

DECEMBER 2020  
EDITION

# A MESSAGE FROM NATALIE, CEO

Dear Residents and Family Members,

I don't know about you, but I am ready to wrap up a box with my thoughts of 2020 inside. It will have a tag addressed to the "Fire pit" and then I would like to burn it and say goodbye to a year many of us would love to forget; a year where COVID has been the key word for 24 hours a day and now nearly 265 days. We have people in a state where "failure to thrive" is happening at all ages. In our quest to deal with the cards dealt to us, we are all trying our best to simply get through the day. Now, Essential Workers are "teachers" at home, and many are at unsustainable stress levels. I have had numerous employees resign because their children are failing in the distance learning model. Some have learning disabilities and some are just bored and lonely. But it is real. Employees break down at work worrying about their kids, their families, their job and then how to see those they love.

One of the best joys of 2020 was our son's small outdoor wedding. I was reminded that even in tragedy there is such joy. The mother-son dance at the wedding brought me to tears. He picked the song "A mother like mine". The moment I saw his eyes connect with his bride as she walked down the aisle and cry, I knew there was peace and love in this crazy world. Life would go on as planned and they would be husband and wife. Plan B, turned out amazing even knowing we were without aunts, uncles, cousins and many friends that could not attend due to the COVID rules. So many couples had to modify plans numerous times and funerals were the same. As a parent, there is no greater joy than watching your children's dreams come true. I have heard this so many times from every senior I have cared for. They pray for their kids who are 70 +, and show photos to their friends of the highlights of new grandchildren and great grandchildren. Life joys for sure.

As a wife and mom, I have worked in nursing homes or assisted livings for 30 years. My husband and sons have grown accustomed to have me leave at all hours of the day or night to address the issues that arise when running 24 hour settings; 365 days a year. They have always supported me to provide cares to seniors across the state. This is my lane, as a girl who loved to race her horse down the potato fields at the farm, I had a lane. Well, my professional lane became serving seniors. I feel natural in this lane. Up until this year, it has been a lane that was always easily guided by my compass which is:

- What would I desire for my grandparents and parents if they were in their last chapter of life?
- What would matter most to them and my siblings?
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- What would matter for me if I was in my last chapter of life?
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- What defines comfort for us all is different. So knowing what we all need to be happy has always mattered to me.

Keystone Bluffs Assisted Living

NEWSLETTER



# *Natalie Continued . . . . .*

I am a farm girl through and through. I haven't lived there since I graduated from High School in 1985. However, I learned to dress up kittens (all 30 of them) in my youngest brother's baby clothes and take them with us in buggy rides. I did not have kids to play with, as all my friends lived 10-20 miles from me. Thankfully, I got to go to school for my social needs to be met. The pig barn, horse/cattle barn all had plenty of friends for me to talk to and they always listened. Playing in the hay was one of the best days ever, especially if it rained and I could sit and pet kittens and make a fort listening to the sound of rain hitting the tin roof. Simple things right?

I could greet every neighbor by name, and so could my entire family. Everyone knew everyone. It was awesome. The American Legion would host Friday night dances and off my parents would go. There was always a baseball game, softball game, or kick the can game going outside on the farm. Somehow, even without a phone and technology, I could preplan gathering people together at a young age.

My parents loved having the house and yard filled with kids. They always knew where I was. I now know that was their divine plan. Hayrides and bonfires were common activities, and yes we threw each other off the wagon into the snow and laughed the more it happened. Then we would toilet paper our friends yards once it got dark. It was a challenge to not get caught. The girls would pick a guy's house and then they would do the same. We left our German Shepard outside and she patrolled so it did not happen more than twice at the farm. The only two times we were toilet papered was when the dog was inside. My dad's rule was "you clean it up". As he was the principal of our middle school, I think he knew there were probably worst things kids could do and realized it was harmless. We all were friends and our parents were friends. No one went to jail or had police called for what we all considered a fun prank. It was never bullying, just kids having fun as we all ended up being "TP'd". Everyone had a sense of humor. I remember one of my friends put an old chair on the side of the road and spray painted a sign "rest area ahead". This is the kind of humor that still makes me laugh.

Times change, but the need to laugh, have fun, and be together to celebrate life events never change. We have our own fingerprint for a reason and that means we need to run our own race and stay in our own lane. So, as a leader, I try to bring hope, laughter and fun even in times when the events around us are very serious. I can only control how "I" respond to the reality of decisions made on multiple policies that affect those I serve.

I do not have solutions for this COVID world we are in. I do, however, challenge you to go back to things people did decades before today that may bring joy:

1. Write letters weekly to those you love, of all ages, as they are lonely.
2. Send flowers if you are financially able.
3. Make signs on cardboard, poster board and stand outside windows to visit those you love.
4. Bring your coffee, a chair, and blankets.
5. Have children make snowmen outside windows where seniors can see.
6. Bring your dogs to play outside so the residents can see the joy of days they remember.
7. Set a day to come with your family, hold hands together, and wrap the building with your love. Have youth groups, sports teams, girl scouts, boy scouts, choir groups visit and perform outside when needed.
8. Help us keep the bird feeders filled.
9. Set up phone call times if your loved ones need help with the phone. Staff is maxed so plan phone calls around times we are not doing meal time, etc.
10. Buy stuffed animals or soft baby dolls for those who need to hug something and would enjoy it.
11. Send photos for staff to share with the residents. Be creative and innovative on how to thank caregivers and make people's day.
12. If you have china cups and saucers consider donating a set so the residents can reminisce with tea and coffee and wear fur hats or scarves.

# *Natalie Continued . . . . .*

So, no more horses for me. However, I will keep running my race. The race is harder now than 30 years ago. At this time, per the Minnesota Department of Health, we are not allowed to have Essential Care Givers return to visit until we have two consecutive facility wide testing results that are negative unless it is for Compassionate Care.

Essential Caregivers must notify Keystone if they become positive for COVID, as this is critical while we partner together. We are not told who is asymptomatic or symptomatic. We pay our staff a higher hourly wage when caring for anyone with COVID until we are COVID free.

I am having a “hug” wall built with plexiglass to use in the front entrance where temps are taken and family members sign in. I anticipate this to linger for a while. I want love and hugs to be possible between families and Essential Caregivers or others. I will have our Maintenance Department design this wall with a top, sides and holes through the middle so families can wear gloves and masks and hug each other. It will look like an old phone booth I guess. With winter for 8 months in this state, outside visits are not feasible.

We will get through this. We live with the best generation who taught us all what really matters in life and that is life itself. Please know that I am suffering with you, as residents and families are not together and that we are doing everything we can to make life as normal as possible.

I am asked every holiday season how to thank our staff. I always suggest gift cards or cash. We will make sure every employee receives a gift to thank them for a wonderful job well done along with a staff Christmas get together. Please contact Therese at the front desk if this is something you wish to do.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. I am eternally thankful for all our residents and the support from our employees and family members. May God bless us all this holiday season.

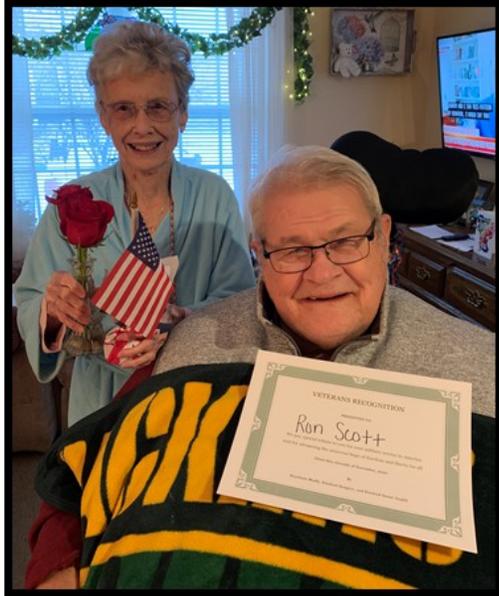
Sincerely,

Natalie Zeleznikar, CEO



# KEYSTONE VETERANS

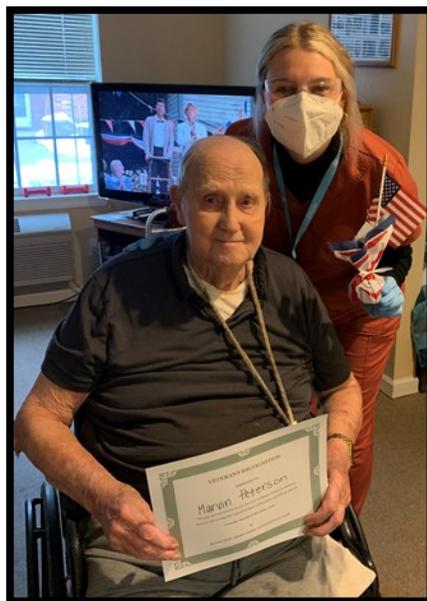
## *“Thank you for your service”*



**Ron Scott**  
**Air Force**  
**Active Duty-20 years**



**Ken Musolf**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-1 year WW2**



**Marvin Peterson**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-2.5 years WW2**



# KEYSTONE VETERANS

## "Thank you for your service"



**Dennis Hackett**  
**US Navy**  
**Active Duty-1 year**



**Dale Miller**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-20 months**



**Ernie Mell**  
**None Combat Vet**  
**Active Duty-2 years**  
**in Germany**



# **KEYSTONE VETERANS**

***“Thank you for your service”***



**Jim O'Leary**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-2.5 years**



**Bruce Simmonds**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-40 years**



**Richard Hanson**  
**Army**  
**Active Duty-2 years**



**Not Pictured: Calvin Skoglund**  
**Army-Active Duty/Korean War**



*May the beauty and magic  
of Christmas be carried  
in your hearts always.  
Happy Holidays*

**The Management & Staff  
at Keystone Bluffs**

