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Dear Julie:

This letter is sent in appreciation for all the quality, professional care that you and your staff members afforded my mother and my father these last three-four years while they stayed there.

Whenever we would address the challenging issues associated with my parents, you were always kind, informative, compassionate and willing to listen — even if it involved just minor issues. You never waited to get around to a particular issue, you addressed it immediately and professionally. You took a personal interest in not only my parents but our family's well being. My mother was so touched when both you and Miraflor came to the hospital those few months before she passed away. Every time she went to the hospital you were there inquiring about her needs and what you could do. You came to my rescue when I needed to visit with them and had no way to either get there or come home. You went out of your way to help my father and always had a smile on your face no matter what. Both my parents presented challenging care for a number of reasons. Each time you and your staff stepped up admirably, and it will never be forgotten.

You have some really exceptional nurses and C.N.A.s who went beyond their call of duty to make Mom and Dad as comfortable as possible. All of them took a personal interest in the needs and wants of my parents, and each came to know and understand all those little things that they appreciated, especially Mom.

Cynda knew that Mom loved her long hair in her older age, and surprisingly it started to have curls these last four years. Cynda would make Mom feel good by French braiding her hair and complementing her on a regular basis. Mom always calmed down when her hair was brushed and not just a rush job. Cynda never complained when she had to clean up Mom over and over again because of her prolapsed bladder/uterus and her repetitive crying from abdominal pain. It was embarrassing to Mom, but Cynda took her agitation away by getting her mind on something else and making Mom feel that her problems were real and understood.

Little Christine could calm Mom down when she went into “sundowner” mode in the afternoons. Talk about hair-raising at times. Mom could relate to Christine's soft demeanor, and she was so very patient listening to her ramblings and sometimes abusive attitude. But Christine never gave up. Mom swore Christine was a child of an acquaintance she once helped raise. God bless Christine's big heart!

Lucy Paz was always there when you needed her. Always smiling, but serious when she needed to be, Lucy was there over and over again when Mom asked for help. Besides hygiene attention, Lucy made up the beds quickly when Mom soiled them and Lucy made it seem like it was nothing to fuss about! That mattered to Mom.

There are so many C.N.A.s that need to be thanked personally, especially Liz Arellano, Maria Contreras, Yolanda Rodriguez, Veronica Vega, Sarah Lewis and Cesar. The assistance these CNAs gave without complaint was tremendous, and never once did they complain about all those tedious and repetitive chores that many of us wouldn't be able to perform or want to do on a regular basis. You have to be someone very special with special gifts to want to work in a care center. Cesar could make Mom laugh and had a way of making everyone smile. Talk about an outgoing personality! And that voice of his when he would chime in when they had sing-alongs!

I would be truly remiss if I didn't mention the nurses that brought such good care to Mom and Dad. Mariflor Liwanag, as Director of Nursing Services, always informed me of any changes and concerns and gave suggestions for making Mom and Dad's stay as comfortable as possible. She was there with you, Julie, when Mom CODED. I am so thankful both of you were there at that time. How does one thank a person enough for trying everything they could to save their mother, yet knowing it perhaps would be kinder if she was allowed to just go on...

Both Mirafior, Director of Nursing, and Jeannie Childress, LVN, cried with me when I reached Mom's bedside that sad day in January. Jeannie said she tried everything to work on Mom when she coded but what really matters is that Jeannie was there for Mom on a regular basis over these last years — always patient, understanding, loving and compassionate, yet professional and competent in her tasks.

Sonia Canales, LVN, is one of the best nurses that you could ever ask for. Perpetually attentive to the needs of Mom and Dad, listening and answering my questions, contacting the doctor immediately with my concerns and overall expending a great deal of positive energy towards my parents even when the air was full of negativity after my parents would both get going emotionally and verbally.

"Mama Rose" Herto, LVN, made quite an impression. She exhibited calmness, patience and always took the time to talk to my parents when they would get upset on a regular basis. As we all know, Mom and Dad had somewhat of a love/hate relationship. It could be challenging when Mom went into full-blown sundowner, and Dad in his dementia mind had to try to tell everybody what was good for them and Mom, and unfortunately all Mom wanted was for everybody to be quiet and she'd hold Dad's hand. She even wanted him to be quiet. Oh, what memories!

There are other nurses who took care of Mom and Dad over the years and I would like to mention my gratefulness towards them — Alex Almenar, Henry, Michelle and many others I didn't get to know. Alex is a quiet but competent nurse who remained observant of Mom and Dad's comings and goings and had relayed such to me. Henry, whose last name I've forgotten, was especially fond of Mom and could calm her anxiety down and talk some sense of a situation to her. Mom related to Henry on many levels, and I'm glad he was there to take care of her when he did.

God bless Roland Urrea's soul for putting up with Dad's verbal abusiveness. Roland understood where Dad was coming from, and he treated my father with respect no matter how abusive my father became. Dad was jealous that Roland as maintenance man was doing things that he couldn't do in his older age. In his mind, Dad felt that he had no control in his life, and he had built part of Golden LivingCenter, and had laid the cement on the patio, put up the fence, planted the grass and all the trees and flowers. He just couldn't understand why you kept Roland on. We all know Roland is a tremendous maintenance man and can fix anything. Funny how dementia works, huh?

That poor gardener is probably happy not to see my father after all these years. Telling the gardener he was going to kick his a... for pruning "Dad's" roses is a memory none of us will probably forget. Well, now that Dad's home, he swears that the man across the street from our house is the gardener spying on him, and the truck he drives is the same one parked at Golden LivingCenter. In actuality, it's the neighbors' son who comes to mow and clean up their yard. Dad watches every day like a hawk. Never a dull moment in our household!

It wouldn't be fair not to mention Paulette's or Karen's hands in ensuring a quality stay for my parents. Paulette did many things for many patients, but one of the appreciated things was ordering panties (diapers) for Mom. Mom's incontinence was an embarrassing situation for Mom but Paulette discretely helped Mom decide what would be the best for her and made her feel at ease. When Dad was having trouble with his appetite, Paulette would offer Dad whatever she could (within reason, of course) to get him to eat. She would stop by and ask him how he was doing on a regular basis and made him feel wanted. She would talk about gardening, which was Dad's favorite subject, and brought in flowers from her garden, which Dad admired.

Karen's nutritional guidance helped get Dad back on track to eating. She took a personal role in ascertaining his wants and dislikes, ordered his favorite buttermilk and avocados, and generally made sure his overall nutrition was balanced and sustaining. She went out of her way to make sure that Mom had her yogurt regularly and made notes of Mom's likes and dislikes, and Mom appreciated it. She always felt better after eating her yogurt. Karen also inquired of me on a regular basis as to how the folks liked or disliked the menu and if there was anything else she could do.

It wouldn't be fair not to mention Ruben Liwanag, the cook. Dad told me over and over again he was telling the cook how to cook a real home meal and how he could make it tasty for the other patients. In actuality, Ruben's cooking was much appreciated, especially by Mom. She loved it when he made those baked sweet chicken thighs, her favorite meal. He would make sure everything was on her tray as ordered.

There were other girls who worked in the kitchen, whose names escape me, but we appreciate all the hard work they did towards making their meals the special time of their day. The food was presented with appeal. My mother appreciated the variety of desserts, and they were well received.

Melissa, the social worker, was always available to help when she could. Set up doctor appointments, run to the store for "chew" and RC for Dad (doctor OK'ed of course) when I couldn't and discussed any valuable information she felt we needed to know and reminders of upcoming doctor visits. When Mom lost her antique ring at the center, Melissa told us Golden LivingCenter would reimburse Mom for what the ring was worth. That in itself spoke a lot about your center and her honest effort to try to locate the ring was appreciated. It wasn't necessary to reimburse Mom. Mom more than likely dropped it down the toilet or sink.

Many people may not think to thank the Janitorial/Housekeeping/Laundry staff at Golden LivingCenter, but I noticed the small things (but large jobs) they do on a regular basis that make the patient's stay safe, hygienic and comfortable. Although I've forgotten the laundry person's name, I want to thank her for her unending job of keeping my parents' clothes in immaculate and clean condition. How the heck she could get some of those stains out without ruining the clothes, I don't know, but she did a fantastic job!

I want to relate an incident that made my mother smile, oddly enough! My mother's favorite color was purple — purple this and purple that, and she had a favorite top that was lavender with miniature dots all over it. One day I walked into the center and the laundry lady came running up to me in distress because she knew my Mom was always asking for this top or that pants. "Oh, your Mom is going to be mad at me! I accidentally threw her favorite top in the white clothes and some bleach got on it!" she said. I told her not to worry, it looked fine to me. I actually thought it was unusually pretty. When I presented it to Mom, Mom exclaimed, "It's so beautiful, it reminds me of the Aurora Borealis!" The lavender had turned to various colors of muted blues, purples, pinks and what have you. It truly looked like the sky with dots of stars amongst the Aurora Borealis. It became my mother's favorite top!

By writing this, I want you to know that in this woman you have a very truly honest and hard working individual. She would ask me on a regular basis if this sock or top or pants belonged to my Mom when no name was to be found. She did the washing expediently and she never complained when presented with my Dad's (nasty) handkerchiefs stained with chew juice and who knows what else, yuk! And they came back white, well almost. LOL

Cialis worked hard to make sure the floors were cleaned, waxed and in good condition — safe for the patients in all respects. Always a smile and a hello when I came to visit and always cheerful.

In my anxiousness to relate the nurses and C.N.A.s, I realize that I failed to mention a few other individuals who need recognition.

Anita, an LVN/RN nurse was crucial in helping with my mother's needs, especially her medicines and chronic flare-ups with her stomach/abdominal pain. She dropped everything to get Mom some Mylanta quickly. She called me whenever the doctor changed or altered Mom's prescriptions, showing patience and the willingness to listen and not just talk, and exhibited an overall caring attitude. She took such a genuine interest in my fathers' ability to grow huge amaryllis flowers, so Dad told me to give her five bulbs from the garden for her home. She appreciated that.

It wouldn't be fair not to mention Wendy, a C.N.A. who has been there for a few years and assisted my mother in her dressing and hygiene. She is extremely strong enabling her to help my mother into bed without effort. She is a true asset to your company.

Many therapists were involved in my mother's and father's ongoing care, and they need to be mentioned. Mom had ongoing problems after each hospitalization and, therapy was necessary in order to keep her active. Without their patience (especially John's — Dad called him "Stanley") and encouragements to persevere when Mom wanted to give up, she wouldn't have had such a quality of life for so long. Now, Dad is another situation. In his dementia mind, he knew more than anyone else and he literally use to run those male therapists out of his room. They tried to send female therapists with no results. Dad was a little nicer to them but refused help. They endeavored to help him after he broke his hip and he wouldn't have any of it. They still watched over him through the windows when he was out in the garden and made sure he was safe. While visiting my parents, the therapists' help with other patients with a variety of challenging diagnoses didn't go unnoticed. All the therapists worked hard, long and with a great deal of energy spent.

And last but not least, Kim Santos and Deanna Alaniz, Office Manager and Business Office Assistant. What troopers those women have been in dealing with Dad's dementia and his "money". As you are aware, Dad felt that he had unending resources coming in and he felt he could ask for money (which was demanded in the hundreds) on a regular basis. Of course, with his dementia and short-term memory loss, no matter what Mike or I said, Dad thought once he asked for money it automatically got replaced immediately. We all know that being on Medi-Cal didn't afford him but \$35 per month. But his chew and RC alone ran over \$160 a month. Those girls took verbal abuse from my Dad for at least the last year, and then Dad finally quit asking out of frustration. Talk about challenging reverse psychology by Kim and Deanna to try to end each conversation positively. You women are saints among all the other angels there!

Well, I could go on and on about the quality care, goodness and compassionate people you employ there, but honestly I'll just continue to refer people to your center. It's the least I can do, and I hope to make a visit soon to say hi.

Just to relate about Dad since leaving-his first four days home were tough for him. A lot of negativity purging, blaming others for his conditions — i.e. no intestines, no rectum, etc. But since then, he's settled into his old routines, fiddling in the vegetable garden, checking the roses, fixing (somewhat) the sprinkler out front, taking apart anything he can take apart but can't put back together, eating tremendously well (home cooked meals fit him to a tee) —finally getting an appetite back, happy he has more than \$35 in his pocket, and fixing his room up (hanging his pictures an accomplishment), and blasting his cowboy music.

We've taken a few short daily trips in the countryside, and he wants to come visit all of you soon — mostly to make sure the garden's thriving and you haven't removed any more "apple" trees. Of course we know they're just twigs he found and called them red and green apple trees. He still hasn't figured out why they've got flowers blooming on top of them! Of course, we also know he wants to check on the "gardener". Generally he stays outside most of the time enjoying the cat, birds, squirrels and looking for gophers with the help of the dog. Yesterday a family of five peacocks came to visit in the yard and Dad was beside himself. He has a small tomato and squash garden and fiddles around the yard watering. His nighttime respite is to listen to soft music on the weather channel, and tune into the horse-training channel until he falls asleep.

Thanking you will never be enough for what you did for Mom, Dad and our family. Please relay my best to everyone and I hope to visit soon.

With Sincere Gratefulness,

J.S.