

PMMA's CEO encourages doing your part to reopen senior living communities

In stressful times like these, I think back to growing up in a family that looked to its elders for sound advice and direction. With family members who lived through tough times during World War II, we all knew their advice was based on years of experience sacrificing for the good of the cause – those serving their country fighting on the front lines. This special generation—known as the Greatest Generation—understood that if the greater good was to prevail, it would take everyone doing their part.

Today, we have the honor of caring and providing a home to some of the children of the Greatest Generation. This generation—known as the Silent Generation—grew up watching their parents navigate a war and a depression. They are now the ones whose wisdom we depend on to help us navigate through this war against COVID-19. And in doing so, they want to contribute to making things better – they want to do their part.

When our residents did their part for World War II, they did without. They endured things for the long haul, like shortages of everyday things like sugar and shoes, even meat. Gasoline was rationed. Ordinary citizens folded bandages.

We can make a difference in this war against the coronavirus by doing our part. If we fail to come together for the sake of others—such as our seniors—we lose the war. As prior generations knew: all of us have to do our part in doing what is right for the sake of the cause – eliminating COVID-19.

As I watch the number of cases continue to rise across the nation, I become more and more concerned about how our country will get its arms around this pandemic. The US is nearing 5 million positive COVID-19 cases, with Kansas and Missouri contributing nearly 80,000 of those cases, with more diagnosed every day. As our states continue their attempts at reopening, one thing becomes very clear – COVID-19 remains the most significant threat affecting all our lives today, especially the lives of our seniors.

PMMA is doing its part in moving cautiously through its reopening plans and the three phases. Even though we are being cautious, we are experiencing an increase in our positive cases, especially among our employees.

There are four main factors that most likely play a role in contracting COVID-19:

- How close you get to an infected person – remain at least 6 feet apart
- How long you are near that person – 10 minutes or longer
- Whether that person expels viral droplets on or near you
- How much you touch your face afterwards

You can help reduce your risk and do your part to protect others by following these basic  steps:

- Keep your distance from others. Stay at least 6 feet away from people outside your household. Limit physical contact by social distancing and making sure not to hug, kiss or handshake.
- Wash your hands often. Any time you come in contact with a surface outside your home, scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds, rinse and then dry your hands with a clean towel.
- Avoid touching your face. Try to keep your hands away from your face unless you have just recently washed them.
- Wear a mask outside your home. A mask protects others from any potential infection from you. The more people who wear masks, the safer we all are.

The recommendations from the CDC and CMS for access to our communities will be relaxed or tightened depending on the COVID-19 virus conditions in the greater community surrounding our campuses. In addition, the predicted changes listed in each phase of our reopening plans will not be implemented at once, but throughout each phase to ensure resident and employee safety. Phases will last a minimum of 14 days and may last longer. For example, Missouri's guidance is for Phase 1 to last 28 days. These recommendations are in place to ensure the health and safety of our residents.

There are other differences between the guidance for Kansas and Missouri communities. The biggest being the following:

- Missouri senior living communities may allow outside visits beginning in Phase 1.
- Kansas senior living communities may allow outside visits in Phase 3.

Both states require strict screening of visitors for fever and illness prior to admittance and adherence to wearing masks, social distancing and hand hygiene. While these plans may seem cumbersome and complex, we believe it is necessary to proceed with caution to keep our residents – your loved ones and our employees—safe from the COVID-19 virus.

We remain acutely aware of the need for residents and family members to reunite, and we are working diligently with our PMMA communities' reopening plans. Each campus' reopening plan will remain fluid based on positive cases identified at their campus, their local health department and the COVID-19 virus levels in the community surrounding their location.

I ask you to join me in praying that God to provide guidance and grace in the face of adversity; to bless our overburdened staff members, our weary residents and our patient family members; and guide our researchers in finding a vaccine soon that will help to win the war against this virus.

God's Blessings,

Bruce Shogren, PMMA President/CEO

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IF YOU VISIT A CAMPUS:

Family members may visit for comfort care and end of life visits. If you are visiting a community, you shoud:

- Expect to answer a questionnaire about your recent travel, health status and exposure risk.
- Have your temperature taken.
- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, rubbing palms together, cleaning between fingers and the backs of hands.
- Utilize hand sanitation stations prior to entering and upon leaving resident rooms.
- Limit movement within the community to your resident's room or your contact's office
- Limit physical contact with the resident – no hugging, kissing or hand-shaking – and remain 6 feet apart
- Report to the community any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or acute illness within 14 days after visiting the community

Personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes gloves, masks and gowns, are available as necessary.