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December 11, 2020

Dear St. John's Residents and Family Members,

By now you have probably learned that COVID-19 vaccines will soon be authorized for emergency use and will become available for distribution to healthcare workers and residents in long term care facilities as part of an expedited schedule. This is certainly long-awaited, positive news.

Unfortunately, we do not have all of the details regarding vaccine distribution that we would hope to provide to you at this juncture, which could begin as early as December 21 according to the New York State Department of Health. However, through this communication, we hope to share information that we can confirm in order that it might facilitate an efficient and successful process for your loved one as part of St. John's participation in the New York State-wide roll out. (We also appreciate your understanding that information flow from governing bodies of this process is still very fluid and has already been in flux in the recent days.)

It is understandable that some of you may be concerned about the safety of these new vaccines, as they have been developed and tested far more quickly than those in the past. We want to assure you that the speed with which these vaccines were developed is not due to skipping important safety steps, but rather the result of focused, collaborative work performed by experts across the globe. Vaccines approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have undergone the same level of rigorous testing for safety and efficacy as other vaccines, and have been tested in tens of thousands of people, including older adults. Two independent advisory committees of experts from academic institutions also monitor vaccines to ensure their safety.

Most of the COVID-19 vaccines require two separate doses given about three or four weeks apart, depending on the vaccine. St. John's has been assigned by the New York State Department of Health to a locally-based branch of a national pharmacy that will facilitate administration of the vaccine to both our residents and staff members on site. Participation is free of charge, voluntary, and no resident or staff member can be mandated to receive the vaccine due to its emergency use authorization (EAU) classification. However, in order to acknowledge agreement to participate, an authorization form is required to be signed by individuals able to do so, or their health care proxy, within a designated time prior to vaccination administration. Given this requirement, we are anticipating a very tight window of time between when the form will be available to us to share with you and when we would need your signed consent returned. We are hoping that your advance notice of the situation with which we are presented will enable improved cooperation. Details regarding how to access the consent form on behalf of your loved one will be forthcoming.

While administration of the vaccine will not mean the immediate opening of full visitation and access to residents of skilled nursing facilities (noting that those specific changes would only come from revamped state and federal guidelines), we are confident that the worldwide, unprecedented scientific achievement of these COVID-19 vaccines and its distribution to as many citizens as possible across our state and nation, will eventually enable all of us to more fully enjoy life with our loved ones once again.

As I have been saying over the course of this difficult year, we are all in this together. Please know that the safety and wellbeing of our staff and residents have been and remain St. John's top priority. We look forward to doing our part in this effort by getting the COVID-19 vaccine, and we hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

President and CEO

Embrace Living

150 Highland Avenue | Rochester, New York | 14620-3099 | 585-760-1300

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