

# Letter to America: Pen pal project connecting local care home residents

Residents at a Scottish care home have been putting pen to paper to connect with new pals in the US Midwest, sharing stories of past memories and experiences of the pandemic.

Edinburgh care home, [Cramond Residence](#), has established a pen pal relationship with The Wexford, an Independent Living Facility part of Columbine Health Systems located in Colorado.

It is the result of some forward-thinking by Lifestyle Co-ordination Lisa Sohn, who worked as an intern at the facility in Loveland, Colorado before moving to Scotland one and a half years ago.

She reached out to her old supervisor to gauge interest in starting up a pen pal program and the message was shared within the Columbine Health Systems where activity director, Logan Shaw picked it up.

Both homes have since exchanged several letters and it has been a positive way of keeping residents' spirits high, as well as keeping their mind occupied and stimulated whilst reminiscing about previous trips visiting Scotland and America.

Lisa, originally from Colorado is one of the dedicated team at

the 74-room modern care home in Edinburgh.

She said: "It's been nice to offer our residents something positive to take part in especially in the middle of all of this madness, it has really provided a silver lining.

"We have had to utilise our nine self-contained small-group living houses again due to the new strain of the virus in order to help with infection control. This has inevitably resulted in reduced physical interaction for our residents.

"This has been a great way to encourage two-way communications – albeit it may be a slightly delayed response.

"Residents have been exposed to 'vintage' forms of communications through writing letters to their pen pal while at the same time adapting to new technologies such as zoom to keep in touch with loved ones.

"The letters are entertaining, refreshingly honest and often hilarious with a spectrum of topics covered including politics, trips to each other's countries and family history.

"A recent hot topic has unsurprisingly been the news of a vaccine and their shared experience of living through the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Residents have really embraced the opportunity to connect with their pen pals and have been writing as often as possible. We now host monthly classes dedicated to writing to their friends in the US."

The simple act of letter writing has many positive benefits such as improved memory function and greater feelings of happiness.

Logan Shaw, Activity Director at the Loveland home, said: "It has been a great initiative to be part of and our residents really enjoy writing letters to their friends in Scotland – with three sharing their experience of visiting the country

together in the past.

“With every letter sent, the excitement of receiving a letter back increases and we are delighted to help facilitate our residents creating new friendships with like-minded people across the pond.

“Although, we started the pen pal program prior to the pandemic, it has truly been a blessing for our residents to be able to relate to one another throughout the last couple months even though they are worlds apart!”

<https://cramondresidence.co.uk/>

