

March 24, 2021

Dear Residents and Long-Term Care (LTC) Home Team Members,

“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.”
— **Emily Dickinson**

This OARC bulletin is different. It comes to you, written from reflection, grief, remembrance, and hope...always hope.

This week, one year ago, COVID-19 invaded the first LTC home in Ontario, beginning what has been, and continues to be, a traumatic experience in the lives of residents, families, and team members. To date thousands of people have contracted COVID-19, resulting in the death of 3,753 residents and 11 team members. You have endured unspeakable trauma through the months of caring for one another, months that have been filled with prolonged restrictions, isolation, loneliness, and grief. A bright light has been shone on your homes, on processes, on data and you have been in the forefront of political and societal focus.

We pause now, to consider that while analysis and process change is critical, we must remember, grieve, and celebrate the lives lost and those forever changed due to the pandemic. Your friends, your peers, your trusted team members, may they rest in peace. May the loss of their lives not be in vain.

“But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars.”
— **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

We Grieve and We Look Forward in Hope

While this last year has been dark, there have been stars that have shone brightly. It is important to acknowledge the grief and pain, and to also acknowledge the good that has come from such tragedy. Here are just a few that come to mind:

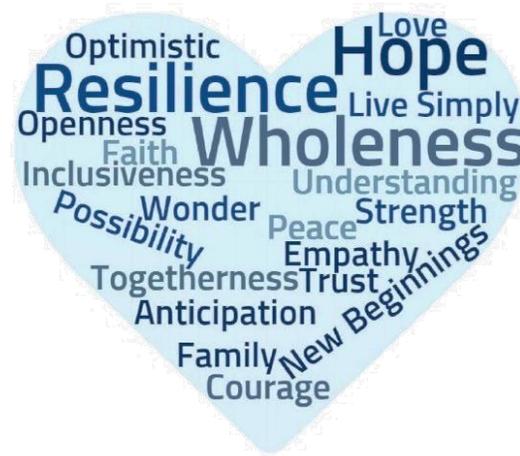
- OARC has worked closer than ever with residents and their team members across Ontario this past year, which has been inspiring
- OARC's [Resident Forums](#) that link residents from across the province virtually have yielded new and sustained friendships
- OARC's magazine, [Seasons](#), has grown in volume and scope providing more opportunities to share leading and positive practices in elevating resident voice and Residents' Councils' effectiveness
- OARC has regular and frequent meetings/consultations with the Ministry of LTC, Ontario Health, and Public Health, sharing the voice of residents to inform policy and decisions
- LTC has been brought out of the shadows and into public light, scrutiny, and analysis. Media attention, heartache and public outcry has been difficult, but now the longstanding systemic issues in LTC have been exposed on a large and open stage. WE CANNOT GO BACK. WE MUST "FIX THE SYSTEM" TOGETHER. OARC is committed to working with government and stakeholders to this end.
- We know the importance and value of 'positive culture change' more than ever; the movement to create LTC homes that support **all** domains of personhood (physical, psychological, emotional), self-determination, linkages to community, choice, challenging the status quo, etc.
- We know and acknowledge as a society the incredible value of 'essential caregivers' and the role they play in their residents' care team
- We have been part of and witnessed incredible creativity, ingenuity, innovation, solutions-oriented work within LTC homes amongst stakeholders
- We know the power of human connection: the intrinsic value of a smile, a touch, laughter
- OARC has witnessed dynamic partnerships, teamwork opportunities, generous sharing of ideas, tearing down of siloes amongst fellow stakeholders. What a joy to work collaboratively this past year.
- We see clearly now, as a society, the importance of team members in LTC; how they support residents' quality of living. For far too long our healthcare team members have been undervalued, underrecognized, undercompensated and not celebrated as the heroes they truly are.

And so, because of the darkness, the stars shine brightly. We grieve, and we look forward in hope. To that end, OARC invites you to participate in our campaign called **Hopeful Hearts in LTC** - [#HopefulHeartsLTC](#).

Hopeful Hearts in LTC

[#HopefulHeartsLTC](#)

As we approach the 1-year anniversary of COVID-19 entering long-term care (LTC) homes and taking the life of its first beloved resident, OARC invites you to help us recognize/mark these significant milestones with a collective gesture of grief, love, and hope.



Our campaign recognizes:

- Solidarity, acknowledging the collective impact and trauma of COVID-19 in long-term care and expressing hope for the future
- And honours the anniversary of the first COVID-19 case in long-term care and resident passing
- Continued feelings of loss and grief for long-term care residents and team members, friends, and family
- How this pandemic has changed life in long-term care

Since the early days of the pandemic, national COVID-19 campaigns have featured images of illuminated hearts and other messages of support in the windows of private residences and various healthcare settings. OARC invites you to build upon this powerful movement and join our #HopefulHeartsLTC campaign. We encourage you to work in partnership with residents, families and LTC teams to create your own unique heart display in your home or in resident rooms. Hearts can be showcased on a wall, in a window, or create a three-dimensional display. Together we mourn, and together we move forward in love and hope.

To help you get started, OARC has 3 downloadable heart templates/colouring sheets for you to choose from and a Word Cloud created by OARC's Board and Team Members representing our message of HOPE for you and yours. Download our template options and colouring pages to begin your hope filled journey.

- Hopeful Hearts LTC Template and Colouring [Page A](#), [Page B](#), [Page C](#)
- Hopeful Hearts LTC [OARC Word Cloud](#)
- Option to create a Word Cloud <https://www.wordclouds.com/>
- OR work with residents to create their own hearts or word cloud...

Support #HopefulHeartsLTC and tag @OARCnews on Twitter or mention us on your other social media accounts and email us images of your creations at mmcvie@ontarc.com For more information and media contact please reach out to Melissa McVie, Education and Communications Manager mmcvie@ontarc.com | 1-800-532-0201 x260

Residents' Feedback Requested about Resident Support Aides/Ambassadors/Attendants (RSAs)

Does your home employ RSAs? Residents/Residents' Councils please give us your feedback.

RSA's, known as Resident Support Aides or Resident Support Ambassadors or Resident Support Attendants (or equivalent) have been providing tremendous support to residents by augmenting the ability of team members to provide the care that is needed. They are not Personal Support Workers (PSWs), nor are they nurses. They are employed to provide non-direct care services, enhance the emotional wellbeing of residents and to support residents in many other wide and ranging ways such as:

- Answering call bells and assisting if the request is non-care/non-medical in nature
- Assisting with mealtimes (assists with meals, drinking, tray service)
- Facilitating Residents' Council meetings
- Companionship
- Bringing residents from place to place, indoors and outdoors
- Visiting with residents to provide social engagement and human connection
- Facilitating the visiting programs in homes (virtual and in person)
- Assisting with the simple pleasures in a day. Example: reading, connecting with other residents safely, providing choice, opportunities for self-determination, connection with community

The Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation (CLRI) have distributed a survey to every home in Ontario, asking for feedback on the role and value of RSAs in your home. CLRI wants to be able to collect data to measure the effectiveness, sustainability, and value of this role in LTC homes and resident feedback is vital. This survey will be used to inform the development and sharing of education and resources for similar roles in the future.

Please [click here](#) to fill out the short survey or speak with your Administrator to offer your feedback by April 9, 2021. THANK YOU.

Recent Ministry of LTC Announcements

- 1) March 8, 2021: The 24 community colleges in Ontario are offering an accelerated, 24-week PSW training program that provides free tuition, free supplies and paid student placements. Government is providing \$115 million for this program that is designed to train up to 8,200 new PSWs by the end of the calendar year.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60593/ontario-colleges-now-accepting-applications-for-accelerated-personal-support-workers-program>
- 2) March 18, 2021: Temporary wage increase of \$3.00 per hour for PSWs and other direct support workers (approximately 50,000 team members in LTC homes) is extended until June 30, 2021. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60798/ontario-extending-temporary-wage-enhancement-for-personal-support-workers>
- 3) March 18, 2021: \$933 million has been dedicated to the upgrading of older homes and the building of new homes. This investment will focus on creating LTC accommodation for Indigenous, Francophone and other culturally specific residents that have been underserved previously. The funds will support 80 new LTC projects that include 7,510 new spaces and upgraded 4,197 spaces, helping to reduce waitlists and end hallway medicine. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60796/ontario-making-historic-investment-to-modernize-long-term-care>
- 4) March 16, 2021: The Ontario Government has created a working group to help implement one of the largest health care recruitment and training efforts in Ontario's history, with a focus on staffing supply in LTC homes.
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60733/new-action-group-to-help-implement-one-of-the-largest-health-care-recruiting-and-training-programs-i>
- 5) March 19, 2021: Funds have been made available to LTC homes to support the purchasing, installing, upgrading, or repairing of air conditioning in common areas and in resident rooms. 1. [Minister's Letter – IPAC and LTC Minor Capital](#) ; 2. [ADM Letter – IPAC Minor Capital](#); 3. [ADM Letter – LTC Minor Capital](#)

As I close this bulletin, I wish you, on behalf of our OARC team, peace, joy, and good health. Please reach out to us via email info@ontarc.com or phone 1-800-532-0201 x 220 and visit our website www.ontarc.com We are here for you.

Warmest regards,



Dee Lender
Executive Director, OARC