



**PACE**

of southwest michigan

Surrounding you with the care  
you need to remain in the  
home you love.

# Newsletter

Summer 2020

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## Serving you well in challenging times

The PACE Center is a gathering place for friends. It is a place to be entertained, to grow spiritually, develop relationships and to use your talents and skills. It is a place for you to connect with the PACE team members for your different needs, services or questions. On March 13, 2020, due to the COVID-19 health threat, we made the decision to keep you as safe as possible and this meant safe at home, away from the Center. This was the best decision, yet the adjustment was difficult. Your presence at the Center makes it lively, loving and fun. Your PACE Team misses seeing you

here. You miss seeing your friends and coming to a place where you can socialize and enjoy yourself. Despite this, in your best interest, we shifted your care from the Center directly to you in your homes. These changes have been highly successful thanks to our dedicated team and thanks to you. You have shown a great faith in us and graced us with your patience as we adapted to a new way to follow our mission and serve you.

On March 30, 2020, Dr. Rina Patel started as our new Medical Director. She can't wait to meet you! She entered PACE during this current health crisis and quickly identified with the PACE model, all we have to offer the elderly in our community and how to enhance our care quality even more.

In April, we received a grant from the MI Health Endowment Fund. We used this grant to purchase tablets specially designed for you to use for wellness checks, therapy visits, nursing visits and more. This will improve our remote care, allowing more sophisticated and varied telehealth options for you.

So when will all this end and everything go back to normal? We don't know the answer to that, but we are developing a slow reentry plan to the PACE Center. We must follow numerous guidelines to ensure a successful, safe reentry for participants and staff. We will keep you posted as these plans progress. In the meantime, please keep the faith and continue being patient as we work hard every day to stay connected to you and serve you well.

*Peace,*  
*Therese Saggau, CEO*

## Staying Connected!

Spending time with others at the PACE Day Center is one of the greatest benefits for PACE participants. It's also high on the list of their favorite things about the PACE program. Suddenly they had to stay home due to COVID-19. "It's been really hard. I miss the people and everything," a participant named Deb said. Staff members' telephone calls soften the blow of social isolation. "She's keeping me company," Deb said about Wendy Todd, PACE Activities Coordinator. "She calls, asks how I'm feeling and if I need anything." Beyond a wellness check, Wendy engages participants in a topic she knows they're interested in. She reads articles on archaeology to

Mary. She laughs at Tim's jokes. She entertains Deb with "This Day in History." "It's really fun," Deb said. "She keeps you thinking all day long about the things she said. She's very nice. She can crack a joke, too."

Some participants just want to reminisce about their life, Wendy said. "Sometimes it's just like when you call a friend. We talk about the flowers in our yard and the birds we see. Most just want to get back to see people" at the Day Center. "They ask when we'll be opening."

Several staff members have call lists. Wendy has



some participants whom she checks on daily, and dozens of others she calls frequently. She mails activity packets to participants who like word searches and puzzles, adult coloring and how-to-draw guides.

"We're trying now to expand into new avenues," Wendy said of staff efforts to stay connected.

PACE Chaplain, Reverend Mary Beth Moran Cross, not only connects with participants over the phone – she connects them to each other. Some who gathered in the same room for Bible study at the PACE Day Center now join a conference call. And they can trade phone numbers, if they choose. "It's a community that builds more everyday," she said.

"Separation is what the participants feel most keenly," Reverend Mary Beth observed. "That's their greatest loss."

If a participant is able to talk on the phone, Mary Beth will reach out to them whether or not they have been part of her activities at the Day Center.

Her extensive outreach is individualized. She is writing a personal handwritten letter to each participant. A virtual memorial table honoring deceased participants is one feature of the participant Facebook Group.

The role of chaplain has taken on even greater value for some participants, especially while their churches have also been closed. Participant Brenda appreciates hearing familiar voices on the conference call. "We sang 'Amazing Grace,'" she said. "It's hard," said Brenda of the quarantine. "But I've been hanging in there. I know that God's going to help us through. And I'm grateful that PACE is still thinking of us. A lot of people call from there."

Rev. Mary Beth encourages participants to affirm their faith in the face of COVID-19 anxieties and other difficult issues in the news by praying and talking about it. "They say all they can do is pray for resolution," Mary Beth related. "I hear them say they are thankful that God has placed PACE in their life."

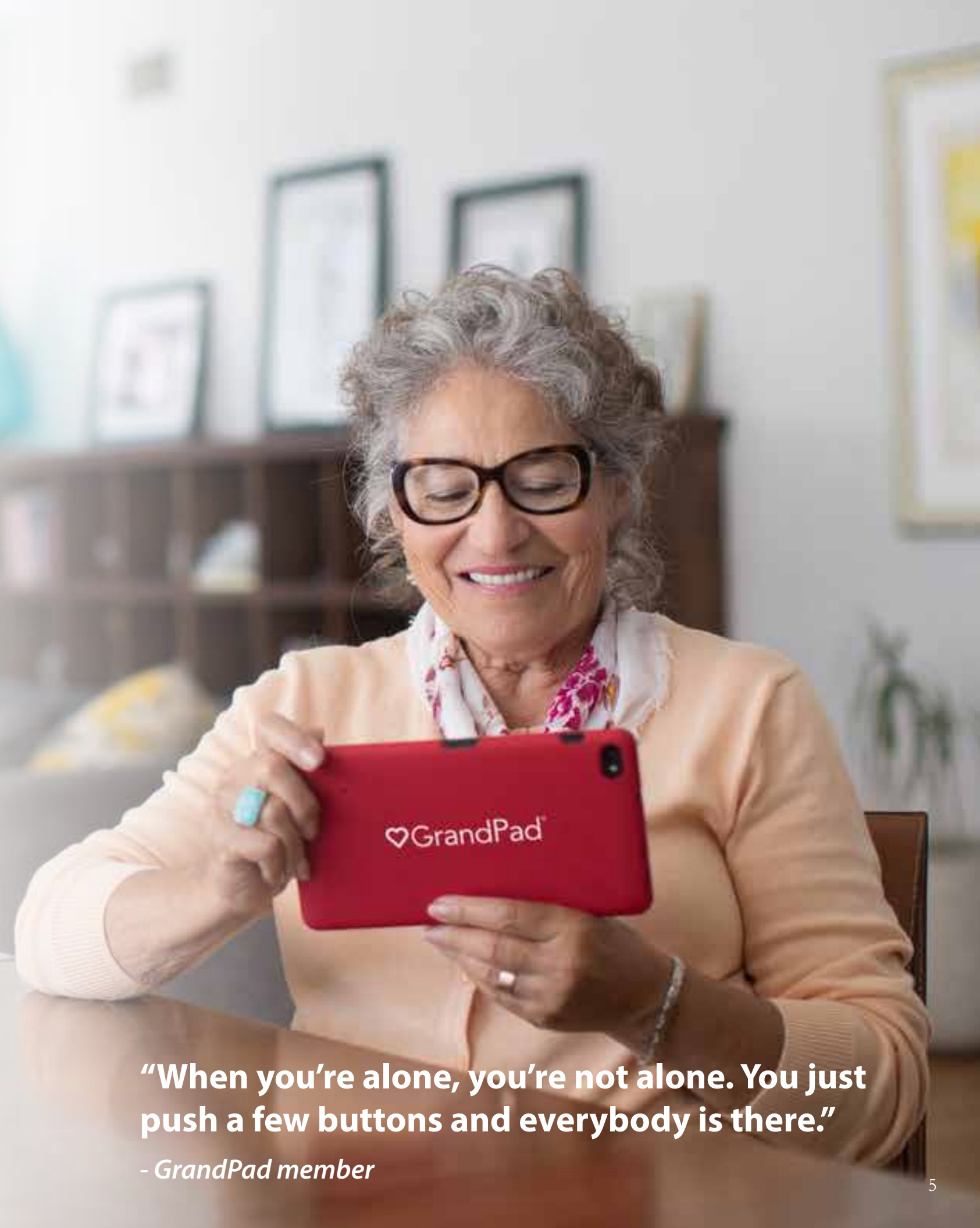
# *A new way to connect!*

*As PACE CEO Therese Saggau said in her introduction to this newsletter, we love connecting with our participants when they come to the Day Center! Since we have had to suspend Day Center attendance to keep participants and staff safe, we are looking for new ways to communicate with our participants. Because PACE is not just about taking care of our participants' physical health, it is about keeping them happy and safe.*

On March 26, not long after the pandemic caused us to close our Day Center for socialization, Therese Saggau, CEO, discovered that a grant was available to purchase a new and exciting way to communicate with our seniors. Thanks to Caleb Vander Ark, PACE's IT Manager, who moved swiftly and applied for the grant, we received a grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to purchase GrandPads.

GrandPad® is the smartest, simplest and safest way to connect seniors with others. Through the GrandPad companion app and web portal, we can connect with our participants through video calls for things like wellness checks, assessments, telemedicine, activities and just to chat! Seniors can connect with their family, friends and caregivers to help maintain an engaged and independent life. GrandPad is also safe and secure from scams and spam.

PACE staff and participants were recently trained on the GrandPad. Our providers, Social Workers, Activity Coordinator and Chaplain will be communicating with our participants who have GrandPads. By the time our next newsletter is out, we hope to be able to share stories about how it has helped our seniors avoid feeling lonely or isolated during this unprecedented time and how it has helped PACE provide care for our participants through telemedicine.



**"When you're alone, you're not alone. You just push a few buttons and everybody is there."**

*- GrandPad member*



PACE of Southwest Michigan is blessed by diversity in many ways. We have a rich diversity of staff and participants from all backgrounds and walks of life and are exceedingly thankful for the opportunity to serve such a manifold array of peoples. However, alongside our love of diversity we also recognize that the grievous stain of racism has systemically and individually affected the health and well-being of many of our participants and staff. Over the past several weeks many Americans have risen up and united in protest and grief against gross injustices past and present.

On Friday, June 19, PACE of Southwest Michigan joined PACE programs across the country, and acknowledged racism as a threat to the health, well-being, and quality of life of people of color. An event called PACE 4 Black Lives was held on the lawn in front of the PACE building and was attended by PACE staff and board members and Area Agency on Aging staff.

Therese Saggau, PACE of Southwest Michigan CEO spoke to the attendees about the importance of fighting racism, as it is a threat to the health and well being of people of color in our community. Reverend Mary Beth Moran Cross, PACE Chaplain, led the group in an opening prayer, followed by 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silence and reflection. Dr. Oscar L. Varnadoe III from the Wide Awake United Church of Christ in Benton Harbor gave a closing prayer.

***The PACE model of care aims to be the most innovative, accessible, valuable and effective model of care for all. There is no room for injustice, discrimination, or racism in PACE.***



## New Faces at PACE! *plus promotions*

We are excited to welcome new staff members to PACE since our last newsletter. New staff members are Janiqua Allen, PCA; Estenieau Jean, Director of Finance; Dr. Rina Patel, Medical Director; Ja'Juanna James, CNA; Lateasha Bridgeman, CNA; Wendy Todd, Activity Coordinator; Amanda Grossman, Compliance Specialist. Also, Natalie Gulledge was promoted to Clinic Clerk and Heather McDermott was promoted to Scheduling Coordinator. *Note: Some new staff have chosen not to share their name and photo in this venue so this is not a comprehensive list.*



**PACE of Southwest Michigan is pleased to announce that Rina Patel, MD has joined PACE as our new Medical Director.**

Dr. Patel is passionate about the PACE model of care, delivering preventive, primary, acute and long-term care services to participants so they can stay living at home.

During her more than 27-year career, she has dedicated herself to providing the highest quality medical care, without barriers. Said Dr. Patel, "I believe in taking care of patients like they are my own family. I want them to know that they have someone watching out for them."

Dr. Patel is board certified by the American Board of Family Practice.



Janiqua Allen,  
PCA



Estenieau Jean,  
Dir. of Finance



Ja'Juanna  
James, CNA



Lateasha  
Bridgeman, CNA



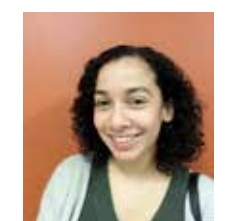
Wendy Todd,  
Activity Coord.



Natalie Gulledge,  
Clinic Clerk



Amanda  
Grossman,  
Compliance Spec.



Olivia McCrean,  
PCA



Heather  
McDermott,  
Scheduling Coord.

## PARTICIPANT STORY



Greeted over the telephone in early May, Johnny Valantiejus said: “I’m doing pretty good. I miss PACE, though. I hope it’s not too long,” he said of the Day Center closure.

Johnny lives in Lincoln Township with his sister, Maria, brother-in-law, Perry, and their children. “I have a wonderful family here,” Johnny said. “My sister is wonderful. If the children ask me to play, I’ll play with them. They’re growing up like string beans.”

Maria and Johnny grew up in a large farming family on Wilson Road near New Buffalo. “My mom and dad are up in heaven,” Johnny said. His parents adopted nine children. Johnny and his half-brother were the only siblings who were biologically related. “We had milk cows, sheep, chicken, pigs ... I went four years to high school.

It went pretty quick.” Johnny was an honorary assistant coach for the football and basketball teams. “After high school, I went to a trade school up north,” Johnny said. “I wanted to take janitorial work.” He worked as a night custodian at the courthouse in St. Joe for 31 years.

Five years ago, Johnny became a PACE participant. He is famous for the number of miles he’s ridden on the NuStep machine. “I was top rider three times in a row,” he said of the NuStep motivational challenges. Johnny’s accomplishments were reported on the front page of the PACE newsletter and in PACE marketing materials. “I’ve still got the picture hanging in my room,” he said.

Johnny enjoys lots of other activities at the Day Center. “I play games. I make pictures to give people, do puzzles, visit with staff, go in the clinic. At home and at PACE, Johnny is very appreciative. “I got a good life,” he said.



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