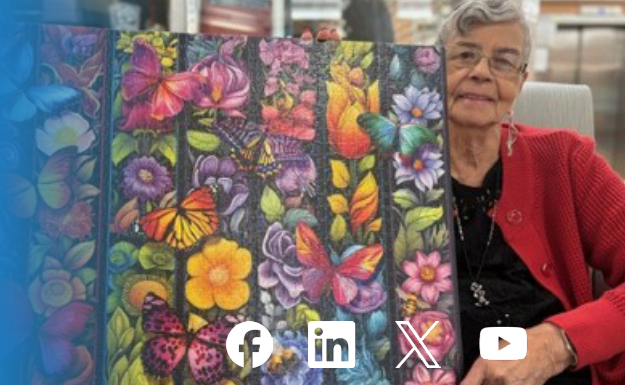


OARC In Action

For Residents By Residents

June 2026



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OARC Celebrates CIHR Grant Success!

We're excited to share that a project led by [Dr. Jennifer Bethell](#), OARC Board Director, has been awarded funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) through the Catalyst Grant: Partnering for Impact – Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research stream.

This exciting work will bring together a collaborative research team—including Resident Leaders, OARC team members, researchers and sector partners—to evaluate OARC's [Resident Engagement Toolkit](#) for long-term care. Using a hands-on, participatory approach, the project will help strengthen resident voices in decision-making and improve quality of life in LTC homes across Ontario. We're proud to see this important work recognized and supported at the national level!



Download a copy here:
<https://shorturl.at/aQa96>

Dr. Bethell was recently interviewed regarding her leadership in co-developing OARC's new resident engagement toolkit: Everything About Residents Involves Residents. Dr. Bethell highlights the research partnership and evidence-informed development of the toolkit. "Every group involved used their strengths, and it worked out really beautifully," she says. Melissa McVie, OARC's Acting Executive Director, and Resident Leaders on the research team, Jim Gilhuly and Gale Ramsden, were also cited in the article. **Article link:** <https://shorturl.at/Gzn7A>





In the Know at OARC

➡ Meet the Coaches – Erin Westwood

This month we are concluding our Meet the Coaches series, where we introduced each of OARC's four new Regional Coaches through conversations highlighting the people, passions, and perspectives behind the work. Each conversation was led by OARC's Communications Coordinator, Stephanie Buosi.

This month we introduce you to Erin Westwood, our Coach for the Ontario West region.



I'm excited to take my passion for supporting Residents' Councils at the home level to a greater regional one. I think we're in a critical stage of culture shift in long-term care. I'm eager to be a part of that movement.

Scroll down or [click here](#) to read the full conversation.

➡ OARC Awards and Contests

Apply for the 2026 Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA)

Applications are currently open for the 2026 SCALA. The winning LTC home team will be consulted to select a prize item (valued up to \$500) that helps bring people together to build community in their home.

For more information and to apply, visit: <https://shorturl.at/uZRTQ>

Recognizing Huron Lodge: 2025 SCALA Notable Mention

Last year, OARC received twice as many submissions for the Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA) as the year before, making the selection process especially challenging. Among them, Huron Lodge in Windsor stood out— read their story below:

Since February 2025, the Residents' Council at Huron Lodge has been involved in supporting the home's human resources – specifically with staff orientation sessions. Following an OARC webinar about resident engagement in home operations, the Council was inspired to get involved, and Home Leadership quickly helped bring this vision to life. The initiative was sparked by a simple yet powerful question from Resident Leader Thomas Findlay: ***"If staff are going to support us, why not get to***

know who they are supporting?”

Thomas is a regular speaker at staff orientation sessions. He reminds people that for residents, Huron Lodge is not just a workplace but their home, and compassionate, person-centered care is essential. The collaboration between Residents' Council and Home Leadership made this initiative a strong contender for the 2025 Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award.

We were proud to feature Huron Lodge in our latest Seasons magazine, which can be accessed here: <https://shorturl.at/CNrDG>



It's clear that welcoming each new group brings a sense of purpose and joy to Thomas.

—Staff Development Coordinator
at Huron Lodge

Your Council, Your Impact: Show Us Your Brag Board Contest

We invite and encourage Residents' Councils to work together with their Residents' Council Assistants and Home Leadership to create and populate a Brag Board, highlighting all the ways your Council has helped shape your home. This is your opportunity to visually show your successes and highlight what's going well. We're excited to see your accomplishments and celebrate with you!

- ▶ **Contest Deadline: September 14th**
- ▶ For contest details, please visit: <https://shorturl.at/v8cDY>

Webinars

July Webinar: Understanding Long-Term Care Funding in Ontario

Join us for a webinar designed to help residents, families and care partners better understand how long-term care (LTC) homes in Ontario are funded.

Delivered by guest presenters from the Ministry of Long-Term Care, this session will explain funding in plain language, including what the different funding envelopes cover, how resident co-pay (accommodation charges) works, and how information may be shared with Residents' Councils and Family Councils. Understanding how your home is funded can help you ask informed questions and participate in meaningful conversations.

This session offers a practical overview of how funding decisions connect to the day-to-day experience in long-term care.

Date: Wednesday, July 15 | 2:00 PM ET

Register here: <https://shorturl.at/42dVH>

► **Please note: This webinar will not be recorded. We encourage everyone to join us for the live session.**



June Webinar Recording: Ready, Set, Engage – Residents' Council Week Planning 2026

If you haven't started planning for Residents' Council Week, the OARC team has got you covered. Our June webinar recording is now available and offers everything you need to get started.

In this interactive session, we introduce the 2026 theme and event schedule, kicking off September 14. You'll also get a sneak peek at our limited-edition Celebration Boxes, learn more about our Brag Board contest and discover how to nominate for the Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA).

► Access the recording here: <https://shorturl.at/D1Z4C>

► Slides: <https://shorturl.at/vBftz>



➡ OARC General Updates

Seasons Spring/Summer 2026 is here!

Seasons, OARC's bi-annual magazine, is filled with inspiring stories that highlight positive quality of life experiences in long-term care homes. In this issue, we explore themes of belonging, collaboration and purpose.

Be inspired by real examples of how the three pillars of a Residents' Council—residents, Home Leadership and Residents' Council Assistants—can work together on quality improvement initiatives, as well as programs and outings that strengthen

community connections and build relationships.

You can also read more about last year's recipient of the Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award, and learn about the multi-generational, collaborative event that earned Algonquin Nursing Home this recognition.

Read and enjoy! Seasons Magazine is currently available in digital formats here:

- ▶ English: <https://shorturl.at/CNrDG>
- ▶ French: <https://shorturl.at/CU8la>

This year, we are including copies of Seasons in your limited-edition Residents' Council Week Celebration Box, arriving at your home in early July.



Annual OARC Membership – Join us in Expanding Resident Influence!

Member insights and feedback play a vital role in informing and advancing OARC's advocacy, learning, and sector leadership. If you haven't yet renewed—or are considering joining for the first time—we invite you to become a member for the 2026–2027 year and be part of this collective impact. Contact [Jennifer Langston](mailto:jlangston@ontarc.com) at jlangston@ontarc.com for any questions.

Learn more: <https://shorturl.at/DmhSp>

New Residents' Bill of Rights Translations

OARC is pleased to continue the expansion of our Residents' Bill of Rights Translation Bank, adding four new languages including:

- ▶ Bulgarian
- ▶ Croatian
- ▶ Serbian – Cyrillic
- ▶ Serbian – Latin

To access over 29 other languages, visit <https://shorturl.at/aV6cQ>

Special thanks to Helena, Chair of the Family Council at Bendale Acres in Scarborough,

for reaching out to us and requesting a Bulgarian translation on behalf of the many Bulgarian residents and families of their home. If you would like to request a new language translation, contact us.

➡ OARC Governance Update

OARC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, comprised of residents and individuals who bring diverse expertise in long-term care. Each June, OARC holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM), bringing together Directors and executive leadership for the Association to highlight key accomplishments.

This year's AGM was especially meaningful as [OARC celebrated 45 years of impact and leadership](#). We also marked five years of our reconstituted, blended Board of Directors, a model that has strengthened our governance, as well as five years of OARC's Resident Expert Advisors and Leaders (REAL) group, reflecting our ongoing commitment to resident leadership and engagement. We also acknowledged two REAL members, Gale Ramsden of Ottawa and Steven Wenzowski of Hamilton, as founding members of the group. Together, these milestones underscore the strength of our community and the dedication of those who contribute to OARC's work.

We are pleased to share OARC's slate of Officers, solidified on June 23rd at the AGM:



Chair
Mary Nestor



Vice-Chair
Dr. Fred Mather



Secretary
Carolynn Snow



Treasurer
Jim Gilhuly

Learn more about OARC's Current Board Directors: <https://shorturl.at/3BeqT>

Recognizing Connie Redmond

OARC would like to extend its sincere gratitude to Connie Redmond, Environmental Services Manager at Riverview Gardens, for her five years of dedicated service on the OARC Board. Connie's connection with OARC extends beyond her time on the Board. She was an active participant in OARC's Through Our Eyes: Bringing the Residents' Bill of Rights Alive pilot program and was also a recipient of an OARC Education Bursary in 2019.

During her tenure, Connie served as Chair of OARC's Resident Experience Committee, where [she played a key role in advancing resident-centered initiatives](#). In this capacity, she also participated in the development of OARC's first communications strategy and its long-term care myth-busting campaign, helping to strengthen awareness and understanding across the sector.



Her longstanding commitment and contributions have made a meaningful difference, and OARC is deeply appreciative of her leadership and engagement.

➡ Ministry of Long-Term Care Updates

Launch of Ontario Long-Term Care Homes Inspection Reports Website

The Ministry of Long-Term Care conducts inspections to ensure that homes are operated in compliance with provincial legislation and regulations. As part of the Ministry's modernization initiative to improve transparency, accessibility and user experience, the new site provides a simplified and bilingual user experience for accessing these reports.

- ▶ Visit the new Home Inspection Report Website: <https://publicreports.mltc.gov.on.ca/>
- ▶ Have questions? Visit the FAQ: <https://shorturl.at/nslhp>

Note: Residents' Councils can expect to receive copies of all Ministry inspections reports from their home's Administrator. Consider inviting your Administrator to a future Council meeting to discuss report findings and solutions your home has implemented to enhance the resident experience.

2026-2027 Long-Term Care Rate Reduction Cycle Starts July 1

Residents living in a basic room in an Ontario long-term care (LTC) home may be eligible to have their long-term care home co-payment amount reduced. This is known as a rate reduction.

Generally, a resident's rate reduction is calculated based on their annual net income as determined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

The LTC rate reduction forms for the 2026-27 program cycle are now available.

To learn more about eligibility, the required supporting documentation or to request assistance with completing an application, residents and care partners are encouraged to speak with the Office Manager or another trusted team member at your long-term care home.

Access the Rate Reduction Summary Guide: <https://shorturl.at/wVhPr>



OARC Impact Stories

Supporting Residents' Councils at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton

This month Sarah Masonovich, OARC's Education and Home Support Coach for the Central region, had the pleasure of visiting with the Residents' Council at both Faith and Grace Manor, the two long-term care homes of Holland Christian Homes. Both Manors are in the process of embracing the Eden Alternative philosophy, which focuses on creating a more person-centered environment where residents experience choice, purpose, meaningful relationships, and reduced loneliness. While visiting with Sarah, the residents expressed great pride in being part of this ongoing implementation and culture shift.

We are thankful for the warm welcome Sarah received from the Holland Christian Homes Residents' Councils, and for the newsletter shoutout too. If you are interested in a home visit by one of our coaches, reach out to [Melissa Matheson](mailto:mmatheson@ontarc.com) at mmatheson@ontarc.com



Guest Speaker: Sarah Masonovic

At our most recent resident council meeting, we were pleased to welcome Sarah Masonovic, an Education and Home Support Representative from the Ontario Association Of Residents' Council.

Sarah provided an informative overview of her role, shared information about the various programs and supports available through OARC and answered questions from council members.

Council members at Faith Manor were grateful for the opportunity to hear about OARC and gain a better understanding of the services and opportunities available to residents.



REAL Members in Action

This summer has been off to a lively start for members of OARC's provincial advisory group, the Resident Expert Advisors and Leaders (REAL). A speaking engagement highlight includes meeting with groups of long-term care leaders as part of the AdvantAge Ontario (AO) Administrator Leadership Program (ALP) on June 12th.

REAL members Ann, Steven and Gale, together with OARC's Director of Education, Stephanie Ventura, as part of the online ALP course, presented to over 40 students as part of the online course, delivering a strong message: "It's all about the residents." The session emphasized the Administrator's role in setting the tone for person-centred care in the home through visibility, direct engagement, and ensuring resident voices are at the heart of every decision.



Coaches Corner

Coaches Corner brings you helpful tips, insights, and resources directly from our four new Education and Home Support Regional Coaches. This month, Erin Westwood delves into the topic of leadership. To enrich her segment, she's consulted with Resident Leaders at John Noble Home in Brantford, Ontario.

Resident Leadership in Residents' Council

As Coaches supporting Residents' Councils across Ontario, one topic we frequently hear about during home visits is leadership. Many Councils express concern when they do not have a traditional leadership structure in place, while others are unsure of what it truly means to be a Residents' Council leader.

The reality is there is no one-size fits all approach. Councils should explore the leadership model that best meets their unique needs, recognizing that these needs may evolve over time. Whether adopting a traditional structure or exploring a shared leadership approach, success begins with understanding the powers of the Council and identifying goals and priorities. Developing or reviewing Bylaws for your Residents' Council can be an excellent starting point.

Residents should consider what is important to them, and the qualities

that make an effective leader. When I visited John Noble Home in Brantford, Ontario, I had the opportunity to meet with the Residents' Council leadership team. Council president Peter Dawson offered wonderful guidance on how he approaches his leadership style: "It's important to have a listening ear and make sure you bring back all suggestions to the table. It's important to have my co-resident voices heard. I love taking the time and chatting with each person and listening to what input they have."

Peter highlights the important responsibility



of Resident Leaders in representing the collective voice of residents—even when personal opinions may differ. Elaine, Vice President of JNH Residents' Council, agrees: "It's very rewarding to be able to speak on behalf of the residents and provide feedback by using my voice. I love working with the residents and the home. Knowing you're making a difference each day makes me smile."

Clearly defining roles and responsibilities, establishing terms of service, and considering trial periods for new leadership structures can help create clarity and confidence. Councils should regularly evaluate how changes are working and adjust as needed. We also encourage Resident Leaders to take

“It's important to have my co-resident voices heard. I love taking the time and chatting with each person and listening to what input they have.”

active roles in facilitating meetings with the Residents' Council Assistant. Leadership is often a collaborative effort, and engaging with homes staff both strengthens and empowers the overall effectiveness of Residents' Council.

Leadership development is an ongoing process. but as Peter states, **“It's a big honour to be the President of our Resident Council.”**



► **Erin Westwood**
Education & Support
Coach, Western Region

ewestwood@ontarc.com
T 905-731-3710 ext. 340

If you have any questions about Residents' Council leadership, or would like to reach out to Erin in general, please reach out.



Long-Term Care Spotlights

Murals at Blenheim Community Village, Blenheim, ON

Inspired by the recent mural project completed by their sister home in Ridgetown, Blenheim Community Village initiated their own mural project to transform the walls of their home into a more welcoming and culturally reflective place.

“Our residents reviewed the design concepts and requested that elements of Blenheim be incorporated,



such as Erieau and the surrounding farm country.” Ashley Bysma, Recreation Manager, shared. “The dining room design was inspired by the strong farming presence in the area, giving it a warm, rustic feel.” With residents representing 15 different countries, Sensory Scape, the mural company the home partnered with, designed hallway window murals that were magnetic, allowing the home to rotate the designs to showcase this cultural diversity.

“Residents have loved the new murals and commented that everything is much brighter and welcoming. It has been my favorite project, and I hope in the future we will be able to add more!”

Special thanks to Ashley for sharing this initiative with us.

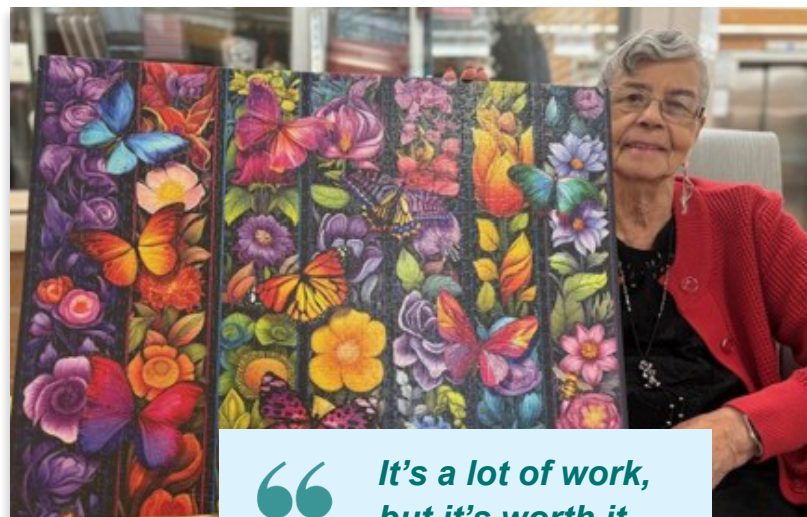


Emelia Murphy – Seniors Month Feature

This Seniors Month we recognize the important and inspiring contributions of Resident Leaders in long-term care. Emelia Murphy is one such leader, who uses her skills and talent in puzzling (and sales) to fundraise for her home. A life-long puzzler, Emelia continued her puzzling traditions after moving into Lakeshore Lodge in Toronto. She’s not sure what inspired her to turn this skill into a money-generating venture, but she knew it would be a good way to contribute to her community. ***Using the proceeds raised, she helps fund programs and events that are enjoyed by all residents.***

“We just had an ice cream social, and we’ll have one for the residents in July and another one in August. We also had Elvis here to entertain, and he was really good, so we’ll have him back again. We can afford it.”

Mark Lundrigan, Manager of Resident Services at Lakeshore Lodge, helps a little with setting up a table in the main lobby, but Emelia completes the puzzles, glues them to frame-ready boards, and then sells them herself. “It’s a lot of work, but it’s worth it. I just pick one day that’s close to pay day, so that people have money. Staff will come in and see the puzzle they want, and they buy it right from the table.”



***“It’s a lot of work, but it’s worth it
- Emelia Murphy***

Before moving into long-term care, Emelia worked at Sears, in the factory preparing packages for sales. Before that she was a bartender. Her skills in packaging, selling, and most importantly, customer service, lend well to her puzzle fundraising. Recognizing the importance of this initiative, Emelia's community eagerly helps by supplying her with donated puzzles. "I have a bin under the table full of puzzles. I'll have to work really hard to get caught up."

Thank you so much to Emelia for sharing her story with us and for her meaningful contributions to her community. Her experience highlights the difference that personal initiative and community connection can make - during Seniors Month, and all year long!



Resources

➡ Events

LTC Community Engagement Day launches Friday, September 18

Launched by the Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) in 2024, LTC Community Engagement Day was created to help LTC homes build relationships with local leaders and deepen their understanding of long-term care. This is an opportunity for homes to celebrate what it means to live and work in long-term care. This year, Engagement Day is being embraced by many LTC homes across Ontario.

To explore how your home and Residents' Council might get involved, OLTCA recommends speaking with your Administrator. There's still lots of time to plan and include this special day into your Residents' Council Week celebrations in September – and to build new and strengthened relationships with your local elected officials and community partners.

Learn more about LTC Community Engagement Day: <https://shorturl.at/w90Ph>

Need help planning? Visit OARC's website here for helpful celebration planning tips and resources: <https://shorturl.at/19fVP>



Stronger community ties lead to a unified voice for long-term care in Ontario.

➡ Podcasts & Media

Podcast: Families Matter: Staying Connected in Care | GeriEvidence

Listen in as Dr. Papaioannou speaks with Linda Verlinden, a family member, and Sam Peck, CEO of Family Councils Ontario, about the essential role of families and caregivers in long-term care. Learn how families can stay connected and the importance of partnering with care teams to create person-centered environments.

Listen: <https://shorturl.at/5cKAo>

Video: National Indigenous Peoples Day Opening Ceremonies

June 21 was National Indigenous Peoples Day, coinciding with the summer solstice and marking this day as a deeply spiritual and cultural significant one for Indigenous communities. It is a time of renewal, connection, and celebration.

Learn about the importance of this day with Sainte-Marie among the Hurons through their virtual education programs, including this Opening Ceremonies and land Acknowledgement Video: <https://tinyurl.com/36s3r3x3>



Explore their full suite of educational videos here: <https://tinyurl.com/3h2t6xy6>

Canada is home to three distinct Indigenous peoples – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The First Nations alone are comprised of over 600 recognized communities, each with unique cultural practices. We encourage you to learn more about the unique customs and celebrations practiced by indigenous communities in your region.

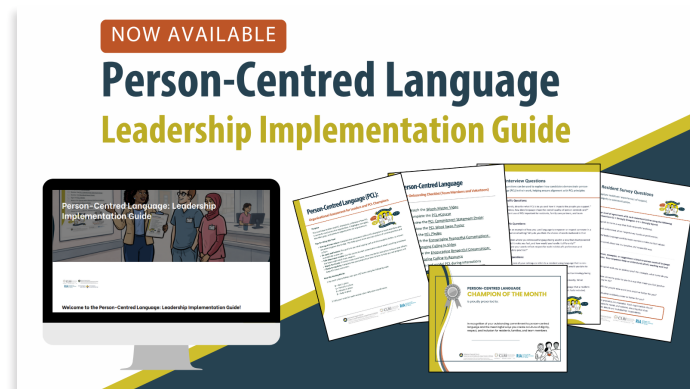
Without a Song: Celebrating Seniors Month with Music

“Without a Song” is an uplifting reflection on the extraordinary power of music in care. When you watch the video, you’ll hear background vocals. These are the voices of 180 caregivers and care providers, most of whom serve seniors. This song was written by Canadian singer/songwriter, Murray McLauchlan and dedicated to the Room 217 Foundation. **Listen and watch:** <https://tinyurl.com/2yjujb5p>

➡ Resource Guides and Survey Findings

Person-Centred Language: Leadership Implementation Guide

Support your teams in embedding person-centred language in everyday practices. This guide includes a package of tools and resources, including templates, checklists and certificates, to help support implementation and sustain momentum over time. The guide was developed by Behavioural Supports Ontario and the Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care at the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging.



Access the guide: <https://clri-ltc.ca/pcl-leadership/#/>

Indigenous Peoples' Health & Aging Resources: Guides and Workshops

The Indigenous Peoples' Health & Aging Division at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH), Lakehead University, suite of resources are intended to help caregivers and providers feel more informed, prepared, and supported throughout the caregiving journey. Topics include bedside palliative care approaches, chronic disease management, and culturally appropriate care services.

Access the resources: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7svcw4>

To attend upcoming virtual events, visit: <https://tockify.com/cerah/pinboard>

Inspecting Long Term Care: Home-Level Dashboard by The Local

The Toronto-based publication *The Local* analyzed more than 17,000 publicly available long-term care inspection reports to create its Long-Term Care Tracker. The dashboard brings together inspection findings, penalties, and health indicators to offer a data-informed snapshot of care quality across Ontario homes. At the same time, the publication emphasizes that the tool “won’t give you all the answers,” noting that truly understanding life in long-term care also means speaking directly with the people who live and work inside these homes, as well as reviewing reports and visiting in person.

To explore this dashboard, visit: <https://thelocal.to/long-term-care-tracker/>

Canadian Perspectives on Health Care – A new Santis- Nanos Survey

91% of Canadians agree it's time for a health system change. The Santis—Nanos Canadian Health Perspective is a national public opinion survey tracking Canadian attitudes and sentiment on health care delivery, priorities, and system innovation.

To improve access, we need to protect our publicly-funded system while striking a balance with new approaches to care delivery and the meaningful integration of innovation.

Explore the full results here: <https://santishealth.ca/canadian-health-perspective/>

Want to learn more? Watch *Unpacking the Inaugural Canadian Health Perspective Research* webinar for an in-depth analysis on the report findings

▶ Webinar: <https://tinyurl.com/ysp8rf8d>

▶ Podcast: <https://tinyurl.com/34snp3zp>

Study opportunities

Understanding the Needs and Gaps in Support for People Living with Dementia

The Canadian Dementia Learning and Resource Network is inviting participants to take part in a study aimed at identifying gaps in community-based supports and services for people living with dementia. They would like to hear from people living with dementia or mild cognitive impairment, caregivers, health professionals, and researchers in the field of dementia.

The survey takes about 15-20 minutes to complete. For more information or to participate visit: <https://shorturl.at/PoFuh>



Meet the Coaches – Erin Westwood

Meet Erin Westwood: Bringing joy, energy, and connection to long-term care.

Erin brings an infectious energy to everything she does. She has a natural ability to create moments of light-heartedness and joy. This was evident even in our brief conversation; I felt immediately at ease and drawn into her storytelling. Throughout the interview, you'll see how this positivity has shaped the many roles Erin has taken

on in her career. Now, as a Coach, she channels these strengths into meaningful opportunities to build strong, authentic relationships.

SB – What inspired you to pursue a career in long-term care?

EW – It's an interesting story; some people may think I'm crazy when I say this, but I discovered my passion for working in long-term care at a relatively young age. I would have been about my daughter's age, maybe 15 or 16 years old. And I just remember waking up one morning, sitting up in my bed, and having this strong feeling that I had to work with seniors. I don't know where that came from. I did have a very good relationship with my grandma, she was my best friend in life. Grandma Connan was the fun grandma, she always had a whole itinerary planned for our visits. It was a really good relationship.

So, I went to my high school guidance counselor and got a cooperative studies placement at a local long-term care and retirement home called Telfer Place. And, as I always say, the rest is history. I had the privilege of working with the recreation team, and I absolutely fell in love with it. I even started going in on the weekends, volunteering my time to help whenever I could.

SB – That's so lovely that you had this very distinct feeling. I hear similar stories from friends who have entered professions based on similar intuitions. Like you are called to the profession.

EW – I really feel like I was. Before my placement was even over, they were



letting me run programs on my own, and develop the very first evening programs, which was very exciting. I even started helping out in other departments. I just knew that, whatever my journey was, I had to come back and have a job in long-term care.

I went off to college, graduated, and got a summer job at that same home working in the kitchen. In the middle of my interview, the Activities Manager visited the Food Services Manager's desk and said, "you better hire her because if you don't, we're going to." So I was hired to work in the kitchen as a Dietary Aide and I loved it. It's still one of my favourite jobs, looking back.

SB – What did you love about it?

EW – I just loved working with my teammates and getting to know all the residents. It was that connection of developing those relationships, I think, that I loved more than anything.

And that was me getting my foot in the door. Within six months I was invited to work in the Activities Department developing the evening programs. I worked there for a number of years, gaining experience in recreation, office administration, and assisting with the development and launch of a home level day program. Then I transitioned to another home, Briarwood Gardens. There I was a front-line Recreation Aide, where I had the privilege of working in long-term care, retirement, and a community-based day program. I had that role for many years before becoming a Recreation Manager.

SB – I see that the recreation element is such a strong thread throughout all these roles that you've had.

EW – Yeah, over 25 years in recreation. I have watched Therapeutic Recreation evolve from an often-overlooked profession to one that has gained greater recognition, professional support and advocacy through groups like Therapeutic Recreation Ontario (TRO) and Activity Professionals of Ontario (APO). Being a part of that sort of advocacy for the profession has been a real passion of mine.

For example, you can still do the things you did in your life before moving to long-term care! You might not do them in exactly the same way, but we can modify the activities together so that you still find that meaning and joy in life.

SB – I love that. And I can see how you'd be so good at it. You have this energy about you. I could see how you could help bring out people's enthusiasm

and ignite that spark for creativity to work together on something.

EW - There's just nothing I love more, and I think I am able to recognize people's strengths and to celebrate those strengths. As a Recreation Manager, I was always in the mindset of "go big or go home." How can we think outside the box and really raise the bar? I thrived on special events and innovative programming. You know, we can be silly and have fun in long-term care. We don't have to be serious all the time.



You can still do the things you did in your life before moving to long-term care! You might not do them in exactly the same way, but we can modify the activities together so that you still find that meaning and joy in life.

SB – Can you tell me about some of the events you've helped plan?

EW - We've done everything from bikini contests to hosting huge fundraisers. You know, we organized an actual Christmas parade to go around the property of our building. And the entire community was involved.

SB – That must have taken so much planning. Okay, my big question: who played Santa?

EW – It was actually our Infection Control Manager's son who was Santa. A lot of friends and colleagues got involved. My son-in-law decorated a big tractor

with lights, the Brantford fire truck and department was involved too. Oh and Therapeutic Paws in Ontario, their dogs with light up necklaces were in the parade too.

SB – Wow, it was like a big community event!

EW – Yes, we had local churches do caroling and staff's kids participated. Oh my gosh, so many people. And the residents were involved from the beginning to the end; sitting on the parade bus and helping with decorations.

SB – What an amazing opportunity for the whole community to get behind this and create a sense of togetherness. That's really powerful.

EW - One of the team members actually nominated me for a Care Champion Award for that program. *But the biggest reward was the thank you note the residents put up on the wall, giving me a shout out for how memorable a program it was.* At first, the parade was something people thought, "oh, there's no way that you could do that."

SB – But you found a way to make it work.

EW – That we did.

SB – So, about Brantford, how long have you lived there?

EW – I grew up in Paris, Ontario. David, my husband, and I moved to Brantford about 16 years ago.

SB – Do you like living in Brantford?

EW – I truly believe it's not the place that keeps you where you are. It's the people.

We've talked about leaving Brantford one day and retiring near the mountains or by the water. But at the end of the day, everyone I love is here. My mom's here, my grandchildren are here, all my friends are here, my girls and their friends. It's not necessarily the shiny place that makes people stay. It's the people, and it's the love and care that you receive.

SB – That does make a huge difference. You stay in the place where you feel most welcome, and a huge part of that is the connections you make and people you meet along the way.

EW – Absolutely.

SB – So now you're with OARC, and we're so happy to have you.

EW – I felt like I won the lottery when I was told I got the job. I was so excited.

SB – I know what you mean! What excited you most about this role?

EW – Gosh, you know, in my role supporting residents, especially as a Residents' Council Assistant (RCA) over the



last 20 years, I've seen how Residents Councils are evolving. I'm excited to take my passion for supporting Residents' Councils at the home level to a greater regional one. I think we're in a critical stage of culture shift in long-term care. I'm eager to be a part of that movement.

SB – I didn't know that you were an RCA for...you said 20 years?

EW – At least! And I've learned a lot from residents in that role. It's taught me a great deal about the challenges that Residents' Councils face, and the ones RCAs are facing too. There are really great things happening as a result of residents having a voice in long-term care.

SB – Those are great things to be excited for. So how do you see your role evolving within the next three years?

EW - I am passionate about introducing the OARC to residents and team members. I think people know of us, but they have questions. I am discovering opportunities to educate others on the full capacity of the OARC and how we can support them. And I hope, as our Regional Coach role evolves, we move from educating and supporting to becoming a trusted partner to homes; to get to a point where OARC and the regional support model becomes a household name in long-term care, and it's understood that we're here to be a collaborative partner

SB – Like educating but also learning from the Councils and homes you visit.

EW – Yeah. You know, residents and team members want to shift that culture

from a task-focused approach to a more resident-centered one. And to make that shift, I think people are looking for, or trying to identify existing opportunities, to have a safe space to ask questions and learn together without fear of being judged (for making mistakes). I see opportunities for OARC to collaborate with these homes as they make this change; to educate and support them with our tools and resources.

I'd also love to see OARC reach out to supporting community and system partners, like Libraries, Schools, Parkinson's Society, Grand River Council on Aging, Hearing Clinics, so that we can really collaborate and work together.

SB – So we can all help influence that positive culture change together.

EW – Absolutely. Get everyone on the same page. ***How we feel and how we view things will help make those changes that lead to a culture shift within a home. If we're showing up with positivity and enthusiasm in a place, then positive change will come.***

SB - I love that. And it's also great to have people like yourself as a positive Coach, because sometimes you need someone to model that positive way of thinking. To inspire us.

EW - Yeah. One of my coaching strategies is to focus on the positive first. It's important to recognize areas where residents and team members are doing well. Because they're going to be a lot more responsive to recommendations or change if you come in through the lens of "I'm here to support and cheer you on." I'm not here to tell you how to run your Council. I'm here to support

you in getting your Council to a place that they feel good about.

SB – Which, in my opinion, makes for a great Coach.

EW – I hope so. I always say to my residents and to RCAs and management, absolutely reach out. I want to hear about the challenges you're having, and if I can support you, great. But please tell me about the really cool party you did, or that great event that Residents' Council initiated, because those are just as important.

SB – On the topic of focusing on the good stuff, how do you celebrate your small wins?

EW – I really believe in practicing gratitude. Taking that opportunity every day to recognize the sun shining and feeling the warmth on my face. And recognizing and appreciating others. To be like, you know what, "great job on this or that." It's made a positive impact in my life.

SB – That's a beautiful practice. Okay, last question. Outside of work, what would your unofficial job title be?

EW – Chaos Coordinator. I've got two teenage daughters, a grown daughter, 2 grandchildren, two huge dogs...

SB – I can see that. I'm sure you have fun doing it all too!

EW – I wouldn't have it any other way.

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



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