

Interviewees: Annette Betz and Jennifer Barnes, with Stephanie Kleiner

Interviewer: Dr. Joshua Furman

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PREFACE: The Medallion is an assisted living facility in Houston, Texas which is a part of Seven Acres, a Jewish senior care services nonprofit. The Medallion caters to an observant Jewish clientele. This oral history with Annette Betz, executive director, and Jennifer Barnes, director of life enrichment, explores how The Medallion worked to adapt their practices for residents during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic. Among other topics, Betz and Barnes discuss how Passover was observed at the Medallion in April 2020, and describe how residents learned to use technology to connect with other residents and their families during a time of increased isolation.

Interview transcript by Katie Webber, HJHA Project Archivist

Interview Transcript

FURMAN: Hi, my name is Joshua Furman. I'm the curator of the Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University, and I'm here today with staff from The Medallion. I'd like to start by asking everyone to introduce themselves; please go ahead.

BETZ: Hello, I'm Annette Betz. I'm the Executive Director of The Medallion.

BARNES: Hello, I'm Jennifer Barnes. I'm the Director of Life Enrichment at the Medallion.

KLEINER: Hello, I'm Stephanie Kleiner. I'm the Public Relations Manager of Seven Acres.

FURMAN: Great, thank you all so much for being with us today. It is June 11th, 2020. Annette and Jennifer just if you would, start by telling us a little bit about your background and how long it's been that you've been working in the field of senior care.

BARNES: Do you want me to start, Annette, or you start?

BETZ: Go ahead and start.

BARNES: I'm from New York, Jewish, born and bred Orthodox, grew up in the melting pot of New York and moved to Houston in 2009 with my husband and two kids- well, one kid at the time, now we have two kids, and I have done adult programming and children's programming, nonprofit, all that type of thing throughout the years and until I worked at the Medallion I had never done senior programming but I had done programming, and I've been here since August 31, 2015, so almost 5 years.

FURMAN: And what is your official title, Jennifer?

BARNES: Director of Life Enrichment.

FURMAN: Okay, great. Thank you so much, and Annette.

BETZ: I was born in Kentucky and I did live in Texas for a while and Minnesota with my father in the Air Force, and then moved back to Kentucky and spent the rest of my growing up years in Kentucky until I moved to Houston in 1984. My background is dietetics, the field of dietetics, I'm a registered licensed dietician, and I started working for Seven Acres in 1993 as their Director of Dining Services, and then when we decided to open The Medallion, or started looking at the demographics for opening The Medallion, I also have a background in interior design so I worked with the architects and it just kind of seemed the natural progression for me to become the Executive Director. So I became the Executive Director of The Medallion. I guess you could

say it's kind of been for me to be a part of senior care all my life. My grandmother lived with us as I was growing up and so I was around senior ladies all the time, so I think it was inevitable for me to be a part of senior care.

FURMAN: Sure. Tell us about the history of The Medallion for anyone listening to this interview who's not familiar with the institution. When was it founded and what population do you serve?

BETZ: We serve the population of residents who need assistance, you know, they are still able to do many things for themselves but they may need someone to just help them get dressed or look over their medications, that type of thing. But we do serve a wide range of needs, and The Medallion actually was opened in March 2006. So we are a little over 14 years old, and our purpose was to serve the Jewish community in assisted living and have Jewish traditions and so forth. Because we are a part of the Seven Acres campus, so we are under the umbrella of the Board of Directors of Seven Acres.

FURMAN: Okay, very good. And so, in normal times, tell us Jennifer, what would an average day at The Medallion look like in terms of resident activities, in terms of socializing, in terms of meals and other things happening in the building.

BARNES: Well there would be breakfast in the morning, so that would be the first opportunity for them to be able to socialize, and then those that wanted to join services could go to services, and then usually after services we would have a fitness class every day, five days a week, Monday through Friday, and then after that we would either go into like maybe a Torah class, a Jewish thought class, a volunteer current event class or beading, word games, alphabet challenge, trivia, memory magic, arts and crafts, cooking class, all different sorts of things like that. And then they would go for lunch, again more socializing, and then after lunch typically we would have different kinds of Torah classes, we would have of course bingo every day, but certain days we would have poker. You know, volunteers coming and playing poker after lunch. Some days we would have on the schedule, volunteers, they would play bridge, they would play mahjong, we have blackjack, and those are just the in-house programming. Every Wednesday afternoon we had a live entertainer come into the living room, and we set everybody up and it's happy hour. So there's music, and then we had birthday parties and other musical programs and all sorts of people coming in and out of the building. Volunteers, schools would call and say, "Hey you know we did a Hanukkah play for our class, can we come to The Medallion for Hanukkah and do that?" or "We did a play for our school, could we come do a rehearsal by you so that we could entertain the seniors and still do rehearsal for our play?" So we had all sorts, and that's not even including when we went out to the Wortham Center downtown for the monthly music program or when we went to the local synagogues for the senior lunch programs or the museums or the JCC or out to- so all of that. So that all depended on the day and the week. So we were full, we were busy.

FURMAN: Yeah, I mean this is-

BETZ: Don't forget- I'm sorry, Jennifer, is that okay? Don't forget evening movies, and so forth.

BARNES: Thank you, exactly, that's right, exactly.

KLEINER: And Jennifer- I'm going to add also that all the major programming that goes on over at the Seven Acres on the other side of the campus that The Medallion residents are invited to, so if on a Sunday we have a Purim party, or a carnival, a grandparents day, The Medallion residents are invited to come on over and join.

BARNES: Right, right.

FURMAN: So you just described, I mean, an incredibly vibrant daily schedule with lots of different kinds of activities, lots of people coming in and out of the building, lots of opportunities for enrichments, education, socialization. Give us some insight into how the pandemic has changed the nature of daily life for your residents. What are the things that they maybe can't do anymore, and how are you working so hard to try to meet their needs to create new kinds of programming?

BARNES: Well I think the number one thing that is the hardest for them is, they're very social, and even if there was a problem or there was a lull between programming in a regular day they would all kind of sort of fall together into the living room, which is the lobby but we call it the living room, and they sit together and they listen to music on the piano or just schmoozing with each other and they don't have that opportunity now. So that's the hardest, I think, part for them right now. We have hallway programs. Hallway fitness, hallway bingo, hallway trivia. The residents sit in their doorways, which, every doorway is in compliance on its own, you know, six feet across or six feet on either side from their other neighbor. So we have that and [go around] and the staff comes around and Wednesdays in the afternoon we still have happy hour, we don't have a live entertainer, but we, the staff that mans the cart come around and we entertain them with music or we say hello and we have a time. Friday, we have the Friday treat cart, we're going around, we're saying hello. The Zoom classes that we have; in their rooms, the residents are able to see their friends and their co-residents and their neighbors on the computer. So obviously, it's changed dramatically, but there is opportunity for them, you know, to be able to still have, keeping them occupied and keeping them entertained to that degree.

FURMAN: Sure. I mentioned-

BETZ: And Josh, the other thing is that we're not able to serve meals in the dining room right now. We cannot have communal dining, so each person is being served in their apartment, which, they don't get that opportunity to socialize, but our staff tries to you know be there a few moments and I visit as much as I can with the residents, and so we've just had to adapt how we as staff approach and take care of our residents. Because we would see them out and about but now we don't, so we have to go to them. With our masks and so forth.

FURMAN: Right, right of course. Tell me more about how you're using technology to keep residents connected. Not only to each other, but also with their families who can't visit them right now.

BARNES: Well, first of all, before I forget, if you don't mind I would like to say we have immediately adapted to telemedicine on the iPad. I didn't want to forget that. So that's important for the care of the residents. So they have that, I hope that's okay Annette but I just want-

BETZ: Absolutely, absolutely.

BARNES: I thought of it and that's the number one thing that was set up immediately. So there are some challenges. Most of the residents are not computer savvy, most of them do not have their own iPad or computer and some of them that do have are not as savvy in that way, you know, they can get on email or they can do other things. So the challenge is in a regular, normal, everyday Medallion activity program, you know, we're busy but we have set areas where the residents come to us. So maybe you know, maybe six people to one program for this one, and then maybe twelve people come to that program the next day or something. So I'm one person creating one environment for multiple people to come and enjoy. So the challenge for me personally is that I'm going around to each individual room who wants to be on the Zoom

meeting, who wants to do Facetiming with their family, and I'm the one running around making sure everybody's connected. So instead of being in one place and inviting the visitors, I'm going to sixteen places, like they're all inviting me. But they've adapted really well and they kind of know the routine already, they know what to expect, they know how it's working. They're really patient, they know I'm one person, and sometimes I have the help, and they understand that and some of them I'm able to slowly tutor them so they're starting to be a little more independent on their own. The real positive that came out of this is the Facetiming that we're able to do with their families. So there's a lot of residents that have, you know, some children and family here in Houston, and then obviously children and family all over the world. Obviously they miss the ones that normally come in and out and see them on a weekly basis, but the positive is we're able to now connect them as well to those family members that live overseas or in another state. So they get to see them, Facetime with them. The challenge of course is for me and some of the other staff that helps assist with that with the Facetiming is, are we running programs during that time, are they busy doing something else, do they have something going on, and what about the family, and trying to make sure all those points are freed up for that one time when we're gonna call. The one or two times a week that they get to call their family.

FURMAN: Sure, there's a lot of schedules to manage. Annette, I'm interested in hearing your perspective just on, in general, how life is different now and what sort of new program or innovation are you proudest of that The Medallion is currently doing?

BETZ: Well I was going to add to what Jennifer said in that how it changed and it's changed, it's changed what I do. Like I said, where I would interact with residents in a group more, now I have to make sure I schedule my time and go visit the residents, and also in trying to help with activities and so forth that now becomes a little more complicated when they're not coming together. Which is true of our Community Relations Director Stephanie Barrocas, and our Wellness Coordinator, and many of our care staff and so forth. We're all adapting to adding different tasks than what we've had to do in the past, and you know what? That's a good thing. That's one of the- I guess the, I don't know if you'd call it an innovation but it's one of the things that have happened that I feel has really been a very positive in that and we always did do a good job of everybody kind of helping in whatever way they could. We're kind of like one big family. It doesn't matter whether you're in dining services or in housekeeping or our maintenance coordinator, whoever. If a resident needed something it didn't matter, anyone would help. It's just gelled a little bit more with all of this and so everyone has just stepped up because it's been difficult for the residents. Number one, out of their routines that they're used to doing, and secondly not being able to hug and kiss their family, you know, that's a big issue and even us, because I'm a very touchy-feely person and I've not been able to do that now with the residents because of the- I'm using physical distancing, not social distancing. So, and so it's been difficult, so one of the things that I think has been a real positive is that. Another is what we've been able to accomplish with the Zoom classes and being able to Facetime and be with family in that way because in the past those folks that lived overseas or lived in another state and didn't get here often, you know they would talk on the phone, and then they would maybe come whenever they could visit but now we have the technology there and the residents comfortable, so we can, even when this is over, we can keep those schedules going with those family members that are across the pond, so to speak, or just in, say, Arkansas or New York or wherever they are. So that I'm very proud of too, that it has made us more aware of bringing

these things to our residents. And we are also in the process of looking at other types of social media or technology, I'm gonna say, to further enhance what we're doing here at The Medallion. BARNES: Yeah, if I could jump on and agree with Annette, one of the things is that since we've been forced to use the iPads and the rolling computer carts and the Zoom and everything else, it opened up a whole new world of programming that we've realized we can incorporate even when things resume. You know, what if a resident's not feeling well? So, you know, they should be able to feel, you know- we can include them in maybe a Torah class and I can set up the Zoom for the Torah class that's going on live in the media room, you know, those kind of things. One of the other things is also that families have been very creative and they'll reach out to me and say, "We're having a *bris*," one resident recently, "We're having a *bris* for so-and-so's great-grandchild, we're doing it via Zoom; can you get her on there?" So she was able to see 13 people from the family, see the *brit*, you know as much whatever- and hear the name, so that was really a wonderful program and even when things were running regular before COVID they wouldn't have had that opportunity. We wouldn't have understood that that was available necessarily. So now the families are also, I think, excited and creative, you know they're joining for family birthday parties, all sorts of things like that.

FURMAN: In terms of physical fitness, what are residents still able to do in order to get daily exercise?

BARNES: Well, we have a wonderful fitness coordinator here at The Medallion, her name is Althea Scott and they love her, and she's really just been able to work with them. We do hallway fitness 5 days a week, we do one shift for the upstairs, one shift for the downstairs, and it's chair! It's chair aerobics, it's chair Zoom, not Zoom, you know it's chair Zumba and all different sorts of things and she's really energetic and she's really high, you know, high energy and they love it and we have them lining the hallways and in their doorways, and she's doing it. They're moving their bodies and then we, also I work with her and twice a day over our PA system that goes into all the resident's apartments, she does a 5-6 minute meditation and stretching over the PA. So she'll verbally walk them through, you know, stretch, roll your head, stretch your arm, do this do that so that they can learn exercise or fitness on their own that if they're sitting too long in one position and they're getting a little stiff, they know that, "Oh I remember an hour ago we did this, I'm gonna do that." And then just get them moving so they don't, you know, they don't get stuck there, you know, their muscles are moving, the blood is flowing and they're having a little exercise. More so than you know not lifting weights but more so getting the body to maintain the function and the strength and their abilities pre-COVID.

FURMAN: Great. Annette, was there anything you wanted to add to that discussion?

BETZ: Well, I just wanted to remind Jennifer that also we, Althea has been able to do some one-on-one exercising with folks too, who may not wish to participate every day in the doorway exercises, so she'll go directly to them and work with them, and a part of this meditation, and also twice a day she reminds them to hydrate, let's drink some water, you know. So that's been real good for them also. And this is something I would like to say, I don't know that Jennifer and I have talked about this yet but I think that is something that even when we go back to doing more groups of the exercising and fitness and so forth, that I would like to keep that meditation time.

BARNES: I agree. Yep. I agree.

BETZ: I think it's very good for the residents, and actually for the staff too. We'll stop many times and meditate also with Althea, so yes.

BARNES: It's a good stress reliever for everybody to just keep breathing, some rolling the head, some rolling the feet, those kind of things.

FURMAN: Yeah, no kidding. I was gonna ask if I could get the Zoom invite for some meditation. With two little kids at home I could really use it. [All laugh]

BARNES: Just as an aside while we're talking about that you can go to our Facebook page and you can see the previous pictures of some of our workouts and the hallway doorway workout. It's "The Medallion Assisted Living Residence" on Facebook. So we post pictures all the time of the different programmings that we're talking about.

FURMAN: Great, I'll be sure to do that. For many of us, definitely myself included, the pandemic really began to unfold in the middle of March, and then Passover came around just a few weeks into that. And obviously for many of us Passover is a time that we get together with family that we don't get to see very often, we do an extensive cleaning in our kitchens, we're eating special food. Give us some insight into, again, what is Passover at The Medallion like regularly, in a normal year, and what changes did you have to make this year to have Passover for folks in The Medallion?

BETZ: Oh my goodness.

BARNES: She's gonna talk because she's the Passover guru.

BETZ: I've been doing this a long time. As I said before, I was Director of Dining Services. I was right in the middle of preparing for Passover a lot. But before I do that, I also wanted to talk a minute about the dietician in me. We know and we've read a lot that vitamin D is important, and that during this pandemic that they've found some connection that getting plenty of vitamin D has helped, and so another activity that our residents always loved was sitting on the rocking chairs out on our front porch, and we have not been able to do that. We did not feel that was a good thing for them to be where people were driving by right on the campus and cars coming and so forth. So they've not been able to do that, so what we have done also and Jennifer and with our resident care staff, is schedule time for them. We have an inner courtyard that they can be outside. It's beautiful, there's lots of plants and benches and chairs and so forth. So we schedule time for them to be outside, again where they're physical distancing and they're getting some vitamin D and nice air outside. Of course since it's been so warm we've had to limit the amount of time that they're out there, if they can go at all, but we are working with that also. Trying to keep the folks going outdoors as much as possible, those who want to, you know. Okay, back to Passover. Well, normally Passover is like you said. Lots of cleaning and we do, we clean every apartment for anyone who wants it. Each resident gets to tell you what degree they want their apartment cleaned. The rest of The Medallion, meaning the living room, all of the community areas, and the dining room and the kitchens of course, are thoroughly, thoroughly cleaned from top to bottom. This year they were cleaned and then each resident was able again to tell us what they wanted done in their apartment as far as cleaning. We still had our Passover menus and our Passover order came for the food. We prepared all of the menus for Passover, and normally we have two seders in our dining room, first seder and second seder, and of course we have our families that come to those seders with their loved one who lives here. So this year that didn't happen, of course. So what we did, we still had the same meal that we would have, first seder, second seder. It was served in their apartment. They

each had a laminated colored seder plate that about six of our residents had colored, enough for everybody to have, and we served the meal, we served wine, and we served the symbols of the seder plate, and so each resident had that in front of them.

BARNES: And the matzah.

BETZ: And the matzah, right, and the matzah. And with the *haggadah*, we had a very short version of the *haggadah*. Our chaplain Rabbi Urkowitz helped us, he actually wrote that for us and he came the first seder and from the front lobby area was able to use the haggadah that he had prepared, and we had a *seder* service over the speaker system that goes into our residents' apartments. So we did that, and the second night, we have a rabbi who lives here and he conducted that service the second night. So the residents were able to enjoy Passover and be able to know that it was Passover and they were having their Passover seder.

BARNES: I wanna, if I can jump in Annette, just to reiterate what Annette said about us being one family and the staff really setting up. Every person on the staff really took a part and said "I'll be responsible for this." To really make it something meaningful for the residents. Annette was in charge as usual of all the scheduling, the rooms, you know, the dining service and the housekeeping, making sure that's all on schedule. Maintenance, actually those residents that want, they get their wheelchairs and/or walkers or canes power washed before, so we do that also, and all the staff helps with that in transition with the residents and then we have my coworker Stephanie Barrocas who's the Director of Community Relations at The Medallion, she really stepped up and she made cute little vases, she got little flowers and she really made some cute little centerpieces so that when they got their food delivered it wasn't just, "Here's the food and here are the symbols," we thought about you and here's a little vase and she bejeweled and she really created all that and she helped you know graphically plan the haggadah and you know, and then the rabbi helped us on the, so you know it was all of us involved and we took on different parts of it to kind of divide and conquer to make sure that they felt that they had, you know, the residents that even though they weren't with their friends that they had parts that they always had that they weren't missing out on. And of course we had the song sheets, because you can't have the *seder* without the song sheets.

FURMAN: Yeah, no, that's clearly very important. I'm interested to find out, as you're working to adapt so much of what you do to care for your residents, is there a network of senior care professionals, either in the city here in Houston, or nationally that you're part of? How are professionals in your field working together to share ideas, share best practices, is any of that happening?

BETZ: Absolutely. All of the above, okay, and we also work across different- for instance, we work with the Houston Health Department. We work with and we have a regulatory agency HHSC, Health and Human Services in the state of Texas, and we receive guidelines from them. The CDC, all of this, all the way across. We as Seven Acres are a part of an organization Leading Age and so across the state of Texas and nationally we're all working together. This is what we're doing, this is how we're doing it, this is how we have interpreted this guideline, and so forth. So yes, I don't know what we would do without having those type of networking. I just was- I attend a weekly webinar every Wednesday from Health and Human Services and mine is strictly for assisted living and here's what the guidelines and what we feel we should be doing and these are some checklists to use and so forth, so yes, absolutely, we're all networking, helping each other with that. And then again, like I said, there's certain mandates that our

regulatory agencies give us that we have to do. We have to follow certain regulations, is how they want us to, for infection control, for all of that kind of thing. So absolutely, and then yesterday we just talked about, okay, now it's hurricane season. So we all have our emergency plans for hurricane season, we have our plans that we are working with for COVID, now we have to combine those because now we are in, what, 3, 4, 5 months of hurricane season and we still have COVID. So we've got to mesh those together, how will we do this? How will we make, you know, if we have to evacuate, if we have to as with [Hurricane] Harvey we had to evacuate first floor and go to second floor. So all of that is okay, now we've got to do *this*. So absolutely and thank goodness we have those folks.

FURMAN: Jennifer, what about on the programming side? Because you have to adapt almost everything that you're doing on a daily basis to keep residents occupied and engaged. How are you sort of coming up with new ideas each week so that, you know, a Zoom class one week doesn't kind of get stale the next week? Is there a process for developing new ideas for programming for residents?

BARNES: So in the beginning, the first couple of weeks was the hardest transition. I remember so clearly the first week, you know, when we said, okay this is coming and we have to now- we're not able to go out to programming and go out of the building, we have to stay in and the week after that it was ok, you can have programs but just six people at a time so everyday I was like okay, this is the next one and I remember so clearly, I was walking out the door one Friday afternoon and I said, "Okay, Annette, I'm leaving" and she came right back in, she came in from a meeting next door at Seven Acres and she said "That entire schedule that we just approved has gotta be redone for next week because the state just came down with more mandates and more, you know, whatever" and I was like aah. So that was really, you know, kind of try to roll with the punches. Now, the residents enjoy a schedule. A sense of normalcy for them is knowing what they're supposed to do when they're supposed to do it. And for them especially, and I know Annette can have her comments on that, I know that's the hardest part for the residents. We don't have an answer for them. We don't have a finite "at this date, this is gonna change." For them they're really big on scheduling, even before COVID. You know, they just like to know the security of the scheduling. So, we have a set Monday schedule. We have a set Tuesday schedule now. We have a set Wednesday schedule, and each thing is different. Monday Zoom class is given by Rabbi Traxler from Chabad. He used to come every Monday in person, so he just adjusted to Zoom, and he talks about the Torah portion and the weekly *parsha* so that changes week to week because there's something different every week. Rabbi Urkowitz, every Wednesday he gives a Zoom class and he talks about different topics. This week it was, "Where did the prayer leader come from and history of Jewish prayer." Last week it was "What is the significance of the "*Shemoneh Esrei*?" You know and where did that come about, and then we just now we're starting on Friday a Zoom class again with Rabbi Urkowitz, he's gonna be doing Jewish current events. So in a way the Zoom classes that we're doing they're not getting stale because the actual classes themselves are constantly evolving with the information that the residents are doing. Bingo, we just this week, the first week, we have now two, everybody gets to play two bingos. Everybody in the building gets a slot in the afternoon one day and then a slot in the morning, that's still big. So, through the consistency, I think, has really helped the residents to- even if there's longer periods between programming as usual, they say, okay now I have an objective in 20 minutes I'm gonna do this. You know, in 15

minutes she's coming by with that, and also one thing I failed to mention earlier is I'm constantly updating in our library word finds, word jumbles, word searches, word games, crossword puzzles, everything that I can photocopy, so as residents want to fill in like a little bit of a lull or something that they want a little extra something on their own, they take it to their room or I sometimes deliver packets depending if it's a special day and they get to do those kinds of things. Adult coloring. In the beginning of this whole thing I went to the store and I bought each resident a pack of their own 10 colored pencils and everybody has their own sharpener and we asked who wanted to join so they have that in their room all the time and now they can just come to the library, pick up some new adult coloring sheets that I have there and it's great and they enjoy that. So a lot of fluidity and a lot of different ways for them to also in some ways take initiative if they want to.

FURMAN: That's really great. I know that we're getting close to the time when we have to end. I wanted to ask each of you, and you may have mentioned it already, but can each of you think of a signature moment in these last couple months. There's been so much change in our world and so much tension, can each of you just think of a signature moment and it could be an interaction with a resident, or it could be a program that you created, or it could be just, you know, something that you think you'll remember when you look back on this period in your lives and in your careers years from now, what are you going to remember as a kind of stand out moment? Something that you did?

BETZ: I know I'm thinking because I'll just have to say, Joshua, that through all of this there's just been, it's just moment after moment after moment after moment, and it's like, "Oh my, we were able to do this, and oh my, the residents are having- you know- they're still happy and joyful and so forth, and we changed- their world is upside down." And so, I guess for me it's not going to be one thing; it's going to be my wonderful staff and how they've been able to adapt and help these residents as they've never known anything like what we're going through right now. Not able to see their families. Our average age is 89 years old, and they can't see their family members. They can't physically, you know, touch them and see them. And so for me, it's the staff at The Medallion and how they have stepped up to the plate and have gone home every night, kept themselves safe, and came back and kept the residents safe. Because I've had no staff member that has- we've all been tested, no one was positive, everybody was negative. So I tell them all the time, "You're doing a great job when you go home at night and what you're doing to keep yourself safe, your family safe, and in turn keeping the residents safe." And then when they're here, they're giving it their all. They're working very hard, they've all been here working. They have not stayed at home at all. So it's the staff, it's my staff, I will just have to say that.

FURMAN: Great.

BARNES: Well, thank you Annette. I've just, to say because I've said it before, Annette's the best boss I ever had and she really, it's a great place to work and it's also the staff, because it comes from Annette. It's the first time I've ever worked in a place where you don't feel like you walk in the building and you have to ignore that one because she was angry at you and you have a beef with that one yesterday and that one's not nice. I mean I don't see- I mean five years I'm here almost. You know everybody's got a bad day, but everybody gets along and there's none of that "I'm not gonna go help her because I don't like her" or any of that. Annette really has such a great attitude that trickles down to the staff. One of the things, I can't- like

Annette- I'm gonna buy some roller skates because I'm all over the place. So I don't really have one particular moment necessarily but I will say, interesting- some things I'm learning from the residents- and something interesting is before this we do have a handful of residents that just wanna be hermits. I mean, you know, they don't want to come out and even before this they chose to eat in their room, they want the solitude, they just wanted quiet, they don't wanna be bothered and interestingly enough they're the ones that are just kind of going with the flow now. To them, life hasn't really changed. (Laughs) So it's just interesting how one week we're so worried about them and we make sure we go in, and "Are you okay?," and now it's like, they are totally fine, they don't want us to come in, they're holding their own, they're the same as they were before the whole COVID thing, so it's just interesting how maybe going back into life as normal will change a little bit about how I look at something, and just because they're not doing a program or just because they're not doing everything everybody else is doing, you know, it's not wrong and that's what they need. So it's just an interesting thing that, I guess in a way also the people that you were worried about going into this are the people that are surprising you, and then you're not really having to worry about them, and the people that you thought wouldn't be having difficulty are having difficulty. So it just highlights that, that every situation will bring out the difference in each other.

BETZ: And let me just say when Jennifer's talking about difficulty it is this, as she said, they're very much creatures of habit, so to speak, and things have changed and so it's been difficult for them in this change. Jennifer does a daily schedule that's given to the residents and many of them carry those schedules around because it gives them their- they feel like, "Okay now I know what's going on, because this is nothing like it used to be," and that kind of thing and so we all are creatures of habit, actually and so you know we don't like a lot of change. Well, this has been major change, and it's also been major change in, not that we didn't practice infection control the entire, you know, all the time, but of course it is really enhanced now with infection control and all of the staff wear masks and that's been hard for the residents. And one of the things is they can't understand what we're saying or they can't hear us as well because we're muffled, you know, now and so that has become a real issue. I saw on the news the other day that somewhere they made masks that had clear plastic here [indicates around the mouth] where the residents, the folks could see, or for people who were hard of hearing. Oh I know, it was a restaurant, and it was the owner was hearing impaired and so they made all his staff, I don't know where, how they made them, but they made masks for everybody so he could read their lips. Well it can also be for smiling, you know. You can see a smile. I always try to say, "Look at my eyes, I'm smiling." You know, when I'm out and about with my mask on. But I'm thinking, wow, if we could get some masks made with clear plastic right here where they could see, they'd still not be able to hear us as well and that kind of thing, but at least they could see us, you know. But that's an issue too. So anyway, it has its challenges, but it's been gratifying to see how the staff and, for the most part, the residents have been able to adapt.

FURMAN: Thank you both so much for taking the time today to give us some insight into your world. A world that, you know, many of us don't interact with regularly, and you're creating programming and adapting on the fly to changing circumstances, and it's very inspiring, and I think this interview's been very informative as well. So I really appreciate your time, thank you so much.

BARNES: Thank you.