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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alliance for Senior Care Nursing Homes Continue to Fight on the Front Lines of Public Health Crisis

ROCHESTER, NY — April 18, 2020 — As the coronavirus, COVID-19, spreads across the country and throughout the community, the Alliance for Senior Care understands and recognizes that the elderly have been and will continue to be our most at-risk population.

“This is a pandemic, and without a vaccine, COVID-19 will continue to be a threat,” said Glen Cooper, President & CEO, Friendly Senior Living, one of the members of the Alliance. “The most important thing that nursing homes can do in the face of this threat is to continue fighting our front-line battle. We are doing everything we can to protect, treat, and mitigate the risk for the most vulnerable among us.”

The Alliance is a consortium of five not-for-profit skilled nursing facilities in Greater Rochester that includes Episcopal SeniorLife Communities, Friendly Senior Living, Jewish Senior Life, St. Ann’s Community, and St. John’s. Together, Alliance members have a combined 4,440 employees and represent more than a third of all skilled nursing and assisted living beds in the region, with more than 2,000 beds. The Alliance has a strong history of collaboration and sharing of best practices.

Alliance members have been and will continue to be transparent with our residents, families and staff, which we have done from the beginning. According to the New York Times and other national news reports, COVID-19 has led to more than 6,900 deaths at nursing homes nationwide. In New York State, the virus has led to over 2,600 nursing home and assisted living deaths, according to the state health department. As of Friday, April 17, the Alliance’s combined confirmed COVID-19 cases total 36 residents/patients and 27 employees. Our combined COVID-19 deaths total 10, all of whom were residents/patients.

“As an Alliance, it is our belief that these numbers will continue to increase within the next few weeks,” said Scott Schabel, MD, Medical Director of The Friendly Home. “We know that it’s only a matter of time before the number of confirmed cases, as well as, sadly, the number of deaths, increase — not only at our facilities, but at nursing homes across the region, across the state, and across the nation. This is the devastating and sobering reality of a pandemic. The enemy, COVID-19, is raging on, without mercy.”

Michael E. McRae, President & CEO, St. Ann’s Community said the sense of loss has been felt by all who work in nursing homes.



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“Like hospitals, nursing homes and our care workers are on the front lines of today’s public health crisis,” McRae said. “The coronavirus pandemic has caused immense suffering across the country, especially among our most at-risk population – the elderly. The stress and anguish that our residents, families, and healthcare workers have had to endure is heartbreaking.”

The elderly are at the greatest risk for COVID-19. This is due in large part to age, existing chronic conditions, and the fact that many reside in communal living, like nursing homes. That’s why the Alliance’s members continue to work hand-in-hand with the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and Monroe County to implement numerous and necessary steps to minimize the risk to our residents and staff.

“Our care workers include our own on-site medical teams — physicians, nurses, certified nursing assistants, and critical support staff who are providing care to our residents every hour of every day and putting themselves at risk,” said Loren J. Ranaletta, President & CEO, Episcopal SeniorLife Communities. “Our Alliance CEOs, medical directors, administrators, and medical staff connect regularly, sharing updates, best practices, and resources to ensure that we all have the latest information to make the best medical care decisions possible for our residents, their families, and our employees.”

Since the beginning, Alliance members have informed residents, families, and employees directly of any confirmed cases within our facilities.

In addition, in February, as the virus spread, the Alliance began implementing extra precautionary measures, including additional extensive cleaning and hygiene efforts and the acquisition of additional personal protective equipment (PPE).

In early March, as the community of New Rochelle, Westchester County, emerged as the country’s new epicenter for the virus, our nursing homes worked immediately with the state DOH to implement and comply with multiple new emergency measures, including:

- Restricting all outside visitors from entering
 - Employees and loved ones of residents are allowed in when end of life is less than 7 days
- Limiting access to all our buildings and requiring screening of anyone who enters, including employees
 - Screening includes a temperature check and the completion of a state DOH questionnaire about risk factors
- Universal masking for all employees
- Screening all residents daily for signs and symptoms of the virus



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- Screening any and all residents who live in proximity to a confirmed COVID-19 case at least every eight hours
- Providing screening status updates to state DOH and our employees on a daily basis
- Following the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the state DOH guidelines, including implementing immediate isolation procedures for any resident with a new onset of respiratory symptoms, as well as for any confirmed COVID-19 individuals

“These steps, however, can only do so much to mitigate the risk,” said Brian Heppard, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Episcopal SeniorLife Communities. “Once COVID-19 reaches the community transmission stage, no amount of PPE, testing, or back-up staff resources will stop the spread of the virus completely. Only a vaccine can truly stop it. Until then, facilities of all types and sizes have to fight through it.”

“The heartbreaking fact is the virus will spread into skilled nursing facilities,” said Kim Petrone, MD, Medical Director of St. Ann’s Community. “It is impossible to prevent. Facilities will see increasing numbers of confirmed cases, and yes, potentially deaths. Facilities with COVID-19 positive residents who do not want to go to the hospital and who prefer to stay and be treated in their “homes” may also see larger numbers of confirmed cases and deaths. We need to recognize that facilities that allow residents to stay in their “homes” are honoring their residents’ most private and most deeply personal healthcare wishes — and they’re doing this in their greatest hour of need.”

In addition, our Alliance is partnering with hospitals to avoid inundating them with COVID-19 positive cases that our medical teams can care for, making sure that hospitals have capacity to accept the most acute cases. We also continue to accept new admissions from hospitals, to help if there is a potential surge.

Solutions to the ongoing crisis are hard to find, and until a vaccine is developed, our Alliance members will continue to need help, including more N95 masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns. Nursing home workers could also benefit from additional financial support. Facebook, for example, recently donated \$25 million to the State of California for a “Skilled Nursing Facility Hero Award” program. The program will provide \$500 stipends to 50,000 licensed practical nurses and certified nursing assistants. Locally, any companies, organizations, government agencies and other entities that can help provide PPE or other assistance are encouraged to contact the Alliance at 585-697-6410. Our healthcare heroes need support.

In the meantime, our Alliance members will continue to care for our residents and do everything we can to mitigate the risk, and provide a caring and safe environment.



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“While outside visitors, including family members, continue to be prohibited at this time, we are continuing to support our residents with family video calls, a buddy program, streaming music and religious services, window visits, and being creative with new rules for games like hallway bingo,” said Michael S. King, President & CEO, Jewish Senior Life. “Our residents are not alone, and they never will be. We will always be with them.”

In addition to caring for our residents, Alliance members will continue to make sure our employees and families stay informed, as we’ve done since the beginning.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently described hospital and healthcare workers and the work they are doing now in the face of this deadly global pandemic as God’s work. We could not agree more. Our employees are going above and beyond the call of duty. They, too, are heroes. They, too, are doing God’s work.

About the Alliance for Senior Care IPA, LLC

The Alliance for Senior Care is a consortium of five not-for-profit skilled nursing facilities in Greater Rochester that includes Episcopal SeniorLife Communities, Friendly Senior Living, Jewish Senior Life, St. Ann’s Community, and St. John’s. The Alliance was first formed in May 1997 to address industry issues, generate cost savings, and share best practices.

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