

Employees Identify Accordius As Home With Possible Coronavirus Outbreak

An employee at Accordius Health in Harrisonburg said Monday the facility she works at is the long-term care facility being investigated by the Virginia Department of Health's Central Shenandoah Health District for a possible COVID-19 outbreak.

Kanesha Hamilton, a 25-year-old certified nursing assistant, said multiple people are sick at the facility on South Avenue.

"There's a lot of sick people," she said, adding both residents and employees are affected. "All of our aides are pretty much sick right now."

Two other employees, who refused to provide their names in fear of being fired, confirmed Accordius is the nursing home being investigated.

Calls to North Carolina-based Accordius were not returned.

In a press release Saturday, state officials say they collected specimens from symptomatic residents of a city long-term care facility. The specimens were sent to the state lab in Richmond. Several were positive for COVID-19.

The department, which is working to determine a possible source of exposure, hasn't released the name of the facility.

"When COVID-19 occurs in a setting where there are many older people with underlying health conditions, we are concerned," said Health Director Dr. Laura Kornegay in a statement Saturday night. "We'll be working very closely with the facility over the coming days to protect other residents and staff and to provide expert guidance on infection control."

Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center in Henrico County reported that 42 residents have died from the illness.

Hamilton said there was an influx of patients with COVID-19 symptoms last week.

In most cases, the new coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms, including cough and fever. The elderly and those with underlying health problems can experience more severe illnesses, including pneumonia.

Those who are 65 and older or have serious medical problems, such as lung and heart disease and diabetes, are urged to self-isolate. Frequent hand-washing and social distancing are recommended to help stop the spread of the virus.

Hamilton said she wasn't provided proper, or enough, personal protective equipment for the situation.

She said she had to use the same gown she used on a confirmed COVID-19 patient with a patient who didn't test positive.

"All of this could have been prevented," said Hamilton, who has been a CNA for seven years. "We told them over and over and over that we didn't feel comfortable working there. I've never been in the dark so much. It was like we're figuring it out as we go."

Hamilton said she last worked two days ago and has become ill. She said she was tested for the coronavirus Sunday night at Sentara RMH Medical Center.

"It feels like my toddler is constantly laying on my chest," she said, adding that she hasn't seen her children in a week.

The possible outbreak comes as cases in the state and the Central Shenandoah Health District continue to rise.

The district covers the counties of Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Bath and Highland, as well as the cities of Harrisonburg, Lexington, Buena Vista, Staunton and Waynesboro.

Monday's tally on the Virginia Department of Health website reported 5,747, an increase from 5,274 cases reported Sunday.

The data shows 87 cases in Harrisonburg and 49 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count increased from 141 on Sunday to 149 on Monday.

On Friday, the VDH reported the first COVID-19-related fatality in the Central Shenandoah Health District. VDH declined to say where the death was.

Doctor: Dozens Of Suspected Cases At City Nursing Home

Officials with Valley Family and Elder Care confirmed Tuesday that the possible COVID-19 outbreak at a long-term care facility is at Accordius Health on South Avenue in Harrisonburg.

Dr. Jonathan Shenk, chief medical officer for the group that oversees care at the facility, said there are four positive cases and several dozen suspected cases at the 97-bed facility.

“Every resident of the nursing home will be tested today,” said Shenk, in an interview with the Daily-News Record Tuesday morning.

He is working with the Virginia Department of Health and the University of Virginia to administer the tests.

Calls to North Carolina-based Accordius Health, which owns the facility, were not returned.

In a press release Saturday, state officials said they collected specimens from symptomatic residents of a city long-term care facility. The specimens were sent to the state lab in Richmond. Several were positive for COVID-19.

The department, which is working to determine a possible source of exposure, did not release the name of the facility.

While the VDH declined to comment further, three employees concerned about how the virus was being handled within the facility confirmed on Monday that Accordius was the facility being investigated by the VDH.

Nursing homes throughout the country have been hard hit by the virus.

Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center in Henrico County reported that 45 residents have died from the illness.

It’s unclear if any residents that have recently died at the Accordius facility died from COVID-19.

Kanesha Hamilton, a 25-year-old certified nursing assistant at the facility, said there was an influx of patients with COVID-19 symptoms last week.

In most cases, the new coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms, including cough and fever. The elderly and those with underlying health problems can experience more severe illnesses, including pneumonia.

Those who are 65 and older or have serious medical problems, such as lung and heart disease and diabetes, are urged to self-isolate. Frequent hand-washing and social distancing are recommended to help stop the spread of the virus.

Hamilton said she wasn't provided proper, or enough, personal protective equipment for the situation.

She said she had to use the same gown she used on a confirmed COVID-19 patient with a patient who didn't test positive.

"All of this could have been prevented," said Hamilton, in an interview Monday. "We told them over and over and over that we didn't feel comfortable working there. I've never been in the dark so much. It was like we're figuring it out as we go."

Shenk responded to concerns of personal protective equipment shortage, including gowns and masks, at the facility and nationwide.

"There will be a future time that we can reflect and determine ways to be better prepared," he said. "Right now, we are in the middle of a crisis and literally trying to save lives."

He said he's grateful to the community members who are volunteering to make homemade PPE for medical providers.

Shenk called the pandemic the "most challenging experience of his career."

He said he is thankful for his dedicated employees.

"I have always considered the leadership and staff of elder care facilities and my team at VFEC to be noble for their dedication to optimizing the health, cognitive status and overall quality of life of the aged," he said. "As we fight this virus together, I now know that they are heroic."

The possible outbreak at the facility comes as COVID-19 cases continue to climb in Virginia, and the Central Shenandoah Health District.

The district covers the counties of Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Bath and Highland, as well as the cities of Harrisonburg, Lexington, Buena Vista, Staunton and Waynesboro.

Tuesday's tally on the Virginia Department of Health website reported 6,171 cases, an increase from 5,747 reported Monday.

The data shows 95 cases in Harrisonburg and 56 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count increased from 149 on Monday to 154 on Tuesday.

On Friday, the VDH reported the first COVID-19-related fatality in the Central Shenandoah Health District. VDH declined to say where the death was.

Family: Accordius Resident Dies Of COVID-19

A resident of Accordius Health nursing home in Harrisonburg has died from COVID-19, family told the Daily-News-Record on Wednesday.

Broadway resident Karin King said Sentara RMH Medical Center called her family Wednesday afternoon to tell them that her 73-year-old father, Jim Southerly, died at 1 p.m. from the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

King said she was told Southerly had been in the hospital since Sunday, but she never received a call from Accordius.

“I’m pretty angry,” she said. “I didn’t even know he was in the hospital.”

She said something needs to change at the facility on South Avenue, where her father lived for three and a half years, before more deaths occur.

Calls to North Carolina-based Accordius Health were not returned.

King is among a growing number of angry family members with loved ones at the nursing home.

For days, Bonnie Southers’ quest to see or hear from her 93-year-old mother, Nellie Gentry, were ignored, she said.

Gentry, who previously had a stroke and suffers from dementia, has called Accordius home for six years.

On Saturday, state officials said they collected specimens from symptomatic residents of a city long-term care facility, and several were positive for COVID-19.

The state didn’t release the name of the facility, but the Daily News-Record on Monday confirmed that Accordius is the home in question.

Southers, of Hinton, said she has no idea if her mother tested positive or not, or whether she has symptoms. She said she’s begged to hear from her mother or be able to see her through a window — a concept that many nursing homes throughout the country have adopted to cope with strict isolation guidelines.

“I’m very, very upset,” said Southers, who added that the person who answers the front desk phone only takes messages. “I can’t see my mom. They won’t let me talk to the nurses. I tried five days in a row. It’s not right.”

Southers said her mother has a phone in her room, but every time she tries to call, the phone just rings and rings with no answer.

Elkton resident Krystal Shaffer said her experience has been essentially the same.

Her 90-year-old grandmother has been at the home for about six months as she completes physical therapy to help her heal from a fall.

Shaffer said the family has been kept in the dark.

“The lack of information coming from the facility is concerning,” she said. “I know they are busy, but families need to know what is going on with their loved ones.”

Shaffer said she received a voicemail over the weekend alerting her to the possible outbreak, but had no details about her grandmother.

She has talked to her grandmother, she said, but would like an update on her condition from the nursing home.

“I didn’t even know she was getting tested,” said Shaffer, adding that the only updates she’s getting on the facility are from news reports.

On Tuesday, officials with Valley Family and Elder Care confirmed that the possible COVID-19 outbreak is at Accordius Health, the day after staff members disclosed the information. The company oversees health care at the facility.

Dr. Jonathan Shenk, chief medical officer for the group that oversees care at the facility, previously said there are four positive cases and several dozen suspected cases at the 97-bed facility. It’s unclear if any employees tested positive, but several employees say there were confirmed cases among them.

Shenk said that by the end of Tuesday, all residents would have undergone testing, although results could take several days.

On Wednesday, he said he was still waiting for results.

“The Accordius Harrisonburg nursing facility, and the medical staff, are continuing to work closely with the Virginia Department of Health gathering data to inform our response to this outbreak,” he said.

Shenk said his company provides a doctor and nurse practitioners when needed, but most of the staff at the facility are employed by Accordius.

Employees say they weren’t provided proper, or enough, personal protective equipment for the situation.

One employee said she had to use the same gown she used on a confirmed COVID-19 patient with a patient who didn't test positive.

In March 2019, the facility was cited for 22 violations, including failing to provide and implement an infection prevention and control program.

The report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted employees failed to use proper hand-washing techniques during a medication pass and pour observation.

The report also stated that a resident who tested positive for the flu was found outside of their room without wearing a mask.

It's unclear if any of those measures were addressed before the pandemic started. At the time of the review, the facility was owned by Curis of Harrisonburg. It's unclear when Accordius took over.

As local health officials try to get a grasp of the situation at Accordius, nursing homes across the country, and in Virginia, continue to be hit hard by the virus.

Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center in Henrico County reported that 45 residents have died from the illness.

The possible outbreak at the Harrisonburg facility comes as COVID-19 cases continue to climb in Virginia and the Central Shenandoah Health District.

The district covers the counties of Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Bath and Highland, as well as the cities of Harrisonburg, Lexington, Buena Vista, Staunton and Waynesboro.

Wednesday's tally on the Virginia Department of Health website reported 6,500 cases, an increase from 6,171 reported Tuesday.

The data shows 101 cases in Harrisonburg and 67 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count increased from 154 on Tuesday to 195 on Wednesday.

On Friday, the VDH reported the first COVID-19-related fatality in the Central Shenandoah Health District. VDH declined to say where the death was.

VDH Confirms COVID-19 Outbreak At Accordius Health; 'Dozens' Of Cases

The Virginia Department of Health's Central Shenandoah Health District confirmed Thursday that there's a COVID-19 outbreak at Accordius Health in Harrisonburg, according to a press release.

City spokesman Michael Parks confirmed "dozens" of positive cases at the South Avenue nursing home as of Thursday.

"We're going to see a big jump," Parks said, adding that the city could have about 200 cases in the next few days compared to the roughly 100 the city had Thursday.

The Daily News-Record first reported the Accordius outbreak on Monday.

As of Tuesday, Dr. Jonathan Shenk, medical director of Valley Family and Elder Care, said four residents tested positive for the virus. The group oversees care at the facility.

The remaining residents, he said, were tested that day.

Shenk referred questions to the health district, which didn't release any results.

On Thursday, the Daily-New Record reported that one resident, 73-year-old Jim Southerly, died from the disease caused by the new coronavirus, according to family members.

According to Southerly's daughter, Broadway resident Karin King, Sentara RMH Medical Center called her family Wednesday afternoon to tell them he had died at 1 p.m. King said she was told Southerly had been in the hospital since Sunday, but she never received a call from Accordius.

"I'm pretty angry," she said. "I didn't even know he was in the hospital."

The health district hasn't confirmed the fatality.

The city of Harrisonburg is helping with the outbreak at the facility.

Parks said two ambulances have been dedicated to the facility. One is being staffed by the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad and the other by the Harrisonburg Fire Department.

Neither ambulance, he said, will be used for calls outside of the home.

Thursday's COVID-19 statewide tally on the Virginia Department of Health website reported 6,889 cases, an increase from 6,500 reported Wednesday. The data showed 119 cases in Harrisonburg and 69 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count increased from 195 on Wednesday to 208 on Thursday.

Last week, the VDH reported the first COVID-19-related fatality in the Central Shenandoah Health District. VDH declined to say where the death was.

'These Residents Are Like Family'

As Accordius Health in Harrisonburg deals with a COVID-19 outbreak, Jacey Roberts spends almost every minute she can trying to save lives.

The physician assistant has worked at the nursing home since July, employed by Valley Family and Elder Care — a company hired by Accordius to provide medical care to the residents at the South Avenue facility.

“These residents are like family to me,” Roberts said. “It’s hard to see them sick. I want to be by their side.”

On Saturday, North Carolina-based Accordius Health released a statement announcing that 81 residents and 12 of 35 staff members tested positive for COVID-19 at its South Avenue facility.

The Virginia Department of Health reported Monday night that 10 residents have died, including five who died at a “local hospital.”

Earlier in the day, Dr. Jonathan Shenk, medical director for Valley Family and Elder Care, said he couldn’t confirm the death toll. However, he said, Accordius is working with the VDH to report updates more efficiently.

“This is a very deadly disease,” he said. “It spreads like wildfire.”

Calls to Kim Morrow, chief operating officer for Accordius Health, weren’t returned Monday.

Monday’s COVID-19 statewide tally on the Virginia Department of Health website reported 8,990 cases, an increase from 8,537 reported Sunday. The data showed 252 cases in Harrisonburg and 106 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count increased from 277 on Sunday to 300 on Monday.

While the death toll will likely rise at the Harrisonburg Accordius facility, the health care providers say it won’t be from a lack of trying.

Roberts said the nurses and certified nursing assistants, who are employed by Accordius, are working tirelessly.

With some staff members testing positive, she said, others have stepped up.

“They’re pouring themselves out for their patients,” Roberts said. “Some are working double and triple shifts. They are taking it to a whole new level.”

During the last week, several people have placed signs outside calling the health care providers heroes.

Roberts said she's just doing her job.

"It's what I'm called to do," she said.

Shenk said he sees it differently. Roberts, and his other physician assistant, Kerwin Borntrager, and the rest of the staff at Accordius are heroes.

"These guys have have been working tirelessly," Shenk said.

As cases of COVID-19 began to mount at the home, family members of residents expressed concern about a lack of communication from Accordius.

Earlier this month, Crystal Gale joined a list she never wanted to be on.

It's a growing list of family members searching for answers about their loved ones battling COVID-19 at Accordius Health.

The city resident told the Daily News-Record on Monday that she has no idea what condition her 61-year-old mother is in.

"I'm worried," Gale said. "I can't physically go in there and check on her."

Gale said she first received a phone call from a North Carolina number on April 10 informing her of the outbreak at the facility but was told her mother wasn't among those who tested positive for the virus.

On Wednesday, she said, she received another phone call from a North Carolina number informing her that her mother tested positive.

That is the last time she received an update about her mother, she said, despite repeated calls. She has no idea if her mother is still at the home or at Sentara RMH Medical Center.

"I called again this morning, and they just took my name and number," said Gale, who added she last visited her mother just before the lockdown took effect last month.

While it's Accordius' responsibility to notify family members, Shenk said, it can be overwhelming for staff. He said staff tries to call the legal guardian listed on the account and relies on them to notify other family members.

Shenk said that calling five family members for each resident, each day, would be nearly impossible.

"That's 500 phone calls," he said "We're struggling. We simply can't make all those calls."

Roberts said she tries to make calls when she can, even though it's not a task she's responsible for doing.

"My heart goes out to them, knowing they can't be there for their loved ones," she said.

Shenk also said family members can arrange to see their loved ones through windows.

Previously, family members said they were denied such access. Shenk said it was a "miscommunication."

"We would love to see that happen," he said.

Accordius Health Death Toll Now At 13

COVID-19 has claimed the life of three additional residents of Accordius Health in Harrisonburg, according to a Wednesday press release from the Virginia Department of Health.

The death toll at the South Avenue nursing home now stands at 13.

“Older adults and those with chronic medical conditions are at highest risk for poor outcomes related to COVID-19. Our community grieves with the families who have lost loved ones and who have loved ones who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The community continues to collaborate to meet the needs of all the residents of Accordius Health,” Dr. Laura Kornegay, director of the Central Shenandoah Health District, said in the release.

On Monday, VDH reported that 10 residents had died, five at the home and five at a “local hospital,” where they were transferred for treatment.

On Saturday, North Carolina-based Accordius Health released a statement announcing that 81 residents and 12 of 35 staff members tested positive for COVID-19.

Although most residents at the facility tested positive for the virus, Wednesday’s press release noted that 38 residents have COVID-19 symptoms, an increase of 10 since Monday.

Eight residents are hospitalized.

Wednesday’s COVID-19 statewide tally on the Virginia Department of Health website hit five figures for the first time, registering 10,266 cases.

The data showed 318 cases in Harrisonburg and 145 in Rockingham County.

The statewide death count is at 349.

VDH and the Central Shenandoah Health District are working with the Medical Reserve Corps to staff volunteers at Accordius Health to help with nursing, social work and pastoral care assistance.

Families Say Nursing Home 'Failed' Them

While no one will likely know how the coronavirus entered Accordius Health nursing home in Harrisonburg, several residents' family members and employees say it likely spread following a hallway dance party in early April.

Several employees, who requested anonymity on fears of being fired, said dozens of residents flocked into the hallway to participate in the dance.

Photographs on Accordius Health's Facebook page on April 6 confirmed the party with the statement: "Social distancing has challenged our staff to become very creative to incorporate our resident's love of music and dancing into our activities, but the [staff] hit [this] dance party out of the ballpark."

While the post stated there was sufficient social distance, the employees said it wasn't good enough with dozens of residents in hallways. Additionally, while employees wore PPE, known as personal protective equipment, residents did not. The pictures posted to the Facebook page confirm the claim.

On April 13, a concerned employee, Kanasha Hamilton, told the Daily News-Record there was an outbreak at the facility. She also voiced concerns of the dance party and lack of proper PPE.

Five days later, after multiple inquiries from the Daily News-Record, North Carolina-based Accordius Health released a statement announcing that 81 residents at the 97-bed facility — and 12 of 35 staff members — tested positive for COVID-19.

As of Friday, 21 of the residents have died.

Repeated calls over the past two weeks to Accordius Health have not been returned.

Ruth Simmers-Domzalski's mother-in-law, Mary Domzalski, was among those dancing in the photographs. The 88-year-old former nurse and Broadway resident died of COVID-19 on April 20.

"They weren't even wearing masks," said Simmers-Domzalski. "It sickens me. They didn't take heed to the warning. To me, they didn't care. It's like running cattle through a slaughterhouse."

Bridgette Barbour's 71-year-old mother, Alberta Barbour, participated in the dance party, too.

The daughter recalled her mother telling her she was going to a "shindig."

Days later, the mother tested positive for COVID-19. On April 19, she died from the virus.

“It’s probably where it did [spread],” Barbour said. “They had no gloves and no masks. The nursing home failed us.”

Several family members said they’ve had a lot of problems with the facility both before the emergence of the coronavirus and after.

Federal health inspection reports back up the family members’ claims.

In March 2019, the facility was cited for 22 violations, including failing to provide and implement an infection prevention and control program. The facility was fined roughly \$13,000.

The report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted employees failed to use proper hand-washing techniques during a medication pass-and-pour observation.

The report also stated that a resident who tested positive for the flu was found outside of their room without wearing a mask.

It’s unclear if any of those measures were addressed before the pandemic started. At the time of the review, the facility was owned by Curis of Harrisonburg.

In the last few years, the facility’s name has changed from Avante to Curis to its current name, Accordius Health, in July.

A December report from the same federal agency shows the facility, under Accordius Health, got worse.

“Since the company took over, this place has gone from bad to worse,” one resident told an investigator. “There aren’t enough staff here.”

The report stated several examples of neglect at the home, including providing adequate showers. One resident stated he went a week without a shower.

Another stated that he was told to go to the bathroom in his pants.

Other residents reported waiting 30 minutes or more for staff to respond when they hit their call bells. Barbour said her mother complained to her about the response time.

“When she would ring the buzzer, it would take them forever to come,” Barbour said. “She had fallen one time. She had hit the button, but no one came. A CNA walking past saw my mother on the floor. My mother said she had been laying on the floor for a good while.”

Simmers-Domzalski said her mother-in-law experienced similar neglect at the home.

“Her bed sheets were dirty with feces,” she said. “The toilet seat had feces on it. That’s not acceptable.”

Another time, she found her sitting naked on her bed.

Barbour described the home as “filthy,” but like the Domzalski family, she couldn’t afford to move her to a high-end nursing facility.

Simmers-Domzalski also said her mother-in-law had several unexplained injuries during her time there, but her charts never showed them.

“Even if it’s a tiny bruise, they are supposed to mark that,” she said. “They were supposed to contact me on everything, but they didn’t.”

She said they failed to contact her when Mary Domzalski was sent to the hospital for back fractures.

“Nobody knew how they got there,” Simmers-Domzalski said.

In the federal government’s report, nurses told investigators they needed double the staff they had.

Fast forward to late March, as the virus continued to spread across the country, family members and employees say little was done to protect the roughly 100 residents at the home.

In mid-April, Hamilton told the Daily News-Record she wasn’t provided proper, or enough, personal protective equipment for the situation. She said she had to use the same gown she used on a confirmed COVID-19 patient with a patient who didn’t test positive.

“All of this could have been prevented,” said Hamilton, who has been a CNA for seven years. “We told them over and over and over that we didn’t feel comfortable working there. I’ve never been in the dark so much. It was like we’re figuring it out as we go.”

Barbour said her mother told her she saw nurses and staff sharing gowns and other PPE.

“That’s cross contamination,” Barbour said. “They’re just passing it around.”

As the virus spread through the facility, communication from Accordius Health to the residents’ family members was minimal, at best, family members say.

Numerous family members called the facility begging for updates on their loved ones, only to be hung up on, they said. When family members did get through, they say, no one would give them a straight answer about their loved one’s condition.

“I got so many conflicting stories from them,” Simmers-Domzalski said. “It went all the way up to the day of her death.”

Barbour had a similar experience.

She said she was able to visit her mother by standing outside her room's window. After the brief visit, her mother took a turn for the worse, but Barbour wasn't told.

"No one took the initiative to call me," she said. "No explanation. No apologies. It had me very, very livid."

Barbour said she's not sure how she will proceed, but she wants Accordius Health to be held responsible.

"The lack of communication to me, and the rest of the resident's family, is ridiculous," Barbour said. "Something needs to be done about it. I'm not going to rest until something is done. If I have to yell it from the rooftop I will. They failed us, and they failed the residents. And the death toll keeps rising."

Loved Ones Mourn COVID-19 Victims At Accordius Health

Before dementia set in, Mary Domzalski would often walk around her apartment complex on Alger Lane in Broadway with a blood pressure cuff and stethoscope.

Although elderly herself, the retired nurse would make sure every one of her neighbors was doing well.

They called her “Nurse Mary.”

“Her passion was taking care of people,” said her daughter-in-law, Ruth Simmers-Domzalski, of Broadway.

Domzalski was among 21 residents of the Accordius Health nursing home on South Avenue in Harrisonburg to die from COVID-19. She was 88 when she succumbed to the virus on April 20.

As a registered nurse in Scotland, she met her husband, Frank Domzalski II, in the United Kingdom while he was on furlough from the Navy. She later traveled to New York on the RMS Queen Mary. She married her husband in February 1956, settling down in New Jersey.

The couple retired to the Shenandoah Valley in 1986, eventually calling Broadway home.

The couple had four children, including Frank Domzalski III, who was working as a contractor at the MillerCoors plant in Elkton when he was killed in an explosion in 2004.

Her daughter-in-law said Domzalski entered the nursing home in 2017 after dementia made it unsafe for her to be home by herself.

Had she been of sound mind, Simmers-Domzalski believed Domzalski would have recovered from the virus.

“She would have beat it, because she would have doctored herself,” Simmers-Domzalski said. “She’s just going to be missed.”

Among the others who fell victim to the deadly virus was James “Jim” Southerly.

The 72-year-old died on April 15.

His daughter, Karin King, said Southerly grew up poor in Rockingham County. She recalled his parents used to sell moonshine in the 1950s just to scrape by.

She said the frugality carried over to Southerly.

“He was always looking to make a buck,” she said, adding that she remembered picking produce with her dad when she was in elementary school. “He’d plant a lot of produce and sell it. He’d plant an acre of potatoes and we’d go sell them.”

He’d also buy hogs and resell them.

While he enjoyed working with agriculture, she said, his full-time job was hanging drywall. For many years, he worked for Miller’s Drywall in Harrisonburg before going out on his own.

In his spare time, Southerly enjoyed gardening and watching birds.

King said he often kept to himself. After Southerly split up with King’s mother, King and Southerly grew apart and didn’t talk often.

“He was a loner, but he could tell a story,” she said. “If you got around him, he could tell a story. I don’t know if they were made up, but he could tell a story.”

He entered Accordius about three-and-a-half years ago.

King said Southerly was known by everyone as the “greeter,” because he’d always be at the front door welcoming guests.

“He greeted everyone that came in,” King said.

Then there’s Alberta Barbour. She died from COVID-19 on April 19.

Born in Washington, Barbour grew up in Gordonsville and moved to Charlottesville in her early 20s.

While working at the Ken Johnson Cafeteria, Barbour met her future husband, James Barbour. They married in 1971 and had two daughters.

One of their daughters, Bridgette Barbour, said her mother was known to all as a caring, generous person.

“My mom was a very sweet person,” she said. “She would want to take [in] a homeless person. That’s the type of person she was. She’d always put herself on the back burner.”

The daughter also said her mother wasn’t afraid to make a fashion statement.

“She was a very sassy dresser,” Barbour said.

During her life, Alberta Barbour worked several jobs, including as a housekeeper at the University of Virginia Medical Center.

She eventually retired after her health challenges became too much to handle. She suffered from lupus, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis.

In 2018, she moved in briefly with her daughter in Broadway, but moved into the nursing home a short time later after blood sugar levels became difficult to control.

While at the nursing home, Barbour said, several of the staff bonded with her mother. One even called her “mom.”

Barbour understood why so many loved her mother — she said she was always there for her family.

“Whatever we needed, she got it,” Barbour said. “She was very determined. She did a real good job.”

Just before she died, Barbour had a chance to talk to her mother via FaceTime.

Seeing her mother in agony from the virus, she recalled telling her one last message: “Pass me the torch, Mom, because I’m going to take over the family now.”