

**Celebrating Community Heroes  
Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month**

***Senior Living Community Responds to Unprecedented Times***

**Becky Reichelt, Executive Vice President, St. Paul Elder Services, Kaukauna, WI**

During Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month we celebrate local heroes who are making a difference in our community during unprecedented times. Becky Reichelt is the Executive Vice President of St. Paul Elder Services, Inc. and has demonstrated leadership and compassion during these challenging times. "I feel blessed to facilitate collaborations both internally and within the community for the development and implementation of new programs, initiatives, and partnerships to enhance our person-centered culture and philosophy of care that ultimately maximizes the quality of life for those we serve."

**Mission-Focused During COVID-19**

St. Paul Elder Services, Inc. (SPES) is a Catholic, Franciscan-sponsored senior living community with specialized programs, community-based services, and facilities that are specifically designed to enhance the lives of aging individuals. During this current COVID-19 pandemic, their mission continues to thrive with a shift to not only enriching but truly protecting and saving the lives of those they serve through rehabilitation therapy services, adult day services, memory care, assisted living, long-term care, hospice care and other community-based programs.



"When COVID-19 first hit, our immediate actions revolved around the protection of the health and physical well-being of the over 350 persons we serve," says Becky. "We implemented stringent infection prevention practices, eliminating congregate dining experiences, reducing group engagements to 10 or less persons with physical distancing, universal masking, daily monitoring of persons' temperature and acute COVID-19 related symptoms, and proactive conversations with those we serve and their responsible parties regarding their advance care planning wishes if they were suspected or diagnosed positive for the COVID-19 virus."

**Working with Families**

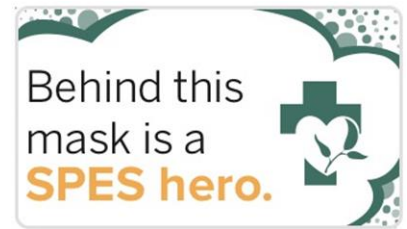
"Family members have expressed extreme gratitude for the hundreds of virtual visits, phone calls, email updates, social media posts, and written communications received during this crisis," says Becky. "The large majority of the family members whole-heartedly understand and embrace the visitor restriction mandate. However, not being able to see their loved ones has been extremely difficult." The Federally-mandated restriction of visitors has had significant, negative impact on the psychosocial well-being of the community SPES serves. Although the mandate is an important approach to preventing exposure and potential transmission of COVID-19 into their setting, and one that they fully

embrace, those they serve have experienced a sense of disconnection to those they love, grief due to the lack of in-person, physical visits, and feelings of loneliness and isolation without visits from their family members.

One of the most powerful approaches to enhancing communication with family members and the community was the creation of a 20-minute documentary to help bring peace of mind to those who were not allowed to visit during this time. The documentary chronicles the preparedness steps SPES is taking to keep those they serve, including staff, healthy. The documentary can be viewed at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJQIC\\_96nZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJQIC_96nZM).

## Staff Embraces Engagement

They practice a person-centered philosophy at SPES and their associates have always respected each unique and individual expression of self, recognizing that understanding a person's life story and expression of needs impacts the success of person-centered connections. This baseline philosophy has empowered associates during this pandemic to embrace this approach more wholeheartedly as they have become the family, foundation, and lifeline for those they serve living with dementia. They have provided additional education regarding the impact of personal protective equipment-wearing perceptions by those living with dementia and their lack of rationalism for wearing face coverings. Associates continue to modify their approaches to respond to the needs and desires of the person living with dementia, while promoting a sense of belonging with opportunities for success.



## Celebrating Care Partners

"Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness is so important to our community," says Becky. "Especially during this pandemic, as we need to recognize and support the incredible dedication of care partners who provide support and love to persons living with dementia. Care partners are instrumental in being the "normal" for the person living with dementia by providing familiarity, love, laughter, and guidance. A special thank you to the Alzheimer's Association, for leading the way in providing awareness and recognition of these most important people in our community."



Becky has been serving individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias for over 30 years. "I feel a strong need to ensure that people are valued, respected, and safe," says Becky. She has served as a consultant, educator, program developer, and resource. She has provided guidance and support for individuals living with dementia, professional caregivers, and family care partners in a variety of community-based, assisted living, and skilled nursing settings. She serves as a Board Member for the Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter and the Fox Valley Memory Project.