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September 2021

Sonja Zuchotzki

Dear Board Members,

My name is Sonja (VanderMey) Zuchotzki. I have been working at Emmanuel Home in various positions for twenty-four years. Most recently, my title was Resident Experience Coordinator, which was taken away from me on December 15, 2020.

I worked hard throughout all my years because I believed in Emmanuel Home as being a special place for our seniors. I have always made sure that I treat all of the residents with the kindness and respect that they deserve. I have laughed and cried with them and their families. In the last few years, I saw people who have signed up to move into Emmanuel Home, mainly because their parents lived at Emmanuel home at one time. Some told me that they wanted to live here because of how their family members loved living here. I had fun sharing memories with them of their mom/dad.

I loved my new position, and I slowly became more confident in my new role. I was good with the residents and staff. Darren talked about needing someone to help him since he was so busy with the new buildings. I was helping at the reception desk a lot and answering the phone when Maria wasn't at her desk. Darren told me that the new person would be assisting Maria, and I could concentrate on getting things ready for the new building.

When he told me Laura was the one he wanted in the new position, I was excited because I worked great with Laura in the Homecare department. There was some miscommunication because I wasn't aware that she would take so many of my jobs away from me. I was not too fond of it, and I know I wasn't always easy on her for that. Two months later, Darren came and told me that Laura would be my new boss. This was a shock to so many of us at that time. There were a lot of things that Laura didn't know about. She butted heads with Pat Groot, and she ended up leaving. Donna told me in the beginning that Laura was using her manager position unfairly. Donna said it would take time before Laura would settle down a bit. Laura changed when she became a manager, and she was hard on me at times and a few others. Six months later, Donna came into my office and was very frustrated with Laura. She said she talked to Darren, and he sided with Laura. She told me, "I can't take it anymore" The following week, she resigned. Before she left, she told me she feels terrible about leaving me. I asked what she meant by that. She said, "no one will have your back; they want you gone." Donna was a great worker who worked hard for Emmanuel Home for ten years. I missed her when she left

I wasn't always in agreement with the way things were done. It was hard to get a new boss, and having the things I worked so hard for suddenly taken away from me. I felt such pride in what I did, and then to have someone else do it was hard. This new position meant everything to me. I was so proud of what I had accomplished. In the last six months I thought Laura and I were getting along a lot better.

In the second week of December 2020, a few kitchen staff came to me about issues with the Marianne. They told me that she made a few of them cry and were very nervous around her. The next day I had a resident, Mrs. Doreen Thomas, who told me that Marianne came to her suite and was very rude to her and made her feel awful. Doreen was only trying to help her best friend. This was the second time Marianne was very rude to her, yet Doreen wasn't sure if she wanted Marianne to get in trouble. Trish had talked to me the day before regarding the issues with Marianne and Doreen. Trish told me that one young staff member quit due to a few residents and staff being hard on her. One of them was Mariann. Since staff and residents have had problems with Marianne, I thought I should bring it up at our department head meeting. Everyone has been under a lot of stress due to the Covid 19. Laura told us to bring what we thought were problems to our department head meetings. Trish and I explained to some of the other managers what had happened between Marianne and the staff. Once the meeting was over, Marina (kitchen manager) saw me in the hallway, and high-fived me, and said, "I'm glad you said something about her, because somebody needed to say it."

The next day I had my evaluation. It was the worst one I've ever had. She brought up some things that weren't true. I tried to explain to her some of the things she said I need to work on or change. I thought things were going better, all the work I did with the new building and the work I did with the new residents that moved in. She never told me a thing that I did well. I was upset when I got home, told my husband what happened. I ended up sending a message to Laura that I was thinking about resigning but would talk to her on Monday about it. The next day I again sent a message to Laura saying that I thought more about it and didn't want to resign.

I received an email to meet with Darren and Laura. We talked about my evaluation. Darren asked if I had anything to say. I froze and got nervous. So I agreed that what Laura had said was true in my evaluation. Later I was told I lost my position. I can't even begin to explain how hard this was on me. I was utterly devastated. I was so depressed for a while, and I don't know what I would have done if it wasn't for my family. That they did this nine days before Christmas made it even worse. My entire family was affected by this.

I have two brothers, Ron VanderMey and Marco VanderMey. These two were very supportive of me, so I brought Marco to a meeting with Darren and Laura. Marco is a manager at AHS and deals with a lot of doctors and other managers. Marco asked if he could see my evaluations. Darren said, "I will see what I can scramble together," My brother asked Laura a question, which she then looked at Darren for the answer. My brother was not impressed with these two. Marco told me your supervisor should have said a few encouraging words about you. Laura didn't say one word in that hour-long meeting.

My first day back as an HCA was excruciating and degrading. I offered to come back early, which happened to be on December 26, to help out since lots of staff were sent home due to Covid. I was on my own for the first five days, which I was thankful for. Many staff didn't know what I was doing and didn't know what to say to me. Some of the HCAs that I was working with, I hired in 2012. I was so ashamed to be in the Homecare office again. I was a failure, and I felt that every

day I was at work. I stopped talking to most of the staff because I felt so humiliated. Coming back to work in a different role was harder on me than I would have thought.

I did still stay away from most of the staff, and it was too hard. Darren and a few others would say Hi. I honestly didn't want to talk to them. I was still troubled with them. They're not my friends and haven't been for a long time.

After a few months of being an HCA again, I thought things were going well. I was happy again working with the nurses. We thought we had a great team. I heard Marianne was to have said that since I'm back in HC, the staff's moral has gone down and it's because of me. Most of us were surprised by that, I didn't really believe it either. We worked so well together.

Me and Catherine Wildeboer received an email from Marianne and Trish. Both of us are accused of steering the seating plans in the dining room and ordering trays for residents. I asked Marianne and she told me which residents I'm supposed to have done this to. One was G. VanderBerg. Another HCA admitted to asking for a tray for her but Trisha said it was me. I have been getting Gerry food for over ten years. Mr. & Mrs. Veenstra, Maria and Aria have been buying her food since Covid. Later we received another email from Marianne that she should have talked to us first before sending this email to us as well as to Darren and Laura.

I have stayed away from Trish in 2021, because I knew she was hard on a friend, Laurie Lenten. Who later was also demoted, she was the head cook for years but was now supposed to be doing dishes. At first Laurie and Trish were promoted together to become kitchen managers, Two kitchen managers working together didn't work. Laurie couldn't handle working with Trish, and two other managers. She left Emmanuel Home as well.

One day in March, 2021 when I was walking to the dining room by the old West entrance door, which was wide open. The residents in the dining room were complaining about how cold it was there from the draft that was coming in from outside. One resident said she was going to go back to her room because she was so cold. I told her to wait and I'll see what is going on. I saw a van from the plumber who was working on some bathrooms. I saw him and asked if he would mind if I close the door due to the fact that the residents were so cold. He told me to go ahead and close it, he was fine for the time being. I closed the door and Trish saw me. She asked why I closed the door. I explained about the residents being so cold and that I asked the plumber first if it was alright to close the door. Trisha then said "it's not up to me to close the door and that next time I should talk to her first before closing the door". I never said a word and just left. The following week that same door was open, this time I didn't say or do anything. When I walked by around 1400, no one was around but that door was open for about five hours. Anyone could have walked in or out.

In May, 2021 I was getting ready to serve lunch/supper. There were no other HCAs there, I phoned Jessica (LPN) she told me Clarence Visser just came back from the hospital and got another HCA to come up and help her. Normally there is four of us HCAs serving, now there's only me. I told the kitchen staff that I was by myself and to go slowly. I put on gloves because I would not have time to hand sanitize in between each plate I bring to a resident. When you have

four staff helping, then you have time to hand sanitize. Marina seen me running around and came to help, and then I saw Trish standing by the kitchen. While I was serving, she said to Marina, "staff is not to wear gloves while serving" I think I said something about why I'm wearing gloves. I then kept serving the residents their food.

**For your information**, there is four to five staff in the kitchen standing side by side. The first one, with no gloves on, grabs a plate, puts the meat on it. Then passes the plate on to the second person, who then puts potatoes on the plate. Then two more staff put food on the plate. Not one of these staff members has to hand sanitize or wear gloves between each plate they pass. Some plates are prepared earlier for residents that need more help. These plates are very hot because they come out of a particular plate heater. The kitchen staff gives us old, dirty potholders so we can grab the plates without us burning our fingers. Hear I was in trouble for wearing gloves when I had no help.

Not long after that, Marianne told me that I need to meet with her and Trish. When I got to the meeting, there was Marianne, Trish, and Henry. Three managers against me, I knew I was in trouble again. We talked about what happened in the dining room, and I explained what had all happened. Trish then said she wanted to know why we don't get along. I told her I stay away from staff lately. I thought the meeting was over when Trish again started talking about me. She said that I'm rude to her and that I told her on more than one occasion that it's her fault that I was demoted back to Homecare. I was shocked and said, "excuse me" she again said that I told her many time that it was her fault that I was demoted back to Homecare. I was in shock. I stood up and needed to get out of that room. Marianne told me to go to her office to compose myself. I walked out and was heading to my locker when Aria saw me. I started crying and told her what Trish said about me. Then Brian saw me and asked what's going on. I was not feeling well by then and wanted to leave. Aria walked me to my car, where I told her what was being said about me. I started having problems breathing and felt dizzy. I couldn't believe what just happened. Aria helped me phone my dad that instead of driving home, I could go to his house. I was not forming words together, so Aria talked to my dad. I needed to lay down since I thought I was going to pass out. One LPN, Jessica asked if she should call the ambulance. I nodded my head. Aria stayed with me until the ambulance came. They gave me an Ativan, which helped me to relax. Aria and Maria later drove me to my dad's place. Trish LIED. I have never seen anyone sit there so nicely and tell such a lie about someone. Who would want to hurt someone like that? I have blamed myself, Darren, and Laura for losing my position. Never have I blamed Trish or anyone else.

I went on stress leave for a month, the first week I had a hard time sleeping and eating. After a while I thought about some of the things that have happened. I phoned Darren to see if we could talk. He agreed and asked if I wanted to bring someone. I told him I didn't need anyone. Then later, when I was talking to Aria, she offered to come in with me because I was very nervous. When Aria spoke to Darren and told him that I wanted her in the meeting, he wanted to bring someone in. I called Darren and left a voice mail telling him that I would prefer to talk together. I wanted to see how we can fix some things and start over again. The next day I received an email

from Darren that he thought it would be better to wait until I get back from my stress leave to have that meeting with him.

On June 22, 2021, I came to work at 6:30, and Darren was waiting for me. He gave me my papers, and I was told that I would no longer be working at Emmanuel Home.

In 2011, Ron Bos made me an HCA supervisor. About six months later, Donna Calahan was hired, and not long after that, Darren told me that Donna would be the supervisor for the LPNs and HCAs. That was hard to go through, but I worked with Donna, and we worked so well together that we became friends. We are still friends to this day.

In the last few years, Darren has been busy with the North wing and the other building he is working on.. Residents complain that they never see him, and they are saying he only cares about building other sites. He made the job application for Operations Manager very difficult, not one staff member would be able to apply because no one had that kind of degree. He told me this. He was worried that Christy Antoniuk would try for it. Darren thinks he runs the building and says he's got the board wrapped around his finger.

I have done lots of fund raising to help Emmanuel Home raise money for all kinds of things. I've never been late and I use one or two sick days a year. I think I would have deserved better than this. Once I was demoted I wrote three letters to the board, I never ended up sending them. Some staff and residents told me I should send them. At that time, I was happy to be working there yet.

I know Darren is fixated on me saying that I don't f\_\_\_ want to be here. This was the first week of January 2021. Brian Dunn was angry at me when I said HI because I haven't really talked to him or anyone yet. He got mad and said that I involved his family. I asked what he meant by that. "You took my daughter off of Facebook, sometimes you say Hi to her and other times you don't" I told him that I didn't take her off from Facebook. and I don't talk to many staff. He kept getting angrier and said what are you doing here, go get a job at Walmart for ten bucks a hour. Since I was only back in this role for a week or so, I did say you think I want to be here like this, I don't want to F\_\_\_ be here. I was upset that he talked to me like that and I thought he was my friend. I think the only friend he has is Darren, because Brian knows everything that goes on in Emmanuel Home. He told me lots of times to "play the game" don't let them know you don't like them. He can say to his maintenance team "I have more muscles in my penis than you both have in your arms". This guy swears more than any one I know. But he's Darren's best friend and he tells him everything that he hears regarding staff.

One good thing that came out of this, is the residents. The love and support I have gotten has been amazing. I never expected anything like this. They didn't care what role I had at work, as long as I stayed there. My daughter told me that she was very proud of me for having the strength to go back into Emmanuel home. She also told me that she has heard lots of wonderful things residents have to say about me.

She worked at Emmanuel Home for over three years in different departments. Donna talked to her about going for her HCA, and she did. Later Marianne asked if she wanted more hours and Deidra said she would love that. A few days later, Marianne showed her a new schedule. She would work eight shifts every two weeks but all evenings. Deidra asked if she could keep some of her days shifts and work the other shifts in the evening. Marianne said NO. The next day Deidra told Marianne that she would like to keep her three days at reception and work her other days in-home care. Marianne was unhappy and told her, "you will be casual in here then, and casuals get the crappy shift so that you will get all the crappy shift." Deidra got 12 hours every two weeks in Homecare after that. My daughter started looking for other jobs that same day and found one. She is now working for AHS and is very happy not to be working at Emmanuel Home.

When the board hired a man named Brad to find out how he can help us and to find out how to make Neerlandia and the West end project as good as Emmanuel Home, out of the managers that were there when Brad came, only two are left. So many of us long-time staff members said this place is not the same anymore. The staff that is still there are terrified of saying anything because of losing their job.

I have received lots of calls from residents and staff after I was fired. Even after being demoted, I could not tell anyone what happened to me, as per Darren. I tried hard at first not to say anything, but residents aren't dumb. There were a few residents that said I stole money from Emmanuel Home, and one asked if I lost Emmanuel home lots of money. This was very hard to hear.

I know a few went to see Darren after I was demoted. They phoned me afterward and told me what they told him. Some said they moved into Emmanuel Home because of me. Some talked about leaving because of the way staff are being treated.

I know it's too late for me, but I ask you to talk to staff or residents and see what they think about how things are going at Emmanuel Home. I know residents and staff are worried about how things are being run. Don't just listen to what Darren or even Laura have to tell you. I have seen the lies that Darren tells. You should talk to Laurie Lenten and find out what Trish is doing hiring sixteen-year-olds to cook meals in the kitchen when they have only had a little bit of training by Trish. One girl was Trish's babysitter, and a few more were her friends. Food wasn't cooked properly, or it was burnt. Lots of complaints from residents because so many young girls were cooking. This should be a safety issue.

I'm not perfect, and I know I have done things I'm not proud of. I don't think I deserved to be treated the way I was in the last year of my work. They are going to make me sound like a villain and maybe some of you know me, and know I am not that kind of person.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I'm sorry, it is such a long letter.

Sincerely yours,

Sonja