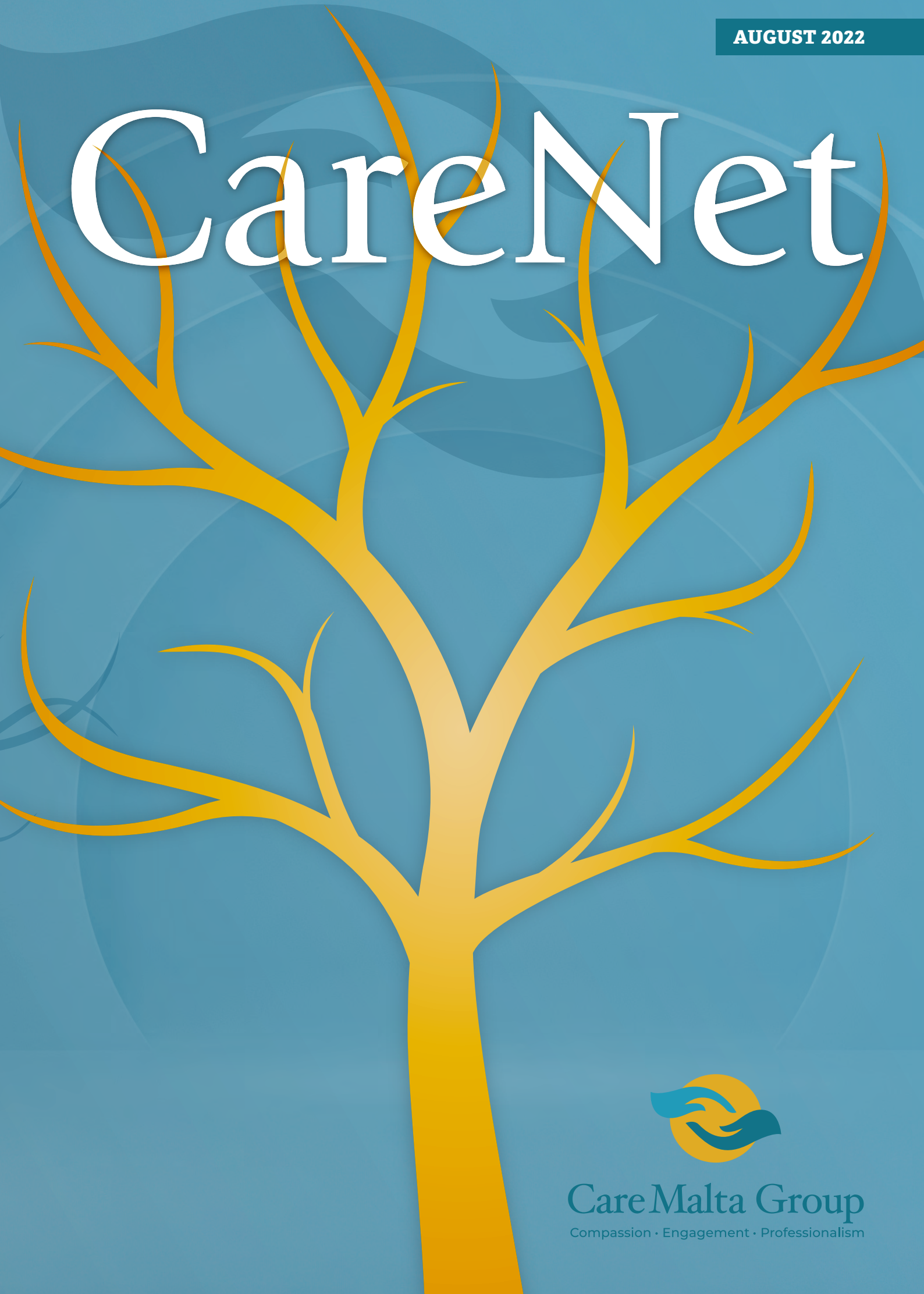


AUGUST 2022

CareNet



Care Malta Group

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GIVING

meaning TO LIFE

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A great year ahead of us: Transforming challenges into new abilities

New initiatives, anniversaries, and the comeback of major events have all been part of CareMalta's looking ahead process after two years of battling the Coronavirus pandemic, with the safety and wellbeing of all residents and employees always at the centre of this journey.

In this year's edition of CareNet Magazine, we tackle the transition to regain normality in all CareMalta's facilities and the residents' lives and we discuss the future challenges of the elderly care sector. The challenges that can be transformed into new abilities. With that in mind, this year's CareNet theme revolves around 'Ability' which is also illustrated in this year's cover of the magazine. The ability to look at obstacles as opportunities and turn them into progress, to increase the chances of success.

In this year's edition, we also feature upcoming projects, the potential of alternative care, CareMalta's major assets, and investments, and rounding off with the lifestyle element promoted within all CareMalta's facilities through various events.

This year we also took the opportunity to interview the Minister for the Elderly and Active Ageing, Jo Etienne Abela, who explains his vision for the care sector, the challenges he wants to and is addressing, and how younger generations can be encouraged to specialise in elderly care.

In this year's magazine, there is also a focus on next year's important anniversary for the CareMalta Group, its 30th anniversary, but for now, we will not divulge any further information about this great milestone. As our Chief Executive, James Sciriha, pointed out in his message, throughout these years, CareMalta developed the care that we all know today but more importantly, CareMalta was able to develop and give care a new dimension, that of seeing the residents and clients as persons, and next year it will be a celebration of the person – the resident, the client, the relatives, and the person delivering care, the employees.

I hope you will enjoy all the contributions and readings in this year's CareNet Magazine.

Amy



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AT CAREMALTA WE THRIVE TO DEVELOP ABILITY IN CARE



JAMES SCIRIHA

CEO, CareMalta Group

Life can be so unpredictable, looking back to 3rd June 2010, I would have never imagined myself writing my thoughts down as the CEO of the CareMalta Group. Back then, I had joined CareMalta as the Financial Controller, the person that many times is looked at as the one who withholds finances and issues budgets, rather than the one who makes sure that we all receive our pay in time or the one who looks after our investments.

Just like anything I do in my life, I gave it all to the best of my abilities, always showing a vivid interest in how CareMalta was developing its operations and business model. Never stuck but always changing for the better, and this is in line with one of my beliefs, that to continue developing and to give your utmost every single day. At CareMalta we create a vision and update it as we go along but most of all we chase our dreams and work hard to achieve them - this was also the first toughest lesson I ever learned when at the age of 21, I lost one of my best friends, Mark.

Nowadays, I also believe that care was always part of me since I was young, growing up seeing my mother taking care every single day of my grandfather, whom he lived with us at home for the last 9 years of his life. 108 months of actively listening to stories, experiences, and creating memories with the person who has been an idol to me, my grandfather Pio. I am very grateful for those 3,285 days as I believe that I am where I am today thanks to the heart-warming, loving, and caring person my grandfather was. Even though he has been missing for

‘Giving consideration to what is necessary’



22 years, he still lives vividly in my heart and guides me in my life.

Fast forward to today, in this article I want to address a very specific topic, that of **Ability in Care**. Whenever I am to write about something, the first thing I tend to do is to split the title into parts. As a result, first and foremost one needs to understand to answer and understand two questions: 'What is Ability?' and 'What is Care?'.

'Ability' is the knowledge, experience, and skill that an individual or group of people bring together to perform a particular task or activity. It also means the strength to accomplish something, both physically and mentally. 'Care' is the process of protecting someone and providing what a person needs, in his/her own home or in a specialised and dedicated environment which can help that person live a better life.

Once one understands and gets hold of the above meanings, the natural question is **Caring with ability?**

In this day and age, we are all discussing what is the context of care and how we can review care in the field of long-term care (LTC). However, we tend to limit our resolution of understanding to concepts that can be superficial to the needs and capacity of the care in its intrinsic sense. How many discussions are being set forward to review the relation of care and to what extent does the notion of care have potential? How can care be fundamental in what we do and how we do it? Whilst many discuss attributes of computation with a dimension of understanding in relation to care an in-depth review needs to start from connotations of defining the understanding of care. Many definitions can be found however, the basics of care can be presented as...

So, we go back to simplistic evaluation which in turn is relative in its own sense. Relative to persons and context. This deliberation can only lead to the journey of striving for outcomes that foresee the narration of one's life. We do not care unless we see persons and we cannot see persons unless

we care. To consider each person is a key to success in how we express ourselves. Moreover, the expression of us is bigger than just a thought. We touch human lives in the multidimensional field of any care component. This led to conceptualising the idea of ability in care.

Consideration for Care

It is not just caring but being able to care. Ability in care can present challenges that are underestimated. We link with each other through the connections of the dimensions, be it physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. To be able and sustain care in the apprehension of gratitude and other naturalistic virtues is fundamental.

The ability in our service is purposely focused to seek and lead in attributing this ability and transmit this to our residents. We look out to give not only a service but an experience in the journey that we accompany our residents in our facilities. We see persons, no more no less, and it is upon us to ensure that our abilities are set and achieved. In each task, each moment, and touch we should be able to leave a mark. The

mark of ability in care, the mark of human service, but above all the mark that we look at our residents as a priority above all.

Our duty at CareMalta is therefore to train and develop our employees in being able to care, meaning to be able to see the person in front of them. The moment we see the human being in front of us as a person, we are able to go to any length for his/her needs, meaning that we are able to care for that person, no matter the difficulties presented to us. At CareMalta we thrive to develop this ability in care as ultimately, we are all able to care for our residents and clients.

Next year CareMalta will be celebrating a very important milestone, the 30th Anniversary. Throughout all these years, CareMalta has developed the Care that we all know today, through a lot of hard work of hundreds of persons that have preceded us. More importantly, CareMalta was able to develop and give Care a new dimension, that of seeing the residents and clients as persons. This is Ability in Care and next year it will be a celebration of the person - the resident, the client, the relatives, and last but not least the person delivering the Care, the employees. ●



CAREMALTA IS INSTRUMENTAL TO LEAD IN CARE

NATALIE BRIFFA
FARRUGIA

Chairperson, Vassallo Group

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.” Nelson Mandela’s words immediately come to mind as I ruminate over the storyline of CareMalta Group as it approaches its 30th anniversary in care. When I think of all that has been accomplished since our first investment through Casa Arkati in our hometown, Mosta, I am filled with a sense of pride.

One of our first aspirations was to bring quality care to the long-term care sector. Years later, we not only have reached higher standards in care, but we have also drastically improved the quality of life - not only of our older population and their families but to a diverse population since our care has reached other sectors and peripheries of care.

The good we can accomplish might be difficult to see and impossible to measure but when the collective energies of a team come together with the right focus, the results surprise us.

The significant difference in the lives of others resonates strongly with the life and culture that a company such as CareMalta has nurtured and cultured. The employees that have served throughout the years have countless stories of how they have developed and grown as the company moved from one stage to the other. The satisfaction and unforeseen ramifications of touching the lives of others have always been higher than any financial reward that the industry offers.



As we transition into the next thirty years of care, I remain committed to ensuring that the board will continue to live the vision, take the best strategic decisions, and while supporting the new leadership to continue the mission, we will be there to help manage the risks that the future will present.

As CareMalta remains instrumental to lead in the care sector, the most important element to secure future success is to remain strong in its ability to care. We never have endless time or perfect conditions, but the right thing to do is always through care. As the group diversifies from one care sector to another, the spectrum of vulnerability widens, and with that grows our 'raison d'être'.

The good we can accomplish might be difficult to see and impossible to measure but when the collective energies of a team come together with the right focus, the results surprise us. All this could not have happened were it not for the vision of my father, the founder, and a very solid board of directors that not only established the mission and values but was always there to support the management structure through thick and thin.

In my new role as chairperson of Vassallo Group, I acknowledge the contribution that every director on the CareMalta board has given through the years. The board has been endowed with integrity, respect, good governance, and excellence throughout. A special mention goes to Mr. Robert Brockdorff who served on the board wholeheartedly for thirty years since CareMalta's inception.

As we transition into the next thirty years of care, I remain committed to ensuring that the board will continue to live the

vision, take the best strategic decisions, and while supporting the new leadership to continue the mission, we will be there to help manage the risks that the future will present.

Looking to the future of care I am thrilled to see how the ten-year plan that CareMalta has in hand will come to life. Embracing new realities of care and being ready to adjust to what the medical technology will offer will be critical. The health IT systems of the future will bring about efficiency gains, and cost savings possibly but also will allow comparisons between service providers and other institutions. We cannot look at care without factoring in the contribution of health information networks.

Our paths will not be limited to the territories we have reached so far, and soon we are very eager to introduce our care services to Gozo following the launch of Care-

Malta Group there last year. Although thirty years have passed since we built our first nursing home for Vassallo Group, our dream for the future still aligns very well with the original concept. Offering a home within the community and creating a home-like environment. The main challenge we face today is the fact that the home-like environment has more likely become an institution so our responsibility is to ensure that the solid structures that keep the family intact will remain solid collaborators in all our care scenarios.

We know that personal autonomy and personal choice will continue to be dominant values in the next thirty years of care. I argue that all the care and other services that are and will continue to be offered through the CareMalta Group, reflect the enthusiasm, passion, and dedication of our foundations and continue to be the best choice for all who will benefit from it. ●



CAREMALTA SERVING AS A
FLAG-BEARER FOR
VASSALLO GROUP FOR THE
PAST THREE DECADES

PIO VASSALLO
CEO, Vassallo Group



The birth of CareMalta 29 years ago was a very important milestone for the Vassallo Group because through such development our group, which was previously known mostly for construction and building started building a reputation as a private company with a public conscience. In a few words, CareMalta gave our group a social mission.

Naturally, the primary aim of any business is to succeed by achieving its goals in line with its mission and vision fuelled by the core values that inspire it along the way. Throughout almost three decades CareMalta was able to assume pride of place as a flag-bearer for the group whose core values of integrity, respect, innovation, and excellence are all part of the day-to-day language across the operations of the company.

My position as CEO of the Group gives me the opportunity to meet many of the employees while going about performing their duties within all our care homes for the elderly as well as those for persons with disability, mental health issues as well as ALS and other degenerative diseases. As I speak to individuals who work as carers, receptionists, kitchen assistants or in some other capacity at CareMalta, I witness their

enthusiasm, determination, and sense of commitment towards their mission.

What amazes me every time is that each one of these individuals is fully aware that when they put on their CareMalta uniform they also represent a whole group with such a rich history going back to the early days after the end of the Second World War. They are aware that when they go the extra mile to deliver the best care or service possible, they are also reflecting Vassallo Group's quest for excellence. The same applies to the other two important values of integrity and respect which are so much tied to the group's reputation with the clients, their relatives, our group's partners as well as with the community in general.

A few years ago, CareMalta took the initiative to create the iCare programme – described as the language of care. Through this initiative, the company is training all its employees to sing from the same hymn book, irrespective of their role and position, when it comes to the delivery of service. Since the programme was launched, I have been dreaming of launching this programme with the rest of the group. This will certainly be the natural step we should take now that we have seen the benefits of

having such a programme being implemented.

I believe that iCare can be the driver that helps us up the service across the group. I see it working at Vassallo Builders, at CaterEssence, and at Vassallo Group Realty. The language of care will become the language of our group as well.

I started by mentioning how CareMalta had contributed immensely by gaining our group a reputation of being a private company with a public conscience. I also dare say that through our involvement in the care sector we were and are able to give our group a social mission. This mission took another dimension just a couple of years from CareMalta's inception when it was the first company in Malta to join forces with government in providing care services in public homes. CareMalta led the way to a whole revolution in this sector which has helped resolve the great challenge of waiting lists in Care Homes.

As a Group, we are proud that this collaboration has now been extended to so many other areas in health and social care. CareMalta can keep leading the way for the group into a future where our social mission will keep making a difference to so many people particularly the most vulnerable. ●



THE POTENTIALS OF ALTERNATIVE CARE

**DR. CHARLENE
VELLA VASSALLO**

**CareMalta Director,
Business Development**

Alternative care is defined as the formal placement, wherein a child is looked after other than at the parental home. The family is a very important structure in society, but the state cannot tolerate, violence, abuse and neglect. No child should be removed from his/her family without a valid reason and after considering all views, in the child's best interest. Every child has the right to be brought up in an environment of a supportive family, nonetheless, more than 3 million children worldwide live in residential care. This figure is likely to be much higher since many of the children are not registered with any institution or family whatsoever.

UNICEF believes that every child and young person should live in a supportive, protective and caring environment that promotes her/his full potential. When analysing the potentials of alternative care, one must further emphasize the importance of having a structure, that is stable and yet flexible in providing the children and young ones with their personal needs. This entails seeking a more holistic approach, to taking care of the kids in the residential home. Alternative care for these children, that have been faced with circumstances that have crushed their personalities and their formation, should primarily reflect the ambience of a family.

Several studies have shown, that the immediate and long-term damage is caused by family separation and unsustainable alternative care, particularly in large institutions. They are often characterized by inherently harmful living arrangements such as forced cohabitation. This emphasizes the importance of keeping siblings together and keeping children and young people within their culture.

Fixed routines that are not tailored to the individual needs can also be harmful and the ability to choose what suits the individual best in an institution is often disregarded. The child's rights should be an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions but most importantly should be applied in the day-to-day running of alternative care.





resilient and sustainable. Young people with a history of maltreatment may also use substances as a coping mechanism to address mental health needs (Jones 2010; Galaher, 2015). Research has shown that more than 70% of children in foster care have aspirations to get postsecondary level education (Courtney, Terao & Boost, 2004), however, only 39% manage to register in two-year or four-year institutes of higher learning.

Nevertheless, in an ideal system, the preparation for children for their future adult roles will include the provision of life skills, discipline and career development. Through social contact the care leaver has a mentor and financial assistance.

Additionally, preparation for leaving care remains an enduring challenge for the care system. Dixon et al. (2004) asserted that good preparation support was associated with longer and more settled care careers. Leaving care early, at age 16 or 17, was frequently associated with shorter more unsettled care careers and was more common for young people exhibiting challenging behaviours.

Successful transitions of care leavers into adulthood mentioned these characteristics that helped them to transition:

- Had role models and pathfinders to help them reach their goals

- Were involved in group activities, clubs etc.
- Had developed a positive self-image through supportive relationships
- Were exposed to opportunities
- Engaged in positive thinking strategies – were self-reliant and assertive (Kufeldt 2003)

There is no doubt whatsoever that when young people leave care, they constitute a vulnerable group in view of the traumas many have suffered before entering care and the extended periods of uncertainty and instability they may experience while in care. These circumstances complicate rather than promote their health and well-being. The problems they then face in negotiating the transition to adulthood are even greater. In comparison to their peers leaving home, young people leaving care do so at significantly younger ages, with few options for ongoing support to continue or complete their education and no opportunities to return to their former accommodation when they need to as part of a gradual process of “final leaving” and assuming self-sufficiency.

The biggest potential in good quality alternative care is for the child to aspire to be someone more whole than circumstance intended him to be, to establish resilience and become beloved. ●

Every child has the right to grow up in an environment that supports his/her physical, psychological, social and emotional development. UN guidelines on Alternative Care for children reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provide concrete guidance aimed at guaranteeing the protection and wellbeing of children and adolescents who lack parental care or are at risk of finding themselves in that situation (UN Guidelines of alternative Care of Children 2010).

Life in an alternative care structure should be more emotional rather than mechanical. The one size fits all is not the ideal environment for any family, let alone for children struggling with their own past situations and relationships. The child should be viewed as a person with his or her own rights, able to participate in his/her own upbringing and participation in the choices that will effect his/her future.

When focusing on the child's education within alternative care (depending on their levels and abilities) the outcome has proved to be more positive. Education and child support yield fruitful results in the long term. This together with stability through permanency planning and reduction in transfers. The separation and anxiety brought about with every change has proved to be very harmful to the child. Active participation by the child in their placements is of utmost importance.

Children in alternative care have complained about the urgency and abrupt end to their placements. Although studies of deinstitutionalisation have shown that the ideal scenario is for the child to be placed in a foster care family yet the effects on the child are dependent on how this takes place. This is done through preparation in their foster placements gradually and not on the day the



child is actually transferred. It is worth noting that participation in matters concerning the child is paramount for his/her support. As experienced by children, abrupt transfers tend to interfere with the children's psychological well-being. It is of utmost importance that meetings are held between the future foster parents and the child prior to the actual placement taking place.

Residential carers play an important role in creating a family-like situation where the child feels special, loved, valued and wanted. Through effective carers, social workers and other people involved in the child's upbringing, one creates reassurance of having someone there when the need arises. The family life relationships built in a residential home establish the emotional stamina required for the child to face future relationships. The idea of the residential home as a safe haven. In good quality alternative care, parents have access to counselling, mental health support and respite services whilst keeping children and young people safe from harm.

More children are facing emerging and growing urban challenges that affect their ability to live, thrive and grow in a safe, clean and resilient environment. Having a child-friendly city will directly contribute to having sustainable development goals, and make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe,



PATIENT SAFETY: A HEALTHCARE DISCIPLINE TO DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES

NOEL BORG

COO, CareMalta Group

Safety and performance in healthcare are benchmarks in effective and efficient delivery of care. Systems thinking adoption is the relationship between systems and the interaction of processes between healthcare professionals and their environment. Quality improvement in patient safety with consideration of the action & reactions within systems thinking should be an interdisciplinary discussion.

The local application needs to be a parallel example denoting different implications and recommending a change in organisational policy and strategy. Systems

thinking should be considered within the capacity for change, within systems rather than individuals in understanding that safety cultures should be a catalyst in resident safety considerations.

Safety and Management systems

The combination of management systems, safety cultures, and leadership has been specifically studied in view of the impact and relation with both patient safety and patient outcome. This write-up intends to explore and evaluate giving reflection to organisational structure, and the relationship with both individual and departmental contexts. Quality management systems are a fundamental application in under-

standing perceptual and conditional approaches to management within organisations. Moreover, the relation in healthcare leads to a link with a safety culture, which has a predominant understanding of the relation to resident outcome.

Many authors have argued on the actual definition of what is a safety culture, and it can be outlined that a safety culture is the adoption of a multifaceted approach in the optimization of interventions. Moreover, the context of leadership is also central in management, as it bridges high-performance organisations with enhanced approaches in organisational capability within the systems approach. The relevance of the key factors outlined are essential in organisational management and strategy, with consideration to performance indicators.



Design and safety in long-term care (LTC)

Design in patient safety has been a major consideration in healthcare, including long-term care. Healthcare systems and processes whilst evolving with research are still related to patient safety and the link between human and error has been long studied. Patient safety is not the result of one person in isolation but rather the interaction of multiple components within a system.

The impact of adverse events on patient safety is complex and this discussion should lead to exploring human behaviour within the context of system-based interventions, with particular attention to the environment and design.



Design in patient safety has been a major consideration in healthcare, including long-term care.

Active failures and latent factors need to be highlighted for the identification of the extent of the impact on patient safety, in objective terms. Design and the human factor are fundamental as sentinel risk factors are related to human failures, as a root

cause. Human factor relates to the science-based on understanding human behaviour and cognition in the implementation of strategies that focus on human limitations and capabilities.

Design and patient safety are identified as prime factor to relate with literature that is focused on the expression of design, in relation to the human factor with specific examples of factors that effect and increase risks within patient safety, such as medication errors. Several evidence-based papers reflect the combine enhancement to the reflection of well-being. ●

PROMOTING THE FORMATION OF AN EXTENDED FAMILY



JANET SILVIO

CEO, HILA Homes

I can still vividly remember my first day in what used to be called the Incubation Office, which would have been my office for the coming year, alone and away from everything and everyone with the knowledge that I was entrusted to create a new service and no plan yet how to go about it.

Fast forward eight years, HILA is now an established company encompassing three different successful services, with more in the pipeline.

Our latest model of care, Casal Nuovo, has just celebrated its one-year anniversary. A model of care which was based on the Mental Health Strategy which recognises the need for specialised services, amongst them the need for rehabilitation and active support services through protected accommodation and independent living” as well as “giving clients dignity and autonomy, together with equal opportunities, offering them a choice on the best and most appropriate model of care for them.

Looking back at Casal Nuovo’s first year of life, the image that remains imprinted in my memory is the arrival of our first clients – the opening of the gates, and the arrival of our van, the clients descending into our gardens with big smiles on their faces to what is now their home. Since then, it has been a roller-coaster of events; a new challenge that proved to be quite tough, especially in the first few months. Even though we had a wonderful team, with systematic processes, and procedures in place, caring for and supporting people who had spent so much time in institutions—in some cases, for the majority of their lives—presented numerous difficulties for both carers and clients.

Getting used to a new place and new surroundings; getting to know new people and learning to trust them, and starting a new lifestyle was not easy for them. De-institutionalisation is not only moving a person physically away from a big building but it’s about moving the person out of an institutionalised lifestyle towards a structured yet inclusive way of life. It took time and patience but, through hard work, resilience, and dedication our team has achieved many successes in the past year.

Julian Tudor Hart, in *The Political Economy of Health Care*, describes kinship as “Solidarity, a belief that all humans are all of one species, that we are so-



“We are now very excited about our new upcoming project, Santa Rosa”

Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli together with CEO of Aġenzija Support Mr. Oliver Scicluna and Perm Sec Ms. Nancy Caruana visited HILA's latest project Santa Rosa. Photo Credit DOI: Clifton Fenech

cial animals who stand or fall together, who survival depends on helping one another, and whose genetic diversity is a strength rather than a weakness”

At HILA we give high importance to the concept of kinship, promoting the formation of an extended family between clients and carers. The strength in walking and supporting each other on our journey to offer new services, together with our clients, their relatives, and other professionals, is key to achieving what is best for all.

The new project, Santa Rosa, will be yet another innovative service, one which will see HILA focusing more on children and adolescents. It will be an extension of what we already offer at Casa Apap Bologna, but with a more targeted focus and with the introduction of new ideas and programmes. Our aim is to always try and identify gaps that exist and services that are not available in the sector trying to address the needs of as many individuals as possible.

Casa Apap Bologna, HILA's pioneer service, gave us the opportunity to reach out to many individuals and their families. Through the years we have learned so much from them and this helped us in identifying what more we can do to reach out to our community.

The design idea behind our buildings is always innovative and fresh, I am always amazed at how talented our architects and designers are and the synergy with them is perfect – they translate my dreams into tangible realities.

Santa Rosa is planning to open its doors by the end of this year, and it will definitely be one of the highlights of my year and of HILA for 2022!

HILA has carved its way through an amazing journey and never looked back, something which was made possible through embracing change. Personally, I am a huge driver for change, both in my personal

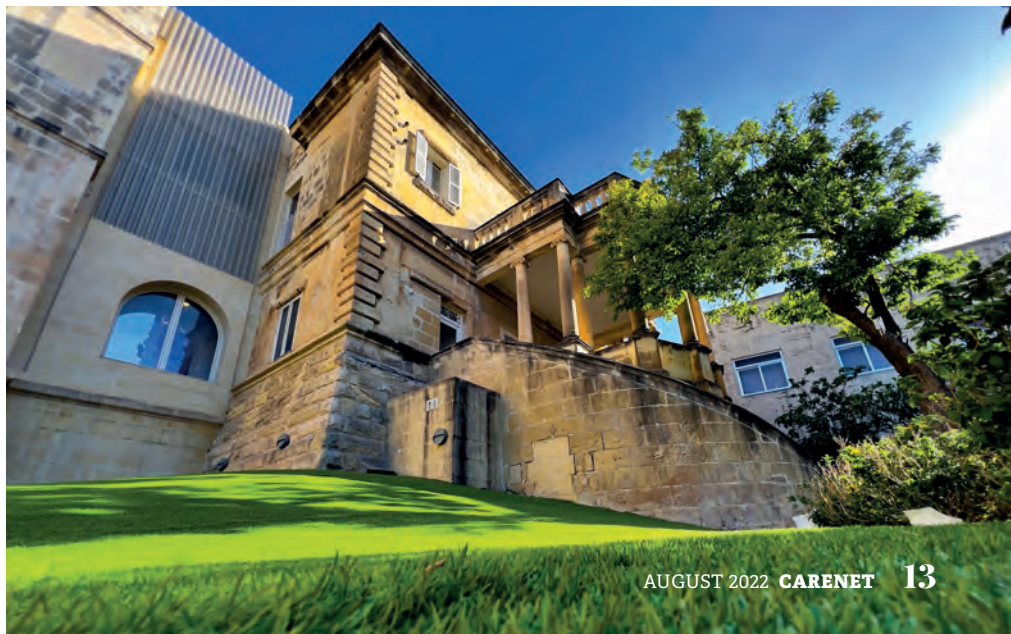
life as well in my professional one. I believe that change is healthy, makes you progress, creates opportunities, and improves your quality of life.

It's the fuel that helps us to think outside the box and be creative and, consequently, helps us in being more flexible and also more emotionally powerful.

Many fears change, which is a hindrance to progress and new models of care proposed. The unknown is something that doesn't sit comfortably with many since it 'disrupts' the routine and creates more work, effort, and uncertainty. But only through embracing change can new ideas be developed, and different services offered.

As I always emphasize, nothing we do would be possible if it wasn't for the great teams we have – dedicated, passionate, and with a shared purpose that thrives us all to do our best. What our teams at Casa Apap Bologna, Dar Bjorn, and Casal Nuovo achieve daily fills me with great pride – I feel humbled to be leading them through this amazing journey.

I want to conclude by sharing something I recently read in a very interesting book called Intelligent Kindness by John Ballatt, Penelope Campling, and Chris Mahoney: “When we are most vulnerable, the most ordinary acts of kindness have extraordinary effects – the clients recover some sense of trust in a world that seems harsh and unforgiving of weaknesses”. ●





CASAL NUOVO'S 1ST ANNIVERSARY

June 2022 was an important month for HILA Homes as the 1st Anniversary of Casal Nuovo was celebrated. During the celebrations, HILA Homes Chief Executive, Janet Silvio, explained the meaning behind the significance of this anniversary which is to “remove barriers that have been built in the past by society and to abolish the stigma there is about mental health”. Casal Nuovo in Paola was inaugurated on the 10th of June 2021 by the Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister, Chris Fearn. This project was also part of the 2020-2030 National Mental Health Strategy.





OUR EMPLOYEES ARE AND WILL REMAIN OUR BIGGEST ASSET

CHRIS GAUCI

**Financial Controller,
CareMalta Group**

During the eight years, I have been working for the Vassallo Group, I have been accustomed to the saying "Our employees are and will remain our biggest asset". This has been quoted on several occasions by one or more of the shareholders, and although this does not actually feature as a figure in the list of assets the Group has in its Statement of Financial Position, all the Directors and Shareholders of the Group, as well as CareMalta Group, abide by such statement. This is evidenced in the progression of the career of a significant number of employees within the Group. Also, recognition of the employees is of utmost importance across all the companies forming part of the group. The Shine Awards is a good example whereby employees are recognised for their hard work throughout the previous year. This investment helped the group to grow in its 75 years, from a small number of employees to almost 1,900 employees being employed today. Such growth is one important way to measure a group/company's success after so many years.

CareMalta Group accounts for more than 70% of such employees (approx. 1,335 in 2022) and hence is one of the drivers towards investing further in its hard-working em-

ployees. This is done continuously in various forms and actions. Most importantly is the constant development of the several tiers existing in the company's organisational structure.

Training is crucial and a yearly strategy is established and budgeted for as it forms an integral part of the management planning. Key personnel too are identified to continue to progress in their studies whilst obtaining experience on the job. Such employees form a vital role in the succession planning of the group's management.

As aforementioned, recognition too is a priority for CareMalta Group, and strives to be one of the best employers in the Healthcare industry. This brings its challenges with the government being the main competitor, however, the group believes that the overall experience it gives to its employees is one that can benefit the individual, the resident with the service being offered, and the group in general. This brings a family feel to the place of work which not all companies can claim to have.

Tangible or intangible assets

An investment can be described as acquiring an asset with the intention to generate income or profit in the future. Assets can then be split into intangible or tangible. The investment in human resources described above can be considered intangible since though it enhances the value of the business

being described, it cannot be mathematically calculated and accounted for. Also, the return on investment in terms of human resources is very difficult to determine and establish.

A different type of asset which is tangible and which CareMalta Group actively continues to invest in is property. At present, CareMalta Group is the owner of 9 properties. These have all been purchased with the sole intention to convert these into the best accommodation for our residents/clients and to give an excellent service provision for their needs as required.

Vassallo Group always had a passion to grab the opportunity to own a beautiful and well-structured property. This continued to reflect in the properties acquired by CareMalta Group. In fact all of the nine properties has an outdoor area where the resident/client can enjoy in his/her own free time. Such properties include Casa Arkati, Villa Messina, Roseville, Casa San Paolo, Casa Marija, Casal Nuovo, Casa Apap Bologna, Casa Santa Monika and the latest addition Santa Rosa.

One must appreciate that such investment runs into millions, and this does not stop once the property is owned. Most of the time such properties would have been dilapidated and in dire need of a total revamp. This too is a hefty investment which most of the time ends up being costly as the property just purchased.

CareMalta Group also operates and invests in property leased from third parties on





sonnel experts in this area and being able to identify the needs of the facility. Also, equipment is upgraded every now and then and if need be replaced completely. As already mentioned, personnel are also well trained to make the best use of such equipment and make sure that it is used to give the best outcome as intended when bought.

Investing in a holistic service

Another intangible asset CareMalta Group invests incessantly in providing the best service possible to our residents/clients and adding quality to their time spent with us. This is the goal of CareMalta's Group achievements and the investments referred to previously, to contribute to such target.

More investment is required to be able and offers a holistic service. This includes running expenditures such as food costs and meals. CareMalta Group can consider itself lucky in this sector in that it has partnered with CaterEssence, which is a sister company of Vassallo Group, and this helps in meeting the requirements of our residents/clients easily whilst understanding each other's commitments. The fact that CareMalta Group caters to more than 1,700 clients makes it more difficult to be able to flex to individual demands and requests, however, through experience, this was challenged over the years and a lot of improvement has been noted recently.

Lastly, CareMalta Group relies also on third parties with regards to part of the investment that relates to the daily running costs. This includes outsourced laundry, accessibility to consumables, consultancy, and other areas. Good business relationships help in continually providing the best service/product possible for our end client and keeping the expenditure at a satisfactory level.

Next year CareMalta Group will be celebrating its 30th Anniversary. The achievements referred to above and that are shown in the service being offered on a daily basis reflect how much the company/group invested along these years and the promise it will continue to do so in the years to come. ●

a long-term basis. Such properties include La Stella/ Astra (ex-KU club) in Gozo and Dar Sant'Anna in Senglea which are also new projects that the Group is currently seeking to consolidate.

Once a property is completely refurbished and ready to start being in operation, the group starts investing in maintaining and keeping the property in a good working condition. This is done by investing in per-



“LET’S SHAKE OFF THE PERCEPTION THAT LOOKING AFTER OLDER PERSONS IS A CAREER DEAD-END”

In his interview with CareNet, Jo Etienne Abela, Minister for the Elderly and Active Ageing, explained his vision for the elderly care sector, the challenges he wants to and is addressing, and how younger generations can be encouraged to specialise in elderly care.

What is your vision as the Minister for the Elderly and Active Ageing?

I always tell my students and trainees that open-ended questions are the most difficult to answer. In saying that, my vision is five-fold. Firstly, I wish to engender an inter-generational attitude, whereby the elderly and our younger generations interact and co-operate seamlessly.

Secondly, I wish to increase activity and support for older persons and their relatives in the community. Thirdly, I want to ensure that long-term residences are modern, safe, and equally befitting the dignity of our older residents and our dedicated workforce. Fourthly, I will set up a dementia directorate that will expand, support, and manage our 24/7 dementia intervention team that looks after persons living with dementia and their carers. Lastly, I wish to have older people representatives in all spheres of life, the concept of mainstreaming.

How do you view the elderly care sector in Malta?

It pains me to hear that older persons are viewed as a burden on our society. Throughout their younger lives, these persons worked hard to build our communities and society whilst paying taxes and national insurance. Is it such a big ask to have a decent standard of living in their old age? At 125,000 strong, older persons contribute towards some 15% of our country’s economy, hardly a burden. Younger generations need to look after, look up to actually, and harvest the knowledge, wisdom, and skills sets that older persons have amassed through a lifetime of experiences.

What do you think are the main challenges faced by the elderly nowadays? How can they be addressed?

As a medical doctor, I am all too conscious of the physical ailments that may afflict older persons. Reduced mobility due to joint arthritis coupled with a sedentary lifestyle, may lead to obesity, and then diabetes, visual impairment, wasting of muscle mass, and blood vessel disease that gives rise to heart attacks, kidney failure, amputations, and strokes. This physical infirmity can be addressed by a reasonable geriatric health promotion strategy that encompasses lifestyle modification, smoking cessation adjuncts, careful diabetic and foot care, blood pressure control, and regular heart and eye checks.

Dementia is a situation that a good few rightly perceive to be lurking around the corner. Physical exercise and mental engagement are

protective. Medication is not uniformly effective but I plan to push for an additional formulary option for moderate to severe disease in the near future.

Solitude has become a stark reality even in a society like ours, which professes to be close-knit. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated its prevalence. Psychological and psychiatric issues creep in and a comprehensive community psychotherapy service is of the essence in addition to compassion. I plan to attract more psychiatrists and psychotherapists to work with us. Moreover, older persons have to beware of various forms of abuse, not least physical (often through domestic violence), neglect, and financial abuse. We need to invest in information campaigns and victim support agencies.

Our well-developed Active Ageing and Community Care arm will re-double its efforts to continue to address all of these issues and aspects.

The risk of inflation and soaring prices is unfortunately a sign of the times. Luckily for us, our government has boosted pensions year after year for the past 8 years, in addition to timely cash injections which were particularly favourable to older persons. Crucially, the government has taken the brunt of energy and food price hikes to maintain stability, thus shielding the most vulnerable whilst supporting the economy at large.

What is the importance of proper care homes for the elderly?

For older persons who are unable to live in their own homes for whatever reason, the care home becomes the new home. In Malta, the Social Care Standards Authority is the legal instrument that, amongst other roles, regulates and licenses these facilities through a set of minimum requirements. It is my intention that this authority sheds off its “extra-elderly” roles in order to super-specialise into an exclusively older person concern. I envisage this to be compassionate with residents, fair but firm with the operators, and implacable with offenders.

What is the main challenge you had to or are still facing as the Minister for Active Ageing?

My concern is for the safety of long-term residents. I admit it is difficult to strike the perfect balance. Safety measures may satisfy the quest for freedom and activity but will necessarily incur a heightened



risk to life or limb. Too many measures and safety nets to curb such incidents and people will call you a jailer. I will stand by my ethos as a cancer surgeon that tells me that I would rather suffer criticism whilst trying to deal with a problem or save a life rather than stay put and pussyfoot around the status quo. My surgical logic demands immediate damage control whilst allowing snap-independent inquiries and audits to mature. Then, discuss the conclusions and recommendations with all stakeholders to readily adopt a long-term safety strategy that matters.

In your speech, during CareMalta's Symposium, you mentioned how it is a priority to make sure that the elderly feel and know they are safe. How can this be achieved?

I think that we need to shift gear and be bold. Information and awareness are key to transmitting our forward-thinking strategy. Mainstreaming is key – ageism is a thing of the past, what we are after is the instalment of older persons in every facet of societal interactions. It will then become easy to avoid, recognise and counter abuse. Our carers need to be primed to the needs of older persons, and well-trained to support them and refer on in order to avert harm. Operators need to be able to demonstrate their commitment and confidence in upholding standards and safety measures.

What is your vision for more collaboration between the public and private sectors in elderly care?

Through the results of studies and audits, the PPP model is proven to be cost-effective. I am confident that higher standards of care can be achieved through it.

In terms of education, do you think that in Malta younger generations are encouraged to specialise in elderly care?

Let me just say that I think we can do much better. There is more to the winning formula than just the financial carrot. We need to shake off the perception that looking after older persons is some sort of a career dead-end. There are plenty of opportunities if only we can make the specialty attractive. We need to instil pride in the caring profession, that sense of dedication and belonging. We need to cast away that ill-feeling of “having to do the chores” and “I’m not supposed to do this or that”.

We need to ensure to bolster morale and not introduce division. “Us and them” is not an ethos, it is toxic and alienating and has to be stamped out. We are all of us called upon to be proactive, to seek help and advice when in doubt. Let us work on spicing and sprucing this speciality up. We can only achieve this by sub-specializing, researching new methods, and discarding the concept of one-size-fits-all. Let us present challenges and push our younger people to excel at finding solutions and then take pride in redefining the priorities and so on to the next challenge. ●





SARAH CAMILLERI

Human Resources Manager,
CareMalta Group

Diversity is not new or complicated, but sometimes appears, or is made to appear, to be both. At CareMalta, diversity appears to have rapidly increased in recent years, which is attributable to several factors. Similarly, the concept of inclusion does not need to be feared as complicated, as employees simply wish to be allowed to be themselves.

Workforce diversity and inclusion is a valued asset for CareMalta and its employees. At our place of work, we are constantly meeting people and learning about other cultures. The key components of workforce diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. CareMalta employs around 1,300 employees all coming from diverse backgrounds and attributes, such as interests, principles, personalities, philosophies, traditions, customs, nationalities, and languages, who work together to accomplish a collective goal, working in an environment where one can provide true passion to deliver the best to our residents. This is not only reflected in our Vision, Philosophy, and Values but through the holistic service provided in our homes. Inspired by our core values, CareMalta prides itself in treating all the residents as individuals.

The first step to consider in having a diverse workforce starts in the recruitment process, meaning that at CareMalta we hire candidates only according to their ability to

**WORKPLACE WELLNESS IS
THE CULTIVATION OF AN
ENVIRONMENT PROMOTING
BETTER PHYSICAL &
MENTAL HEALTH**

perform their job efficiently, without considering bias. In diversity hiring, we mitigate unconscious biases that stand in the way of hiring the best candidate, like their race, gender, or educational background.

As CareMalta employs a variety of individuals the advantages are endless, and one receives different perspectives and opinions to benefit from. Whenever a group of like-minded people is put together, they are most likely to generate similar ideas. This is because their thinking patterns are very much alike. However, creating a diverse environment is a game-changer, having a workforce that is more prone to creativity and innovation; two important ingredients for success.

A heterogeneous workforce will be able to exchange unique perspectives and spark fresh ideas. Diversity and productivity go hand in hand where employees feel valued, accepted and show up to work happy. Diversity in the workplace will also increase employee morale and instill a desire to be more effective and work more efficiently. As CareMalta's employees come from different backgrounds, and from all walks of life they are able to connect with our residents who also differ in character, family upbringing, marital statuses, and religions. Fortunately, having a diverse workforce helps in building strong work relationships.

Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Good living conditions such as housing and having the peace of mind that we provide for our family, are fundamental to well-being. We also take into consideration other indicators that measure what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions, and resilience, the realisation of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life.

Workplace wellbeing at CareMalta relates to all aspects of working life from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how employees feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work, and work organisation. Fostering employee wellbeing is positive for both the employees and CareMalta. Promoting wellbeing helps to prevent stress and creates a positive working environment where employees at CareMalta can thrive and perform to their utmost. Together, good health and wellbeing are core enablers of our employee's engagement and CareMalta's performance.

Over the past few years, management at CareMalta anticipated the need for well



“Diversity in the workplace will also increase employee morale and instill a desire to be more effective and work more efficiently.”

being to go beyond the typical team-building activities one would find in organisations. Wellbeing is not treated as an add-on activity, but it is placed at the centre of our business model and viewed as a vital source of added value for our employees. The Arkati Foundation was founded in 1991 with the intention of safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of employees while keeping their interests at heart. To date, the Foundation has raised several funds, helped numerous employees, and brought a strong sense of community. These funds are used to care for the wellbeing of employees who have been affected by extenuating circumstances.

The Wellbeing committee, together with the Chairperson of the Group brainstorm together to come up with ideas to improve a healthier and more inclusive culture, a better work-life balance, and better employee morale and sense of belonging, now more than ever after the world seems

to be coming out of a pandemic which has impacted the lives of employees in many different ways.

Workplace wellness is imperative

CareMalta is one of the companies within the Group participating in the annual Shine Awards ceremony during which employees are rewarded for their hard work and loyalty. Employees are nominated because they excel in a certain area or other which is noticed by other employees and management alike. On the 4th of June, thirteen awards were distributed, one in particular, the Employee Wellbeing award, long service awards to celebrate the employees' loyalty, together with the retirement bonuses, forming part of the Vassallo Group Loyalty and Retirement schemes.

Another Wellbeing initiative is the collaboration CareMalta has with Richmond Foundation. We believe that since the place of work is a huge part of every employee's life, the presence of multiple stressors at work can give rise to a range of problems in both personal and professional lives. CareMalta employees have access to the services provided by Richmond Foundation as talking with a qualified mental health practitioner will aid an employee with learning techniques to manage patterns of excessive stress, anxiety, depression, self-criticism, and other thoughts and emotions. This in turn can restore good work performance and increase productivity levels. ●

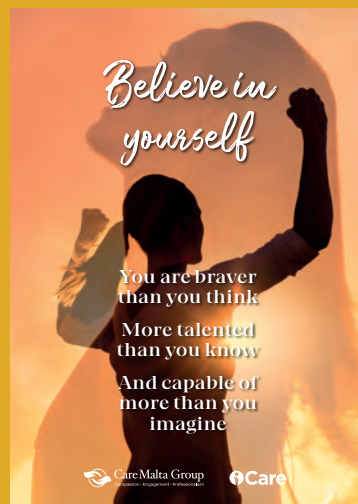


A HEALTHIER YOU

The aim of a well-being campaign is to help positive and lasting lifestyle changes. We are always talking about how we should live the now and “be present” that we often forget that it’s possible to look at our past with love and appreciate it. It is easier said than done but one should try and remember to promote a strength-based approach while sharing lived experiences to be able to increase the varied and valuable contributions, towards others.

Wellbeing objectives include an infinite number of possibilities that may influence what happens to you next, therefore today, and this instant will never happen again. Take this awareness for new perspectives and opportunities that haven’t yet presented themselves.

Here are some of the posters published by CareMalta Group as part of the 2022 well-being campaign which also centres iCare in its strategy which engages a language of compassion and professionalism. •





FOR MANY, IT'S THE SILENCE: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON OLD AGE

PROF. GODFREY BALDACCHINO

It's the absence of friendly and familiar voices echoing in one's home. It's the steady reduction in the number of phone calls or house visits by those genuinely interested in one's quality of life. It's the progressive deterioration of eyesight, mobility, and hearing, which erodes self-confidence in independent living and forces one to progressively restrict movements to ever smaller and private spaces. It's the onset of mental or physical disease – including dementia – which may lock one into a private, silent world that none can penetrate. It's the loss of social roles, and the tasks and responsibilities they each imply – sibling, parent, worker, volunteer, friend ... with the snuffing out of each role, part of one's personality is also extinguished. It's the abandonment of children and close relatives who have better things to do than visit old women and men, who have nothing interesting or funny to say anyway. It's conversing with dogs or cats or other pets, in the absence of human company. It's the solace provided by the television or radio programme, which at least allows a semblance of human conversation to waft into one's home. And it's the inexorable sequence of funerals; the departures of those who once loved, knew, worked with, or lived with: with each burial, a part of one also dies. Whenever the bell tolls, it tolls for all of us (and not just for the deceased). Until our own card is called up.

Life has been described as a terminal disease. Factually and existentially, this is so. But such a dour statement does not address the beauty and opportunity that living one's life can bring. And, for us humans, that

beauty and opportunity are *relational*: it is built on a sequence and portfolio of dealings with (and for) other people. The richness of one's life does not boil down to material riches; but rather to the quality and relevance of so many relationships and voices that meld with ours: loved ones, close family members, special friends, mentors, acquaintances, and colleagues, those who one admires (unbeknownst to them) and those who admire you (unbeknownst to you).

Such is the case even in a small and densely populated archipelago like Malta. Alongside the cacophony of our daily and busy lives, are people struggling with silence. Waiting for someone to give them a call; visit their home; extend an invitation to an event; or drive them to a venue. Social media has helped to make up for this unnerving quietness. But chatting with someone on a social media platform is not quite the same as the real thing. Plus: the old are the demographic that are least comfortable with internet technology.

The lockdowns and restricted mobilities experienced because of and during the coronavirus pandemic (2020-22) have exacerbated the plight of the old everywhere. In Malta, even simple daily rituals – like going to the grocery to buy staples, going to church, visiting (or being visited by) grandchildren – many of these small pleasures have had to be abandoned in the name of public health, and out of fear of contracting the virus or, even worse, being a carrier and infecting others, possibly leading them unwittingly to their death. The outcome has been an ever-heavier burden of silence.

Old age is the price we pay for living longer. Luckily for many, the concept of 'active ageing' is beyond sloganeering. Physical and mental health can be enjoyed for longer than even our immediately preceding generation could have imagined. Sooner or later, however, for those who do not succumb immediately to acute hospitalisation, palliative care, or sudden death from a situation of good health, a period of infirmity and gradual loss of faculties is almost assured. Hence society is responding by developing a wider suite of services to cater to such a stage in one's life. The underlying rationale ranges from maintaining a full sense of active community living to be cared for with dignity and respect.

Thousands of health care professionals, including many migrant workers, are now engaged in providing such services in Malta (as is happening in other parts of the world). These are complemented by various volunteers, particularly women, who dedicate considerable time tending and caring for one or more aging parents, often in their own homes.

You know that you are old when and if those who deal with you, treat you as a lesser person and belittle you, just because you are older and not as fast and quick-witted as you used to be.

You know that you are old when you can't bear the silence. ●

Godfrey Baldacchino is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Malta. Comments and feedback are welcome on: godfrey.baldacchino@um.edu.mt



"My journey with CareMalta started during the Covid pandemic and at a time when iCare had already been implemented. I

believe that the principles instilled through the iCare program were critical in guiding Facilities through the pandemic and the challenges they faced".

Pierre Jacobs
Zammit Clapp Home



"iCare is putting the Resident first, anticipating his/her needs to create an enjoyable experience.

Managers lead by example for others to follow. iCare reflects also on the employees. Management does care for its workforce as with them the iCare cycle is complete".

Robert Grech
Casa Arkati



"iCare is not just a training programme, but it is the ideal tool to help us understand in a holistic manner the needs of our residents. iCare is literally a Gem!"

Antoine Borg
Cospicua Home



"I define iCare as an unspoken social order that is aimed to engage and instill a common language of compassion and professionalism that will be automatically transmitted in how we meet the needs and requirements of our clients at various stages. It is the glue" that aligns CareMalta's corporate culture with its employees' values, drives, and needs".

Claire Coldman
Roseville



"I experienced iCare as a motivation to the team, enabling them to understand the resident's journey. It is an infusion of the iCare values, reflecting CareMalta's core values which enable the resident to feel at home receiving unparalleled care, achieving a smooth journey towards the last chapter of their narrative".

Josette Grech
Mellieħa Home



"iCare for me means the staff/people who really care for each other who enjoy doing things for our residents".

Edel Borg Mizzi
Żejtun Home

**iCare...
it's more than just a job
it's a way of life**



"iCare takes the level of service we offer to another level. It instigates the employees to give a personalized service which in turn creates a bond between the resident and the employee".

Stuart Caruana
Casa San Paolo



"iCare is a way of life, whether it is with residents, their relatives, our staff, or outside work. iCare values are to be considered as a cornerstone in all that we do".

Anthony Caruana
Villa Messina



"iCare is our commitment to excellence. When embraced by all, it provides a harmonious atmosphere among all staff and peace of mind to residents and their relatives in ensuring genuine care".

Carl Caruana
Casa Marija



"iCare must start with self-care to be able to care for someone else. It means being compassionate, accepting all differences we may have, respect with dignity and empathy. All these values must be in you to be capable to give iCare care to the residents".

Renata Zahra
HILA - Casal Nuovo



"iCare means to show interest and/or concern for others through one's attitude and mannerisms. We care about what happens to provide help, protection, and good general well-being. Through iCare one becomes more aware of the importance of compassion, engagement, and professionalism in everyday life".

Lara Grech
HILA - Dar Bjorn



"iCare is giving value and caring for clients, relatives, and employees alike. Respecting and guiding team members and being emphatic when people around me are passing through a difficult time".

Nicolette Sant
HILA - Casa Apap Bologna



“PROVIDING QUALITY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IS OUR MISSION”

The Chief Executive of Learning Works, CHARLO BONNICI, explains how CareMalta’s academy was the starting point that has now developed into a fully fletched learning institution

Vassallo Group’s training and education arm Learning Works owes its creation and eventual evolution to CareMalta.

It all started in 2009 when the company, faced with an acute shortage of carers started organising courses for prospective care workers. At that time my role was that of CareMalta’s HR Manager therefore recruitment and people development was my main focus. Our aim was to train individuals interested in joining the company in order to work in care. This initiative allowed CareMalta to engage a number of persons as trainee carers with the intention of confirming them as care workers once they complete the course.

As time went by it became necessary for us to not only offer training but this training needed to lead to a recognised qualification which eventually became a legal requirement. Since the development of home-grown qualifications was still in its infancy we decided to partner with City & Guilds to offer their qualification in care. We now started offering this training as the CareMalta Academy which at that stage also had its own website and branding.

Through this initiative, we managed to train hundreds of individuals most of whom were eventually recruited by CareMalta. It needs to be pointed out that a number of others found employment with

other companies as well. This was therefore an important development for the CareMalta Academy because it was the first time we were offering training to individuals who would not necessarily work with CareMalta but also with competitors.

Throughout the years training was provided at different venues. Prior to offering accredited courses, we used to hold sessions at the Cottonera Sports Complex and also at the John Paul Parish Centre in Attard. Once we got our first license from the then National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCHFE) we needed to also hold courses in venues approved by the same commission. For this reason, initially, we started using the Magister Academy premises in St Julian’s and later converted a room at Roseville to be used for training and eventually settled in The Landmark where the current training facilities are located. Over time the premises at The Landmark were expanded three times particularly as the CareMalta Academy evolved into Learning Works.



CareMalta Academy's evolution into Learning Works became necessary once we started branching out into areas that were not connected to care in 2018. In fact Learning Works, incorporated as a company and licensed as a Further and Higher Education Institution in February 2019 today offers courses in Health and Social Care, Catering

and Hospitality, Management, Construction Languages, and Sport. It is also licensed to carry out VNFIL (Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning) and is currently responsible for the assessment of all Vassallo Builders employees leading to the issuing of the Skill Card which will soon become obligatory by law. Learning Works

has already trained all the company's construction employees who are now in possession of the BICC Safety Card.

A major development was achieved in 2021 when Learning Works partnered with one of the top ten universities in the world for Sport Science, Liverpool John Moores to offer a Master's Degree in International Sport Coaching. Currently, six students are enrolled in this programme which can be completed in one or two years. The next group will start their course in September 2022.

Another milestone will be reached in October 2022 when the institution will be offering its first Post Graduate Certificate in the Psychology of Eating Disorders and Obesity in cooperation with Psychologist Dr. Dorothy Schembri.

Today Learning Works offers 27 courses ranging from MQF Level 1 up to MQF Level 7.

Learning Works also supports Vassallo Group companies in providing bespoke training to its employees. It is currently responsible for providing regular in-service training to CareMalta employees working in various departments. Furthermore, it is currently training Vassallo Builders employees in health and safety and collaborating with CaterEssence to train new employees in the area of food and beverage and catering service.

Its mission is to keep providing high-quality education and vocational training with the aim of helping learners identify educational and career goals, develop skills necessary to achieve intellectual and personal growth, excel in their studies or area of specialization enabling them to ultimately secure quality employment, career advancement and to reach their maximum potential. ●

HILA'S CONCEPT OF 'EXTENDED FAMILY' IS A FIRST IN MALTA

Paula Sultana
Receptionist Casal Nuovo

Supporting mental health has always been a subject of interest to me and HILA has given me the opportunity to explore and interact further within this field at Casal Nuovo. For me, HILA's concept of 'Extended Family', is a first in Malta, as one can see in the 3 homes that HILA operates.

HILA has also an inclusive work environment which is beneficial as when employees from diverse backgrounds get together and have equal opportunities to contribute their skills, experience, and perspectives, our clients can then have the best service offered to them.

I feel that HILA's management offers a strong support network regarding emotional well-being to its employees. Emotional well-being is very important otherwise, I will not be able to function properly and that will affect all those around me which will be especially difficult for our clients as they will not be able to understand the negativity that could arise.

At times, managing mental health at work is challenging because work varies a lot, sometimes I do feel overwhelmed, but I must be a strong person to cope. On the other hand, there are more positive moments than there are bleak ones. One of my ways to cope is joking with my colleagues, who themselves might be having a tough day. I also found out that music helps a lot, especially popular Maltese music which has a feel-good vibe that is also beneficial to our clients as they sing along to them, myself included!

Our clients at Casal Nuovo all have their own unique personalities, that's what makes them special being who they are with their happiness and appreciation so genuine!

Working at Casal Nuovo is so rewarding because through projects given to our clients, every day, you watch them feel so proud of themselves thus creating positive well-being while practicing HILA's values: BELIEVE AND ACHIEVE.



“SEEING THE RESIDENTS AND STAFF HAPPY MAKES MY HEART WANT TO SING”

Lara Grech
Facility Manager DAR Bjorn

Having worked in a critical care setting for 10 years, working at Dar Bjorn felt close to home. Residents need specialised care and attention where the caregivers serve as the most supporting system to clients and their families. Given the medical conditions of the clients, I felt I am able to provide the best care through my experience.

DAR Bjorn is a residential community home that caters to people with ALS, MS, and other Neurological conditions, aiming at improving the client's quality of life.

Having the right attitude and approach within the workplace and maintaining positive emotional well-being can have a huge impact on employees and staff. For me this is of utmost importance, encompassing also the ability to practice stress-management techniques, be resilient, and generate the emotions that lead to good feelings.

Throughout this year there were many rewarding experiences, but everything boils down to seeing the residents and staff happy at Dar Bjorn, laughing and joking with each other makes my heart want to sing. This gives me the best motivation, and that is my favourite thing about DAR Bjorn.

“I TRY TO SEE BEYOND LIMITATIONS AND FOCUS ON WHAT CLIENTS CAN DO”

Maria Balzan
Occupational Therapist at Casa Apap Bologna

HILA is a place that feels like home for the residents and service users. A place where as the name translates, they are given the opportunity to use their abilities in all aspects of life. The abilities of the individual are seen beyond the disabilities and are supported as required. For me, it's not just a place of work, but it's a place where I am connected with others, an extended family.

I always had a passion to help other individuals. This passion started with my sister who was diagnosed with Autism and global development delay at a young age. Initially, the thought of supporting my younger sister whilst working with persons with disabilities was overwhelming.

HILA allowed me to meet with families of persons with disabilities with whom I empathized and could relate to. It offered me the opportunity to work with other health care professionals and learn so much from them.

It is rewarding to see parents have the rest they truly needed

Throughout my experience working at Casa Apap Bologna, I have had many rewarding experiences that would be difficult to write them all down. The one that I feel was very rewarding was when we had parents who approached us that they needed to start using the respite service for their adolescent son with autism. Their son started to trust us with time and we formed a therapeutic relationship. We graded the transition very gradually moving from one hour stay with the parents present, one hour without the parents, two hours, five hours... etc. we then managed to have an overnight stay which went very well. It was so rewarding to see the parents have the rest that they truly needed, while their son is in good hands.

“I try to get to know the person not just from a clinical perspective”

As an Occupational Therapist, my work revolves around occupations; meaning the person's wants, wishes, and preferences are irrelevant to the diagnosis. If I meet a new client, I try to get to know the person as a person. I ask things such as “what they like to do, what interests them in life, their personal history and experiences” among others. The diagnosis will then help me to understand more and assist in the clinical goal setting, however, it is not the most important thing. If you only look at the diagnosis you will realise that automatically you start labelling clients and stereotyping.

My extended family

HILA clients have become my extended family. This might sound like a cliché, but it is very much true. I feel that especially after the Covid-19 lockdown that we did together, we became even closer. Therefore there are so many things that I love about the clients. If I had to pin it to just one favourite thing, it would be their smile. No matter what, their smile is always contagious, pure, and soulful. ●





IT'S *TIME TO SHINE* FOR CAREMALTA EMPLOYEES

The Shine Awards' made its comeback this year, on the 3rd of June, following a 2-year miss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Vassallo Group hosted its 7th Edition of this grand event at The University of Malta.

134 employees from CareMalta and HILA Homes received their service award in recognition of their loyalty and dedication towards the CareMalta Group over the past years. The 5-year service awards were presented in each and every CareMalta facility and HILA's homes, by Vassallo Group Chairperson, Ms. Natalie Briffa Farrugia, Vassallo Group Chief Executive, Mr. Pio Vassallo, Mr. James Sciriha,

Chief Executive of CareMalta Group and Mr. Lee Xuereb, Chief People Officer at Vassallo Group.

The 10-year, 15-year, 20 years, and 25 years of service awards were presented during the Shine Awards event.

During his speech, Mr. Pio Vassallo, Group CEO, stated how the group strongly believes that its employees are its greatest asset and this event revolves solely around the employee, rewarding those who excel in their role in some way or another.

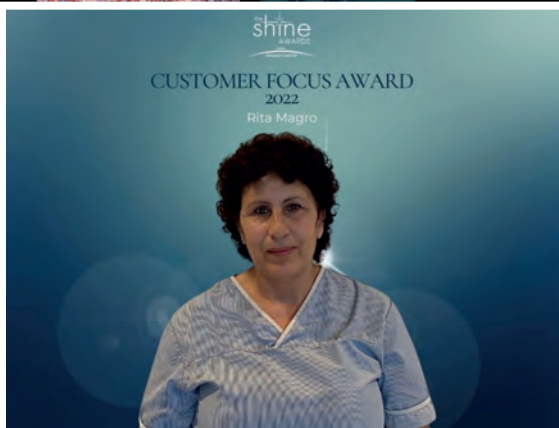
Natalie Briffa Farrugia, Group Chairperson closed off the night with a speech, sharing her appreciation towards the group's





employees, quoting that "Appreciation is an increase on the value of an asset over time, 1.590 years of increasing value".

Ms. Briffa Farrugia concluded, "I feel humbled and honoured to be the new Chairperson of this group and we cannot let this Shine Award Ceremony go by without giving due recognition, to the brightest light amongst us all, he, who has been through decades of dedicated hard work, who turned a social problem into an entrepreneurial social venture, a legacy in all the corners of this island and more, the founder of Vassallo Group, Mr. Nazzareno Vassallo". A special award 'The Founder's Award' was presented to him on this special occasion marking the group's 76th Anniversary. ●







JANUARY 2022

CareMalta Group sponsoring the Dean's Awards for the academic year 2018/2019

The event was transmitted live on the Facebook page of the Faculty of Health Sciences within the University of Malta. The event was addressed by the Dean of the Faculty of

Health Sciences, Dr. Roberta Sammut, and the Deputy Dean, Dr. Stephen Lungaro Mifsud, followed by the presentation of awards to students.



FEBRUARY 2022

New top-level appointments at CareMalta

James Scirha was appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of CareMalta replacing Natalie Briffa Farrugia, who replaced Nazzareno Vassallo as Vassallo Group Chairperson, and Noel Borg was appointed as Chief Operating Officer. As part of the company's efforts to strengthen the company at the board level, Vassallo Group director and shareholder Dr. Charlene Vella Vassallo has been appointed director of the company with a focus on business development.



MARCH 2022

Library launched at the Żejtun Home

During the launch, residents enjoyed a reading session by the lovely Dianne Giordmaina, a representative of Malta Libraries. This was the 3rd library launched in care homes managed by CareMalta. The first library was launched in 2016 at the Mellieħa Home and another one was inaugurated last year at Villa Messina.



MARCH 2022

Final goodbye to well-loved poet and theatre director Mario Azzopardi

During the month of March CareMalta was mourning the loss of one of Casa Arkati residents, Mario Azzopardi, one of Malta's leading poets, theatre director, and educator, who passed away at the age of 77. Azzopardi was at the forefront of reshaping Maltese literature. Mr. Robert Grech, Facility Manager at Casa Arkati, had described Mario Azzopardi as 'pensieroso', a writer who was always reflecting and a deep thinker.



MARCH 2022

CaterEssence and CareMalta supporting families fleeing war-torn Ukraine

Vassallo Group companies, CaterEssence and CareMalta collaborated with another subsidiary of the group, Vassallo Builders, to provide Ukrainian families, arriving in Malta, with mattresses, bedsheets, pillows, and blankets. The aim was to help furnish offices at Bighi, Kalkara, which were

converted into dormitories to accommodate ten Ukrainian families. Together, CaterEssence and CareMalta donated a total of 30 mattresses, 30 pillows, 60-bed sheets, and 30 blankets and were delivered to the dormitories by Vassallo Builders personnel.

APRIL 2022

Vassallo Group and CareMalta's CEOs complete the Vassallo Group Century Ride to promote development and peace

To mark the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, IDSDP, celebrated on the 6th of April 2022, Vassallo Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Pio Vassallo, and CareMalta's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. James Sciriha, cycled to all 12 care homes and facilities, managed by CareMalta, in one race as a symbol of unity. The Vassallo Group Chairperson, Ms. Natalie Briffa Farrugia had also participated in this event covering part of the 100km distance along with two of the Group Directors Charlo Bonnici and Neville Calleja who have participated in this cycle/run event.

APRIL 2022

Thank you Mr. Robert Von Brockdorff

Appreciation lunch to celebrate Mr. Robert Von Brockdorff's loyal directorship. For 30 years, Mr. Von Brockdorff had shown dedication, integrity, and honesty towards CareMalta.



APRIL 2022

CareMalta residents welcoming Pope Francis during the Holy Mass

CareMalta residents were amongst the 20,000 people who attended the Holy Mass at the Granaries in Floriana, the highlight of the Pope's two-day visit to Malta in April.

The residents had this golden opportunity to see Pope Francis, while he gave his blessings and sent messages of hope, love, courage, and care for all people.

Residents at CareMalta had been longing for the Pope's visit and since throughout the CareMalta Group, there is a true passion to deliver the best for the residents, the Facility Managers from various CareMalta homes made sure to bring joy to their residents by attending the Holy Mass.

MAY 2022

The first 100 days of our CEO

From life lessons, the biggest challenges, and why he joined the CareMalta Group. Our Chief Executive, James Sciriha explained, in a short interview, how the first 100 days were highly focused on new opportunities, challenges, and new initiatives. James was appointed as CEO in February 2022, replacing Natalie Briffa Farrugia, who replaced her father, Nazzareno Vassallo as Vassallo Group Malta Chairperson.



MAY 2022

The need for a more inclusive society to abolish the stigma

To raise more awareness about Mental Health, HILA, Home to Independence and Limitless Abilities, organised a walk in Valletta, on Monday 16th May, starting from the Triton Fountain to St. George's Square. With this initiative, HILA created an opportunity for the community to come together and raise awareness.

Participating in this event were staff members and clients from Casal Nuovo, in Paola and Casa Apap Bologna, in Mosta, both are facilities managed by HILA along with Dar Bjorn in Qormi. Residents from CareMalta facilities, Casa San Paolo and Casa Marija, have also participated in this event together with the Chairperson of Vassallo Group, Natalie Briffa Farrugia, and the Chief Executive of CareMalta, James Sciriha.



MAY 2022

You are our champions!

CareMalta Group together with HILA, organised a Get-Together Event for Special Olympics Athletes who reside at CareMalta and HILA Homes.

This year Malta hosted The Special Olympics Invitational Games and Vassallo Group Malta, together with HILA were the gold sponsors of the first international Special Olympics event in Europe since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MAY 2022

Minister Jo Etienne Abela visiting Zammit Clapp Home

The Minister for the Elderly and Active Ageing, Jo Etienne Abela, visited Zammit Clapp Home which is one of the facilities managed by CareMalta

He was welcomed by the Chairperson of Vassallo Group Malta, Ms. Natalie Briffa Farrugia, CareMalta Group CEO, Mr. James Sciriha, CareMalta's COO, Mr. Noel Borg, and the facility manager, Mr. Pierre Jacobs. Minister Abela had the opportunity to meet with the staff but most of all to meet with all the residents.

During the same visit, a new CCTV system was unveiled by the Minister. The new security cameras were installed outside the premises and inside the home in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

JUNE 2022

The portrayal of the beauty of Maltese Literature at Casa Arkati

A Maltese Literature Night aimed at promoting literature and reading amongst older generations was organised at Casa Arkati.

The literary event featured reading excerpts from various Maltese authors, namely, Anton Buttigieg, Mario Azzopardi, Oliver Friggieri, Ġuże' Ellul Mercer, Professor Victor Mallia Milanes, and Pierre J. Mejlak.

The event was organised in collaboration with Malta Libraries, Venus Harp Trio, and Stephanie Cilia who was the presenter for the evening.



JUNE 2022

Thank you for your hard work and dedication

Mr. Nazzareno Vassallo visited Casa Arkati, Casa San Paolo, and Roseville, facilities managed by CareMalta, which celebrated their anniversary in June.

JUNE 2022

Casal Nuovo's 1st Anniversary

It was an important day for HILA Homes as the 1st Anniversary of Casal Nuovo was celebrated. During the event, HILA Homes CEO, Janet Silvio explained that the significance of this anniversary was to remove barriers that have been built in the past by society and abolish the stigma there is about mental health.



JUNE 2022

Uejja!

A wonderful experience for CareMalta residents participating during UEJJA. Residents from Casa Arkati, Villa Messina and Żejtun Home participated during this TV Quiz show presented by Angie Laus and produced by Jürgen Manicolo.



JUNE 2022

CareMalta's symposium

The role of the elderly in our society, society's responsibility towards them, and the need for more care and involvement coming from their families have been subjects discussed during a symposium, Faces of Ageing: Lived Experiences of the Older Person, organised by CareMalta.

Stakeholders in the elderly care and active ageing sector attended the symposium, as well as the Minister for the Elderly and Active Ageing, Jo Etienne Abela, the Shadow Minister for the Elderly, Paula Mifsud Bonnici, together with Vassallo Group's Chairperson, Natalie Briffa Farrugia, Vassallo Group's Chief Executive, Pio Vassallo, and CareMalta's Chief Executive, James Sciriha.

This symposium is an annual event organised by CareMalta Group. Through these events, CareMalta manages to introduce discussions to profound questions and concepts about the elderly care sector.

JUNE 2022

Celebrating one of Malta's oldest feasts, l-Imnarja, at Żejtun Home

The feast of St. Peter and St. Paul on the 29th of June marks an important event in CareMalta's calendar. On this day, all facilities organise events and prepare traditional Maltese food for the residents to recreate the festive atmosphere of l-Imnarja, a feast that dates back to before the arrival of the Knights of St. John in 1530. This year at Żejtun home, an event featuring anything that is related to Imnarja festivities was organised and it was an immense success!



JULY 2022

Members of CareMalta's SMT attend KU Leuven's Ethics in Dementia Care course

The 8th edition of the Ethics in Dementia Care course organised by the Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Law, Faculty of Medicine, KU, co-ordinated by Prof. Chris Gastmans from KU, Leuven, to which CareMalta Group Chief Operating Officer, Noel Borg, attended together with Maria Xuereb, CareMalta Group Nursing Manager.



JULY 2022

Festa Rhula at Casa San Paolo

It was a great night with an amazing atmosphere at Casa San Paolo during Festa Rhula. The event was organised in collaboration with Nicolo' Isouard Band Club, Mosta. Festa Rhula is an annual event that brings so many memories to the residents, of the traditional Maltese "festa" that each and every locality celebrates in Malta and Gozo, during summer.



We believe in **CHOICE**

We nurture **DIGNITY**

We ensure **SAFETY**

We support **DEVELOPMENT**

We promote **EQUALITY**

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