

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Catherine Butterfield, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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Aged care residents hit the right note virtually all of the time

Mercy Place East Melbourne's lifestyle team has not let visitor restrictions get in the way of residents having a good time at the aged care home. Residents, their loved ones and friends from Mercy Place Apartments Parkville worked around the restrictions, joining together virtually for a group sing-along last week.

Residents whose family members were on the nursing home's big television screen for the Zoom catch up were overjoyed to see and hear their loved ones singing along to the tunes, including *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, *The Happy Wanderer* and *Que Sera Sera*. While for those residents not familiar with virtual technology, they were in awe of what was playing out in front of them.

"It took quite a lot of work to pull it all together, and there were some minor technical glitches, but with the help of our lifestyle assistants Janet and Disha, the activity turned out to be a wonderful reunion for the residents, their families and friends," Mercy Place East Melbourne Lifestyle Coordinator Claire Ganzon said.

"We had five family members attend the Zoom call and a couple of the Sisters of Mercy from Mercy Place Apartments Parkville. You should have seen everyone's faces when they were singing along with our virtual participants. It was priceless. There were some residents who had never been a part of a group video call before so seeing themselves on the big screen, and seeing people from outside of our home right there with them, was fantastic. They were fascinated by the technology."

There will be more opportunities for Mercy Place East Melbourne residents to connect virtually with family and friends following the Mercy Health Foundation's donation of another tablet to the aged care home via its Critical Coronavirus Appeal. The virtual sing-along was connected via the tablet to the large television screen in the home's club lounge.

A playlist of song lyrics was printed out and sent to participating residents, family members and Sisters of Mercy to ensure everyone could join in the singing.

For Joanne Briggs, whose mother Dorothy Aikman is a resident at Mercy Place East Melbourne, the virtual catch-up was the perfect tonic for all participants during a difficult period of visitor restrictions.

"It has been really difficult for us, and particularly for Mum, for me to not be able to pop in twice a week to catch up and do our activities together," Joanne said. "The virtual catch-up was fantastic. It was so good to see Mum and the other residents we know smiling and singing. The lifestyle staff made sure that they went right around the room multiple times so we could keep on seeing our family members."

“The lifestyle team at Mercy Place East Melbourne has been outstanding in keeping everyone connected during this time. I can’t explain what a relief it is to see Mum virtually and see firsthand that she is being well looked after.”

Metropolitan Melbourne has been living with strict coronavirus visitor restrictions for a number of weeks. The Mercy Place East Melbourne entire team’s role has become even more important since their introduction.

“The care staff and the nursing staff have been exceptional, but for people like Mum who are still quite mobile, the lifestyle staff are probably even more important than the personal carers,” Joanne said.

“Healthcare workers who work on the frontline have been getting a lot of attention for what they are doing to keep everyone safe and well during this time, but the lifestyle teams at aged care homes need to be properly recognised, too. The team here is outstanding and I can’t thank them enough.”

Sister Patricia Nolan, who lives in the Mercy Place Apartments Parkville and is the primary contact for a number of Sisters of Mercy who live at Mercy Place East Melbourne and Parkville, was thrilled to see her friends during the virtual catch-up.

“It was lovely for the residents to see people that they haven’t been able to see for weeks and weeks,” Sr Patricia said. “And it was very good for me to see the Sisters and see how they’re doing. I usually visit them on a regular basis, I make sure they’re doing well and look after their daily general needs, so it’s been very hard to not visit. I miss them very dearly so to see them so happy was very special.”

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