



ChevrahKadisha

26 June 2020

Dear Friends

COMMUNITY UPDATE

A heartfelt thank you to you, our wonderful community - your financial support enables our lifesaving work. Your messages of encouragement mean so much to our staff and residents – thank you!

We are acutely aware of the difficult and troubled times we are all living through. The pandemic will come to an end eventually but in the interim we must dig deep and find faith, resilience and courage.

Despite all our efforts, we are seeing an increasing number of COVID positive cases across our facilities. At the time of writing we have 12 positive cases across our nearly 1000 residents. Virtually all of these are as a result of asymptomatic spread from members of staff. Thank G-d to date we have had nobody with serious illness, no hospitalisations and no deaths. We are seeing a rapid increase of infections in Johannesburg and we are doing everything in our power to minimise the exposure of those who are most vulnerable in our community.

A perfect storm: The complexities of the Chev's position are distressing as the virus has impacted harshly on every aspect of our work, demanding that we rise to challenges and fight for survival on three fronts.

1. **Preventative Healthcare** - Almost one thousand of the community's most vulnerable people live in our facilities and it is imperative that we do whatever we can to protect and care for them. To this end we continue to apply a host of vigilant precautionary infection-control measures including staff screening and strict access control, ongoing staff training, providing our carers with PPE, deep-cleaning all common areas and surfaces, physical-distancing, hand-washing and providing face-masks to all staff and residents. All residents and staff in all facilities have their temperatures taken twice a day, every day, to be on the alert for early spikes in temperature. The Chev closely follows the advice of our external Medical Advisory Committee and a virologist who offers ongoing guidance and expertise.
2. **Social and Financial Assistance** - The Chev is the safety net for thousands of people in our community. Ours is the address to which they turn, in pain and desperation. Built into our culture is the determination not to fail them or send anyone away without hope. In addition to the many people the Chev is accustomed to supporting, every day brings multiple new appeals for help. Many are from



Registered as Johannesburg Jewish Helping Hand & Burial Society



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previously independent people who have lost their jobs or businesses and have no way to feed their families.

3. **Funding** – Our challenges are so unique in many ways and particularly in the social services sector. In many first world countries, the State contributes the vast majority of funding for facilities such as ours. Less than 3% of the Chev's funding comes from the State whilst the vast majority of income comes from you, our generous donors. We are on our own, as an organisation and as a community. At this time some donors have had no choice but to reduce their longstanding contributions.

Invisible enemy: Our staff provide 24/7 compassionate care to our residents and community members. While the daily screening of the 1000 staff members is thorough, most who later test positive are entirely asymptomatic. Our vigilant twice-daily temperature-testing, our system of tracing and tracking contact between people, and the practice of confining our staff to only the areas in which they work, have all been beneficial and contributed to early detection and containment of cases.

Isolation: When Coronavirus is suspected or confirmed, the challenges of trying to isolate residents suffering with dementia, intellectual disability or mental illness are complex. They don't necessarily understand what is happening or why they have to be confined to their rooms and refrain from touching each other. This can result in resistance and behavioural challenges. In addition to the fact that their environment has changed so radically, communication with residents is impeded by face masks that challenge their hearing and their ability to recognise people.

Balance: We are always very cognisant of walking a fine line between physical (clinical) and emotional health. Our residents can become depressed and despondent in isolation and being confined and removed from friends and family can be damaging to their wellbeing. For that reason, throughout the process, we have been focussed on ways in which we can encourage and hearten our residents. Our goal is that our residents must emerge from this period whole and healthy, not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically too. Our teams actively seek ways to provide happiness and meaning in this uncertain time. They have had to be innovative and creative in finding ways to keep the residents active, entertained and emotionally healthy. It is in this domain that the Chev's Programming and Social Services departments have joined forces and stepped up to enrich their lives in dozens of ways every day.

Heroes: It is my honour to express gratitude to and celebrate our dedicated staff across the Group for going above and beyond the call of duty. They often place themselves in harm's way to provide comfort and uplift any residents and community members who may be struggling. In every situation they respond with kindness, compassion and





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understanding, treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Finances: As you can imagine the ongoing testing, precautionary measures and infection-control protocols are costing the Chev an additional R1 million per month over and above our normal budget. For the first time in its long history the Chev has been forced to launch an [Emergency Relief Fund](#). We appeal to those of you able to assist to do whatever you can. Equally important, it would be deeply appreciated if you could **share this request with your family and friends overseas**. It's not about how much you contribute, but about how many people contribute.

“We must never confuse faith that we will prevail in the end ...with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of our current reality, whatever they might be”.
(Stockdale Paradox).

With Hashem's help, we believe wholeheartedly that we will emerge from this crisis but that does not prevent us from dealing with our complex challenges as we encounter them.

May Hashem continue to bless and protect this very special community and may these difficult times soon be behind us.

Keep well and stay safe

Saul

Saul Tomson

Chief Executive Officer
Chevrah Kadisha Group

24 hour Emergency Helpline - **082 499 1010**

Arcadia

Selwyn
Segal

Our
Parents
Home

Sandringham
Gardens