



OMNIway

The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Shown
LTC Homes' Strengths. . . pg. 3

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O Canada!

Frost Manor resident Mary Lee Digiaco, who was named Frost Manor's 2020 Ms. Canada, shows her Canadian pride on July 1. See story at right.

Artist Lynn Melbourne Honours Almonte Country Haven Residents by Sketching Their Portraits

By Deron Hamel

Before the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, Lynn Melbourne, an artist from Almonte, Ont., was inspired to sketch portraits of people living in long-term care homes.

While searching for potential subjects online, she landed on Almonte Country Haven's Facebook page and saw many faces of people living at the home.

Lynn started sketching. In an interview with

CTV News Ottawa, Lynn said she was taken by the photos Almonte Country Haven had posted of residents. She wanted to use her artistic skills to capture the beauty, joy and kindness she saw in the photos.

"I got to Country Haven's page before COVID, (and) that's what I saw; I saw people being kind to people," Lynn told CTV.

In early April the Lanark County long-term care home was impacted by a

COVID-19 outbreak. Twenty-eight residents passed away as a result of the virus.

On June 29, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit declared the outbreak over at Almonte Country Haven.

For three months, Lynn sketched portraits of Almonte Country Haven residents from photos on the home's Facebook page. She has sketched 40 portraits at

See 'She Just' page 2

Village Green Residents Enjoy First Live Entertainment Since March

A live outdoor performance from the musical group Breaking Chains on June 30 was a much-needed change for Village Green residents.

The Greater Napanee long-term care home's residents enjoy live entertainment and this was the first musical performance

they had attended since the global COVID-19 pandemic began in March.

Indoor group programming has been on hold since the pandemic began, so experiencing live music was headline news at the home, says

See 'People Were' page 2

Maplewood LEA Rosanne Blackburn is Taking on the Role of In-house Entertainer

Since Maplewood residents have been missing their regular entertainment due to restrictions in place during the global COVID-19 pandemic, life enrichment aide (LEA) Rosanne Blackburn has been coming up with ways to keep people smiling and the laughter flowing.

As a result of restrictions

in place due to the pandemic, outside entertainers are not visiting OMNI Health Care homes, and group programming is on hold.

Knowing how important entertainment is to the Brighton long-term care home's residents, Rosanne has been providing

See 'I Just' page 4

Frost Manor Celebrates Canada Day with Photoshoots for Residents

Canada Day celebrations were different at Frost Manor this year, but despite protocols in place to keep everyone safe during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, the Lindsay long-term care home's residents still celebrated Canada's 153rd birthday with lots of fun and laughter.

The highlight of the

celebrations at Frost Manor on July 1 was a photoshoot organized by the life enrichment team.

Life enrichment aides Amy Whitehead and Taylor Davies dressed residents in red and white props with the maple leaf and took pictures of them in a photo booth they set up.

Residents got right

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Peppy Mocko holds a portrait of his mother that was sketched by artist Lynn Melbourne (left).

‘[S]he Just Reached Out of Compassion and Kindness and Concern, It Was Such a Beautiful Gesture’

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the time of this writing and plans to complete drawings of more residents.

Lynn began sending her completed portraits to Almonte Country Haven in the hopes that her artwork would provide some comfort during a difficult time.

“I thought maybe this would give them some joy... Maybe this would help the residents’ families and staff because it must be hard. What a hard job. My job is easy.”

— Lynn Melbourne, an artist from Almonte, Ont.

“I thought maybe this would give them some joy,” Lynn told CTV. “Maybe this would help the residents’ families and staff because it must be hard. What a hard job. My job is easy.”

Some of the residents sketched by Lynn have passed away as a result of COVID-19. The families of those residents will receive original portraits of their loved ones from Lynn.

One of the residents who passed away was the mother

of Peppy Mocko, who said his mother loved life at Almonte Country Haven.

“She really found a home here; she loved the people here, she loved the staff, and I think it was pretty mutual,” he told CTV, adding he was touched to receive a portrait of his mother from Lynn.

“This just tops everything off,” he said. “That someone cared about these people beyond a working situation. She would have been so thrilled.”

OMNI Health Care, which owns Almonte Country Haven, is planning to have the portraits Lynn has created transferred to canvas for family members to have.

Portraits will also be used to create a commemorative wall at the home.

Almonte Country Haven administrator Carolyn Della Foresta says Lynn’s gesture has meant a lot to everyone at the home.

“God has given her this incredible gift and she is now using her gift to be generous with others and kind,” Carolyn told CTV.

“She has no affiliation with the home, and the fact that she just reached out of compassion and kindness and concern, it was such a beautiful gesture.”

‘My Dad Showed Me What I Was Supposed to Do in Life’

Streamway Villa’s new LEC, Laurie Kracht, says caring for her father inspired her to pursue a career in LTC

Laurie Kracht became Streamway Villa’s new life enrichment co-ordinator (LEC) in early July, and she credits her late father for inspiring her to take the career path that brought her to the Cobourg long-term care home.

About five years ago, Laurie moved back home to help her mother care for her dad, who had been diagnosed with dementia.

Eventually, Laurie’s father needed hospital care, and, after spending several months in and out of hospital and waiting for a bed in a long-term care home, Laurie’s father moved into Streamway Villa. He passed away three weeks later.

But Laurie says during his time at Streamway her father was happy and was receiving excellent care.

Laurie saw the difference that people working at Streamway Villa made in her dad’s life.

“It was the first time I had seen my dad smile in a long time because he had been in and out of the hospital for a long time,” she tells The OMNIway.

While caring for her dad



Streamway Villa life enrichment co-ordinator Laurie Kracht, right, with resident Vera Haden in this photo from 2019.

at home, Laurie was also enrolled in the fitness and health promotion program at Durham College.

She followed up by taking the gerontology and activation program at Durham College and is currently taking online classes in the recreational therapy program at Canadore College.

Seeing her father so happy while living at Streamway Villa inspired Laurie to pursue a career where she could advocate for seniors.

“That’s when I knew that this is what I wanted to do,” she recalls.

Laurie and her mother moved to Cobourg. Laurie worked in an adult day program as well as at the local hospital.

Then, last summer, Laurie started working casual shifts at Streamway Villa when a life enrichment aide position opened.

She started working part-time at Streamway Villa in January. She says there’s been no looking back for her.

“This is where I am supposed to be and I knew it from the get-go,” she says. “My dad showed me what I was supposed to do in life.” — DH

‘People Were Smiling for Days’

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life enrichment co-ordinator Ulana Orrick.

Keeping in line with safety protocols, residents watched Breaking Chains’ performance while observing social distancing requirements from inside the chain-link fence in the Village Green courtyard. The band played from the other side of the fence.

To make the event even more enjoyable, Village Green hosted a strawberry social during the concert, with staff members dishing out plates of strawberry shortcake made with fresh berries.

“It ended up being a huge success,” Ulana tells The OMNIway.



Village Green residents practise social distancing while enjoying a performance from Breaking Chains on June 30.

“People were smiling for days. There was a buzz in the dining room at mealtimes; the residents were all talking about it, asking each other if they had been at the concert.”

Ulana recalls one touching moment when she asked a normally quiet resident how

she was enjoying the show.

“She just said, ‘I’m happy!’ with this huge smile I haven’t seen in months, and I just knew that this was perfect.”

Ulana says Village Green is hoping the home can host another outdoor concert in August. — DH

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Family Visits, Outdoor Time Key to Keeping Residents' Spirits High at Kentwood Park

'We want every single resident to be happy'

Given the restrictions in place in the long-term care sector since the global COVID-19 pandemic began in March, homes have concentrated on finding ways to keep residents' spirits high while maintaining important safety protocols.

"We are spending a lot of time outside, if it's not too hot, and we're doing a lot of one-on-one programming."

— Brandy Courtney, life enrichment aide, Kentwood Park

At Kentwood Park in Picton, there has been an effort to focus on one-to-one programming, supervised outdoor time and, most recently, outdoor family visits, says life enrichment aide Brandy Courtney.

"We are spending a lot of time outside, if it's not too hot, and we're doing a lot of one-on-one programming," she tells The OMNIway.

Outdoor visits began in June at Kentwood Park when the Ministry of Health and Long-Term

Care announced that Ontario long-term care homes could have supervised outdoor visits for residents and their family members, provided safety protocols were met.

Since some residents do not have family members who can visit them, the Kentwood Park life enrichment team is focusing on one-to-one activities the residents enjoy as well as taking requests for new activities to try out.

"We want every single resident to be happy," Brandy says.

Some residents who have cognitive impairment do not understand the situation, so staff members will sit down with them and explain why their loved ones have not been coming into the home and why it's important to maintain protocols, such as social distancing.

Kentwood Park team members have also been accompanying residents on visits to the home's garden so they can have some sun and fresh air.

"That has been helping residents a lot; just getting out in the sun and getting that vitamin D," Brandy says. — DH

Team Members Name Resident Mary Lee Digiacomo Frost Manor's 2020 Ms. Canada

Continued from page 1 into the action.

"The residents were seen cheering each other on and discussing the best and funniest poses," life enrichment co-ordinator Lyndsay Burton tells The OMNIway.

One resident in particular stood out for her Canadian enthusiasm.

Mary Lee Digiacomo had red pompoms and was cheering her friends on and

offering helpful tips and tricks to striking the perfect pose, Lyndsay says.

To make things even more fun, staff members crowned Mary Lee Frost Manor's 2020 Ms. Canada.

It was Mary Lee's "winning look and very Canadian personality" that earned her the honour, Lyndsay says.

"Although Canada Day was very different this year, we certainly celebrated in style," she adds. — DH

EDITORIAL

COVID-19 Pandemic Has Shown LTC Homes' Strengths

If you've been reading the papers or watching the evening news in recent months, you've probably noticed a narrative emerging that questions the safety of long-term care homes during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

There has been a lot of finger-pointing directed at the long-term care sector after homes across Ontario and Canada experienced outbreaks of the virus; and indeed, some of these outbreaks resulted in multiple deaths in homes and, in some cases, resulted in staffing crises.

However, what is not being discussed at large are the underlying factors that have led to COVID-19 infection and spread in long-term care homes.

A June 25 report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) states that, as of May 25, Canada has the highest percentage of COVID-19 deaths in long-term care homes in the world.

As has been the case worldwide, Canadian long-term care homes have been significantly affected.

At the same time, Canadian "lockdown" measures are regarded as very effective in containing overall spread, significantly impacting the comparability of this measure to the experience of other countries.

But why have Canadian long-term care homes been impacted so heavily by COVID-19 infection?

To begin with, COVID-19 is a highly infectious virus. Seniors, particularly those with other health issues, are more

vulnerable to infection and mortality than other segments of the population.

Because of the extensive care needs of residents, long-term care is delivered in congregate living settings. The particular design characteristics of older homes creates more extensive infection prevention and control challenges. It is essential that government policy and funding be addressed so that these older homes can be redeveloped.

In all settings, it is vital to detect the presence of the virus early in order to properly isolate it and protect residents from spread.

In virtually all the long-term care homes that saw significant infection, such as Almonte Country Haven, an OMNI Health Care long-term care home in Lanark County, the spread began early because the virus was introduced early, most likely through transmission from visitors who had contracted the virus from within the community prior to the provincewide introduction of non-essential visitor restrictions.

At the time, Public Health Units in Ontario were facing a shortage of testing supplies, and testing was generally limited to up to three symptomatic residents to confirm the presence of COVID-19.

It is now widely accepted that the virus is spread by affected staff and residents who are asymptomatic and who were not otherwise identifiable through active screening measures.

Widespread testing was

not available to detect those individuals, representing 27 per cent of the population in Almonte, until well after the outbreak had occurred in late March.

Facing a highly infectious and dangerous pandemic, it also needs to be said that long-term care homes have done a very credible job of containing and controlling the spread of COVID-19.

Homes that were infected early are coming out of outbreak, and many are not showing new cases. The staffing crisis faced by many homes has been eased through recruitment and emergency measures adopted by government, though it remains a significant concern looking forward.

Infection control practices, social distancing and adhering to strict ministry-mandated infection prevention and control protocols, such as visitor restrictions, have gone a long way in stemming COVID-19's spread, protecting residents and helping many who contracted the virus recuperate.

Widespread testing of all residents before entering the home and continuing widespread and frequent testing of staff are key elements to containment strategies for COVID-19 that are now available to homes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the resilience and resourcefulness of long-term care home staff, their personal sacrifices, and their dedication to the residents.

Much needs to be written and said about these heroes of the pandemic.



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Village Green's LEC Reflects on Starting a New Job During a Time of Great Change

'I am absolutely loving it here, this is such a great little home,' says Ulana Orrick

Ulana Orrick says she's loving her job as Village Green's life enrichment co-ordinator (LEC), a position she started shortly after the global COVID-19 pandemic was declared.

While the job of an LEC is normally focused on developing, overseeing and assisting with activities for residents, group programming in Ontario long-term care homes was suspended when the pandemic was declared in March.



Ulana Orrick began her position as Village Green's life enrichment co-ordinator in late March, shortly after the global COVID-19 pandemic was declared.

Instead of being involved with programming when she started her job March 30, Ulana says she and her team were helping residents connect with their loved ones through video conferencing, phone calls and e-mails, since indoor visitation was cancelled.

Being able to connect residents with their loved ones during a challenging time was especially meaningful to Ulana,

she says.

"(This job) is especially rewarding right now, to be able to foster those connections between residents and families, to make the window visits happen and now the garden visits," she tells The OMNIway.

Ulana has a solid background working in long-term care.

She graduated from the recreation program at Fleming College at the top of her class and did a four-month placement at a long-term care home in Peterborough as well.

Before joining the Village Green team, Ulana worked at a long-term care home in Picton for four years as both a life enrichment aide and an interim manager for the activities department.

Ulana credits her supervisor in the activities department during this time for encouraging her to stay on the path she was on in life enrichment and to eventually pursue a career as a manager, she says.

"She said, 'you found your inner leader, you should definitely pursue something,' so I started looking around for another rural home — I really wanted that rural experience — and Village Green just happened to be looking (for an LEC) at the same time I was, so that's what brought me here," she says.

"I am absolutely loving it here, this is such a great little home." — DH



The Springdale Country Manor team poses with T-shirts that were specially made to thank them for their hard work during the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

Springdale and Riverview Design T-shirts to Thank Staff for Outstanding Work

The T-shirts have gone over so well that more are on the way

Two OMNI Health Care long-term care homes have joined forces to create special T-shirts to acknowledge their team members for all their hard work since the global COVID-19 pandemic began.

Managers at Springdale Country Manor and Riverview Manor wanted to both thank and show support for staff representing all departments, and the T-shirts

they designed reflect this.

The T-shirts have the words "Long Term Care #Strong" encased in a diamond with the names of all departments and positions — activities, dietary, housekeeping-laundry, PSW, RN and RPN — embossed along the sides.

The long-term care sector has faced new challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic began that have required staff members in

all departments to work extra hard to keep residents and their colleagues safe.

Springdale Country Manor life enrichment co-ordinator Sonia Murney says team members from both homes have been so happy with their T-shirts more are now on order.

"Staff were so overjoyed with the T-shirts that they are ordering more in a rainbow of colours, some even tie-dyed," she says. — DH

'I Just Want to Put a Smile on Residents' Faces and Make Them Laugh'

Continued from page 1
entertainment by dressing up in costumes.

The residents are loving it. One day she dressed up as Elvis and danced to one of the King of Rock 'n' Roll's songs.

On another day, she danced to the song Lollipop by the Chordettes — with a big lollipop in hand.

Rosanne also served residents tea and coffee while dressed as a clown.

She has dished out banana splits while wearing a banana costume.

Rosanne says her ideas have gone over so well with residents they are

eager to know what she's going to do next.

"They get a good chuckle out of it," she tells The OMNIway. "They always tell me when I come in, 'I'm waiting for your next costume; I can't wait to see what it's going to be.'"

Rosanne says she plans to dress as Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz and sing Over the Rainbow.

She adds that she enjoys making the residents happy as much as they enjoy her performances.

"I just want to put a smile on their faces and make them laugh — and it's working," Rosanne says. — DH



Maplewood life enrichment aide Rosanne Blackburn, pictured above, recently dressed as Elvis and danced to one of the King's songs for the home's residents.

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