

Letter from the Editor



2020...what a year!! Covid-19 took us all by surprise and turned our world completely upside down, especially for the residents. You have endured so much with such resilience and gratitude. I take my hat off to you all, well done for persevering through such difficult times. I know the way forward is still uncertain, but it will eventually come to an end, please hold onto that hope. There will come a day where you will go outside again, interact with the outside world, go shopping, have the freedom to choose where and when you want to go. But for now, as you patiently wait for that day, I would encourage you to keep yourself busy with activities to keep your mind stimulated and care for your physical well-being. Join the exercise groups with Lauren, Karin and Freda, it's time to get your body moving!! Sit outside in the sun and get a good dosage of Vitamin D. Enjoy a cup of coffee at the coffee shop. If you come to Bingo you could win yourself some vouchers to use at the coffee shop. The library has so many wonderful books to read. I have many resources like colouring in books, crosswords, sudoku, cards and board games. Many residents have embraced being inside and found various ways to cope with the current situation. You will hear such stories in this newsletter. I would encourage you to "keep moving." And to hold onto hope, the hope for a brighter day and to see this world healed from this global pandemic.

Lesley Knoll

Greetings from Delia



Dear Residents

What a challenging period the past months have been, as our world was turned upside down with the impact of Covid-19.

For me personally, this time has brought tears, uncertainty, mammoth responsibility and ongoing concern for the wellbeing of residents and staff.

Fortunately, due to the speedy and professional response of the management team, led by Dr Geffen and our dedicated and loyal staff, the impact has been minimal and managed. We appreciate your courage, sincere support and partnership in collaborating with us.

We do all have to remain vigilant and the sensible safeguards and preventative measures will remain until we are assured that the most vulnerable group, the elderly, are no longer at high risk.

Summer signifies a beautiful season. Hope abounds amidst the warmth and sunshine. A season of renewal and replenishment. Find things that bring you joy and lightness. In the meantime, stay well and stay patient. Wishing you all Happy Channukah.

Warm regards **Delia**

Through it all I am Very Grateful



When the virus first surfaced, we did not worry, unduly thinking we were in a safe environment. We had a group of seven of us who sat every afternoon in the coffee shop; knitting, chatting and enjoying ice cream. One of the ladies and I had enjoyed a friendship spanning over 50 years. That Thursday afternoon, she said she did not feel well and had a bad headache. She was taken to hospital for a checkup and sent back home into isolation. I was completely traumatised to hear she had passed away on Saturday morning. The autopsy read positive for the virus.

One by one, residents and staff were tested positive. We were then confined to our rooms on TOTAL lockdown. My best friend, Rhona Kushner who suffers with COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) was so ill, I did not know if she would survive. I could not see her and she was too ill to answer the phone, I nearly lost my mind worrying. Thankfully she

recovered. Of the group, two of us did not test positive for the virus, I thankfully was one of them. The following months were a nightmare: meals in our rooms, no contact at all and it was exercise in endurance. Very gradually we are getting back to normal but masks and physical distancing are still in effect. We have to sit 2 at a table at meals, but we have the freedom of the home and the coffee shop is operating again. After 6 months my darling daughter, Janine, was able to visit me and it was the best day of my life. I just pray there will not be a second wave, and that we will be able to go shopping again.

What I am enjoying most right now is being able to bake again. The residents look forward to Fridays and I bake as often as I can. I also love knitting I am well stocked with wool. I kept my daughter Janine very busy running around looking for wool for me. I am experimenting with crochet work, and I really enjoy it. I am fortunate to have many friends in Israel and America, we spend a lot of time on Facebook and chat away and swap recipes. I realise now you are never too old to learn.

When the weather is nice, we gather outside by the koi pond and spend a lovely afternoon knitting and chatting with masks and physical distancing. I also read a lot and work every Tuesday in the hair salon, and if needed I facilitate bingo. I also light candles on a Friday night. With all of it, I keep myself very busy and don't leave myself time to be depressed. We are blessed with beautiful gardens, meals, the coffee shop and now, visitors. I am very grateful to be in Highlands House where I am not alone.

Jeanette Jacobs

Covid-19

Thanks to Highlands House and New Somerset Hospital I am able to write this article for all the residents of our wonderful establishment.

When you are about to die, everything else pales into insignificance. I was in that unwelcome situation earlier this year. Being infected with Covid-19 is no trifling matter. I had it twice, I hope, ending a three-year litany of health woes during which I was stabbed and was DOA on arrival at hospital (saved by a novice doctor who used her training and bravery to stick a needle in my heart). To catch the virus was a bitter blow. When first diagnosed positive with the pandemic' trail of horrors, I was isolated. But my breathing worsened, aggravated by a pneumonic predilection caused by a consolidated haemo-thoracic blob of about 60mm sitting in the lower region of a lung, after that stabbing in my right chest as I waited for an Uber in the CBD. I survived the first bout and was freed.



Three days later I again tested positive. I vaguely recollect an ambulance siren's monotonous wail as I was carried at pace through Cape Town's bumpy streets to New Somerset Hospital. Yes, you see, no private hospital for me. A State patient, the vagaries of the casualty admission and its teeming throng was to be my destination.

A doctor, his face swathed in protective gear, followed a nursing sister who had collected my not so vital signs. I did not feel so good. From then on I suffered 15 days' unconsciousness and hallucinations and developed severe double pneumonia. In all I has seven drips, I felt and looked, like a Gothic rocker who depended on body piercings for solace. I was very ill. My son, faithfully monitoring the scenario from his South London home (he'd successfully overcome the virus himself) was told he might expect the worse as the Covid-19 took grip on my weakened state. I drifted in and out of consciousness. I imagined in one scenario I was in a club. People came and went. I called out; no one answered. Then I was on a train; going where I did not know. The hallucinations continued - how real they felt.

I ate nothing. My taste had gone; nausea overtook me when anything was offered. I drank water and an occasional cup of coffee – they tasted identical. Gradually I came to. I desperately sought to return to Highlands House; to obtain transport failed. Eventually, my son enlisted my wonderful editor from Weekend Argus. The delightful, amazing Vivian Warby, a Mother Teresa, managed to arrange for an ambulance and I returned home to two weeks' isolation with continuing loss of breath control; inability to sleep was excruciating. I'd lost 23kg while in hospital. I am still feeble, dizzy and unable to sleep properly; food remains a major hurdle.

Thanks Highlands and all the dedicated staff – you have been fantastic.

By Alan Simmonds

How I Survived Covid-19

On Saturday, 2nd May we lost our first resident to the virus. On the 5th May every resident in the home was tested. Friday the 8th May I was informed that my test was positive. At that time, I had absolutely no symptoms at all. The following Monday my breathing was extremely bad, as I suffer from COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). When they wheeled the tank of oxygen in, I thought it was the end, but it was just the beginning. I developed a high temperature that went up and down, uncontrollable diarrhea and at times was delirious. I was unable to eat any food for 2 weeks and because I did not get enough fluid became dehydrated. My isolation was about 3 weeks as I only came about on Tuesday 26th May. Its only now, after 4 months, that I am starting to feel my old self again. I completely lost my sense of taste and lost 11 kg in weight. I just pray that we don't have a second wave as I could never survive another bout as bad as this.

We are slowly getting back to normal with our activities such as bingo, games and the hairdresser is also open. I am extremely grateful to my carers Denise and Pelisa for all they did for me and to the Management team for keeping us all safe as it certainly wasn't easy handling so many residents.

Rhona Kushner

Skype - A Wonder of the Internet



Imagine not being allowed to visit with family and friends for months on end. Skype is a wonderful way to communicate anywhere in the world. Not only to talk, but to see whom you are calling. I have been truly blessed to be part of this wonderful and sometimes emotional experience.

Imagine sailing with your sister on her yacht somewhere off the coast of Portsmouth. Just watching a vessel out at sea in choppy water makes me sea sick. There we were, flying over the water at fullmast with sister dressed in her yellow waterproof jacket and sou'wester. Needless to say I turned my back to the screen. Then there were two little great-grandsons playing their violins – gran was in tears. How about a great-grandson crawling around on the floor playing peek-a-boo behind the sofa cushions in an apartment

somewhere downtown in Hong Kong.

Shared video calls are very popular. Residents can have more than one family member on the screen at the same time in different parts of the world. Imagine this, everyone talking at the same time, children being held up for gran to see. A cat here, a dog there, in the background come to see what the commotion is all about. The dog chasing the cat and barking - BEDLAM!

A bris in Israel. This was very emotional. With tears running down her face. Gran says she felt she was in the room with the family.

This is just a few of the highlights, there are so many more.

Jenni Burnett

My Experience with the Covid-19 Virus

There was a knock on the door. Then a second more urgent knock. It didn't sound like a good news knock. I opened the door. Colette stood there, looking very serious. "Please don't leave your room. You've tested positive. I'll be back a bit later to tell you more."

To say I was stunned is an understatement. I was speechless and just looked straight ahead even after she was gone. I tried to process what I had just heard. When rational thought returned, I realised that when it comes to co-morbidities, I was over 75, diabetic and had high blood pressure. And just to tip the odds even further against me I was overweight. The only conclusion I could draw was that I had just been given the death sentence. I informed my family, who were equally shocked.

It felt as if the sword of Damocles was hovering over my head. Soon I was inundated with doctors and nurses. I was too scared to ask the question I wanted to ask. "How much time do I have?"

The next few days passed very slowly. I had no symptoms, but I refused to allow myself to become optimistic. I didn't want to have to deal with the let-down when the illness set in. One, two, three, five, eight days passed. Still nothing. I began to feel cautiously optimistic. Only 5 days to go. The one thing I never got used to was being a statistic. I would see on the news that there were 5649 cases in SA. And I thought there would have been 5648 cases without me.

The last 5 days went a lot faster. My growing optimism built up a momentum which seemed to accelerate the process. Finally, on the 18th March they removed the commode and I figured I had beaten the deadly virus. Co-morbidities and all.

Today, some 7 months later, those memories have dimmed. What remains indelibly etched in my mind is the knowledge that it is thanks to the Herculean efforts of Leon and Delia that I, and the other positive residents, are safe and sound today. I will be eternally grateful to them. Today I still look at the statistics and when I see there are 43, 187, 803 cases Worldwide, I am reminded I am one of them.

David Myers



The residents enjoying a visit from one of our regular volunteers, Sue Hendler, and her dog Bhodi.

How I Experienced this Global Pandemic

I have been at Highlands House for 4 years now. I have quite a few friends here. On the 16th March Highlands House was under complete lockdown due to the Corona Virus Pandemic that hit us. We were isolated for seven months. Unfortunately, some of my friends were contaminated with the virus and passed away. Thank you, Hashem that the majority of us have survived. Never in my life did I experience such a pandemic. I must say, Dr Geffen and his team of 9 doctors were amazing. They saved our lives. Without them I would not like to imagine what would have happened.



I did not see my family; daughter, son in law and grandchildren for 7 months. When I saw them on Skype it was beautiful, but not seeing in them in reality was too much for one to bear. The day I saw them was like “a stone taken and lifted off my heart.” I cried non-stop and my family too. We are still in lockdown and can’t go out shopping. We can only go out to the garden at the back. I have to ask friends and family to get groceries for us from Checkers or Pick’n Pay online because we are not allowed to go out. I really feel that a person should be kept occupied by knitting, reading and taking walks to avoid being depressed or lonely. That’s what I do to cope with the lockdown. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Geffen and his team for all their hard work and interest he took in keeping us safe.

Diane Kanter



Eli Rabinowitz gave a very interesting talk about: We are here! The commemorations he attended in Europe in 2019.

Lockdown



It reminded me of the war and sitting in air raid shelters. Then I thought I have got to have a positive attitude. I thought of Nelson Mandela, he spent 27 years in prison, and I have been on lockdown for nearly 5 months. Then I decided I would write a book about my life for my precious children – Michelle and Alan. I had these grandiose ideas that it would be like *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell and be made into a film and my children would be famous. So, I sat every day and wrote and wrote. I started on the 10th June 2020. That day I would have been married to Sedrick for 65 years, my children's father. My life has been so complicated, having had 4 husbands; 2 children; a million step-children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and I am friends with all of them.

Adrienne encouraged me to write the book because we have a lockdown support group on a Monday and I was telling them a story of my childhood and she was very impressed and encouraged me to keep writing my story. She then spoke to Lesley and she setup a time to give my talk. I was terribly nervous as I have never done anything like it before. My first talk was an hour long and nowhere near finished. Then out of the blue sky came Jenniffer Miller who kindly offered to help me and type it out. An angel from Heaven!! The feedback from my talk was: "Outstanding, Too long, It was ok", the entire spectrum.

The worst for me during lockdown was having meals in my room with polystyrene and plastic cutlery. Nevertheless it must have been very hard on the staff and they did an amazing job. I congratulate them all. The lockdown left me anti-social and I have become a recluse. I have missed my family and friends and now become a bit nervous and shy to see them. At the time of writing I have seen Michelle alone, then Michelle and Natalie, my youngest granddaughter. I also got visits from family and friends. So that has been lovely for me. Who knows what is going to happen in the future with the 2nd wave of the Corona virus? Let us all stay safe.

My appreciation to Adrienne for the encouragement and to Lesley for her help and kindness for my talk. To dear Audrey with the tea and coffee and her kindness to everyone and sincere gratitude to Jennifer for her enormous help.

Myra de la Harpe



Special Care Unit staff taking some time out to come together and perform the Jerusalema Dance.

To our Carers from the Bottom of My Heart

MY SPECIAL PRAYER is that you all keep safe and well. I would like to praise **ALL** the Carers at Highlands House, not only for their sterling efforts during this 2020 pandemic but for the love and care that is always given to all of us who live in this home.

Whilst I do not know all of you I have had the privilege of getting to know Jeanette, Lilian, Queen, Sharlene, Babalwa, Julia, Emma Faldelia, Mandla, Thabiso, Thandi and Judy who lovingly show care and devotion to us 2 Old Wing. I commend them for seeing to the needs of my husband, Errol, especially during this very difficult year health-wise for him. I would also like to mention Pretty who once relieved our carer. She and the other carers never fail to greet and ask how we are wherever we may bump them.

For the past five months I have been living on 1 Old Wing where I am blessed to have Connie, Olga, Kanyi, Priscilla, Alvina and Lulu as well as Thandi the “locum” who all make me feel like I am the only one they see even though they give the same love and devotion to each and every other resident on the floor.

I also salute the carers on the ground floor who looked after me when I was there for a month being isolated. You are our angels and I appreciate the sacrifices you make for our wellbeing. Your job is not always easy, I have observed that, but your efforts are really appreciated. Early rising, long and dangerous travel conditions as well as being apart from your families for a long while. I know how this hurts as I too was a working mother all my life.

Jenniffer Miller

Our Unit Managers Experience



I have been employed at Highlands House since 2008. In May 2020 I was in complete lockdown, at home for two weeks after I tested positive with the Corona virus. My experience with the Corona virus was quite harsh because I had never felt that ill before. After the isolation period I felt much better and was relieved to be back with my colleagues and residents. The most important rule to remember is to sanitise and keep our hands clean, wear a mask and to practise social distancing. I am grateful to management and to the doctors for keeping residents and staff safe during this time.

Nazeema De Bruyn (Unit Manager)



Residents recently enjoying a lovely walk and fresh air on their first outings since March.

My New Hobby - Colouring in



It has been very difficult for me, to not go out during this lockdown. I enjoyed going to the Garden Centre to do my shopping and having visitors in the coffee shop. But what has helped me during this time to keep my mind busy, and also for enjoyment is colouring in. I never used to colour in before, it was recommended to me by the social worker. I thoroughly enjoy it, so much so that I have put up my artwork on the walls in my room. I'm very proud of it! I'm so grateful to receive the colouring in books, kokies and to have gained a new hobby which I absolutely love!!

Adele Greenblau

I am a Covid-19 Survivor

I caught the virus from a close friend who unfortunately died within days. I never knew how ill I was. I knew that I was on oxygen and a doctor came to see me every day. My son was also allowed to come and see me, but I never knew as I was so ill. One day, they took away the oxygen and the doctor stopped coming. The carers and others all came to tell me how happy they were that I had survived. Apart from feeling tired most of the time, there haven't been after effects, only the fact that my hair is falling out in batches. I am very lucky to have survived as one of the nursing sisters called me "a walking miracle."

Leah Kessler



We had a lovely Valentine's day celebration. The theme was a "Garden Party."



Talk by Marlene Silbert about, "The isolation of Jewish children in the broader community."

“People are About as Happy as they make up their Minds to be”

An early riser, the first hour of each day begins with thoughts of gratitude for the good health of my children, grandchildren and myself. When Highlands House became my home, I was motivated to schedule an organised programme and I maintained this, with some changes, from the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic. I maintained a daily exercise programme by following either a DSTV, Virgin Active or a Youtube Seniors exercise demonstration on my laptop. An absolute boon to my physical and mental well-being. Now that the restrictions have lessened, I instruct and attend an exercise class.

Thereafter, I attend to general domestic chores. I anticipate the ultimate joy of watering and observing the daily growth of new blossoms, and the progress of tomato and lettuce plants. Refer to the picture. The scenic beauty of Chapel Road with a river bordered by centuries old trees, and a beautiful Syringa outside my balcony, providing a playground for squirrels, birds and butterflies, are a constant appreciation of nature's bounty.

One large great-grandfather tree holds particular significance as my children and grandchildren came together there to see me. I positioned myself at the window at certain times where we could chat over the cellphone and see one another. Now of course we have the privilege of our 30 minute visit where bursting with joy we can knock elbows and have personal visits! Most days, the advantage of listening and watching Zoom on my computer has opened up a continual source of learning, culture and enjoyment. As a member of Temple Israel, I am sharing my spiritual life with family and friends, following services on Zoom. In addition to this I walk, knit, read and socialise within the perimeters of Covid-19. None of the aforementioned would have been possible without the chats and loving support of my family and friends, enhancing the absorbing tapestry of my life. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the medical staff and all the caring personnel at Highlands House during this every changing period of our lives.

Freda Kahanovitz



A Special Place in my Heart

I started working at Highlands House in 2013, as a young 26-year-old with very little experience with the elderly. Naomi guided me so well in those first few months and soon I was helping develop the OT service into what it is today. It was easy to fit into the Home and I felt very comfortable trying new groups and interventions in this setting. ***Some of my early lessons:*** I had to learn very early on that I needed to speak loudly and project my voice better especially in exercise classes; I learnt terms such as “Shabbat Shalom” and “Chag Sameach” and “Good Yom Tov;” I learnt that sitting on the floor was often the best way to adapt a wheelchair; I learnt I needed to wear comfortable shoes for a huge amount of walking one needed to do at Highlands House; I learnt that milk and meat do not mix; I learnt there was a protocol or system for everything; and so much more.



I soon grew fond of the residents I worked with and developed close attachments to some (you know who you are) through group activities, outings and major events in the Home. Some highlights for me were the 100th year celebration, outings to Greenpoint Park and Kirstenbosch, starting the Quiz with Lesley and being involved in so many creative projects for resident's groups.

I have been fortunate enough to have made special connections with certain residents and have enjoyed hearing about their histories and families. I have heard stories about life in war time Europe, stories about being political activists during the Apartheid-era, stories about starting a well-known clothing line, stories about being part of the Black Sash, stories of families that have emigrated and stories about great grandchildren coming into the world. These stories and so many more are wonderful to hear and added such depth to my interaction with everyone. I will remember all these, and I hope that all of you will remember me and some of my stories too. Highlands House will always have a special place in my heart.

I wish all of you happy, healthy years ahead stay active, stay well and look after yourselves. Remember me.

Anisha Adams - Occupational therapist



Lauren's Appreciation of a Warm Welcome

I understand this year has given us all many surprises and has likely been much more difficult than what we would have chosen for ourselves. Change has been ongoing and uncertainty immense. Despite this, what struck me when I first started at Highlands House in September was the genuine openness of the residents and staff – it felt like walking into a real community. While I have yet to meet all the residents personally, I trust that the positive, welcoming experience I had is just the beginning of many good relationships in the time to come.



I was fortunate to spend a two-week period with Anisha before she left and witnessed the authentically patient and caring all-rounder role that she played at Highlands House, giving me a taste of what her time here involved. I am pleased to step into this role and assist wherever needed when it comes to maintaining your quality of life, independence and opportunities to participate in the things you enjoy. Occupational therapists are known to wear many hats, and I am very willing to swap between them as needed, to assess and manage injuries or health conditions, work with assistive devices and mobility aids, brainstorm and advise regarding room layouts and adaptations, and I'm sure much more.

To share a little more about myself personally, I qualified as an occupational therapist at UCT in 2012, and have worked since then in both a hospital and long-term care facility settings for people with disabilities, while also completing my Masters studies on a part-time basis for the past few years. I have lived in the southern suburbs of Cape Town my whole life, apart from a year spent working in the Free State in 2013 after graduating. Apart from work, I have a love for the outdoors, and spend much of my time hiking and long-distance running. I really enjoy local travel and getting to know all that our diverse country has to offer. With the Highlands House residents having many more years of life experience to share than I do, I look forward to the opportunities to learn about each one of you in the same way.

Lauren Fuller - Senior Occupational Therapist



Talk by Stuart Diamond



Elaine Durbach is an acclaimed journalist-turned-author. When visiting Cape Town from the US, we had the privilege of listening to her talk about her first fiction book called Roundabout.

Finding My Way Through this Pandemic

While many people worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was one of the few people that continued working. This was a very daunting experience as there was so much tension and suspense in the home. This experience was a first for everyone, so we took it day by day.

Traveling to and from work was also a different experience. The city seemed like a ghost town.

I could not perform my usual duties and had to take on different tasks most of the time. There was even a time when I had to stay in my office all day to prevent the spread of infections in the home.

Some days I felt as if I was just a ball of nerves because I was worried about going home to my family and possibly being a carrier and transmitting the virus to them.

Even though this was a difficult year and many things have changed, the protocols that were put in place were necessary to help flatten the curve and stop the spread of infections. We have been able to enjoy more activities and socialising within the home again.

Karin Syce - Occupational Therapy Assistant



A Farewell visit by Gwen and her dog Moya. They have been volunteering for many years. They will always have a special place in our hearts.



Celebrating Rosalie Wolpe's 111th Birthday. Seen here with Barbara Bernstein.

Leaning on Each Other - A Social Workers Journey

I have been asked to reflect on the 8 months we have lived with the knowledge of Covid-19, in Highlands House. I am fortunate that I was recognized by Law as an essential worker from the very beginning of Lock-down. It has been a time of change and adaptation, of adjusting to situations that were previously unimaginable. When Harris Burman stopped residents from going out on Monday 16 March, I was stunned. How could we expect this of people? Writing this article in October, the status quo remains. The majority of residents have not left the premises since March.

As a Social Worker I have offered supportive counselling to residents in 14 days isolation, to residents who tested positive for Covid-19, to residents not allowed by the Regulations of the Disaster Management Act to see their family. Nothing prepared me for this, so it was a professional challenge. Residents had to sacrifice freedom for personal safety and were obliged to become dependent on us for shopping and banking in many instances. I have always tried to support the residents to be independent, so this was a first in my 25 years at Highlands House. There was no other way.

I was dismayed when we closed Dining-rooms and the Lifestyle Centre. The atmosphere in the Home was dejected and dull and dismal. The biggest hurdle, I reckon was dealing with the issue of no visitors. It caused such pain and heart-ache. But the risk of visitors was too great.

On the plus side, I have had the time to re-connect with residents as the Admissions process lapsed during this time. This has been a great pleasure as I marvelled at resident's resilience and stoicism. It made my own sacrifice seem smaller and easier by comparison. Booking family's planned visits is an unexpected job since 17 September, but it is happy and rewarding. It gives such pleasure to both sides and the Coffee Shop is alive again.

Some people have said this is the fastest year ever while others have commented that every week is the same. We have shared our unique feelings in our weekly groups, re-enforcing the concept that we are **ALL** in this together. Us, and the whole world. Sharing the experience has been very healthy and a helpful coping mechanism.

Covid-19 is not over, and the struggles are not over. I am humbled by the strength and dignity of each and every resident who bravely fights each day of the pandemic. Residents say they feel safe and secure in Highlands House but are paying a price and making sacrifices. I am inspired by this triumph of the human spirit and it keeps me going.

Barbara Bernstein - Senior Social Worker



Social Work in 2020



Just as I was back in the swing of being a regular social worker in the field I know and love and established my daily work routine - the Corona Virus arrived. Then LOCKDOWN happened and EVERYTHING changed. ESPECIALLY when our first cases were discovered and residents were ordered to go into isolation. I switched from counselling residents to counselling desperately concerned relatives and friends. I remember that my phone rang constantly. I soon started feeling that there was not enough of me to go around and the me that went around to our residents was not the usual me – not least of all because I looked like an alien dressed from top to toe in red and green plastic.

So after relatives became used to the status quo, my focus could again more wholly return to the residents but... NOT in the regular way!! Because of the “no in, no out” policy, practicalities and material needs became more pressing than emotional needs. This soon meant that residents were no longer looking to me for my ear, but for my shopping and banking skills. I discovered, not unlike me, that many people have their thing that they simply CANNOT live without....be it cheese, grapefruit, chips, all at once we realized that our Hairdressing Salon has been taken utterly for granted.

One thing I have sure had to sharpen while becoming an errand doer, has been my organizational skills. On any day, I could have thrust on me, several bank cards, several envelopes of cash, loose cash and shopping lists. I have had to learn mindfulness!! BUT...sharing and caring and bonding have for sure been positive spin offs.

So, my role is a little different these days, but I have adapted, and I have come to really enjoy what I do these days at Highlands House. I have got to know our residents in a whole new way and am loving it. Of course, our residents have been my greatest role models and inspiration when it comes to adaptation. I am continually in awe of how our residents have accepted with such good grace the restrictions placed on them. Going forward, may the restrictions continue to lessen, may our excellent team continue to steer us so well in these turbulent times and may the bonding between us continue and grow even when PG lockdown has become a distant memory.

Adrienne Todes - Social Worker

Being Inside not Going out = Bingo



Today is exactly 7 months since I was last at Highlands House and also the first day that I was there again.

The time has gone by so slowly and also so fast. I walked into Highlands House feeling elated and excited but left with a whole bundle of emotions. I was saddened by the loss of time that has lapsed, time that I was not able to visit and play bingo with “my” beloved residents. I was happy to see familiar faces; say a few “hello’s” and “I have missed you” and “I hope to see you again soon.”

I was intrigued and proud to hear of new interests and hobbies residents have developed during these torrid times of lockdown, and the inner strength and resilience that was unlocked and tapped into. I can only imagine how trying this time has been for you all – scary, sad, frustrating, heartbreaking and the list goes on and on – well done to you all for your bravery. I AM thankful and grateful for what is and has clearly been wonderful care, love and support that has been given to you all by the management and staff.

Whilst life seems to have gone on outside the walls and gates of Highlands House, it has also been very different for me too. I have learned to have online meetings, ‘attend’ Zoom Shul services, watch webinars, even managed some online courses and learnings; and had some parties with friends online!

The highlight of my week is on a Thursday - I take a bit of time to play Bingo on my phone and feel that I am connecting to “my” bingo friends at Highlands House.

As the days left in this year are fewer than the days that have been, I hope that the days remaining of this “disaster” are fewer than the days that it has been around.

I wish you all good health and much happiness with love to you all and gratitude to the wonderful team that supports and takes care of you all.

Dore Kleinberger - Volunteer

To my dear Friends at Highlands House:

It is with gratitude to Hashem that I have this honour and privilege to be able to write an article in the Highlands House newsletter. It takes great courage, strength, faith and trust in Hashem to endure the difficult times that life presents, and to you, my dear friends, I am extremely proud of you all, who have overcome “your” difficult moments and still do.



Not being able to give over my time to you by entertaining you musically, and to deny you the pleasure of music, has been somewhat painful. The difficulty has not been for myself, but for you, which always creates so much stimulation and joy in your lives. The musical interaction which I have always experienced with you, my dear Residents, has now created a huge void for a short while, and hopefully not for too long. Just to mention, once strong relationships have been established, nothing or no one can sever that bond. Music continues to play in our hearts and our minds, and that bond will never cease to exist.

May our strong friendships continue to strive with each other, whether visually or virtually in the near future. May we all have the strength and courage to comfort each other, being it musically or physically. The melody never ends, it just goes into remission for a short while. I bless you with great blessings, much love and joy for the “New” year, and as they say in Yiddishkeit: “Simcha breaks ALL of the those barriers.”

Shulie Babus - Volunteer

My Journey with Covid-19

In June, I tested positive for the Covid-19 virus. I was scared and was unbearably sick at the same time. Although some people survived it, all I could think of was death. I was very anxious, I experienced headaches, a loss of taste and smell and had a dry cough. I tried eating lemons with the skin on just see if the smell or taste was coming back and it slowly did. It was a rough journey but I am so grateful that my family and I made it through this and survived by the grace of God.

Johanna Muller - Carer on 2 New Wing



Concert by Aron Halevi and Divine Mahara. Divine is the first winner of Zimbabwe's Got Talent. Aron is the founding member of the South African Afro-fusion band, Freshly Ground.



The Survivor's Portrait Exhibition held at the Holocaust Centre. These portraits were painted by some of our Highlands House artists, supervised by Haim Menashehoff. Seen here are Arnold Wallach, Haim Menashehoff and Herschel Miller.

Life is a Gift

Being diagnosed with the virus was unexpected but I realised it could happen to anyone so I accepted it and concentrated on handling it in a positive manner. The worst part about it was leaving my family to isolate, but I was very lucky to have been isolated in a plush isolation facility. I missed my family and work. It was challenging to be on my own, but I didn't want to infect them.

The best advice I can give you to is sanitise your hands as much as possible, be vigilant and wear your mask.

Life goes by so quickly. One day we feel good and the next day it feels too hard. During this time, I realised how valuable life is. To appreciate the good times and thank God for our blessings. Life is truly a gift and I sincerely hope that slowing down has taught us to appreciate it.

Jean de Silva - Carer on 1 New Wing



A New Journey



I'm grateful to be part of the Clinic Nursing team at Highlands house, who are very supportive. Coming from a background of working in an Intensive Care Unit, and being very new to working in a clinic, I'm very glad to have been given a chance to learn new skills.

I admire the way the management of Highlands House implemented medical strategies to protect the residents against the Covid-19 Pandemic. It's for that very reason that few of the residents have lost their lives to the virus.

I can truly say that I love working at Highlands House, using my nursing skills in the service of the elderly community. Meeting the special needs of the residents is both challenging and rewarding.

Joan de Villiers - Nursing sister

