



CareNet

AUGUST 2023

Meaning in care

SENIOR CARE AND
SERVICES



Care Malta
GROUP



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COMPASSION • ENGAGEMENT • PROFESSIONALISM

Celebrating 30 Years of Elderly Care: A Legacy of Excellence

Welcome to this year's edition of CareNet magazine, a special edition as this year CareMalta Group is marking its 30 years since its inception. In this year's edition, we explore subjects that touch the lives of our residents, their relatives, and CareMalta Group's biggest asset – our employees.

As CareMalta Group celebrates its 30 years of dedicated service in the elderly care sector, we reflect on the lives of our residents and staff and the unwavering commitment the Group has made to enrich the lives of the persons under its care.

In this year's magazine, we will look back on the journey of CareMalta Group – thirty years during which the company witnessed profound transformations in the field of elderly care but also in other areas of social and specialized care – through HILA Homes.

Through in-depth interviews, expert opinions, and compelling stories, the reader gets to 'meet' some of our residents, their relatives, and our employees who have been working with the company for many years. I would like to give a special mention to Dorothy Inguanez, who has been working with the company for 30 years – three decades of dedication, commitment, and excellence.

We will also explore the importance of intergenerational connections, advancements in technologies, the role of compassionate caregivers, and the significance of inclusive communities.

The Group's Chief Executive, James Sciriha, describes 2023 for CareMalta Group as a celebration of the person, the resident, the client, the relatives, and last but not least the person delivering the Care, our employees. The Group's team of dedicated professionals, compassionate caregivers, healthcare providers, and support staff, are the reason behind the company's success. Tireless efforts, boundless empathy, and dedication have made CareMalta Group a beacon of hope and compassion for many families.

The aim of this publication, which is published annually in August, is to inspire, educate, and empower its readers to envision a future where older persons can age gracefully regardless of physical or cognitive limitations.

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

Amy



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30 years as Leaders in Care

CareMalta's values are non-negotiable

As he watched the birth of his uncle's venture into the care sector in 1993 as an eight-year-old boy, **James Sciriha** never dreamt that one day – 30 years later – he would be at the helm of CareMalta Group as its CEO.

"I remember Casa Arkati opening 30 years ago when residential homes for the elderly were a bit taboo and considered by many as a last resort," he starts off.

Over the years, people warmed up to the idea so much that nowadays, some include residential homes in their retirement plans.

"Life has changed a lot since 1993. As a family, we always prioritised a person's dignity and individuality – no matter their age. I recall a time when my grandfather Pio Vassallo could no longer live on his own, and his children – including my mother – would take it in turns to care for him.

"Nowadays, not many afford the time to care for their elderly parents. Living in a nursing home has also become more financially accessible, and the government's subsidies help."

Increased demand has led to increased supply in the sector, although CareMalta, which operates nine facilities for the elderly across the island, remains the strongest service provider.

Sciriha admits that despite being healthy, competition has also brought about lower financial margins, meaning the values that set CareMalta apart become even more important.

"The values that lead the company are non-negotiable. Our priorities are the resident and the employee, which means dignity, quality, security, well-being and development lead our every decision.

"If one is undecided between a financial/business decision that might negatively impact residents' well-being, they are expected to decide in favour of the resident. While business has its dips and recoveries,

the repercussions of something that negatively impacts the resident are irreversible."

Sciriha, who joined the company 13 years ago as financial controller and took on the role of CEO in 2022, believes Vassallo Group has always deemed CareMalta to be its social conscience.

Casa Arkati, Sciriha recalls, was initially a loss-making initiative and had the Group's intention for the company been purely business oriented, it would have been turned into something else.


"The ultimate aim was never to make X amount of money, but rather to provide vulnerable people with a safe place to live in, and give them a dignified service. CareMalta grew as it always reinvested its profit to be better able to provide a service to the vulnerable.



“

We will be embarking on a technological revolution in our homes to fully digitise our administrative procedures, allowing increased human contact





Care Malta Group



“We’re always on the lookout for a way of improving the life of vulnerable people. This is why CareMalta could branch out into the sectors of disability, mental well-being, children and neurological conditions.”

Over the past three decades, the elderly care sector changed exponentially. The biggest development was a shift from residential homes with minimal nursing intervention to nursing homes with 24/7 medical care.

“Our elderly live longer and consequently face more comorbidities. As a sector, we’re moving towards a hospital setting with general practitioners on standby, while end-of-life care has also become much more important.”

Over the next 10 years the sector in Malta will become more specialised with a special focus on dementia, among others. Demand for nursing and care will also increase substantially as is already happening in advanced countries such as the UK, Sciriha explained.

“As a company we will be embarking on a technological revolution in our homes to fully digitise our administrative procedures, allowing us increased human contact.

“So, for example, if admission is processed digitally, instead of spending 30 minutes manually processing the resident’s details, the employee can spend this time listening to, or accompanying the resident. Similarly, the time spent on handovers between shifts can also be cut down so that carers spend more time with residents.”

This technological revolution comes at a time when the admission of so-called baby boomers at the homes is on the increase.

This cohort of people have themselves experienced a technological revolution throughout their years and have led a completely different life from the generation before them.

Apart from being the first company – within the care sector – to digitise all of its processes and procedures this year, CareMalta is hoping to mark its 30th anniversary with the opening of Dar San Ġużepp in Għajnsielem by next year.

Eventually, the plan is to see CareMalta branch out overseas by opening a facility in a fellow European country, a move that will see the company remain a trailblazer in the sector. •

A professional acrobat

Natalie Briffa Farrugia helped evolve CareMalta from an elite care service to one accessible to all. Now, as chairperson of Vassallo Group, she continues to tread the fine line between business and care practices to keep going from strength to strength.

It is impossible to speak to Natalie Briffa Farrugia about business without referring to her sporting endeavours and her philanthropic work with the missions in Africa. For Natalie, the lessons learnt among the poorest of the poor and the struggle faced while swimming among jellyfish in aid of charity are metaphors for the ongoing challenges of life, especially those endured by people with disability or mental health issues.

"This is my purpose in life," she begins. Barely 48 hours earlier she had been completing another gruelling sporting event in aid of twin brothers, Len and Jacob, who were diagnosed with Zellweger Syndrome.

"Disability is a very harsh reality, and it just gets harder. You don't choose disability. You have to face it. The physical aspect of the sporting challenge is a great representation of what happens in these boys' journey, in their world. This was my way of showing solidarity with the parents."



“

The real success is
hearing the need before
people see it, and
catering for that

And after just one day of rest, she was back pounding the tarmac to train for the next sporting challenge. “This is the reality of disability. It doesn’t stop. You go from one challenge to another. If it isn’t going to stop, you make friends with it. You convert it into something significant.”

Earlier this year Natalie spent some time volunteering with the Living Waters mission in Ethiopia, a charity organisation she has been committed to since 1998.

“I went to visit a young man in prison who had killed someone because of an undiagnosed mental health issue. This meeting reinforced my belief in doing more for mental health.”

All this brings Natalie back to her “single purpose in life” where her sport and business ethos reflect and affect each other.

“Care, disability, mental health... they will never give you a rest. You’re struggling and striving all the time so you may as well keep going all the time,” she says, adding that, just like in sports, what matters is striking the right balance to achieve long-term consistency.

CareMalta was what brought Natalie back home from her travels with the missions and over the years it became her “home”.

“All I wanted to do as a person and the difference I wanted to bring about in the world, CareMalta gave me the opportunity to do it. And from a business perspective it was a great success.”

During her tenure as CareMalta CEO she, together with her team as she insists on adding, transformed it from an elite care service provider to an accessible one.

“I maximised the potential of the private-public-partnership which had been introduced by our director Richard Clough. My belief is that quality of care is not only for those who can pay for it; it is a basic fundamental right.”

She likened herself to a tightrope walker, “a professional acrobat” who has to tread a very fine line between business and care practices. “They are two different and very sensitive things. Unless you have all the

right components you won’t manage to bring that right perspective. CareMalta was the platform that gave me all this: my priority was care. I didn’t come with a business perspective.”

Natalie learnt her greatest lesson about priorities at the door of a “dying” home run by the sisters of Mother Teresa where they had to assess who had the greatest need for the few beds available.

As chairperson she is conscious of the significance of her role, not just as heir to her father’s legacy, together with her siblings, but as the caretaker for future generations.

“You can never stop dreaming... The real success is hearing the need before people see it, and catering for that.”

“We have a 10-year vision which, from a business perspective doesn’t make sense but from the human side allows us to forecast what is going to happen. This is our greatest strength. We have the backbone of society in mind. We are not just providing a service.”

The “private company with a public conscience” motto as spelt out by her father is still valid today. “You have to have a greater purpose. You can’t just do it for the profit margin. Today we cannot live without public conscience.”

The greatest challenge the company is facing is rising costs, which is why digitalisation is one of the top priorities. “We are embracing change all the time. We are confident we will find a way to mitigate these rising costs.”

And overriding all this is a sense of authenticity in every aspect of the business.

“If you had to summarise us in one word it would be ‘authentic’. That is what CareMalta is about. I am obsessed with *I-intenzjoni retta*. The people who will make it are the authentic ones.” •



Exporting CareMalta's model

Thirty years ago he spent his summer holidays helping to build Casa Arkati, now Vassallo Group CEO Pío Vassallo is looking ahead to CareMalta's expansion beyond Malta's shores.

It's the eve of the Shine Awards and Pío Vassallo is preparing to celebrate Dorothy Inguanez who has been working at CareMalta since its inception.

"I still remember her coming in to work on the first day," he says.

Over the past three decades not only has Pío witnessed the development and growth of CareMalta but he has, quite literally, helped build it from the ground up alongside his father and the rest of the Vassallo Group team.

"I have very vivid memories as a child when my father first bought the land, which we used to call *il-hofra* in the middle of Mosta. I used to spend my summer holidays on site helping with the construction of Casa Arkati."

Fast forward 30 years and CareMalta has become the byword for private care for the elderly in Malta and soon to be Gozo and beyond with plans for expansion overseas.

"It was very challenging and innovative at the time," reminisces Pío. "Since then, CareMalta has developed a lot and has helped us achieve our Group mission to leave a positive impact on society and on the economy by creating jobs within the





communities, and enabling locals, especially women, to work in their own village.”

In the next 10 years, the Group is planning to take its CareMalta expertise abroad and is seeking to manage care homes “in a mature market” possibly Cyprus or the UK.

“We need to build a strategy for that and we need to make sure we have a solid team that helps us in the growth process,” adds Pio.

But CareMalta’s core values will always remain the same. “The resident is at the heart of everything we do. The biggest satisfaction is when we meet relatives of elderly residents and they tell us how grateful they are for the care their parents are receiving at one of our homes.”

This philosophy of keeping the resident at the heart of the company was the reason why CareMalta had launched the ICare training programme five years ago, as part of its endeavour to maintain excellence in the level and quality of service.

One of the biggest challenges was teaching the language of care to foreign employees who first had to learn English or Maltese. “Through ICare they understand the importance of delivering the right message and how to communicate with residents.”

While setting up CareMalta was a challenge in itself, the biggest test to the Group by far was

the Covid pandemic. Pio recalled how he and his sister Natalie, then CEO of CareMalta, had visited all the homes just before they were locked down and sat down with the staff who were getting ready to live at the facilities.

“It felt like preparing to go on Noah’s Ark. That was the biggest challenge of the past 30 years and thankfully I think we managed to sail through that voyage without much damage.”

This was the first year Pio and his siblings did not have their father present at board meetings. And yes, he is missed.

“He had his own style and we’re adopting a similar style but maybe with our own signature. We do consult him outside the boardroom. It’s always nice to ask him for advice because he has a lot of experience. My father was a genius. I hope that together us five [siblings] can perhaps make another genius.”

A sportsman and a team player at heart, Pio believes in unity, teamwork and empowering staff to achieve their maximum potential by focusing on their strengths. He describes himself as a “servant leader”.

“Sometimes the best leaders don’t need to be at the front but at the back making sure the team is working hand in hand. Unity is the key to anything. The success of the Group will depend on the unity of the five siblings and working together towards a common goal.” •

“
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A man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit and a patterned tie, stands with his arms crossed on a grand staircase. The staircase has ornate black metal railings with gold-colored handrails. In the background, there are two white busts on pedestals, two large chandeliers, and a doorway with blue curtains.

Making a difference in people's lives

"I've never climbed a real mountain but the CareMalta mountain was a steep one to overcome." Thirty years on, Vassallo Group founder **Nazzareno Vassallo** reflects on the journey that shaped Malta's care industry.



It was unthinkable and he was called “mad” for proposing it, but Nazzareno Vassallo had a vision which was ahead of its time and he was determined to see it materialise.

Thirty years ago, there was no such thing as a private care “industry” in Malta. However, years before the first private home for the elderly opened its doors, Zaren Vassallo, as he is fondly known, was already sowing the seeds of this concept by channelling Vassallo Builders’ ethos as a “private company with a public conscience”.

“At the time, we had this property in an area in Mosta known as *fuoq l-arkata* and this property was too beautiful to be built as flats or a supermarket,” begins Mr Vassallo. That statement alone today would already raise eyebrows and we shall return to it later.

“I wanted to create something that would outlive me, something for the community of Mosta and for the Maltese community in general,” he adds. That beautiful property would become Casa Arkati, Malta’s first purposely designed and privately owned and managed residential home for the elderly.

The company commissioned Malta University Services to conduct market research on what was needed most: whether a private hospital, a private school or a home for the elderly. The study showed unequivocally that what was mostly needed was a home for the elderly.

“No one in the private sector had ever considered this. We had a mountain to climb, a huge hurdle to change the culture of the Maltese to convince them to send their parents to a home run by a private company.”

At the time, Malta lacked the expertise in managing a residence for the elderly so the company had to source experience from abroad. Mr Vassallo reminisced how he and Alex Tranter met Richard Clough at a Birmingham fair who, together with Robert Von Brockdorff, and the other directors who serve on CareMalta’s Board till today, would go on to be so instrumental in the Group’s running for almost 30 years, not to mention becoming his close personal friends.

It was Richard Clough who introduced the concept of public-private-partnerships in the care sector in Malta, and convincing then Health Minister Louis Galea, “who had a vision

“
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far longer than his legislature”, to try it out at CareMalta’s second home in Żejtun.

The PPP was instantly successful. “After three years it resulted that the Żejtun home was 30 per cent more efficient than any other government home in terms of cost, care and everything else.” That was in 1994 and since then all governments that followed always used that same PPP system.

“I am proud that we not only contributed to this sector and raised the bar in terms of standards of operation but also that what we introduced 29 years ago is still functioning successfully today.”

Since then not a year has passed without CareMalta introducing some new service or facility. They were pioneers in introducing specialised care for dementia patients. But above all, CareMalta ensured that every residence felt like “home” where residents lived in dignity, privacy and safety.


“In the beginning, the move is a trauma for everyone but once they get used to it and adapt they benefit from being in the residence. We have evidence that residents in CareMalta homes on average live longer. The fact that they have the right climate-controlled environment – not too hot, not too cold – is enough to extend their lifespan.”

The same care and attention is afforded to the buildings themselves, especially those with important architectural heritage such as Roseville, Villa Messina, Casa Apap Bologna, Casal Nouvo and Santa Rosa, where the old has been restored and sensitively blended with the modern.

“Our priority as a Group is to save what we can, rather than demolish an old building. It hurts to see certain developers demolishing to build modern buildings. It’s true you spend more to restore an old building but you don’t need to kill the life of that property to build new.”

After a year in retirement, Mr Vassallo himself is learning to adapt to a new life rhythm but can look back on 55 years leading the Vassallo Group with satisfaction.

“This journey has been very interesting. I never believed we could get this far. A lot of water has gone under those *arkati*. My biggest satisfaction is that year after year, every Euro profit was re-invested in this sector to add more services and that throughout these 30 years we made a difference in people’s lives.” ●

A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue suit and a red and white striped tie, stands with his arms crossed in front of a stone building with large arches. The building has a warm, yellowish-brown tone. The man is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

Prioritising a 'Resident First' attitude

CareMalta experienced a period of remarkable growth and evolution between 1993 to 2010 during the tenure of then-CEO Alex Tranter. He shares the significant changes, trends, strengths, and recommendations that helped to shape CareMalta during these transformative years.

“ Leading CareMalta for its first 18 years... was a truly remarkable journey

From its inception, with the opening of Malta's first purpose-built home for older persons – Casa Arkati in Mosta, in 1993 – CareMalta revolutionised the concept of modern and beautifully designed care homes.

A year later, a public-private-partnership (PPP) agreement was formed with the government to operate the home for the elderly in Żejtun. Its portfolio continued to grow when in 1996, the management of Villa Messina in Rabat, jointly owned by CareMalta Ltd, Gasan Group, and the Calleja Group, was entrusted to CareMalta.

Another milestone was reached in 1999 when CareMalta took over the management and operation of the government home in Cospicua through a second PPP agreement.

Then, in 2002, CareMalta introduced an innovative financial initiative by launching a corporate public bond worth €8.75 million through its subsidiary, CareMalta Finance plc.

“The funds raised from this bond were used to increase bed capacity and carry out refurbishment projects in various homes. This initiative was oversubscribed, which reflected the confidence institutional investors and the public had in us,” recalls Alex.

CareMalta's commitment to innovation continued in 2005 with the launch of Malta's first independent living facility for older persons, Prince of Wales in Sliema. In 2008, CareMalta won a significant government concession to finance, construct, and manage the new Mellieħa Home, completing the project in a record time of 323 days.

“The last project I oversaw was the acquisition of Villa Roseville in Attard, as well as the design of the new residential block for older persons that was built adjacent to the villa whose art nouveau architecture was restored to its full glory when this new home was completed and opened in 2010,” Alex reminisces.

During the years of Alex's leadership, he says that he observed several significant shifts during his time as CEO:

“Firstly, there was a change in the mindset of the local community regarding the importance of modern purpose-built

care facilities for older persons. There was also the launch of the PPP agreements between the government and the private sector in the field of elderly care, which we pioneered. Most important of all, CareMalta led the way in providing high-quality care that prioritised

individual well-being and respected the dignity of each resident.”

Under Alex's guidance, one crucial strength of CareMalta was the ability to attract high-quality talent, and to invest in continuous development and training of staff.

“The exceptional human capital that was nurtured within the company transformed the delivery of residents' personalised quality care,” he says. “Additionally, CareMalta implemented constant financial monitoring to ensure effective deployment of investment and cost-effective delivery of care.

Through its active participation in organisations such as the International Association for Homes and Services for the Aged (IAHASA) and its European branch EAHSA, CareMalta gained access to valuable networks of care providers which helped inspire innovative concepts.

The election of Alex as Chair of IAHASA for a one-year term in 2008 provided him with the opportunity to showcase internationally what CareMalta was achieving in Malta in the field of elderly care.

As for the future, Alex's recommendation is that CareMalta should maintain a ‘Resident First’ attitude, prioritising individual resident needs while balancing the quality of care with associated costs. Additionally, he says, CareMalta should continue to stay innovative and remain informed about international developments in the sector, while also exploring local and international niche care opportunities.

“Leading CareMalta for its first 18 years, and witnessing and contributing to its growth and success, was a truly remarkable journey. From humble beginnings with two residents and 12 staff members at Casa Arkati, to operating six homes, employing over 500 staff, and caring for over 700 residents when I left in 2010. I have no doubt that CareMalta will continue to thrive, innovate, and lead this important sector,” he concludes. ●







CareMalta Group Company History

Company History Timeline

Thirty years ago, the vision of Nazzareno Vassallo, the Founder of Vassallo Group, to build something with a social purpose, materialized, on the 1st of August 1991, into the first home for the elderly in Mosta, Casa Arkati. Through this home, CareMalta created an innovative model of care and set the standard in this sector.

Today, CareMalta Group has 11 facilities, 3 of which operate through private-public partnerships, and 3 operated by HILA Homes. HILA is CareMaltaGroup's specialized arm, which offers a range of services including residential, respite, and day services with a person-centered approach.

As the company marks its 30th anniversary, CareMalta Group remains focused on being the market leader whilst celebrating the residents, the clients, their relatives, and finally the people delivering Care, our employees.

1993

The opening of Casa Arkati in Mosta - the first privately owned home for the elderly



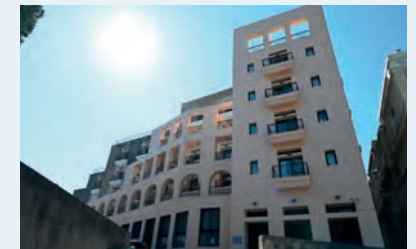
1996

Villa Messina in Rabat was the second private home that opened its doors



1994

The opening of Žejtun Home through the first Public Private Partnership (PPP)



1999

Another Public-Private Partnership at Cospicua Home

2002

Casa Arkati's new extension inaugurated



2003

Žejtun Home Extension inaugurated



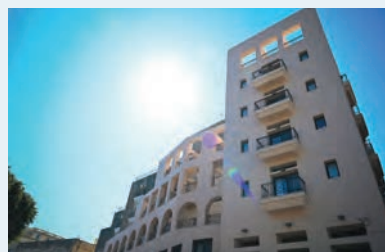
2005

The inauguration of the Prince of Wales in Sliema as an independent lifestyle support for senior citizens



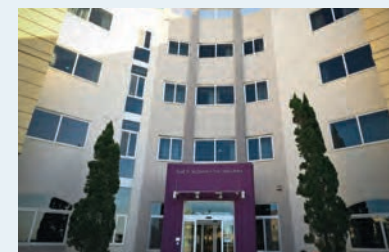
2002

Inauguration of the new extension at Villa Messina



2004

Cospicua Home Extension inaugurated



2008

The Inauguration of Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieha - the third Public Private Partnership

2010

The Inauguration of Roseville in Attard



2014

Casa Arkati undergoes refurbishment



2016

CareMalta diversifies into the disability sector with the inception of HILA and opens Casa Apap Bologna in Mosta offering residential and respite services for adults



2012

Zammit Clapp Home starts its operation under CareMalta management



2015

Official inauguration of another privately owned home – Casa San Paolo



2017

Villa Messina undergoes extensive refurbishment



2017

HILA started a collaboration with ALS Foundation for the running of operations of Dar Bjorn in Qormi



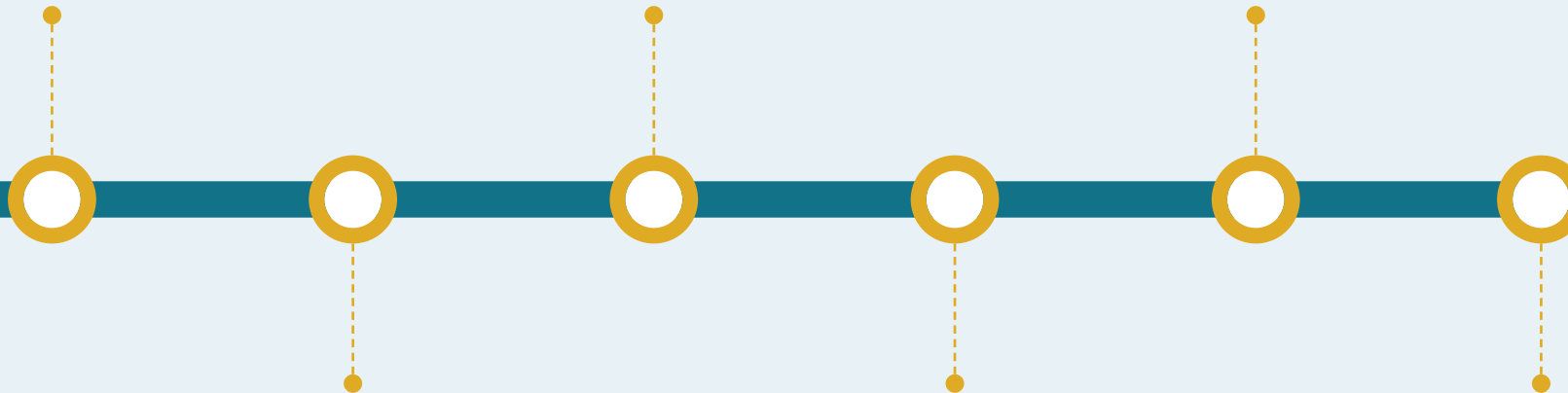
2018

The privately owned home for the elderly, Casa Marija, opens in Sliema



2023

HILA furthers its collaboration with the ALS Foundation through the running of operations of Dar Bjorn in Żebbuġ



2018

The launch of I Care – CareMalta Group's Service Excellence Programme, the language of care



2021

Inauguration of Casal Nuovo, a Community Home in Paola which led to the de-institutionalization of Mount Carmel Hospital clients - a first in our islands



2023

Inauguration of HILA's third home, Santa Rosa, offering residential and respite services for children and adolescents - a further specialisation to what Casa Apap Bologna offers





Choosing CareMalta



“Making new friends and feeling safe gives me peace of mind” – Mary Anastasi

Mary Anastasi, who is 86 years old, joined Żejtun Home recently but nonetheless, she describes her experience with CareMalta so far as being wonderful. Mary lost her husband 11 years ago and despite having four children who give their utmost to take care of her, she recently took the decision to join a facility where she would be taken care of 24/7.

“I enjoy keeping myself busy and participating in events and after I lost my husband, I tried to keep myself even more active to improve my quality of life because it is not easy to live on your own at a certain age especially when your health affects your mobility. That is why, I recently decided to join a care home where I know I will be safe, especially during the night”.

In her interview with CareNet, Mary explained how she never was sceptical about joining a care home because her mother had resided in one so she was well aware of how this decision could be beneficial for her health, both physically and mentally.

“There is always an activity or event taking place at Żejtun Home. For us, especially for someone like me who always likes to go out and participate in initiatives, it gives a great feeling of being part of a community. I made new friends and I never feel alone, and this feeling gives me such peace of mind”.

Intergenerational events, keep-fit sessions for the elderly, bingo events, and knitting are among the activities that Mary likes to attend. “Apart from the activities that are organised on a regular basis, they do make our health a priority not only through the food that is served or if someone suffers from a particular health condition but overall, as they do routine check-ups”.

Mary continued to explain that for her living alone, even though it was her home, at a certain point she realised that she was experiencing difficulties that many seniors face when they live alone. “Luckily, I have 4 wonderful children, I am a grandmother of 7 and a great-grandmother of 3, who all love, adore and care for me. Even though for the past few months I have been living at Żejtun Home, they all find time to visit and go out with me”. Mary chose to mention this because she wanted to convey the message to others who are still doubting about living in a care home, that living in a facility like that of CareMalta, does not mean that you will feel abandoned, but on the contrary, “you will find a new community and you will find a second home”, stated Mary Anastasi. •



Veteran sports journalist Mario Meli finds a new sense of community

His sense of adventure in sports has diminished but he still manages to share his sporting memories with other residents at Casa San Paolo. Mario Meli, who is now 83 years old, joined Casa San Paolo about a year ago.

Mario is an ex-sports broadcaster and journalist, with a sterling career dating back to 1962 when he joined the then Rediffusion, now the Public Broadcasting Services Malta. His sterling career saw him anchoring an array of Sports programmes on television and having the opportunity to interview several international sports personalities. He sat on the committee of several local sports associations and served as an executive member of the Maltese Olympic Committee. His latest initiative was the foundation of the Masters Football Malta established in 2013.

Now retired, also due to health reasons, Mario spends his days surrounded by new friends at Casa San Paolo. "It is hard to leave your family, but I needed specialised care and unfortunately it was getting very hard for my wife to take constant care of me. I must say that the staff is very friendly and most of all dedicated and they helped me find a new sense of community".

Even though Mario has mobility issues, due to his health condition, he still manages to keep himself busy. It is a must for him to watch the news and read the newspapers every day, especially the sports sections. Like in any other CareMalta facility, the residents at Casa San Paolo are given the opportunity to engage in activities and events and Mario is surely one of them, contributing also to the organisation of the events, especially from the logistics side of the event.

Mario's family involvement is vital for his well-being and this aspect is something that CareMalta encourages. The engagement of family members and friends in their loved one's care is crucial to the resident's journey in a facility to enhance their quality of life while fostering a deeper sense of belonging to a family within a community. •

A photograph of Bernardette Briffa, a 71-year-old woman with short grey hair, wearing a grey and black patterned sweater. She is sitting at a wooden table in a library, leaning over an open book with a purple cover. Several other books are stacked on the table in front of her. In the background, there are tall bookshelves filled with books.

When giving meaning to service translates into peace and serenity for the resident

Residing for the past two years at Casa Marija has been a transformative journey for Bernardette Briffa, 71 years, who describes the facility as her new home and her second family. During her interview for this year's CareNet magazine, Bernardette, who is a grandmother of two boys and a girl, describes the mental health challenges she faced throughout her life. The first few months following her admission at Casa Marija, Bernardette recounts how she adapted to living in a facility and while she was still struggling with mental health issues, which in a way restricted her from going out on her own, she gradually made great improvements, to the extent that she can now enjoy the outdoors unsupervised.

Whilst talking to her, one could easily notice that she enjoys reading, so much so that she frequently makes use of the library at Casa Marija. Her favourite genre is romance and loves reading in both Maltese and English. Bernardette also mentions how she loves participating in the many activities the facility organises that promote active ageing. "We are always organising different events. I say we, as I enjoy involving myself and I love helping Anna Curmi, AAF at Casa Maria, who manages to keep us residents happy through her work".

Bernardette has a special bond with Anna, who is the Active Ageing Coordinator at Casa Marija. "She understands me so well and whenever she is working, I try to spend time with her by helping whenever needed. In that way, apart from keeping my mind busy doing something I know that I am helping Anna and when she is not there, I then tend to immerse myself in reading".

Given that Bernardette experienced mental health issues she tends to understand when other residents might be going through a tough time and that is when she reaches out to them by lending an ear. "I know that I am part of a community, and to nourish that community one must look out for each other not only between us the residents but also with the staff as it works both ways; That is why I feel happy, at peace and safe". •

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NOEL BORG
Chief Operating Officer



DR CHARLENE VELLA VASSALLO
CareMalta Director,
Business Development



JANET SILVIO
HILA Homes Chief Executive
Officer



CHRIS GAUCI
Financial Controller



ELISA CAMILLERI
Human Resources Manager



MARIO DEBATTISTA
Senior Manager / Acting Facility
Manager, Zammit Clapp Home

OPERATIONS TEAM



MARIA XUEREB
Nursing Manager



ZVETLANA DEBONO
Nursing Manager



CLAIRE COLDMAN
Services Manager



JAMES BUTTIGIEG
Projects Manager



MICHAEL ZERAFÄ
Maintenance Manager

FACILITY MANAGEMENT TEAM



ANTOINE BORG
Facility Manager



EDEL BORG MIZZI
Facility Manager,
Żejtun Home



ROBERT GRECH
Facility Manager,
Casa Arkati



CARL CARUANA
Facility Manager,
Casa Marija



JOSETTE GRECH
Facility Manager,
Mellieħa Home



ANTHONY CARUANA
Facility Manager,
Villa Messina



STUART CARUANA
Facility Manager,
Casa San Paolo



JOHN SCIBERRAS
Acting Facility Manager,
Roseville



NICOLETTE SANT
Home Manager,
Casa Apap Bologna



RENATA ZAHRA
Home Manager,
Casal Nuovo



LARA GRECH
Home Manager,
Dar Bjorn

CareMalta's journey towards a united workforce

Former CareMalta HR Manager **Lee Xuereb** and newly appointed HR Manager **Elisa Camilleri** shed some light on the journey towards building a culture of diversity and inclusion at CareMalta.

In an increasingly globalised world, organisations are recognising the importance of fostering diversity and inclusion within their employees. CareMalta has taken significant strides in embracing individuals from diverse backgrounds and ensuring their integration into the company's structure.

CareMalta embarked on its path toward diversity by actively recruiting individuals from outside the EU in 2012. As the company's workforce expanded rapidly, the need to attract a diverse range of nationalities became imperative.

Lee Xuereb, who assumed the role of HR Manager in 2015, witnessed this transformation firsthand.

"Before then, we did employ some people from other countries, but they were few and far between," he explains. "With the influx of foreign nationals, a cultural change ensued, requiring education on language, traditions, and even local cuisine. It was a bit of a culture change – even somewhat of a shock – as, for example, staff members were not used to being mindful that they shouldn't speak Maltese when in the company of a group of non-Maltese."

Through patience, understanding, and a positive outlook, CareMalta has successfully integrated individuals from various backgrounds, enriching the company's labour force in the process.

As the newly appointed Group HR Manager, Elisa Camilleri recognises the importance of continuing to enhance diversity and inclusion at CareMalta.

"With the organisation's ongoing growth, recruitment efforts remain diversified, so we are constantly seeking individuals from different countries and cultures. We are happy to do so, as long as everyone shares the same passion and values we have at CareMalta," she says.

“

Inclusiveness
begins with the
little things.





“

Any instances of racial
ignorance require
careful management!

Elisa emphasises the need for continuous awareness-building and training initiatives, as well as events that promote inclusivity.

Moreover, she advocates for increased awareness and support for LGBTIQ+ rights, emphasising the importance of providing a safe environment for everyone.

Transitioning into a new position always comes with its own set of challenges. Elisa anticipates addressing issues such as staff room segregation, where employees tend to group themselves based on nationality.

“Additionally, although they are rare, any instances of racial ignorance or offensive comments, especially from elderly residents unaccustomed to diversity, require careful management,” she says.

To combat these challenges, Elisa stresses the significance of awareness and active intervention.

The responsibility of fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion does not rest solely on the organisation; employees play a vital role in this process.

According to Lee, inclusiveness begins with the little things, such as adopting English as the ‘official’ language at work to ensure everyone can understand and participate fully.

“Switching to English when speaking in mixed groups, and fostering inclusiveness during staff meetings can help create a more cohesive and united work environment,” he states.

He emphasises that CareMalta is committed to providing individuals from different backgrounds with equal opportunities for career development and advancement within the organisation.

Moreover, CareMalta acknowledges the varying financial capacities of its employees and ensures that social activities and events are accessible to all.

One of the initiatives in place is the annual Diversity Day event. Although it has been temporarily paused because of the pandemic, plans are under way to reintroduce this event by the end of the year.

“Diversity Day provides a platform for employees of various nationalities to showcase their cultural heritage through food, dance, crafts, and other activities,” Lee explains.

Furthermore, individual facilities within CareMalta also organise smaller-scale versions of the event for the residents, fostering a sense of inclusivity and celebrating diversity at every level. •

My 30 years with CareMalta Group have been a dream

DOROTHY INGUANEZ

Facility Administrative Assistant, Dar Bjorn

I have been working with CareMalta since it opened its doors in 1993 and have always felt happy working with the company. Every morning I have always looked forward to going to work because I know I will find another family at the place of work. I am not saying this just because of this article but it really is something that kept me working with CareMalta Group for all this time.

I am now a Facility Administrative Assistant at Dar Bjorn in Qormi but attaining this post meant that I went through my stages of growth and development within the company. I started as a laundry assistant and then worked as a housekeeper at Casa Arkati.

Working with CareMalta gave me a great sense of satisfaction. Many memories were created which I cherish to this day. I like to talk and listen to our residents especially when residents share life experiences because during this communication, I show them the attention that they need at that moment in time. I was also given the opportunity to follow a programme of studies specifically focused on disability and this programme opened a great opportunity for me to work at Dar Bjorn under the management of HILA Homes.

The opportunity to work with HILA brought new challenges, especially in terms of administrative responsibility but thanks to the support I received both from the management and my colleagues I managed to face these new challenges.

During the time spent working in an elderly care home with CareMalta and now that I work with HILA I make it a priority to remain in contact with the residents, and our clients. This gives me the chance to build a relationship with them to get to know them better and in turn, this improves my ability to work more effectively.

I do feel blessed that I work for a company that apart from offering the best service for care, its main aim is to see its employees grow. If I had to go back in time, I would still make the decision to work with CareMalta Group as I feel that there is a certain loyalty that works both ways – a quality that nowadays is hard to find, build and nourish. •



A company that truly values its employees

NICOLETTE SANT

Home Manager, Casa Apap Bologna

Being valued and emotional well-being is extremely important for CareMalta Group, something that I have experienced over many years. Providing care to others can be emotionally challenging and it's important to ensure that we are taking care of our own emotional well-being to be able to provide the best possible service to our clients.

I have been appointed as Home Manager at Casa Apap Bologna in 2022 after 26 years working with CareMalta. I must admit that the change between managing an elderly home and managing a home for persons with disabilities is significant. Whilst both roles involve caring for people, they have different requirements and challenges, but I view this change as an opportunity for greater learning, greater exposure to different social situations, and the opportunity to witness and have a direct effect on the learning and development of our clients.

I started my journey with the Group in 1997. I always had an interest in working in the care sector and my experience as a student at Casa Arkati motivated me to start working as a part-time care assistant. After 2 years, the Group felt the need to create a new tier- that of Senior Care Assistants. I was among the first 4 SCAs within the Group. A couple of years later, a new role was put together, that of Care Ambassador where I was to ensure that the carers got adequate training.

With the opening of a new elderly facility in 2011, came the new role of Lead Carer, once again a post I was the first to hold. In 2015 I joined the team at Villa Messina as their Assistant Facility Manager followed by the promotion to Facility Manager during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the years I had the opportunity to be part of many individuals' lives, but one can't omit the difficult time the Covid-19 pandemic made us go through. For their own safety, our residents were unable to see their relatives, and staff members chose to leave their families to ensure a safe environment for all. Ensuring that we were providing not only a safe environment but also a pleasurable one to our residents during such time is surely not easy but seeing the smiles on people's faces, and the joy in their eyes gave us the push to continue and make this huge sacrifice worth it.

Today, as a home manager for HILA's Casa Apap Bologna, I face new challenges that will help me grow further within the CareMalta Group. We strive to ensure that all our homes really offer the joy, safety, and comfort of a natural home. This not only provides a wonderful environment for our clients and residents but also a fantastic working environment for the team. •



CareMalta Group gives me a sense of belonging

EDEL BORG MIZZI

Facility Manager, Żejtun Home

I have been employed with CareMalta since 2003 and after 20 years, the company, its values, and vision, still give me a sense of belonging, something that keeps me motivated to learn and do more within the company. Back then, I had decided to work with CareMalta because it posed a great opportunity at the right place and at the right time.

After 7 years, as Care Assistant at Casa Arkati, I had a 2-year experience as a Senior Care Assistant at Roseville residence, and later as a Lead Care Assistant at both Roseville and Żejtun Home, where I was responsible for the care department. During the same period, I was engaged as a Training and Development officer for another year. Following this experience, I was appointed again as a Lead Care Assistant at Żejtun Home.

In October 2020, I started my journey as Assistant Facility Manager at the Żejtun Home and in July 2021 joined Casa Arkati as an Assistant Facility Manager. It was then in May 2022 that I was appointed as Facility Manager at Żejtun Home.

Like many of my colleagues, the live-in that we were part of due to the Covid-19 pandemic will forever remain my favourite memory of CareMalta. It was a time that put our values at the centre of everything: Quality, Safety, Integrity, Development, and Dignity. Nonetheless, the challenges that



were faced due to the coronavirus pandemic were the biggest challenge I have ever encountered during my career because there was the fear of the unknown but knowing that all was done to safeguard our residents' health, I feel proud to have been part of it.

CareMalta Group has also offered me the opportunity to further my studies, in fact, I have read several courses offered by CareMalta, and others through different institutions and recently I finished my studies at the University of Malta, within the Faculty of Social Wellbeing in Geriatrics and Gerontology. This proves how the company believes in training as being crucial for its employees to progress in their careers whilst obtaining experience on the job.

Working in the care sector is not easy, one needs to be patient, sensitive, and dedicated but if you put the resident at the core of everything then things will fall right in their place. Not to mention the constant sense of achievement knowing that what you do will leave the resident's dignity intact.

Some might argue that working for a company for a very long time is not healthy but with CareMalta Group, it is never the case because it gives its employees room for growth, and you feel challenged to always do better. Ultimately, I know that by working with CareMalta Group, I am part of a family, that provides quality service, with a vision in mind and is a leader in care. •

A pioneering leader in care

JAMES BUTTIGIEG

Projects Manager, CareMalta Group

In its first years CareMalta was known as the pioneer in elderly care and over the past 25 years it became a leader in the sector. This was achieved through good planning, well-taken decisions, and a strong team of employees.

I started my career with CareMalta back in 1997 as a maintenance technician at Villa Messina. After a few years, I was given the opportunity to take care of and coordinate the maintenance operations in the facilities managed by CareMalta. In 2018, I was appointed as Projects Manager and formed part of the Operations team, taking care of the projects and refurbishments in all CareMalta's facilities and HILA's Homes.

Over the years I viewed the company as a family that gave me the opportunity to grow and strengthen my potential. With every project that was concluded, I feel a great sense of satisfaction and that all the hard work will serve as reassurance and peace of mind for many residents in need of our care services.

I still remember my first day working with CareMalta, at Villa Messina, which had been in operation for just one year. I was being given handover on the plant and equipment since I was stepping into the new job of maintenance technician. I think that throughout my career with the company, which stretches for the past 26 years, the biggest challenge I faced was the full refurbishment project at Villa Messina. I remember that nearing the end of the project, I was given the responsibility to get all pending and backlogged works back on track to conclude in time. It was tough but we managed, and the project was concluded in time and the residents returned to their care home as planned.

HILA'S Casal Nuovo project, which took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, also proved to be a very challenging one. Finishing the work in time whilst following the pandemic precautionary measures to safeguard all involved, was not easy but having the project terminated and seeing the premises being used by HILA's clients was such a rewarding moment.

Knowing that I have been working with a company that is helping the elderly and those in need in their retirement age gives me great satisfaction and I believe that those who will join our team in the future, once they settle into their job, will too feel the satisfaction through the services and care given by them to our residents and clients, as we are one big family. •



A family-oriented business that cares about the whole person

MICHAEL ZERAFA

Head of Maintenance, CareMalta Group

Working with the elderly gives me a better understanding of life, and I consider my personal growth as one of my main achievements in working with CareMalta Group.

I recall my first day working with CareMalta, it was the 28th of June 1999. I was toured around Villa Messina by James Buttigieg, who was the technician in charge of the facility.

Throughout my journey with the Group over the years, there are two main projects I worked on which offered me new opportunities. In 2005 construction on the new facility of Price of Wales was underway and halfway through the project I was stationed there to take training from a foreign company that was installing the telephone and nurse call systems. I was later tasked with the maintenance and upkeep of these systems. From around that time on I was also the one carrying out the preventative maintenance in all the facilities.

In 2007 work was underway on the first PPP project of its kind, Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieha home. Toward the end of the project, I was assigned to assist and oversee the finishings and installations. Shortly after the opening in March of 2008, the then CEO of Care Malta, Ing. Alex Tranter offered me the position of Head of Maintenance at Mellieha home. This was my first official supervisory/management role.

In 2021, I started a new chapter in my career, as the CareMalta Group senior management offered me the opportunity to be the Maintenance Manager of the Group.

To sum up my 24 years of working with CareMalta Group, I am more than proud to have contributed with my work in building better the maintenance department, setting out a better preventative maintenance plan, improving the documentation, and setting procedures. But above all, I treasure the reactions of the residents. They have shown their gratitude in so many ways that it is hard for me to describe. They thank me for solving problems and assisting them and these short moments do give me a sense of satisfaction in what I do. •



Always one step ahead

ANTOINE BORG

Facility Manager

The 22nd of September 2009 was my first day working with CareMalta. I worked within the Kitchen department at Mellieha Home. After a while, I joined the Front Office team within the same facility where I focused my duties on the needs of the residents and their relatives. Over the years I also served as a Facility Administrative Assistant at Casa Marija and upon completion of my Diploma in Leadership and Management, I was appointed as an Assistant Facility Manager and subsequently appointed as Facility Manager at Cospicua Home.

But why did I choose to work with CareMalta Group? I got to know about the company from a friend of mine who encouraged me to apply. I remember how 14- years ago, I did not have a driving license, and I used to catch the bus, from Birkirkara to Mellieha. To be completely honest I never thought I would ever work in the elderly care sector, but nowadays I do not imagine myself doing anything else.

I consider my journey with the company as quite a colourful one, filled with beautiful memories and opportunities but one of my favourite memories is when I was given the opportunity to form part of the Management Team when Casa Marija opened its doors. During that time, I encountered different experiences and when I look back, I feel proud of what was achieved.

For me having a group of people synchronised and working together, towards one goal, to ensure a good quality of life for our residents is what makes me feel proud to be part of this team. CareMalta Group also invests in people development and gives out opportunities, on several occasions. I am currently sitting for Higher Diploma in Geriatrics and Gerontology at the University of Malta and form part of the CareMalta Group Active Ageing Committee.

Unfortunately, the biggest challenge I have encountered during my career was the coronavirus pandemic. Though it was our duty to ensure the safety of our residents, it was not an easy decision to take and leave family members and loved ones, and literally start living at the place of work for 11 weeks but it was the best decision to safeguard our residents.

After 30 years of care, I believe that CareMalta Group is always a step ahead in the sector. 30 years ago, what we offer today, was something relatively new on the island and nowadays it is the norm. As the saying goes "History repeats itself", and CareMalta is repeating history through the introduction of Hila, which is giving care and support to persons with disability through innovative services that are offered. •



Each day I look at CareMalta Group with pride

CARL CARUANA

Facility Manager, Casa Marija

In January 2012, I joined Casa Arkati to take over from Noel Borg, who was the Facility Manager at the time and was about to move on and launch Zammit Clapp Residential Home. Today Noel is the COO of CareMalta Group. I remember I was full of enthusiasm, as I always am, and was convinced of putting my fear of the unknown aside and using my energy and positivity to learn this new task and to hopefully make people's lives better. This not only materialised but each day makes me feel proud of what we achieve and look at the company with pride.

After 7 beautiful years working at Casa Arkati, I was asked to join Zammit Clapp Residential Home, where I spent 2 years. Then I moved on to Casa Marija in Sliema, as Facility Manager.

Prior to my engagement with CareMalta, I spent 26 years in the hotel industry. Though I loved working in hotels, I always questioned whether I would ever move out of the tourism industry and experience a different field and the thought of moving to CareMalta had sat in my mind for quite a few years, until the right moment came along and decided to take up the challenge.

Working with this company gives you great experiences and generates wonderful memories and for me when a resident or relative conveys his or her appreciation towards our care, that is added up to all of my favourite memories of working with CareMalta.

As I mentioned before, every day I look at CareMalta Group with pride whilst every day is an achievement. Over the years I have had the pleasure of experiencing so many beautiful memories in all three facilities I represented so far.

The company is dynamic and is always changing to improve and expand and for those who are seeking to join our team, my advice is to go for it. We always keep in mind to care for our residents as though they are our own parents as respect and a smile can make a huge difference in their life. •



A dynamic duo

ROSANNE TRIGANZA AND DANIELA FARRUGIA

Head Chef and Kitchen Assistant at Villa Messina

Rosanne Triganza and Daniela Farrugia are an amazing duo who work in the kitchen at Villa Messina, with Rosanne being the Head Chef and Daniela her assistant. They started working together at Zammit Clapp Home, nine years ago. At the time Rosanne had already been working with CareMalta for three years. They both feel that their relationship goes beyond being great colleagues.

“I feel proud to have Daniela as part of my team at Villa Messina’s kitchen. I remember that a year ago when I was contacted by the management that my services were needed at Villa Messina, which meant that I had to leave Zammit Clapp Home, Daniela’s parents were informed as well and since my relationship with Daniela grew strong, they expressed their wish to have their daughter transferred together with me”.

Both Rosanne and Daniela chose to work not only in the catering sector but specifically in the elderly care sector. Daniela believes that she was given this opportunity by CareMalta to do something great for others, that is being part of a team that prepares the daily meals and snacks for the residents. “I feel a certain joy when I peek out at the dining room and see the residents enjoying their meals”, says Daniela.

Rosanne describes Daniela as a very determined and motivated woman. “Now that we work at Villa Messina, we cater to a larger number of residents, which is a bigger challenge but somehow Daniela manages to embrace a challenge that can help her grow and she knows I am there to support her through every step of the way”.

For Daniela working with Rosanne is inspiring apart from having someone teaching her tricks of the trade. “I like everything about Rosanne and working with her is always fun for me because she is always pushing my boundaries to help me grow and develop more. She even gives me specific tasks when it comes to major events that are organised at Villa Messina, such as the annual BBQ for all the residents. I must say that it is not easy but with Rosanne’s help I always manage to accomplish my tasks”.

They both agree that working in a kitchen can be stressful at times but together with the rest of the team they strive to work hard every single day to provide optimal food quality for the residents. •



A company driven by passion values and people

ROBERT GRECH

Facility Manager, Casa Arkati

When I first started working with CareMalta, I remember it operating on a smaller scale, and over the past 14 years, I have seen it open new facilities, employ more people, and specialise in the mental health and disability sector, through HILA Homes. Today CareMalta is a leader in care because it is driven by passion and people, who make CareMalta Group what it is today.

Prior to my employment with the company in September 2009, I was a bondholder, so I used to receive this magazine – CareNet. Then I saw a job vacancy and I decided to apply as Facility Manager at Villa Messina in Rabat. Back then, I remember, Ing. Alex Tranter as the CEO of the company.

Between 2013 to 2017, I overlooked the management of LiveLife Rehabilitation Centre, in Sliema and after 4 years I was reappointed at Villa Messina as Facility Manager. In 2020, I was appointed as Senior Manager within the senior management team and was involved in the management of Casa San Paolo during the lockdown, and later at Casa Arkati. During the same year, I was given the opportunity to work as People Operations Manager for the CareMalta Group, but I felt the need to work directly with the residents in a facility and was eventually reassigned to Casa Arkati.

Throughout my career with CareMalta Group, there were many projects that I was part of which generated a sense of accomplishment and achievement, and every post that I was assigned posed challenges that made me believe more in myself and which helped me excel. I am proud to say that the company always believed in me and today, after all these years I feel that its culture and values are instilled in me.

A favourite memory of mine about my work with CareMalta goes back to around 5 years ago when we organised an event to create awareness about Alzheimer's. It was an event in which we invited residents to read a poem, we had two musicians playing the cello and we also invited residents with dementia. It was such a perfect event not only for us who planned it and made sure that everything was plain sailing but also for Ms. Natalie Briffa Farrugia, who was the CEO at the time and who had always wished to organise such an event for our residents.

Every day, every month, and every year means a lot for CareMalta but this year we are celebrating 30 years of a company that appreciates the work carried out by all employees, a company that wants to see its employees thrive, and a company that will always put the residents at the centre of everything. •



Fulfilling the true meaning of care

RENATA ZAHRA

Home Manager, Casal Nuovo

Working with CareMalta for the past 11 years I managed to turn my career into a success story and with the encouragement of the management I have been able to attain personal development and motivation.

My first role was as a care assistant at Zammit Clapp which was an unforgettable experience. On my first day on the job, I remember that one of my tasks was to prepare the beds on the first level as we were expecting new admissions. Then I moved to Villa Messina where I spent 7 years as a Senior Care Assistant and as a Lead Care Assistant. In September 2020, I was promoted to Assistant Home Manager at Casal Nuovo, one of HILA's homes. During that time, I was also offered a position as a Designated Manager at Casa Apap Bologna, another home of HILA. This gave me a boost to explore and learn more about the area of disability and mental health, sectors that are very much at heart for me. In January 2022, my journey changed direction as I was appointed as Home Manager at Casal Nuovo.

Switching from elderly care to the mental health and disability sector was one of the biggest challenges that I have encountered in my career with CareMalta Group but knowing that you receive constant appreciation from our clients, makes everything worthwhile because it means that we are leaving a positive impact on their quality of life.

The Mental Health Awareness Walk, organised in May 2022, was one of the best initiatives I ever worked on. With this event, HILA created an opportunity for the community to come together and raise awareness to eliminate the stigma associated with mental illnesses by raising awareness about mental health conditions. I felt immense joy in seeing the staff members and clients from Casal Nuovo and Casa Apap Bologna, participating in the walk from the Triton Fountain to St. George's Square in Valletta. I remember we also had residents from CareMalta's facilities, that had attended, together with the Chairperson of Vassallo Group, Natalie Briffa Farrugia, the Chief Executive Officer of CareMalta Group, James Sciriha, and HILA's CEO, Janet Silvio.

I believe that after 30 years CareMalta Group still manages to fulfil the true meaning of care and that is what makes the company a leader in this sector, where every resident comes always first. ●



Quality of life and dignity – CareMalta’s strongest pillars

A nurse first and foremost and a self-confessed anti-ageist, CareMalta COO **Noel Borg** reflects on the paradigm shift in care models, overcoming ageism and turning older adults’ limitations into opportunities.

There is a cartoon image hanging in Noel Borg’s office in which he is depicted in full protection gear at the height of the Covid pandemic standing outside Zammit Clapp Residential Home, surrounded by Spiderman, Thor, the Incredible Hulk and a host of over superheroes.

“I am not the superhero. I am in my nursing uniform. The staff are the superheroes. They have always been. I am there, but my team are the heroes protecting the facility.”

It was an exceptional time when CareMalta had to temporarily shift to a medicalised model of care to keep their residents safe. Extraordinary measures for extraordinary circumstances. Putting his nursing cap back on, Noel had overseen the needs of residents at Zammit Clapp during CareMalta’s first outbreak. This was a first and from a residential facility, the home became more like an infectious disease ward.

But models of care for the elderly have evolved beyond the “old-fashioned” concept of hospitalisation as older adults themselves have changed.

“Our understanding of models of care in Malta have always been from the British model. Malta adapted that and made it work in old people’s homes. So much so that we still struggle to get out of that model.

“Then in 2013, when the government published the first National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, we started moving towards differentiated models of care. Older adults don’t need medical models of care in their homes, they need integration and social participation. Their needs have changed.”

“If we want to engage older adults we need to ensure that whatever we do, the focus must be on the person,” says Noel, adding that the key aspects are respecting their dignity and ensuring quality of life without any limitations.

The second National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing published in 2021 also highlighted equity and equality.

“We believe in social integration where no distinction is made between people with different





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Age shouldn't be a limiting factor in a person's enjoyment of life

conditions and they are not labelled. A [residential] home is a community and just like any other home it consists of different people with different characteristics and that gives the sense of a family.”

Quality of life and dignity are the “strongest pillars” of CareMalta's model of care, one that transforms the perceived limitations of old age into opportunities. Age shouldn't be a limiting factor in a person's enjoyment of life.

“We are trying to move towards person-centred individualised care planning, keeping in mind opportunities that are normally seen as limitations of older adults. It does not mean there are no limitations. This is not a positivist approach, rather the acknowledgement that when you set limits you have to be realistic. You cannot assume that just because a person is frail and stuck in bed there is no way of maximising his potential of enjoying himself.”

“I am quite an anti-ageist person. The elderly and society in general are ageist. Traditionally, we are not even oriented to foresee the needs of older adults. How can we expect people to live more independently in society when society does everything to the contrary of what should be done to maximise the individual's function within it?”

The future of care is evolving to a complete model that looks at activities of daily living in totality within a social context.

“Older adults have this wealth of knowledge and if we were to adopt this in any model of care in a bottom-up approach, it's how we can consolidate more where we're going.”

When CareMalta was set up 30 years ago it had a “visionary” approach to care for the elderly. That tradition of ensuring a better way of taking care of people, Noel pointed out, is still “very much there”.

CareMalta was also a pioneer in the care for people with dementia. Noel explained that people with dementia faced many challenges in Malta and while the company had already done a lot in this field to improve dementia patients' lives, “we need to keep pushing the bar further up... as far up as possible”.

“Stop taking the word dementia for granted. Dementia does not mean people forget. Dementia is a syndrome. In that individualised aspect of that syndrome people have needs and those needs have to be catered for properly. People do not stop being themselves because their behaviour changes. A person is a person till the end. It's not easy, not even for the relatives. Everyone must be given the opportunity to express themselves. I am against restrictions. Maximising a patient's potential would be the best way to mitigate this syndrome.” •

Shaping the public-private partnership model for better care

Dr Antoine Mifsud Bonnici - Retired Member of Parliament, medical doctor and pharmacist by profession

There is no greater challenge and there is no greater honour than to be in politics to provide for the common good and be of excellent service to all mankind, particularly to the elderly.

I had the privilege to serve as a Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly at the same time when Mr Nazzareno Vassallo had also founded a private company with a public conscience focusing on becoming a market leader in providing specialized care for the elderly. I was proud then and still am today that 30 years back, my Government had a vision - we had successfully embarked on a strategic plan as to how to promote sustainable health and elderly care financing through public-private partnerships.

The Government was already aware of the ageing-related challenges, and population projections were already indicating very clearly that Malta will be one of the fastest ageing countries in Europe. Hence, the need for the involvement of the private sector became crucial. We knew then that a well-designed public-private partnership (PPP) could possibly generate value improvements, faster implementation, more efficient allocation of risk, and above all improved service quality for our elderly. I do humbly believe that this concept was a success from its very inception, undoubtedly with its own inevitable teething problems considering that it was a relatively new system for Malta with almost no legal framework.

I still recall the official opening of the Zejtun Home in 1994 – it was the first PPP between the Government of Malta and CareMalta. We were all so very enthusiastic and satisfied

that our new residents were being provided with excellent and professional care, and most of all, with great dignity and respect. And during my subsequent years as Parliamentary Secretary, I had the pleasure to work more closely with CareMalta - we embarked on various different projects together.

I have been out of politics for many years now but being an elder myself, I still follow what is going on in the sector. Subsequent governments have, over the years, increasingly adopted various different models of PPPs as an alternative to the traditional in-house provision of public services, ranging from service contracts, operation, and management contracts, leasing agreements, and other types of complex partnerships. I do augur that the well-being of our elderly remains always the main focus when choosing a PPP approach and when determining as to which of the available models is best suited for our elderly. The emergence of new models, trends, and innovative solutions for setting up efficient PPPs should always guarantee better care for our elderly. I am still confident that higher standards of care can be achieved through PPPs.

As the company celebrates its 30th anniversary, CareMalta continues to remain focused on being one of the best providers of elderly care. As a former Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly and also as a medical doctor myself, I congratulate CareMalta, your numerous teams and your employees for being so dedicated and for genuinely caring for your residents. Caring for the elderly isn't just a job – it's an act of love and service. •









An Extended Family

Empowering children for a brighter future

CareMalta has witnessed significant evolution and transformed the lives of individuals in need through various initiatives. **Charlene Vella Vassallo's** journey from a passionate advocate for children's rights to Development Director of CareMalta's Alternative Care sector exemplifies the Group's unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on society.

In a world where compassion and support are crucial, CareMalta continues to redefine the concept of care. The company's expansion into the realm of alternative care marks a significant milestone in its journey, thanks to the vision of CareMalta Director Charlene Vella Vassallo and her commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children.

"I was initially drawn to the organisation through my own personal experience," Charlene explains. "Despite initially not actively participating in the day-to-day operations of CareMalta, my passion for human rights, particularly those of children, prompted me to pursue specialised studies in this field."

Charlene's sister, Natalie, hinted at the opportunity for her to join CareMalta as the Development Director for a new sector within CareMalta Group - Alternative Care.





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At the core of
CareMalta’s mission
lies a deep
understanding of the
importance of
humanity



Though initially a daunting prospect, Charlene was inspired by the love of her own five children, and a desire to delve deeper into the circumstances faced by less fortunate children in various situations. She recognised this opportunity as the chance to give something back to society.

With a legacy spanning 30 years of compassionate caregiving, the delicate nature of the Alternative Care sector required the strength and support of CareMalta’s extensive experience. Its heart lies in providing a nurturing home for children and adolescents, fostering an environment that sparks hope and resilience.

By offering a fresh outlook and new opportunities, CareMalta wants to provide a brighter future for those under its care. Through this sector, it aims to change the perspective on life for these young individuals, encouraging them to dream big and overcome their limitations.

Charlene believes that even the smallest changes can make a profound difference in the lives of these children.

“CareMalta has continuously evolved, setting itself apart from other organisations, and solidifying its position as a resilient and forward-thinking company,” Charlene states.

“We strive to create an inclusive society that is attuned to the needs of its members. Its responsiveness to societal needs has garnered respect and recognition, establishing CareMalta as a company that remains closely connected to the pulse of the community.”

At the core of CareMalta’s mission lies a deep understanding of the importance of humanity. By extending their dedication to the Alternative Care sector, CareMalta aims to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve.

Charlene says CareMalta’s commitment to comprehensive care is evident through its continuous engagement with families, caregivers, and social workers:

“Children are our future. By fostering open discussions and maintaining constant communication, CareMalta ensures a holistic approach to the well-being of our young residents. Furthermore, regular reassessment of each individual’s situation enables us to adapt and tailor our services accordingly.” •

The social conscience of the Group

Before joining CareMalta, Janet Silvio did not spend more than three years at one place of work. But 14 years since she joined the company, the HILA Homes CEO has even bigger plans for the entity born out of CareMalta eight years ago.



Janet Silvio joined CareMalta in 2009 following 18 months touring the world.

"I needed a break from a career in accounts and management as I had reached a point where I had no distinction between my private and my work life.

"After spending 18 months backpacking on a budget, and seeing the things I saw in countries such as India, I knew I would never get satisfaction from just a money-making job.

"I needed to do something for someone. I wanted to wake up in the morning and go to work knowing I can make a difference."

So when she returned to Malta, Janet applied for a CareMalta facility manager vacancy and soon got the job at the Bormla home for the elderly.

"Up until I joined Bormla home's family, I had always spent a maximum of three years at one place: I would sign up for a job with the mindset that I will bring about some change, and then move on. I stayed at the Bormla home for five years, and to this day, it holds a special place in my heart.

"After around five years, Natalie Briffa Farrugia [former CareMalta CEO and today Vassallo Group chairperson] broached the topic of branching out into the disability sector, and she knew I was personally interested in supporting children."

That discussion saw the eventual birth of HILA Homes Ltd (Home to Independence and Limitless Abilities) in 2017.

Following two years of business development between 2014 and 2016, Janet and her team walked in the footsteps CareMalta had travelled 30 years ago.

"Just like CareMalta, we can sustain ourselves by generating profit that gets reinvested in the service.

"From the very beginning – during the business development phase – we worked with prospective service users: we organised live-ins with people who could benefit from a respite service, and involved parents in the design of the residences. We contacted experts in the field and went abroad to understand whether we could replicate models here.

"And just like CareMalta 30 years before it, HILA became a pioneer in providing respite tailored for people with disabilities."

Since HILA's launch and opening of Casa Apap Bologna (in

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We could easily make
much more money with
much less effort in
areas other than care...
Why don't we? Because
this gives us purpose

collaboration with *Aġenzija Sapport*) to provide short- and long-term respite services to people with disabilities and their families, HILA opened Santa Rosa, a separate home offering residential services specifically for children and adolescents with disabilities.

HILA was also entrusted by the ALS Foundation to operate two residences for people with severe neurological conditions, as well as Casal Nuovo (through Mount Carmel Hospital and the Health Ministry) in Paola for people with mental health challenges.

"HILA, as CareMalta's and my offspring, initially relied on CareMalta, but eventually moved away, gaining its own independence. Today, it has come full circle and continues to grow as demand prevails.

"On one hand it is nice seeing the service bloom, but on the other hand, as our waiting lists grow longer, you become increasingly concerned about the number of people who need a service but are not receiving it."

HILA has managed to fill gaps in the social care sector, especially in the area of mental health where people who had previously not ventured out of a hospital environment were finally living in the community while still receiving care for their mental health challenges.

However, Janet believes this is still the tip of the iceberg. Over the next 10 years, she believes HILA will have specialised further in the mental health sector.

This comes on the back of a worldwide pandemic, which in itself brought about a lot of mental health challenges but also increased awareness about mental well-being, encouraging more people to seek support.

"I ventured into this sector because I wanted to make a difference to the life of vulnerable people, most especially children.

"Fifteen years on, I'm still here and I'm still seeing change – including in sectors I never thought I would work in, such as mental health.

"I stayed on because CareMalta, and eventually HILA are truly the social conscience of the Group. We could easily make much more money with much less effort in areas other than care."

"Why don't we? Because this gives us purpose. At the end of the day, while we do need money to run the services, our main aim is to support the vulnerable." •



“HILA is my son’s second home”

Lyndsey Rogers, the mother of 12-year-old Noah, describes HILA as her son’s second home. Noah is a person with autism and ADHD, who has been using the services offered at Casa Apap Bologna, one of HILA’s homes, since it opened its doors, in 2016.

In an interview with CareNet, Lyndsey speaks about the incredible change that her son went through over the years and how HILA has been part of her support system. “I must say that thanks to HILA my son keeps himself occupied, he releases a lot of energy and is so much calmer”.

Lyndsey, who currently works in the healthcare sector, mentions how a few years back, they spent two years living abroad and recalls how she could not find support for her son which meant she had to take care of him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Unfortunately, this situation took a toll on her physical and mental health and that is why today, she can truly appreciate the services offered through HILA.

“I cannot imagine how our lives would be without HILA. It is our extended family, which happens to be HILA’s motto and I must say that when you use their services, you do feel part of a family”.

Lyndsey admits that when she was introduced to HILA, it was hard for her to let go of her son. She questioned many things for example, if they will be able to understand the way that Noah expresses himself. Then she recalled how she went through the guilt feeling stage. “At first, I felt so guilty that I was not able to take care of my son on my own, but it is a process and I had to understand that I needed support. Whoever is in this kind of reality needs to understand that we need a backup plan to take care of ourselves physically and mentally because otherwise, we would not be able to take care of our children”, and HILA was Lyndsey’s backup plan, where her son Noah, at Casa Apap Bologna, is cared for, he can socialise, integrate with other children and where his dignity, safety, and development are a priority. •



“I wish Casal Nuovo to be my nephew’s forever home”

Carmen James is her nephew’s best friend and inspiration, and she feels blessed to have him, Joseph, at Casal Nuovo where he is taken care of with love, respect, and dedication. Joseph, who is now 40 years old, lost his mother at a young age but was fortunate enough to find a mother figure in his aunt, Carmen, who loves him deeply as though he is one of her children.

“Our Joseph was transferred from Mount Carmel Hospital to Casal Nuovo a year ago, and it was life-changing for him, for us, and for his family, as well. Unfortunately, Joseph’s father could not take care of him himself because he resides in an elderly home. Over the years I supported my late sister’s husband as much as I could as their son Joseph has a challenging behaviour”.

With tears in her eyes, Carmen recalls the many difficult situations that her nephew and his father had to endure over the years when they were living in their home, especially after her sister passed away. But now that Joseph has been residing at Casal Nuovo, Carmen feels reassured that he is safe and protected.

Casal Nuovo is what Joseph needs, said Carmen, “even though I am his aunt, I care for him as though he is one of my children and for me, the fact that I see him happy gives me a sense of reassurance and my only wish is to see Casal Nuovo his forever home”. She continues to explain how at Casal Nuovo the environment gives the clients peace and how the initiatives that they take on are targeted specifically to improve their well-being.

Carmen also mentions how from time to time, apart from visiting him herself, every day, together with her husband she organises outings with Joseph’s father. “To make this possible, I pick up Joseph from Casal Nuovo and my husband goes for his father, who resides in an elderly home, and we then meet all of us together for a coffee or for a meal. It is simply wonderful whenever we see them together and thanks to my husband, who supports me a lot, we try and organise this kind of outing on a regular basis”.

For Carmen, the fact that Joseph interacts with other people it is vital and apart from taking him out herself to different places where he meets different people, she believes that the sense of community that is present at Casal Nuovo led to a drastic positive change in her nephew that ultimately led to greater happiness. •







Care in the Heart of Gozo

Extending our services to Gozo

RUBEN VASSALLO

Shareholder and Director, Vassallo Group and Group Architect

For the first time in its 30-year history, CareMalta Group will now be present in sister Island Gozo through two projects – the new facility on the site of the former Ku Club in Victoria and Dar San Ġużepp in Ġhajnsielem.

The property in Victoria was acquired by the group in 2021 following the signing of a 65-year lease agreement with La Stella Philharmonic Society. This property in Victoria will be developed into a 40-bed facility used for social care purposes.

CareMalta Group will also be responsible to do all furnishing and fittings to complete and operate Dar San Ġużepp in Ġhajnsielem after it was successful in a public tender issued by the Ministry for Gozo. This home will serve as a 119-bed home for older persons.

Both projects, when completed, will bring care to the heart of Gozo offering a high-quality care service.

The architect behind all CareMalta group homes is Architect Ruben Vassallo, a shareholder of Vassallo Group





and CEO of Vassallo Group Realty. In a comment to CareNet Architect Vassallo, said that "Designing a building which will ultimately be used for a social purpose is more than just a job to him. "I consider it as my mission to create a space that will ultimately make a difference and give dignity to human beings whose physical ability, disability, or condition imposes additional challenges. The soul of any building is transmitted through its roots, and I am honoured and glad that I have this opportunity through CareMalta Group to combine the old with the new. In our choice of buildings, we search for location, history, and significance. Through the maximum use of light, we manage to help shine our person-centered care even through our architecture. Giving a new lease of life to property which in the past may have served other purposes but which now will help make a difference in the quality of care to so many people give me the greatest satisfaction as a conscientious architect. It's all about the quality of life."



Serving the community in the years to come

Formerly known as the Astra Discotheque, the property, built in the shape of a tower, is located at the foot of the Citadel, just behind the Astra Theatre. Inaugurated by Gozo Minister Anton Tabone in 1989, this top entertainment venue changed its name along the years, first to Planet Discotheque and later to KU Club, closing its doors in 2019.





The home is being built on the site of the historic Casa San Giuseppe, which was built in the 18th century. It had been an orphanage and was the original home of the St Joseph Band of Ghajnsielem: in more recent times, it has served as a youth hostel.





Malta's first
ABA intervention
centre supporting
children and their
families





Understanding the Care and Support needs of older people

Equality and equity in the care sector are imperative

Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca – President Emeritus of Malta

Most of us are concerned about growing old for a variety of reasons. One common apprehension revolves around the notion of lacking sufficient familial support during this stage of life. The fear of not having loved ones around to provide care and companionship can be distressing. Additionally, there is anxiety surrounding the financial means required to access quality services as vulnerability increases with age. The prospect of becoming institutionalized is also a source of fear for some individuals.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the landscape of elderly care has transformed in today's world. Gone are the days when extended families could readily care for their senior members at home. Instead, a new paradigm of elderly care has emerged, one that encompasses much more than mere comfort and the presence of caregivers. Presently, elderly care entails providing holistic and personalized support to enhance the quality of life for older adults.

Ensuring a high quality of life for the elderly involves keeping them engaged in a variety of activities and fostering their active participation to the best of their abilities. Happiness and a sense of purpose are essential components of this approach. In Malta, we are fortunate to have developed elderly care to exceptional standards. This achievement is the result of substantial state investment over the past few decades, along with significant contributions from the private sector. Notably, CareMalta has played

a pioneering role in the private sector's commitment to this crucial and necessary development.

Since its inception, I have closely followed the progress and accomplishments of CareMalta. I can confidently attest that it has continued to evolve over the last three decades, establishing itself as a highly successful private initiative in this field. Achieving quality residential care for the elderly necessitates an ongoing journey of innovation and creativity. CareMalta has consistently adhered to the required standards of innovation and creativity within the sector. Its unwavering commitment to excellence has been maintained throughout its three-decade existence.

Through collaborations with state entities, CareMalta has not only created tranquil and harmonious residential homes but also ensured accessibility for many elderly individuals who may have struggled financially otherwise. Equality and equity in the sector are imperative. It is the right of our elderly citizens to have access to such services, and it is our moral obligation to guarantee that, after a lifetime of work, they will be cared for in the most dignified manner possible.


Personally, I have witnessed CareMalta's dedicated efforts to uphold its reputation, and in retrospect, it has continuously pioneered advancements in the sector. As we applaud the leadership of CareMalta over the past 30 years, I express my hopes that meaningful endeavors will persist to further improve residential elderly care in Malta for the decades to come. •





A man with a shaved head and a light beard, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie, is sitting at a white curved table. He has his hands clasped in front of him and is smiling at the camera. The background shows an office environment with a wooden door featuring posters, a window with horizontal blinds, and a desk with a laptop and papers.

Investing in employees for overall success



With a workforce of over 1,300 employees, CareMalta's continuous commitment to employee development and well-being has contributed to its growth and success over the past 30 years. CareMalta Group Chief Financial Officer **Chris Gauci** explains how, by prioritising employee investment, the company ensures the availability of skilled professionals, improves service quality, and fosters a positive work environment.

CareMalta's philosophy revolves around continuously investing in the growth and well-being of its employees. By adhering to core values such as 'development' and 'dignity', the Group has created an attractive workplace for candidates seeking a career in the healthcare sector.

"In our industry, where specialised expertise is crucial, attracting and retaining knowledgeable professionals can be challenging," explains Chris Gauci.

"So once skilled employees are recruited, it is up to us to offer the right working environment and proper compensation, as well as provide further opportunities for progression to retain these employees."

CareMalta's investment in employees can take various forms, including financial rewards, compensation packages, and programmes promoting mental health awareness.

For instance, upon proper evaluation and directors' approval, the company allocates a budget to improve the financial packages of specific employee groups, ensuring their retention, despite external factors.

"Moreover, recognising the significance of mental health, CareMalta has implemented programmes to raise awareness and provide support to employees. These 'indirect' investments, as we call them, contribute to the improved well-being and job satisfaction of the workforce," Chris adds.

One of the Group's recent initiatives was the 'Road to Growth' programme, which identifies employees with potential for future

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Every single employee
who worked for this
Group helped to make
our 30th anniversary
milestone possible

management roles and provides them with opportunities to enhance these skills.

Led by CareMalta's senior management team and supported by Learning Works, a sister company of Vassallo Group, this programme allows individuals to focus on improving their managerial abilities outside their regular work environment.

Additionally, CareMalta provides various courses to address knowledge gaps and ensure continuous professional development among its employees.

The Group also ensures that employees have access to the necessary tools and resources for success in their roles.

Regular audits – whether internal or conducted by external bodies such as the Social Care Standards Authority – highlight areas requiring further investment. Based on the audit findings, the company invests in providing employees with adequate training, resources, and equipment to meet the required standards.

Chris acknowledges that the company's success would not have been possible without its dedicated workforce.

"Every single employee who worked for this Group helped to make our 30th anniversary milestone possible. As a Group, we have celebrated its employees' contributions on multiple occasions, both individually and collectively. This recognition of employees' efforts and commitment translates into the high-quality service CareMalta Group consistently delivers to its clients and residents," he asserts.

As the company celebrates its 30th anniversary, CareMalta remains dedicated to sustaining a positive work environment and providing high-quality care through its valued employees. •



CareMalta gave birth to Learning Works

Charlo Bonnici joined CareMalta 15 years ago, but as the Learning Works CEO takes a trip down memory lane, he recalls watching the birth of the company in 1993, back when he was a public service employee.

As head of the Secretariat for the Elderly between 1992 and 1996, Charlo Bonnici remembers the alarm surrounding the growing waiting lists for people seeking to be admitted to a home for the elderly.

“CareMalta was the first company in the private sector to open a purposely built home for the elderly – Casa Arkati. At the time, the public and private sectors were discussing the idea of public-private-partnerships, which I believe were the salvation of the industry.

“At the time, I also absolutely had no idea I would one day work in the sector, let alone with CareMalta. I was interested in the subject and eventually did a postgraduate course in gerontology, but it wasn't until 2008 that I joined CareMalta as Human Resources Manager.”

By 2009, Malta – and CareMalta – was suffering a shortage of carers. So CareMalta started organising its own tailored courses to train prospective carers. Although licensed as a training institution, the courses, in the absence of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, were not accredited.

“That was the beginning of the CareMalta Academy. When accreditation eventually became a requirement, we partnered up with City and Guilds and started offering their accredited courses before creating our own tailored courses.”

By 2019, the academy had branched into other areas such as disability, mental healthcare, management, hospitality and sports, and by February 2019 the company realised the academy could stand on its own, which gave birth to Learning Works.

“Learning Works owes its beginnings to CareMalta, and CareMalta remains one of our most important partners as care makes up around 65 per cent of our business. And with the elderly care sector expected to continue growing as people are living longer, we expect CareMalta to remain among our main partners.

“Businesswise, CareMalta has always been strong, and during the pandemic the company grew even stronger. People realised that care could provide a permanent job and we saw a surge in people enrolling in our courses, including CareMalta's own employees who wanted to specialise or advance in their career.”

CareMalta is Learning Work's biggest partner, not just when it comes to training in care.

One of the main challenges for CareMalta remains shortage of human resources on the island, with half the company's employees being foreign. CareMalta therefore resorts to recruiting foreigners who may not all be fluent in English and this is where Learning Works steps in. The educational institution offers English language courses that also provide an overview of the Maltese culture.

However, in recent years, Learning Works has also specialised in sports, with a special focus on psychology, nutrition, and management.

“We recently partnered up with Liverpool John Moores University to offer a Master in Science in International Sports Coaching, ahead of the opening of the Mediterranean College of Sport in Birkirkara in 2024. The independent school will cater for secondary and post-secondary students, who can specialise in football, water polo, swimming, artistic swimming and athletics.”

Apart from the opening of the college, Learning Works will this year be marking its 15 years with full digitisation of its processes and procedures.

“Before the Covid pandemic, everything was face to face and we had never ever considered online. But when businesses and the academy had to close their physical doors in March 2020, we went online within a week.

“Now that the pandemic restrictions have gone, 70 per cent of Learning Work's classes remain online. So, we're taking this a step further by digitising admission, management and recruitment procedures so that the process for students, from beginning to end – including issuing of invoices and certificates, submission of assignments, correction and internal verification – are digitised.

“Since digitisation does away with double work and laborious paperwork, the system becomes more efficient, as does the handover from those who leave the company to others who join it,” he says.

“However, while digitising procedures eventually leads to fewer people, it will never replace creativity. So, specialised people will always be sought after.” •

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Specialised people
will always be
sought after

Passion to care for others

The CareMalta Group Operations, Facility and Home Management teams strive to motivate their respective team, in the different facilities, to achieve excellence in the service offered to the residents and clients. This means that through their daily routine, they come in touch with the different aspects of long-term care. The importance of integrated care, the benefits of sports, the aim behind organising intergenerational activities, being part of the company's growth, the significance of active aging, empowering women, catering for the elderly with care, the importance they give to health and safety, patient safety, ethics at the place of work and how they view CareMalta Group over the years are the topics that the Facility and Home Managers shared their view upon for this year's edition of CareNet Magazine.

All of this is part of the Group's philosophy, to maintain a safe, comfortable and home-like environment, encourage the residents' independence and provide privacy, and promote social interchange between residents and staff apart from continuously offering training and support to employees.



Mario Debattista
Senior Manager,
CareMalta Group

"Having started 30 years ago by opening Casa Arkati for the Elderly, CareMalta Group is now considered as the pacesetter in Elderly Care".



Antoine Borg
Facility Manager

"Through Active Ageing, we help our residents maintain a sense of purpose, and have opportunities to learn and grow together".



Edel Borg Mizzi
Žejtun Home

"CareMalta Group solicits and embraces every potential in totality. We believe that women have equal opportunities for development".



Robert Grech
Casa Arkati

"Integrated care is the basis of CareMalta's approach to achieving person-centred care involving all stakeholders, who together, work in an inter and intra-disciplinary approach, to reach one common goal - the wellbeing of our elderly residents."



Stuart Caruana
Casa San Paolo

"Any kind of sport helps reset your mind, gives you the energy to face the day with positivity and determination, gives you discipline which helps you achieve deadlines and face challenges, and gives you self-confidence".



John Sciberras
Roseville

We make sure to prioritize nutritional care for our residents, ensuring well-balanced menus that promote optimal health and well-being, and providing a professional and compassionate approach to senior nutrition.



Carl Caruana
Casa Marija

"Engagement enables growth, which leads to constant consolidation of the company and self".



Josette Grech
Mellieħa Home

"Achieving excellence is our ethos of service".



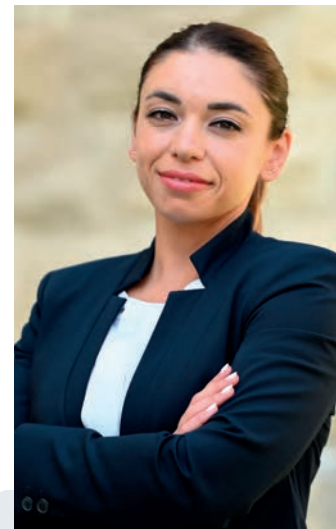
Anthony Caruana
Villa Messina

"At CareMalta, safety at the place of work is placed at the top of everyone's agenda and nothing hindering it should be taken lightly. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".



Nicolette Sant
HILA, Casa Apap Bologna

"Only when we, as care providers, come together to ensure the best care plan for our clients we preserve the quality of life and well-being of our clients".



Lara Grech
HILA, Dar Bjorn

"For us patient safety is imperative and we achieve it on a daily basis by building on the foundations of a safe culture and safe systems".



Renata Zahra
HILA, Casal Nuovo

"Over the years CareMalta Group has not only invested in the Elderly Care, Mental Health and Disability Sectors but also invested in the success of women at work. CareMalta empowers women through equal opportunities and development whilst making it possible for women to achieve a work-life balance".



Maria Xuereb
Nursing Manager,
CareMalta Group

"CareMalta's core values; Quality, Safety, Integrity, Development and Dignity, are the representation of ethics at the workplace".



Zvetlana Debono
Nursing Manager,
CareMalta Group

"Everyone in their respective role has a collective responsibility to work diligently, ethically and to the best of their abilities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our residents".



Claire Coldman
Services Manager,
CareMalta Group

"We believe that intergenerational initiatives bring people together with the shared purpose of fostering a deeper level of understanding and respect".



James Buttigieg
Projects Manager,
CareMalta Group

"CareMalta Group always managed to be ahead of competitors with innovative projects and solutions in care to ease the lives of persons in need whilst gaining trust and reputation as Malta's leading company in care".



Michael Zerafa
Maintenance Manager,
CareMalta Group

"I am a living example of how CareMalta believes in the development of its employees. The statement "I Can Achieve Real Excellence" proves true!".

“If I will ever need long-term care, I will choose CareMalta” – Josephine Borg



Josephine Borg, a former nurse, has her mother, Paula Cilia, 90 years old, residing at Casa San Paolo. Together with her husband Manuel, Josephine does not simply involve herself in her mother's care, but she also volunteers in helping when the facility organises certain events.

“My mother is so happy to the extent that she views the facility as her home. For me that gives me great satisfaction and I feel that I need to give more than my mother is receiving and that is why I work as a volunteer during activities organised by Casa San Paolo. This gives me a lot of satisfaction since I know that I am doing something that is helping others.

During the interview, Josephine mentions how her mother managed to build relations with other residents and how events organised at the facility help her to socialise more. One major event that takes place at Casa San Paolo and is a popular event is *Festa Rhula*, an annual summer event that brings so many memories to the residents, of the traditional Maltese “festa” that every locality celebrates in Malta and Gozo. Each year Nicolo’ Isouard Band Club, Mosta visits Casa San Paolo and this makes the event a truly festive evening for all the residents.

“Even though I have my own health challenges, I visit my mother whenever I can and when I am not with her, I know I have nothing to worry about because I know she is in safe hands. Even during the coronavirus pandemic, I knew she was in caring hands. It was difficult to accept that we could not see our loved ones, but we knew that it was for their own safety. After all, it was not a situation that the facility wished for because I know that they encourage family members and friends to get involved in their loved ones’ care”.

Josephine Borg ended her interview by stating that CareMalta would be her and her husband's choice if they ever need long-term care because, through her mother's experience, she has proof that, love, attention, and professional care are what she would receive. •

Love can be expressed in many different ways

“The care that my parents receive is proof that love can be expressed in so many ways and not only between couples, family members, or friends but also through the daily attention that nurses and carers, amongst other staff, offer”. This was stated by Josephine Sgandurra Pullicino who has her mother Vivienne, 86 years old, and her father Edwin, 91 years old, residing at Casa Marija, since February 2022.

In her interview for this year's CareNet edition, Josephine explains how her parents lived in Sliema for many years, so for them living at Casa Marija, which is situated in Sliema, is all they could have asked for, a place they can truly call home. She further explains how her father suffers from dementia and how for her mother the situation at their home was becoming overwhelming. Josephine also mentions how the coronavirus pandemic made her father's condition even worse and that is when, as a family, they decided that their parents needed constant, professional care.

“Given my father's condition, knowing that he is receiving the specialised care he needs, we now have our mind at peace. Even for my mother, we now know that if something happens to my father, he will receive immediate attention and that reassures her”.

Josephine continues explaining how living in a CareMalta facility meant that her parents' life could still go on and that they found a new sense of happiness. She mentioned one event that the facility organised for her parents which for the family meant so much – her parent's 68th wedding anniversary. “The facility organised an event for them to celebrate their anniversary, which they and we, did not expect. They managed to create such wonderful memories of this celebration and we are so thankful for it”.

Together with the rest of her family, Josephine feels serene, knowing that whenever she has queries about her parent's health, she is always provided with answers and support. She considers her mother's and father's experience as a positive one and believes that the decision for them to reside in a facility was worth giving a try as they found another community that they now belong to and which gives them a new sense of happiness. •



“My father has all the care he needs”



Theresa Demanuele Montebello has her father, John Montebello, 86 years, residing at Žejtun Home, where she knows that he is in safe hands. Therese spoke to CareNet about her father's experience, and her struggles to cope with being primary caregiver to her father and having to take care of her own family.

“His health started deteriorating and we were always worried knowing that he is living on his own. At first, he refused the idea to reside in an elderly home because he thought that he was going to lose his independence, his privacy, and all he was used to. After a few months, until he settled down, he came to realise how much he is loved by the carers, nurses, and the other residents and now he feels it is his second home, where he has all the care he needs”.

John's daughter explains how for the rest of the family, knowing that their father, and grandfather is happy is all they want as there is no price for their father's happiness, and when they visit him, which happens on a regular basis, they always try and do different things together.

For Theresa, knowing that her father is well cared for meant that she could further her studies, something that her father had always encouraged her to pursue. “When you leave your job to take care of your loved ones, in my case, my father, it was a decision I was happy to make but the fact that once again I could go back to my normal daily routine was not a matter of money but about my mental health. In care homes, there are experts in the field who are trained to deal with certain situations, with specific resident's needs, and knowing that my father receives that kind of care of attention is all that we ever needed”.

Therese Demanuele Montebello ended her interview with a strong message, “To those who have relatives who need constant care, do not be afraid to accept the reality that your loved ones need professional care. Ultimately, they will have a better life, better care, and above all, they will have love 24 hours a day, 7 days a week”. •

Taking CareMalta into the digital age

The future for CareMalta is digital as Vassallo Group Chief Corporate Service Officer **Carlo Aquilina** maps out the “ambitious” project that will put it at the forefront of the care industry.

Thirty years after revolutionising the care industry, CareMalta is set to raise the bar once again with an ambitious digitalisation project that will do away with all the traditional “pen and paper” processes that currently characterise the health sector in Malta.

“This is a very ambitious plan,” explains Carlo Aquilina, who was appointed Vassallo Group’s first Chief Corporate Service Officer last year, while retaining his CIO role.

“It is a massive project as it will lead to the full digital transformation of CareMalta operations. The project is still in its infancy but once implemented it will be revolutionary for CareMalta, for the Group and for Malta. I think it will shake up some institutions in Malta too. CareMalta will be at the forefront.”

And this digital transformation will not only positively affect employees and Group operations. It will also improve residents’ lives as our *nanna* and *nannu* have all become more tech savvy. “Today’s CareMalta residents all demand WiFi for their video calls and Netflix so we will be able to give them a better service.”

Despite “extremely aggressive” timelines, Carlo and his small team are taking things “slowly, on purpose” as the digitalisation will extend to the rest of the Group. “The main aim is to migrate business support functions and change them to business value. Everyone is Corporate Services. Everyone should feel part of this.”

Staff will be trained in using these new processes, which will certainly “make their life easier”. “I am sure it will be a positive experience for everyone.”

And beyond this ambitious plan, Carlo is already looking ahead to future projects, introducing the concept of risk management and AI dash-boarding for the C-Suite. •

“

Our *nanna* and *nannu* have all become more tech savvy

Keeping everyone safe with military precision

A career in the Armed Forces of Malta was the perfect training for Vassallo Group Health, Safety and Security Manager **Martin Bondin** as he uses his broad expertise to keep all staff and customers safe.

Discipline is at the heart of Martin Bondin's ethos, something that was drilled into him throughout his stellar military career covering sensitive roles including Head of Administration, Head of Safi Detention Services and aide-de-camp to two presidents.

When Martin swapped his officer's uniform with a business suit to join CareMalta as the manager of the Cospicua home in 2014, he relied on his military training to help him face the myriad challenges of his new job. That experience still helps him "a lot" in his current role.

"I could only manage this job today because of the training I had received before. Thanks to that I can adapt to varied situations," he says.

His role was created in 2019 and he immediately set about instilling a "cultural shift" in the way occupational health and

safety was perceived. "I wanted to introduce health and safety by design."

Legislations are not enough unless people's mentality is changed. "We tend to take health and safety for granted. We need to put those laws into practice."

His first task was to update occupational health and safety and fire risk assessment in all facilities. While employee safety is a top priority, the safety of CareMalta's residents is also paramount to ensuring their quality of life. CareMalta has invested heavily in training and fire safety equipment by purchasing evacuation chairs and placing an evacuation sheet under each bed.

This cultural shift extends to the role of security guards who should be perceived as the first port of call in an emergency, especially at night when staff is not at full complement. •

“
Introducing
health and safety
by design



Rethinking the supply chain

Experience has taught Vassallo Group Procurement Manager **Eusebio Muscat** that you must always have a Plan B and a good dose of creativity to face continuous challenges.

The Covid years have shown that “nothing will be the same again” and this couldn’t ring truer than in the procurement sector where supply issues and rising prices continue to be the biggest challenge.

“It would be a pity if people didn’t understand that nothing will be the same again post-Covid and now with the war in Ukraine. We need to learn to adapt to accept the challenges which will be continuous,” says Eusebio.

And with 27 years of experience at Vassallo Group he has learnt that “you cannot take past performance for granted anymore. The disruptions in the supply chain created by Covid showed there is no guarantee that a supplier can deliver as agreed”.

Keeping a very good relationship with all your vendors is key but a Plan B is necessary to mitigate for possible shortfalls. “We keep good relationships and open communication with all stakeholders. We try to diversify our procurement as much as possible and channel it through different sources.”

He stressed the importance of being “dynamic” in adapting to changing circumstances. “These will be challenging times for procurement, for supply chains and for logistics in general. Covid was a big learning curve and we rely on our creativity and resilience in coming up with alternative solutions to ensure no disruption to our supply chain.”

He credited his hard-working, dedicated and highly motivated team for pulling through challenging times. “I am very proud of the Procurement Team. You cannot do procurement unless you have full commitment and harmony within your team.” •

“

We need to learn to adapt to accept the challenges

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CareMalta Group employees Shining Bright

This year the 8th edition of The Shine Awards marked the Vassallo Group's 77th Anniversary. Vassallo Group Malta strongly believes in acknowledging those hard-working employees who show their dedication to the company, through this grand event, which this year was held on the 2nd of June, at The University of Malta.

125 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, 25 years, and 30 years of service awards were presented during the Shine Awards event. For CareMalta Group it was an honour to have Dorothy Inguanez receive the 30 years service award. Dorothy has worked with the Group for 3 decades, showing dedication, commitment, and excellence through her work and she is the first CareMalta employee to receive the 30 year service award.

During his speech, Mr. Pio Vassallo, Group CEO, stated how The Shine Awards are a celebration of the people who form part of Vassallo Group whose mission is to leave a positive impact on society and that this promise can only be delivered through hard-working employees. He also mentioned how the company considers its 2,000 employees as their extended family.

Natalie Briffa Farrugia, Group Chairperson closed off the night with a speech, explaining how the Group is celebrating its 77-year anniversary and how there are still several milestones to be reached. "The average age of the Vassallo Group workforce represented here through these service awards is 40 years. As they say, life begins at 40 so as a Group we are all very looking forward to life ahead". •





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Timeline of events

January 2023



CareMalta Group sponsors workshop on Integrated Care Solutions

The workshop 'Designing and Implementing Integrated Care Solutions, Challenges, and Opportunities', sponsored by CareMalta Group was given great exposure on local media during January 2023. The workshop was organised by the Department of Health Systems Management and Leadership, within the University of Malta together with Professor Axel Kaehne, from the Health Services Research, Medical School, Edge Hill University, being the Keynote Speaker.

The 1st inter-generational pilot activity

The first pilot inter-generational activity was part of a collaboration between CareMalta and VISTA Coop. The first part of the project was a wonderful experience for both students and the residents of Roseville and Żejtun Home.

An inter-generational encounter: when children and the elderly enrich each other's lives

VISTA Coop is a pioneer in the early years education. Follow the Reggio Emilia approach, we assist children in feeling part of a community and to share life experiences with significant others. For this reason, when contacted by CareMalta for an inter-generational project, Vista Coop immediately accepted.

The first part of this project started off as a trial, since it was the first of its kind for both Vista Coop and CareMalta. On Thursday, 15 December 2022, Vista Coop hosted the first group of 10 elderly citizens from (Żejtun Home & Roseville Attard) at their Kidstart Kindergarten in Sta Venera.

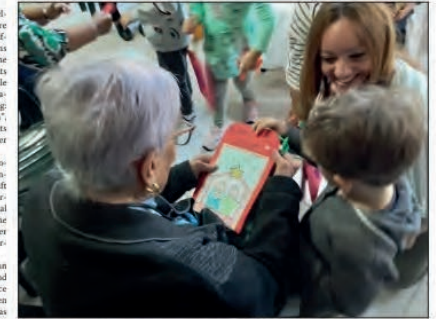
The three and four-year old students were briefed in advance about this project and their enthusiasm was reflected in their innovative ideas. After some brain-storming sessions, students together with their educators came up with a programme. Being so close to Christmas, they wanted this encounter to bring joy to the elderly home residents.

The senior citizens were welcomed at Kidstart: Childcare and Development Centre. After the initial introductions and some time to settle in, the students showed the residents how they usually do circle time. The children sang the famous Maltese Christmas song, "Christmas Father għibli pupa", and soon after, the residents joined chorus in singing other traditional songs.

The second part of the programme saw the children constructing a Christmas tree craft together with their new elderly friends. This was a special bonding moment where the children's excitement, together with the sweetness of the elderly, was tangible.

This encounter came to an end with tea and coffee, and having ample time for a nice chat. Whilst the Kindergarten students prepared Christmas cards for the visitors, the latter gave out knitted scarves and small knitted bags with chocolates to the children.

This experience was one to cherish, for both students and residents. It was a great success, and it will definitely not be the last one. These sweet encounters are beneficial for both age groups, and Vista Coop is willing to work on similar projects in the near future.



The CareMalta Group Sports Day

During 2023 CareMalta Group is organising a number of events to mark the Group's 30th Anniversary, and a Sports Day was a wonderful way to unite the residents. CareMalta Group believes that by increasing awareness about the benefits of sports, we can find ourselves both mentally and physically, more determined to overcome challenges.

February 2023



Meeting the President of Malta

Residents from Cospicua Home had the opportunity to meet President George Vella and his wife Mrs. Miriam Vella, during a visit to San Anton Palace in Attard. The residents were also taken on a tour of the President's Palace during the visit.



Students from St. Monica School visit Roseville

Students from St Monica School visited Roseville as part of their Health and Social Care studies. During their visit, they attended an art activity in the dementia unit and participated in a session on how to attend to the elderly and how to engage with them.



To love and to be loved

CareMalta Group organised a lunch for all the couples residing in our facilities and homes. The lunch took place at Villa Messina where the management made sure to create a romantic yet celebratory ambience for the couples to enjoy. Dr Lydia Abela, the wife of Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela, attended the event together with the Chairperson of Vassallo Group Malta, Natalie Briffa Farrugia, and the CEO of CareMalta Group James Sciriha.



Carnival Party 2023

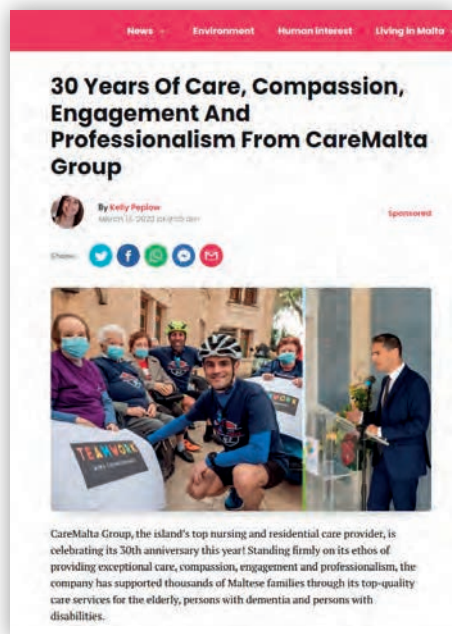
Residents from CareMalta's facilities and clients from HILA's Homes participated in teams during the CareMalta Group costume-themed Carnival Party, that took place at Casa San Paolo.



Gold and Silver Awards for CareMalta's facilities and HILA's homes

Through these awards, the Facility and Home Managers together with their team were presented with an award for their dedication and hard work in the service they offer to the residents and clients, based on their performance in 2022. CareMalta Group ensures that improvement in the service offered is monitored to assure a high standard of performance throughout all the facilities and homes. The Internal Quality Assurance Audits are carried out in all areas of operations; Care and Medicine, Administration, Front Office, Maintenance, Housekeeping, Health & Safety and Catering.

March 2023



Standing firmly on CareMalta Group's ethos

An article about CareMalta, its aim and its mission, was published on Lovin Malta's news portal as part of a campaign of articles published throughout 2023 to celebrate CareMalta Group's 30th Anniversary - 30 years as Leaders in Care, 30 years of celebration of the person, the resident, the clients, the relatives, and last but not least the persons delivering the care; our employees.

Challenging Ageism

CareMalta continued its collaboration with VISTA Coop, for our residents to participate in inter-generational activities. The aim of these initiatives is to bring people of different ages together with the shared purpose of fostering a deeper level of understanding and respect.



April 2023



Easter Wishes

Every year, during Holy Week, Mr Nazzareno Vassallo, the founder of the Vassallo Group, together with the Chairperson of Vassallo Group, Ms Natalie Briffa Farrugia, distributes Easter Eggs to the residents of CareMalta's facilities and HILA's clients, whilst wishing them peace, love, and joy during Easter and always.

Fostering creativity, encouraging cultural diversity, and promoting social change

This year CareMalta themed up with the Malta Dementia Society to organise an event on World Art Day, on the 15th of April. During the event, residents, relatives, and carers, together with the organisers enjoyed working with clay. The aim of such an event is to spread awareness about art and to promote the development of art.



Another successful intergenerational activity

An intergenerational communication event between older persons living in long-term care and University students was a success. The students who participated are currently reading for a Higher Diploma in Geriatrics and Gerontology and others reading for a master's also in Geriatrics and Gerontology, awarded by the University of Malta. Dr Maria Aurora Fenech coordinated the event between CareMalta's Active Ageing Committee and the Department of Geriatrics and Gerontology at the University of Malta.



Supporting the development of the seminar and report: *Dementia-friendly Hospitals: A Myth or Reality?*

CareMalta supported the development of a seminar and report entitled *Dementia-friendly Hospitals: A Myth or Reality?* The seminar and the report are a collaboration of two NGOs; the Maltese Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics - MAGG and the Malta Dementia Society, two University of Malta Departments, the Gerontology & Dementia Studies and Nursing and the Faculty for Social Wellbeing and Faculty of Health Sciences, at the University of Malta.



Mother's Day at San Anton Palace

His Excellency, George Vella, President of Malta, and his wife, Mrs Miriam Vella, welcomed residents from Roseville and Żejtun Home, who attended a mass celebrated at Sant' Anton's Chapel, to celebrate Mother's Day.



Supporting Dementia Awareness Week

CareMalta and HILA Homes organised an event for residents and clients in collaboration with Stella's Garden Centre in Żebbuġ, Malta, to raise awareness about dementia. As part of the event, a blue-coloured plant was potted as a symbol of Dementia awareness. This year's theme was a timely diagnosis that can help take action to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.



Inauguration of Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa, in Mosta, was inaugurated on the 24th of May by the Minister for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights, Julia Farrugia Portelli. Santa Rosa will offer tailor-made services for children, adolescents and young adults. Santa Rosa is a €3 million investment with the government offering necessary services through Aġenzija Support.



June 2023



Thank you for your hard work and dedication

This year the 8th edition of The Shine Awards marked the Vassallo Group's 77th Anniversary. 125 employees from CareMalta and HILA Homes received their service award this year in recognition of their loyalty and dedication towards the CareMalta Group over the past years and this year was the first time for CareMalta Group to have an employee, Dorothy Inguanez, who received the 30-year service award.

Celebrating one of Malta's oldest feasts

The feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, L-Imnarja, 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.



July 2023



Amazing atmosphere at Casa San Paolo during Festa Rħula

Festa Rħula 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. As always, the event was organised in collaboration with Nicolo' Isouard Band Club, Mosta.



Believe ACHIEVE

HILA believes in the concept of extended family to achieve our mission of empowering persons through choice and developing individual abilities towards an inclusive and fulfilling life.



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Home to Independence and Limitless Abilities

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