

# Rolly the Robot rolls into St. Paul residents hearts

A Telepresence Robotics Pilot Project is taking place at Kaukauna's St. Paul Elder Services, Inc. in Kaukauna to help reduce social isolation and bring families together. The goal is to improve the lives of people living in care homes in which the Alzheimer's Poetry Project is conducting arts programming on a regular basis.

On Thanksgiving Day from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., families inhabited Rolly to visit their loved ones. Together, St. Paul residents and APP staff recited an original poem created by the residents on the theme of "What we are thankful for?"

A rousing version of "Roll out the Robot!" was sung as well.

At a recent weekly happy hour event, the residents had a naming contest, and "Rolly the Robot" was the winning name.

"I have observed a number of positive outcomes from the robot programming that I do not necessarily observe from traditional programming," St. Paul Executive Vice President Becky Reichelt said. "I

have been pleased to see that residents are engaging with each other when Rolly is approaching them, during their interactions, and as Rolly leaves. Rolly appears to be a catalyst for initiating peer-to-peer engagements."

St. Paul Manor Activities Director McKenzie Krohn noted, "It is so great to see the residents so engaged with the programs that include Rolly. Technology is a relatively new concept for our friends, but the way they interact with the people on the screen is so heartwarming to watch unfold."

How the robot came to Wisconsin:

On Oct. 15, Susan McFadden, co-founder of the Fox Valley Memory Project and a colleague that has partnered with the Alzheimer's Poetry Project on many projects over the past 12 years, reposted a message on social media from St. Paul Elder Services. The message in part read:

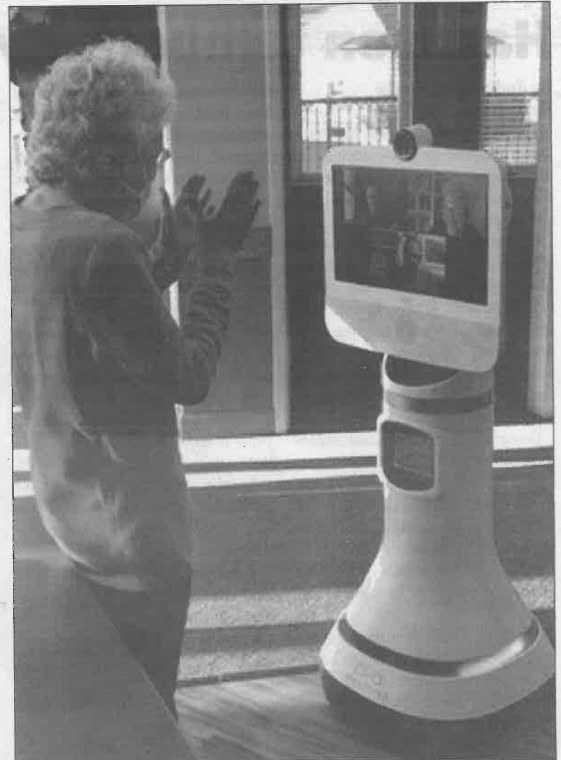
"We are devastated to share that we have identified a new widespread outbreak of COVID-19 within St. Paul Home. Last night,

we received notice that one resident from one of our memory care neighborhoods had tested positive after developing symptoms."

This urgent and emotional posting was a call to action. It wasn't a faceless message; the APP staff remembered back to the people it had worked with at St. Paul Manor in June of 2019, as part of a project funded by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health.

APP staff recalled the creativity, love, and caring St. Paul brought to their culminating event during that initial engagement, which took the form of an ice cream social. At that time, APP staff jumped for joy with St. Paul Manor residents at the end of the event as they shook their pom-poms and created cheers to honor the residents.

APP and ACD Direct, Inc. contacted Ms. Reichelt and she enthusiastically accepted the idea for the pilot project. The rest, as they say, is history, especially considering St. Paul is only the second facility nationwide to be provided a grant for this robot.



Submitted photo

**ACD Direct provides contact center services and related support technologies to a variety of non-profit organizations. This is their first field test of Rolly the Robot in response to COVID-19.**