

By Alison Boote, Operations Director

As we head towards autumn, I am reflecting on what a wonderful summer it has been across our care homes this year. To witness our residents enjoy the sunshine, create memories, and embrace every moment confirms what a caring community every team member has worked towards creating for our residents, family members and loved ones. Through the summer months, we have been busy with many of our homes that have taken part in national events including Father's Day, Afternoon Tea Week, World Senior Citizens Day, Allotments Week, World Chocolate Day and Good Care Month to name a few. It is wonderful to see such creativity within our homes and sharing this on social media for your communities to see.

Amongst others, Avonbridge successfully raised over £200 for Breast Cancer Now at their 'Great Avonbridge Bake Off' and Alexander Court raised over £1000 for their residents' fund with a sponsored walk. This has enabled the home to purchase a brand-new gazebo and garden furniture, which I know will have brought great joy to the residents as they love to spend time outside, enjoying the warm weather.

Notably this season we have seen Summer Fairs which have brought excitement into our homes, our residents have enjoyed the atmosphere of

games, food, and laughter. Residents at Avonbridge went on a nostalgic trip to Blackpool Pleasure Beach, utilising their new sensory garden, bringing back cherished memories of seaside visits in past years. At Cams Ridge, a special 110th birthday was celebrated, a testament to the wonderful care we provide, Happy Birthday Annie from all of us at Larchwood Care. Alexander Court also celebrated 25 years of providing first-class care, joined by the Mayor of Thetford, Cllr Stuart Wright, for a great celebration. Thank you for all your dedication and hard work over the years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the team members at Mundy House, who have been recognised for their outstanding contribution to care in Essex at the Prosper Awards 2023 walking away with two wins and two highly commended recognitions. Well done for this recognition and I am excited to see other award wins from across our portfolio over the next quarter.



Another Accolade for Mundy House

Continuing its award-winning streak, our Mundy House care home in Basildon has been recognised for its 'outstanding contribution to care in Essex.'

The home won two awards at the Essex Care Sector Awards – The Prospers – and was highly commended in a further three categories. Mundy House has been recognised for care excellence at these awards every year they have run since the inaugural ceremony in 2016.

It took first place in the Digital Impact and Technology and Sensory categories and was highly commended in Team of the Year and Making a Difference. In addition, Dr Mohammad Aslam, one of the key health professionals working with the Mundy House team was named as an unsung hero.

Last year, Mundy House was awarded a gold medal by NHS England and Improvement – East of England Regional Team for an initiative raising awareness of keeping older people as physically fit as possible. Mundy House manager Josi George said: "I'm so proud of everyone at Mundy House. The whole team works hard every single day to make life full of love and laughter for our residents.

"The support we receive from families, friends and the local community is also important, and these awards are just fantastic. Thank you to everyone who contributes to making life at Mundy House as wonderful as it is."



Puppies & Pimms - Name a Better Combination

Residents at Diamond House care home, nestled in the heart of Downham Market, experienced a heartwarming BBQ event, filled with joy and laughter as they were joined by some very special visitors – a group of adorable puppies!

In the care home's serene garden, five charming cockapoo and dachshund puppies mingled with residents and their families, creating a delightful atmosphere that blended the sweetness of companionship with the delicious aroma of a barbeque buffet - and the refreshing clink of Pimm's glasses.

The rather excitable furry guests managed to bring smiles to the faces of everyone at the home.

This heartwarming visit stands as a testament to the diverse range of activities that Diamond House care home offers to residents. The carefully curated activities programme, tailored to individual interests and needs, aims to keep residents engaged, active, and full of life.

As we've shown in our newsletters, Larchwood Care is a strong believer in the benefits of pet therapy. This approach involves residents interacting with a variety of animals, including reptiles, birds of prey, Shetland ponies, alpacas – and now, the adorable puppies!

Sarah Hamer, team leader at Diamond House care home, said: "This is probably one of the best days I've had at work! Everyone was so excited for the puppies' arrival and our residents have had a fabulous time. Studies show that bringing animals into care homes can increase social interaction and goes a long way to improve residents' sense of wellbeing. These visits have really boosted our residents' spirits!"

One resident said "I love dogs, so this visit has made my day! I've had a number of pets throughout my life and today has brought back some fantastic memories from years gone by!

"The home is always putting on these entertaining events for us, I'm already looking forward to whatever the next one may be!"



Help Us Find Larchwood Local Heroes

We're thrilled to unveil an inspiring new initiative that shines a spotlight on the incredible individuals who make our Larchwood Care Homes not just places to live, but true havens of love and support. We are looking for you to help us find Larchwood Local Heroes so we can recognise those exceptional people who embody the spirit of our communities and have touched lives with their boundless compassion.

Larchwood Local Heroes are the unsung champions who have woven the fabric of compassion and care within the walls of our homes and beyond. These are the neighbours, friends,

volunteers, and residents themselves who have gone above and beyond, dedicating themselves to enhancing the lives of those around them. Their stories are a testament to the power of kindness and community, showcasing the remarkable impact that can be achieved when hearts come together.

We'll be sharing details about how to nominate your Larchwood Local Hero with care home managers and activity coordinators soon, so please let them know if you'd like to thank someone for doing their bit to make the lives of our residents, their friends, and families, better!

To find your nearest Larchwood Care home visit: www.larchwoodcare.co.uk, search for 'Larchwood Care', or call our central office on 01564 820140 and our team will be delighted to help.

Search for your local Larchwood care home on Facebook

Appleby's 'Hopping Mad' New Residents

Appleby Care Home in North Shields has some unusual new residents, adorable bunny rabbits Oreo and Snowy. The introduction of Oreo and Snowy – named for the markings on their coats – is the idea of Appleby's activities coordinator Elaine Rook. She'd noticed how much excitement was generated when petting zoos and other animals visited the home for pet therapy sessions, and wanted to be able to offer residents animals of their own to care for.

Clare Leonard, Larchwood Care's home manager for Appleby, said: "Everyone is absolutely thrilled to introduce Oreo and Snowy into the Appleby family.

"Larchwood Care focusses on providing person-centred care that supports the overall well-being of our residents. Our residents wanted a pet, so we've listened and moved in Oreo and Snowy!" "The therapeutic value of animals is amazing. Interacting with them can reduce stress, boost mood, and provide a sense of purpose and routine, which is incredibly important for people living with us." George Wood, who lives at Appleby care home, said: "The rabbits are getting big and I like them. They make me smile because I used to have rabbits. Can't remember how many but there was a lot. Cleaning them out took a while, and my boys Gavin and Anthony watched – good memories!"



5 Minutes with . . . Christine McKay Activities Co-ordinator, Muirton House

What makes Muirton House so special?

The location and grounds of Muirton House in Blairgowrie are beautiful and over the last few years, we have developed the gardens to ensure the residents and their families have somewhere attractive and comfortable to enjoy. We have a fabulous summerhouse, vegetable plot, a jubilee garden and lots of spots for the residents to sit with their families. Everyone at Muirton House has genuine care for our residents and everyone's priority is to see both their physical and social needs fulfilled.

What attracted you to work in the Care sector?

I started visiting Muirton House when a family member was a resident in the Learning Disability Unit. Initially, I became a volunteer and really enjoyed being involved with assisting the staff to entertain and provide activities for the residents. When Covid meant all visiting was suspended, I secured a role as activities co-ordinator which meant I could continue to visit my family member and continue to be involved with the other residents who I had

gotten to know. Working within the Care sector was not something I felt I would have the skills for, but after volunteering I soon discovered my previous experience was very transferable. I've learnt so much over the last few years and feel I still learn something new everyday!

Could you tell us a highlight of your work at Muirton House?

There are so many highlights over the last four years. Everyday something happens that brightens my day or makes me smile. Some of the best highlights are the trips out with the residents such as tea with a pony visit, swimming, tea dance, and of course visits to the hairdresser to get a makeover are always fun. I really love when we have entertainers visit and everyone – residents, family and carers, all have a good sing-song. In July we had a Summer Fayre in the garden where family and friends joined their loved ones in the garden for an afternoon picnic, and entertainment, with all the team dressing up as school children on a sports day. The staff had a sack race, egg and spoon race and a wheelbarrow race, but with decorated wheelchairs. The residents and family loved it and we raised £1,300 for the resident comfort fund which pays for us to do extra activities and buy residents treats.



110 Years - VIP Visits And A Card From The King

An extraordinary milestone was recently celebrated at Cams Ridge Care Home in Fareham. Annie Samphire, one of the UK's oldest citizens at 110 years, marked her special day surrounded by loved ones and well-wishers, including the local Mayor and Hampshire's Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the King's representative in the area.

Until someone just a few months older moved to the county, Annie held the title of Hampshire's oldest woman. Her secret to a vibrant life? Simple pleasures and determination. She says that regular walks (she's never had a driving licence!) and a fondness for sweets and ice cream before bed, have contributed to her impressive age and cheerful outlook.

Joined by family and guests, was a heartwarming affair. A card from King Charles III and Queen Camilla added royal warmth to the occasion. Annie's story is one of love and resilience. Her life in Hampshire, aside from a brief stint in Australia, was deeply intertwined with her late husband, Harry, a baker. Their enduring love weathered challenges, including wartime hardships.

Annie's family remains her source of strength. With two daughters, four grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and more to come, her legacy thrives. Her journey also underscores changing societal roles, as she faced workplace restrictions for married women having to leave her job at a local bazaar when she tied the knot with Harry. Betty Staley, Annie's daughter, attributes her mother's strength to a life well-lived. Transitioning to Cams Ridge Care Home was made easier by the supportive community and engaging activities. Betty, said: "My mum has always been a strong character and it's no surprise to me or any of the family that she is celebrating her 110th birthday. She shows the power of love, determination, and embracing life's joys.

"Cams Ridge Care Home has made such a fuss of her birthday and made it one for us all to remember. She was living at home until a year ago and is fiercely independent, but she has really embraced the social aspect of Cams Ridge and gets involved with all of the different activities the team put on."

Annie said: "I've lived a long and happy life, and I have been lucky to have the love of a good husband and family. Everyone keeps asking me how I've done it and I tell them that it's all about staying fit and enjoying yourself. Walk, rather than drive, when you can. And always say yes when offered a biscuit or chocolate bar. Life is for living and enjoying."

Mrs Joan Ferrer JP DL, representing HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, said: "It was a huge honour to join Mrs. Samphire and her lovely family for her 110th birthday celebrations. She is an amazing lady who is full of fun and energy, and I believe her recipe for life will stand her in good

stead for more years to come."

Marie Toledo, home manager for Larchwood Care at Cams Ridge, spoke fondly of Annie's incredible milestone. Marie said: "Annie is an extraordinary individual, and we are honoured to have her as part of our care home family as she celebrates her 110th birthday. She might be one of the oldest people in the UK, but don't let that fool you - she still has a sharp wit and keeps everyone on their toes!"

