontario, Oakcrossing Retirement put many precautions in place designed to keep everyone safe, often before they were mandated by the provincial government.

Requiring staff to work at only one location and universal masking of all staff and visitors are just two such measures. Both have since proven extremely effective at preventing transmission of COVID-19, and there have been no resident or staff cases in the residence to date, a fact not lost on Bev.

“Last year we were living in a high-rise condo building, where we had no control over anyone’s comings or goings,” says Bev. “We are much safer at Oakcrossing Retirement Living.”

Designed for independent retirement living, Oakcrossing Retirement looks after the chores of daily life, enabling residents to spend

their time on personal leisure activities. Although family members often offer to run errands, “Everything is taken care of by Oakcrossing staff,” Bev says. “It gives our family peace of mind that we are here.”

Never has peace of mind been more important than during the pandemic, and Oakcrossing staff has worked hard to balance safety with the needs of residents, making it a point to check in with residents about all the little day-to-day things. “Things that usually we’d ask our family to do, the staff are always willing to help,” Bev says, such as offering to be her own personal “geek squad” when she needed technical support, and simply changing a battery in her heavy wall clock.

When having meals in the spacious common dining room was not possible, staff delivered meals to every resident in their suite. “We have the best servers. The staff did an excellent job to keep everyone’s spirits up when they delivered meals right to our doors,” Bev says.

While Bev has been able to enjoy social visits virtually using her personal computer in her own apartment, she says staff had the technology and know-how to help other residents stay connected with their families using Oakcrossing’s devices and apps such as Facetime and Skype.

As London enters Ontario’s COVID-19 Stage 3, Oakcrossing Retirement is cautiously optimistic. Staff continue to actively screen all residents and visitors, including twice daily temperature checks and monitoring for the signs and symptoms of COVID. To everyone’s delight, any activities that had to be curtailed at the height of the pandemic are gradually and safely resuming, with new safeguards in place.



Bev Millar, Resident Oakcrossing Retirement Living.

Residents are delighted to resume dining service with enhanced precautions to support a wonderful dining experience while respecting the need for physical distancing and rigorous infection control protocols, including deep-cleaning and frequent sanitization.

According to Holly Albion, Director of Community Relations, COVID-19 has shown some seniors liv-

ing on their own that dealing with everyday challenges can be difficult without access to their regular support units. As a result, Oakcrossing Retirement Living is receiving inquiries from seniors and their concerned families.

“Moving into Oakcrossing Retirement Living means safety and peace of mind, with services wrapped around the person, at all

times,” says Holly. “Because we are a strong community of friends and neighbours, no resident is ever alone. Everyone is in this together. Which is exactly what many of us want and need right now.”

“We’re very thankful to live at Oakcrossing Retirement Living,” Bev says. “We’re really happy here. And our family is very happy we are looked after.”

ENSURING A SAFE HOME FOR SENIORS DURING COVID-19

Safeguard and care for residents, protect staff and maintain close connections with families: those three imperatives have been the focus at peopleCare Communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Asking ‘What’s the right thing to do?’ has guided our actions and helped us create an iron ring of protection around our residents through many enhanced protective measures,” says Oakcrossing General Manager Melissa Hawki. “At the same time, we recognize the importance of living a life full of meaning and joy and so we’re working hard to balance quality of life.”

Making a difference in the community and beyond is another way Hawki and her team demonstrate peopleCare’s values as a Canadian, family owned and operated organization. In addition to regular COVID testing of staff and residents, which reduces risk of transmission in the Home and beyond, as an organization peopleCare has stepped up in response to the pandemic’s unique challenges.

Along with ensuring Oakcrossing employees and visitors have the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need, peopleCare contributed to a sector-wide initiative to source and fund PPE for frontline staff in other organizations. The team has also been collaborating with health system partners and the government to shape best practices in pandemic management in senior living settings.

“Until an effective COVID vaccine is developed, no one will be completely safe from COVID-19,” Hawki says. “In the coming months, peopleCare will keep fighting COVID and calling on our health system partners and the government to fight with us. Our residents deserve nothing less.”