

OARC In Action

For Residents By Residents

March 2026



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Meet the Coaches – Special Limited Series

In this new column, we begin a series of articles introducing OARC's four new Regional Coaches - featuring conversations that highlight the people behind the work. Each conversation is led by OARC's Communications Coordinator, Stephanie Buosi.

This March, we're introducing **Jessica Chong**, our new coach for the Ontario East Region.



I feel the great passion and mission of OARC, and even though my grandma's not with me anymore, I know this work would be meaningful to her, too.

Jessica Chong, OARC

▶ **Scroll to the end to read the full conversation.**

In the Know at OARC

Share your valuable feedback – Complete your Annual RC Survey today

Hearing directly from Residents' Councils helps us to understand what's working well, identify needs and priorities, and improve the support and services that OARC provides. We invite Residents' Council Leaders to work together with their Residents' Council Assistant to fill out one short survey:

- ▶ **By mail, fax or email.** Physical copies of the survey have been mailed to each home.
- ▶ **Online.** You can access an online version of the survey here: <https://shorturl.at/qADpl>

**Access the French translation: <https://shorturl.at/SHGWa>

Please share your thoughts with us by **April 15, 2026**

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to submit a survey so far. We've received over 100 surveys to date and look forward to seeing this number increase in the coming weeks!

Congratulations to the Residents' Council at Baycrest Apotex Jewish Home for the Aged for being selected as our 'Early Bird' draw winners.

***March Webinar Postponement* Elevating the Resident Voice: Early Insights from OARC's Food Services Survey in Long-Term Care**

New date: May 6th, 2026, 2:00 PM EST

Residents consistently tell us that food quality and the dining experience are top priorities. OARC's Food Services Survey captured the perspectives of nearly 1,400 residents on meals, snacks, and dining in long-term care homes. To allow time for deeper analysis and thoughtful planning, we have rescheduled our March 18th webinar to May 6th. This will ensure we can share meaningful insights and clear next steps grounded in residents' lived experience.

You can continue to register for this webinar here: <https://shorturl.at/TQAXF>

Webinar Recording: Keeping Residents Informed and Engaged, Nutrition Month Replay

The importance of consistent, good food and a pleasurable dining experience in long-term care cannot be understated. Last year, to help keep residents informed and engaged, OARC welcomed Heather Toll, a clinical dietitian with more than 20 years working in LTC homes, to lead a meaningful webinar discussion about food services.

Access the recording on YouTube today <https://shorturl.at/mlauu>

April Webinar Meet Our Ministry of Long-Term Care Partners Panel

Join us this coming April 15th at 2:00pm EST for a special Webinar Wednesday and meet our current Ministry of Long-Term Care Partners. This webinar will include a Q&A session, and an opportunity for you to submit questions in advance.

Register here: <https://shorturl.at/GlwGX>

New Translation: Residents' Bill of Rights Now in Mohawk

Did you know that OARC has translated the Residents' Bill of Rights (FLTCA, 2021) into more than 30 languages?

To support homes serving residents of diverse cultural backgrounds, this is an ongoing initiative by OARC. Most recently, we were excited to add Mohawk to our language bank.

Access our full list of translations here: <https://shorturl.at/Y3Hif>

Don't see a translation you need? Contact us and let us know!

OARC Impact Stories

Hopping into Spring! Celebrating a New Residents' Council Mascot!

Earlier this month, Jessica Chong, OARC's new Education and Home Support Coach for East Region, visited Peter D. Clark home and had a fruitful discussion with Residents' Council President Karen Emberley about opportunities for residents to be leaders in their home.

During this visit, Karen offered Gibby and Clarinette's services to become the home's new mascot for Residents Councils and OARC.



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*Gibby and Clarinette are enthusiastic about everything their mother does which includes attending meetings at the home because I am the president of the Residents' Council. They are so proud of the stickers they are wearing on their bellies [...] when I show my frogs to people, **they read the stickers and ask questions about the organization.***

Karen Emberley, Residents' Council President

Coaches Corner - Jessica Chong

Introducing a brand new OARC in Action feature: the Coaches Corner. Check in every month and read helpful tips, insights, and resources directly from our four new Education and Home Support Regional Coaches. This month, Jessica shares the benefits of considering a Shared Leadership Model for Residents' Councils

Redefining Leadership: Is the “Shared Model” Right for Your Council?

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Let's lead in a way that sustains us, rather than drains us.

Did you know? A Residents' Council can take many different shapes while remaining fully compliant with Ministry requirements. There is no "one-size-fits-all" rule for how your leadership team must be structured, provided it serves the needs of the residents.

Through my recent Home Support Visits, a consistent theme has emerged: many Residents' Council Presidents are carrying an immense weight of responsibility. The message we want to share is simple but vital: you are not alone in this work.

The Case for Shared Leadership

The **Shared Leadership Model** is a transformative approach to balancing the Council's workload. By collaborating as a team of Resident Leaders, Councils can level the playing field. This model fosters an environment of equal participation where roles are distributed based on the Council's unique strengths and preferences.



Breaking the "President" Myth

A common concern among Residents' Council Assistants (RCAs) is the fear that the Ministry only recognizes or expects to speak with a "President." However, my lived experience leading a Shared Leadership model proves otherwise. The Ministry values effective, collective representation over specific individual titles.

We also see a recurring challenge during leadership transitions. Many residents shy away from joining the Council because they are intimidated by the "weight" of a solo title. While some residents thrive in traditional roles, others find that the Shared Model opens doors for those who want to contribute meaningfully without the pressure of a singular presidency.

Closing: Strength in Numbers

At the end of the day, the true strength of a Residents' Council isn't found in a single title—it is found in the collective voice of its members. Whichever leadership structure your Council chooses, the goal remains the same: ensuring every resident has a seat, and a say, at the table.

Let's lead in a way that sustains us, rather than drains us.



▶ **Jessica Chong**
Education & Support
Coach, East Region

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Please reach out to Jessica if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Shared Leadership model. Jessica is happy to connect.

Resources and Opportunities

Nutrition Focused Resources: Research Institute for Aging

Recipes for Healthy Aging

Choose from over 50 recipes that feature Ontario-grown foods and prioritize the needs and preferences of older adults. Browse the recipes here: <https://shorturl.at/YaGjZ>

Why Dining Rooms Matter in Long-Term Care

Enjoying mealtimes can lead to increased food consumption and improved quality of life. Learn about the CHOICE+ evidence-informed program that aims to improve mealtime experiences in retirement and long-term care homes.

Read the article here: <https://shorturl.at/yz0Ws>



Comfort Care for Eating and Drinking Resources for Long-Term Care

Rather than nutrition-focused eating, comfort care eating and drinking focuses on the residents' quality of life. This can be especially important as part of an end-of-life journey, or to support eating challenges brought by underlying health conditions.

Developed in collaboration by the Ontario Centres for Learning, Research & Innovation in Long-Term Care (CLRI), and the Research Institute for Aging (RIA). Browse resources for family members, residents and care providers here: <https://shorturl.at/QabTt>

Enhancing Resident and Family Partnerships for a Positive Resident Dining Experience

Developed in partnership with OSNAC (Ontario Seniors Nutrition & Advocacy Committee), OARC, and Family Councils Ontario (FCO) in 2023, this LTC Menu and Mealtime Planning guide offers tangible strategies and suggestions to enhance engagement, review current practices and more.

Download the Menu and Mealtime Planning guide here: <https://shorturl.at/RgVn7>

Media: Ontario Launching Pilot Project for ‘Emotion-focused’ Long-Term Care

Long-Term Care Minister Natalia Kusendova-Bashta announced 17 homes chosen for the first phase of a three-year, \$9-million pilot project for “emotion-focused care.”

“Some of these emotion-based models of care really lend themselves well to [making the environment a lot more homelike](#) and respond to the emotional needs of our residents.”

Read the full article here: <https://shorturl.at/w5Ao0>

Share Your Story: CLRI’s EDI in Action

The Ontario CLRI is revamping the Embracing Diversity Toolkit so it better reflects real experiences in long-term care homes. CLRI is currently inviting LTC teams to share their experiences of putting equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging into practice. These stories will help inform the development of the refreshed toolkit.

All completed submissions will be entered into a random draw for a prize.

Submit your story today: <https://shorturl.at/UKmFh>

Podcast Episode: Reimagining Dementia Care in LTC

Bringing together two experts in medicine and compassionate care, this episode of OLTC’s Coming of Age podcast explores how Ontario’s long-term care sector can honour the person first when caring for people living with dementia. Listen to the episode here: <https://shorturl.at/2s7Nq>

Ontario Ministry Update: Increasing the Number of Reunification Priority Access Beds (RPABs)

The appointed Directors under the Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 (Act) and the Ontario Regulation 246/22 have decided to designate two additional long-stay program beds as RPABs for a total of four RPABs in every LTC home with long-stay beds.

To better understand the requirements regarding the additional RPABs designation, please see the linked resources below:

- ▶ RPAB Sector Q&A document: <https://shorturl.at/HTBiS>
- ▶ Ontario Health atHome guidance document: <https://shorturl.at/FfdIU>

Ontario Health atHome has updated the Long-Term Care Bed Vacancy Notification Form and LTC homes are expected to use this version going forward: <https://shorturl.at/VKSdv>

New Report: Aging with dignity: Using data to strengthen long-term care for Canadians

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) released a new report on the challenges and opportunities facing LTC across the country. The report reinforces that supporting dignity in aging is a shared value amongst residents, families, and care teams. Explore the report website for more information, including:

- ▶ Executive summary and key findings
- ▶ Aspects impacting resident safety
- ▶ Factors influencing quality of life
- ▶ Initiatives to improve access to LTC

Access the report here: <https://shorturl.at/21553>

Share Your Story: Pet Visit Study

Researchers at the University of Guelph are asking adult pet owners/caregivers who bring their dogs on visits to Ontario LTC homes to complete their survey.

Those who enter have a chance to win one of three \$100 pet store gift cards.

Learn more here: <https://shorturl.at/ANpj>

Long-Term Care Home Spotlight

Weekly Meal Preparation: By Residents, For Residents

Shared by Kaitlyn Bos, Programs Manager

Bringing the joy of cooking and meaningful contribution back to the kitchen, the weekly meal preparation program at **Niagara Health System's Extended Care Unit** creates both yummy food and a sense of purpose for residents.

Running for over a decade, residents stay engaged, socialize, and maintain familiar life skills while enjoying time together. Just as importantly, it allows residents



an opportunity to contribute to a meal that others in the home can enjoy. Seasonal food preparation programs are also offered throughout the year, featuring fruits and vegetables that are in season.

*“From buttering bread to making desserts, **the kitchen fills with conversation, laughter, and pride** as residents share the delicious results of their teamwork.” - Kaitlyn Bos, Programs Manager*

Meet the Coaches - Jessica Chong

Meet Jessica Chong: Where personal heart meets professional ambition.

Jessica Chong would be happy to spend all day outside if she could. Based in Ottawa, East Ontario Region, she welcomes me with a bright smile as we sit down and chat through Zoom. Our conversation ranges from hiking outside, to the power of storytelling to inspire hope and culture change in long-term care, and the opportunities she’s excited for as a new Regional Coach for OARC.



J – There are so many things I love about this city. It’s been almost two years since I moved back here, and it’s been this breath of fresh air.

S - The fact that you can just walk and find a beautiful place to enjoy nature is huge. I remember loving that when I went to school in Ottawa.

J – I’ve really loved living in so many

different places, but I’m so grateful for where I’m at right now. I’ve loved all the different stages of my life, and all those moments have led me here, right?

S – That’s so true. I love that you are finding peace in Ottawa, that’s lovely to hear. Thank you so much for your time, by the way. I’m excited to get to know you better!

J - Thank you!

S -Okay, I'm going to jump right in. Can you tell me a little more about your time working in long-term care?

J - Yes, so my time in long-term care has been unique personally and professionally.

Professionally, I started to volunteer at a long-term care home around the corner from my house when I was in high school. That was my introduction to recreation and to programming and to the life of residents living in long-term care. I thought it was so cool that I could spend my time meeting people, making connections and giving back to the community. That is where I fell in love with recreation and discovered what I wanted to do.

Personally, when I was 15/16 years old, I started as a caregiver for my grandma. This continued for 15 years and evolved into so much more than just caregiving. It has really shaped my path in long-term care.

S - That's beautiful. I love how you found your professional calling so early, but there's this deep personal connection as well.

J - Yes, it was really special for me. It was important as I grew in my career that I didn't lose sight of my personal goal and my connection with my grandma.

Of course, as a young teenager and a young adult, I never recognized this for what it was. I was just kind of living through it. And then, as I started to grow into adulthood and as a leader, I realized how meaningful it was, and I realized why and where my passion came from.

S - It's like you built a foundation quite early that was an internal guiding force for you.

J - Yes, And I'm really grateful that I had the experiences I had, and that my grandma was so open to me sharing about that experience. I use this knowledge in my work life. And I'm always mindful of those boundaries between the work and the personal, but there's strength in that knowledge too.

S - Definitely. It makes complete sense to me that your personal and professional passions are very closely entwined.



J - Absolutely. And I think that's why I was drawn to the position at OARC. I had a positive experience with Melissa (McVie) when I worked at Streetsville (Care Community). This is where I was introduced to OARC for the first time. She came and talked to our residents about the Shared Leadership Model [for Residents' Councils].

After listening to her, I felt this need to continue in this work. I feel the great passion and mission of OARC, and even though my grandma's not with me anymore, I know this work would be meaningful to her too.

S - That's amazing. We're so excited to have

you as a Coach for the East Region!

So, I guess this is a good segue into my next question. What excited you about this new role with OARC?

J - I think something I am most excited about is sharing success stories. Sharing the challenges. Sharing the opportunities that other homes are identifying. When we share knowledge and ideas, there's so much more potential for creativity and for person-centered care. And compassion and love, of course.

And I'm really excited to be with people, to share their joy and understand their difficulties too.

S - My thoughts go back to when you mentioned how it sometimes takes just one person to inspire someone else, and just being there to listen sounds like a very human way to create partnerships.

Once you are in your rhythm as a Coach, how do you see your role evolving over the next, let's say, three years?

J - That's a really good question, and I wish I had a crystal ball to be able to say, "this is where I'm gonna be." But I hope that I will have established relationships with all three pillars [the residents, Council Assistant and Administrator] at the homes in the Eastern region. That I've sat down with leaders at all levels to say: this is who OARC is and this is how we can help support you.

And how can we further that support as times change? We know right now we have an influx of older people and we're creating all these new opportunities for people to have a place

where they can age well and successfully with the care that they need.

I see the Coach's role as being more involved in shaping what it means to live a quality life in long-term care, and what it means to give residents more choice.

S - I think that's very integral to the idea of home, having choice.

J - Yeah, it really is. I also see the Coach's role in sharing more opportunities and ways in which we can provide that back.

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Residents need to have autonomy at all levels. Maybe it's picking paint colours; or picking different menu items. Maybe it's having more options when it comes to what is being planted in the garden. And I do believe that all this is possible. We just need to shift our mindset and remind ourselves whose home we are working in.

S - Before I let you go, I do have one fun question for you. I'm going to paint a picture. It's a Saturday. The weather is beautiful, and you have no plans. How are you going to spend your day?

J - Mhm. OK, so it's a weekend. I would probably wake up, make a coffee, pack some snacks, and I would find a new

hike in Gatineau. Maybe it would turn into a lunch excursion, and I'd find a new place to eat. There're some beautiful and wonderful bakeries in Quebec, and I love visiting them. I love eating outside on a trail and enjoying the views. In the evening I would be outside in my backyard, tidying things up. Or I would find a city event to go to.

On weekends, it's always so busy, and it's so wonderful that the community offers

so much opportunity for connection and for laughter and for joy.

S - That's awesome. I love that you'd spend every moment outside, even in the in really cold weather. I applaud you.

J - Honestly, I don't even feel the cold anymore.

Many thanks to Jessica for this wonderful opportunity to get to know her a little better!

Please join us next month, where we'll continue this series with a conversation featuring Sarah Masonovich, OARC's Regional Coach for the Central Region.



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