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LeadingAge Ohio Stands by Quality Providers Amid COVID-19 Outbreaks

BLUFFTON – As the voice for mission-driven, values-based providers of long-term services and supports in Ohio, LeadingAge Ohio continues to stand by and support members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio (MHCO) is a long-standing member of LeadingAge Ohio with a 65 year history of serving older adults within four communities in Bluffton, Ohio and the surrounding region. MHCO is known for its innovation, having created the first nationally-recognized “Green House” models of nursing care in the state.

In recent weeks, one of its communities, Mennonite Memorial Home, experienced a surge of cases of COVID-19 among its residents and staff. Mennonite Memorial Home operates a high-quality nursing facility with an above-average rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), including particularly high marks for infection control.

“This pandemic has been a tragedy for Mennonite Memorial Home, as it would be for any facility. Behind every COVID-19 data point is a human being,” stated MHCO Board Chair Elizabeth Kelly. “Under layers of PPE are professionals who have worked around the clock to care for each resident. Surrounding us are caring and worried families and communities.”

In response to the recent outbreak, MHCO made the decision to pay out-of-pocket to test all of its organization’s residents and employees through the Post-Acute Regional Rapid Testing (PARRT) program. This situation has been repeated around the state in recent weeks within long-term services and supports, all of whom are adapting to the daily challenges of caring for a vulnerable population and keeping a deadly infection at bay.

“We’ve benefitted tremendously from the support of our local communities, agencies around the state, and national resources,” added Kelly. “Surveillance testing is one tool that we can use to assure that each resident receives the best care possible.”

“Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio exemplifies both quality care and the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic – that it can strike anywhere, at any time, despite use of best practices on infection control,” stated Kathryn Brod, President/CEO of LeadingAge Ohio. “Ohio providers will need enhanced supports, including universal testing, to continue this fight, which is expected to last up to a year or more as experts work on a vaccine or other solutions that can keep both our staff and residents safe.”

As has been widely reported, older adults, especially those with chronic or multiple conditions, are the most vulnerable segment of the population for complications from a COVID-19 infection. Almost all residents of a long-term care facility fit into this population, and many are there because they are unable to be cared for by loved ones at home.

“It is important for families to understand that senior care providers are highly trained on infection control procedures, and will continue to provide the best environment for an individual with serious conditions requiring round-the-clock care,” continued Brod. “We need to keep cheering them on and join together to encourage our state and federal leaders to continue to increase supports within the sector.”

LeadingAge Ohio joins a list of local organizations who have voiced their support for Mennonite Memorial Home, which include:

- Blanchard Valley Health System;
- Bridge Home Health & Hospice Services;
- Bluffton University Dining Services and Sodexo;
- Bluffton Area Ministerial Association (BAMA);
- The Centre at Bluffton;
- Riley Creek Pharmacy;
- 3dpcoalition.org;
- Putnam County Hospice;
- Interim Hospice; and
- Blanchard Valley Obstetrics & Gynecology - Bluffton

LeadingAge Ohio will continue to provide support and guidance for all members during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for those who have experienced positive cases. This has included access to infection control experts, daily briefings, and a wide array of educational and technical supports for member staff and leadership.

Founded in 1937, LeadingAge Ohio is a nonprofit organization that represents over 400 long-term care organizations and hospices, as well as those providing ancillary health care and housing services, in more than 150 Ohio towns and cities. The continuum of care reflected by the member organizations serve an estimated 400,000 elderly Ohioans daily and employ more than 35,000 persons statewide.