

Seasons

OAR^oC
Ontario
Association
of Residents'
Councils

Celebrating the Seasons of Life | For Residents, By Residents

Spring/Summer 2025



IN THIS ISSUE:
FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD
RESIDENTS TRANSFORMING CARE CONFERENCES
ENHANCING RESIDENT BATHING EXPERIENCES

Seasons

Published twice a year, *Seasons* contains news and information of interest to those living and working in Ontario long-term care homes.

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Story Submission

To share your story, please email Melissa McVie at mmcvie@ontarc.com with the following information:

- Your article (250-300 word maximum) including a summary of the event, project or program
- Submission title and authors
- Pictures to bring your story to life for our readers
- Quotes – we love hearing about resident reactions to your programs/initiatives

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Contents

Message from the OARC Board Chair..... 3
Message from the OARC Board Chair..... 3
Keeping it REAL: Food, Glorious Food4-5
Team Member Spotlight: IPAC Lead, Queen’s Garden..... 6
Staying In-Forumed with OARC Resident Forums 7

LTC Home Sharing and Innovation

Residents Transforming Care Conferences8-9
Residents Engaged in Research: OARC Co-Design 9
Enhancing Resident Bathing Experiences..... 10-11

Residents’ Council Week

Residents’ Council Week 2024 Reflections..... 12
A Good Day in Long-Term Care Photo Contest 13
Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award..... 14-15



Cover Page: Art Thompson nurtures his green thumb at Tullamore Community in Brampton, where the Residents’ Council is actively fundraising to purchase raised garden beds. Art looks forward to sharing his favourite outdoor hobby with other residents this summer. Catch this photo and more on page 13.

Back Page: Jim Gilhuly poses proudly next to his home’s OARC membership certificate. As Treasurer of OARC’s Board of Directors, Jim invites all LTC homes to become OARC members and support the only provincial association with a mandate to amplify resident voices and experiences.



Contest Residents’ Council Week Wishlist

We invite residents to **tell us what they’d like to see in this year’s Residents’ Council Week celebration package.** Are there materials that might help you as you prepare for Residents’ Council Week 2025 — September 15th to 21st? Share your ideas with Melissa at: mmcvie@ontarc.com by May 30th, 2025 for a chance to win a gift card of your Residents’ Council’s choosing. Congratulations to the Council at Rideaucrest Home in Kingston for finding the hidden copper pot in the last issue of *Seasons*.

Message from the OARC Board Chair

Spring has arrived—a season synonymous with renewal, growth, and the blossoming of possibilities. For many, spring serves as a meaningful reminder of the opportunities to refresh our perspectives, embrace positive change, and continue building connections and vibrant communities within the places we call home.

In this edition, we celebrate the many ways residents are shaping the daily life and operations of their homes. You will find inspiring ideas and insights into how quality improvement efforts focused on areas such as care conferences, bathing routines and mealtimes, are making a tangible difference in how residents experience life in their homes. You will see evidence of an encouraging shift away from simply informing residents of changes, or “doing for” residents, to a more proactive consultation and co-design with residents. Furthermore, these initiatives align perfectly with the aims of OARC’s current co-design research project, about which you can learn more on page 9.

As we turn the spotlight on Residents' Council Week and OARC’s Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award (SCALA), we share reflections on the lasting contributions that Councils have made, by working in partnership with their long-term care home teams. Residents’ Council Week is a celebration of teamwork and the essential role that residents play in shaping their homes for the better. When residents are intentionally and meaningfully engaged as partners and collaborators, the resulting tangible outcomes are translated into positive experiences across the whole home. Everyone benefits!

Looking forward to the year ahead, we encourage Residents’ Councils to consider joining the Ontario Association of Residents’ Councils (OARC) as annual members for **2025-2026**. Membership offers a unique opportunity to join OARC’s network of over 500 Residents’ Councils, to learn, share insights, and help your provincial association to amplify the voices of residents at the home and system levels.

We hope you will find this magazine edition both uplifting and thought-provoking. May it inspire continued growth, connection, and a renewed sense of pride in the meaningful contributions residents bring to their communities.

Happy reading, and may the spirit of spring bring fresh energy to us all!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Nestor", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

**Mary Nestor, Chair,
OARC Board of Directors**



Food, Glorious Food

By Jennifer Brown, Resident Leader, Lakeside LTC, Toronto & OARC REAL Member

“Let food be thy medicine, and medicine thy food.” Hippocrates said it best!

Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this message was lost in many long-term care homes. Mine was one. Put it down to the pandemic, product shortages, food chain or staffing issues, what has always been promoted by management as a “pleasurable dining experience,” had turned, for too many of us, into anything but.

It has taken the Residents’ Council in my home several years to remedy this issue. We started small, by bringing concerns forward as individuals, supported by family members who emailed, phoned and met with management on our behalf. Our issues were inferior ingredients, badly cooked, served cold and slopped onto plastic plates (an unfortunate infection control measure).

When Residents’ Council meetings resumed, more individual complaints were noted and carried forward from month to month. We started requesting the presence of both the Dietician and Dietary Manager at each meeting and recommended specific changes to enhance our food quality and overall dining experience. Minor adjustments were made, but much more was needed. When we consulted with Family Council and our Executive Director, we received immediate support. An Executive Food Committee was struck, which involved us (the residents!), the Executive Director, the Director of Care, the Chair and another executive member of Family Council.



Residents Driving Food Quality

This Committee initiated a series of monthly meetings and requested the attendance of senior representatives from our home's management company and their subcontracted food company, responsible for planning, purchasing, preparing, cooking, presenting and serving all meals. Our Dietary Manager, Registered Dietician and even the chefs, were also present, as needed. Every aspect of food management in the home was examined and critiqued. The process was exhaustive and we did face resistance. Minutes were taken at every meeting, specific action plans were tabled, with agreed-upon deadlines, which were reviewed at the following meeting. We were encouraged to continue emailing our concerns to the Dietary Manager and include all members of the Committee on the correspondence. When issues remained unresolved, we resorted to attaching photographs illustrating our concerns, to everyone. This proved to garner faster and more acceptable results!

We formed the Executive Food Committee in January 2024 and it still meets monthly. Progress, although slow at times, has been made. This is an ongoing process! Our Residents' Council's Food Group meets monthly with the Dietary Manager to discuss any issues and recommend changes. We also review the seasonal menus twice a year and our suggestions are incorporated into those as well. As a result of all this advocacy, our home has initiated a residents' baking club, a monthly breakfast club (pictured on page 4) where we sample new dishes, and special menus which feature cuisines from different cultures. To date we have enjoyed food from Latin America, India and China. Most rewarding of all, most residents have noticed and acknowledged that the food we are served is much better, as are its presentation and service.

We understand that we are not “there” quite yet, but the road ahead is much smoother, now that all parties are working together and communicating as one.

Jennifer's Steps for “Making Food Better!”

1. Follow the usual complaints process in your home before escalating anything.

2. Invite your Dietary Manager to your next Council meeting, capture resident feedback in minutes, and request an action plan with specific dates for anticipated resolution.

3. Form a Food Group sub-committee with your Council and request ongoing participation from the Dietary Manager and Dietician. Review all aspects of food service in these monthly meetings including the food budget/nutritional

allowance, food sourcing, menu planning, food preparation, cooking, serving, presentation and wastage. It is important to know and understand the process.

4. Provide timely feedback (including photos) to Dietary and Home management. This helps them review and implement solutions.

5. Work in partnership and meet regularly with Executive Director and Family Council. Discuss the formation of an Executive Food Committee to act as a time-limited supervisory group for as long as necessary. Page 5 | Spring/Summer 2025

Team Member Spotlight



Inspiring Infection Control Lead

Nominated Employee: Jeanette Xaypharath, Queen's Garden, Hamilton

*Similar to residents, the leaders working in long-term care (LTC) homes have their own unique story and a personal journey that led them to work in LTC. **This is Jeannette's story:***

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Jeannette credits her family and early life experiences for shaping her as a person and for helping to inspire her career path. Jeanette's parents met in Canada after leaving the Philippines (mom) and Laos (dad). Growing up, her brother had a lot of food allergies and Jeannette remembers the many trips to the Doctor's office. During one particular visit, there was a nurse that shared the

same name (and spelling!) as Jeannette. This nurse treated her brother and family with such genuine care and kindness, that it made Jeannette want to become a nurse herself.

Fast forward to 2013, and Jeanette was proudly graduating with her Practical Nursing diploma from Seneca College. During her student placement experiences, Jeannette developed a passion for the well-being and quality of life of seniors in LTC. She saw first hand, the need for compassion and advocacy, and it made her want to become a LTC nurse.

Jeanette officially stepped into the role of Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Lead full time at Queen's Garden Long-Term Care Residence in 2020, during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional training and certifications obtained through Centennial College and Queen's University helped prepare her for this role.

As IPAC Lead, Jeannette spends time engaging with community partners including Public Health, and auditing and analyzing information. She genuinely enjoys sharing this information and providing education to support others' understanding. Her relationship with the Queen's Garden Residents' Council is an important one; the Council has extended an invitation to have her join their meetings on a quarterly basis, where she strives to keep residents informed about vaccines, infection rates and trends and outbreaks. Jeannette welcomes opportunities to meet with residents, answer their questions, and collect feedback about all aspects of her role.

As a nurse and IPAC Lead, Jeanette's role might be clinical in nature, but she values the relational aspects of her work most of all. "I try to have as many 1:1 conversations as possible to develop my relationship with residents," she says. "Even if it's just me giving a smile and asking them about their day, I try to make a connection." Jeannette feels that it is a privilege to work with residents. "At the end of the day, they deserve the utmost respect. I am working in their home, and my goal is for them to be as comfortable as possible. It's a lot easier to give a vaccine or take a nasal swab from a resident when there is trust and rapport!"

Thank you, Jeannette for all that you do!

Spotlight on Resident Forums: Thursdays at 2pm

Shared By: Ann Donaldson, Resident Leader, Weston Terrace and OARC Board Director and REAL Member



OARC Resident Forums are meetings that I try to join every Thursday from 2:00pm—3:00pm ET (sometimes it goes longer, when folks have lots to say on a subject). Residents from homes across Ontario get together using the Zoom platform (provided and hosted by OARC) to hear what's happening in their respective areas, share ideas and/or concerns, and to ask questions.

I've found it to be not only very entertaining but also informative. Not a week goes by where I fail to learn something. We've talked about everything from weather and politics to government rules and regulations, changes to home activities, Residents' Council challenges and of course, food! Nothing is off limits. Lots of laughs. What happens in the Forum, stays in the Forum!



We would love to see you on our Zoom screens sometime soon! To learn more and access our meeting link, contact OARC or visit our website:

www.ontarc.com/resident-forums.html

Be sure to tell your Council Assistants that we also have a dedicated Forum once a month, just for them. Residents' Council Assistant Forums are hosted on the last Tuesday of every month at 1:30pm. Registration information is available on the OARC website.

Residents Transforming Care Conferences

Shared By: Dillon Underwood, Social Worker, Sun Parlor Home, Leamington, Ontario

At the Sun Parlor Home in Leamington, residents are at the forefront of decision-making. One example that illustrates our home culture and commitment to resident-centred engagement was the outcome of a home-wide systematic review and the subsequent transformation of our Interdisciplinary Team Conferences (IDTC)—now known as Resident Wellness Reviews.

In Ontario, long-term care homes are expected to—at a minimum—hold a care conference for all residents, six weeks after they move in, and again annually thereafter. After identifying the IDTC/care conferences as an opportunity for improvement in our home, we worked together with residents to develop a review process with which they were comfortable and confident.

From the beginning, residents were engaged in the changes taking place. First, the Residents' Council was surveyed to determine what residents value most about their care conferences. They expressed that the facilitation of conferences must ensure that resident voices are heard and their needs prioritized. Embracing the philosophy of 'nothing about residents, without residents,' the group agreed that when residents are placed at the centre of all discussions, they feel empowered, and are more confident communicating personal preferences related to their care and how they spend their time in their home.

Residents helped to shape the new look of their care conferences—right down to the name. Recognizing that the term 'care conference' placed emphasis on the clinical aspects of their experiences in their home, the residents decided that a more wholistic name would be more appropriate. Presented with several alternatives to consider, Residents' Council members put the decision to a vote, and now Sun Parlor Home enthusiastically conducts Resident Wellness Reviews in place of the former IDTC's.

The Residents' Council also discussed the location and timing of Wellness Reviews, and provided valuable feedback aimed at making the meetings more accessible for residents. Residents graciously permitted team members to use the resident lounges for Reviews, which fosters a greater sense of community and comfort for all involved. This also reduces the sense of formality that is often associated with medical or board room settings, allowing for more relaxed yet meaningful interactions. The team at Sun Parlor Home has also observed that residents are more likely to share their concerns when in a comfortable environment, leading to better care outcomes.



"I thought it was good! I enjoyed [the Wellness Review] because all the important people were there."

- Harriette, Resident

One of Sun Parlor Home's beloved residents, Harriette, was asked to reflect on her recent Wellness Review: "I thought it was good. I enjoyed it because all of the important people were there," Harriette said, noting her children, son-in-law, and multiple departments were all present for the review.

After sustaining the new Wellness Reviews for over a year, the residents and team at Sun Parlor remain equally enthusiastic about the changes they were able to implement. They would encourage other homes to embark on a similar journey to bring renewed meaning to care conferences and other areas of home operations. When in doubt, they say—always remember to ask residents—it's their home!

Residents Engaged in Research: Update on OARC's Co-Design Project

Did you know that OARC is currently engaged in a nationally-funded research project? As key members of the research team, OARC Resident Leaders Jim Gilhuly and Gale Ramsden have been involved every step of the way of our three-part co-design project that aims to develop an evidence-informed resource to assist LTC home teams to engage residents in organizational design and governance (i.e., to incorporate residents' needs, values, and preferences into home-level decision-making and operations).



Our project team brings together residents, knowledge users from OARC, researchers and other sector partners. To date, we have conducted a scoping review to describe existing research on resident engagement as well as the associated barriers, enablers and approaches to evaluation. Next, we interviewed people living and working in LTC homes in order to understand community capacity for resident engagement. The third phase of our research project that is currently underway has focused on the collaborative development of a toolkit that showcases a wide range of opportunities for residents to be engaged in their home operations—using home spotlight stories and tips for implementation and sustainability.

Stay tuned — we look forward to sharing updates regarding the launch of our toolkit later this year in future OARC communications.

Learn about our project: www.ontarc.com/research-and-quality/current-research.html

Enhancing Resident Bathing Experiences

Shared By: Sierra Giles, RPN, BPSO Lead, ADOC; Shannon Golbeck, PSW, Greenwood Court Stratford and Shaila Aranha, RN, MSc.N, PMP BPSO LTC Coach (RNAO)

Greenwood Court is a long-term care home on a journey to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) in partnership with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO). Our examination of the bathing experience is an example of our commitment to implement RNAO's Person- and Family-Centred Care Best Practice Guideline. By exploring ways to enhance our approaches to resident care and daily routines, we are striving to enhance quality of life for all residents.



Bathing is a purposeful activity that supports personal hygiene, promotes skin health, prevents infection, and contributes to a person's quality of sleep and overall sense of well-being. At Greenwood Court, the care team recognized that some residents did not enjoy bathing. We determined that over a six-month period of time, twenty-five per cent of residents refused at least one bath each month. When a bath was offered, residents became visibly nervous and upset, and they resisted care, to convey their intent to refuse bathing.

To better understand why some residents might be feeling and responding this way, our team engaged residents and families in a focused discussion. We learned that for some residents, their past personal experiences might be negatively impacting their enjoyment of bathing. Some of the possible reasons that were shared included the fear of water, medical conditions, cultural practices, changes to past bathing routines, traumatic experiences, incompatible bathing times, bathing style and caregiver arrangements.

As a next step, Personal Support Workers (PSWs) had conversations with residents and families and worked collaboratively to identify solutions that respected resident preferences, including cultural practices, to make their bathing experiences more enjoyable and relaxing.

By embracing a more person-centred approach to resident bathing, we saw more residents having positive experiences, while the number of bathing refusals declined. Team members involved in resident care also expressed how much they enjoyed the new bathing program. One PSW shared, "I love having the one-on-one time with residents and learning about their life stories."

Learning directly from the residents and their preferences, the team considered the following aspects when customizing bathing practices in the home:

Time of day: for some residents, bathing before bedtime is a customary routine for cleansing.

Cultural and religious practices: some residents prefer bathing prior to religious service days.

Preference of caregiver: some residents prefer to receive care from staff of the same gender.

Pre-bathing support: involving the resident in activities leading up to the shower or bath helped them to be more psychologically prepared and relaxed at bathtime.

Type of bath: a shower might be preferred over a tub bath for those who are fearful of water.

Adaptation of bathing practices and styles: asking each resident how they like to be supported during bathing can alleviate stress and promote resident independence and comfort.

Music therapy: music can be used therapeutically to help residents experiencing nervousness during bathing; a sing-a-long can be a pleasant distraction.

Bathing environment: the shower and tub rooms were transformed into rejuvenating spaces by being free of clutter, changing the lighting, adding heat lamps and shelves for personal items.

The team at Greenwood Court, led by our PSW Champions, were empowered to enhance the bathing program by working with residents, to review routines and implement new practices. We

have enhanced communication amongst the team by designing a visual bath board to plan care for a pleasurable bathing experience.

Demonstrating our commitment to respect the privacy, dignity and self-determination of residents, we involved residents directly in our quality improvement efforts and all decisions about their bathing preferences.

Together, we have shifted away from a task-focused approach, in favour of being more person-centred.

Resident quality of life is prioritized and valued just as much as quality care experiences.

Resident Feedback

"I prefer to have my bath on Saturday evenings, as that was custom before going to Church on Sunday morning. I am glad to continue this routine."

"I look forward to my baths... I can use my favourite products; I do what I can for myself which helps me feel more comfortable."

"I like that I don't feel rushed during my shower... I feel clean and refreshed and the staff are helpful."

Residents' Council Week 2024 Reflections



Last September, we recognized the 5-year milestone of Residents' Council Week and long-term care home celebrations across Ontario did not disappoint!

- Councils got creative using the OARC celebration package materials which included a banner and balloons, and many homes created their own displays.
- Our customizable posters and certificate templates were a hit again—we loved seeing how Councils used them to show their appreciation and raise awareness.
- Councils continued to embrace this celebratory week as an opportunity to work in partnership with their homes and communities to plan activities and events.

***CONTEST* For a chance to win a gift card, OARC wants to hear from you!**

This year, we will be celebrating Residents' Council Week during the week of September 15th—21st, 2025, and we need your help with our preparations!

- Tell us what your Council would like to see included in their year's celebration package and/or what activities or templates you'd like us to add to our existing printable resources: www.ontarc.com/residents-council-week.html
- When is the best time for you to receive your RC Week materials in the mail?
- Share your Council's ideas with Melissa McVie at: mmcvie@ontarc.com by May 30th, 2025, for a chance to win a gift card of your Council's choosing.

A Good Day in Long-Term Care Photo Contest



Maple Health Centre,
Maple, ON



King Nursing Home,
Bolton, ON



Emo Health Centre,
Emo, ON



Glen Stor Dun Lodge,
Cornwall, ON



Marshall Gowland Manor,
Sarnia, ON



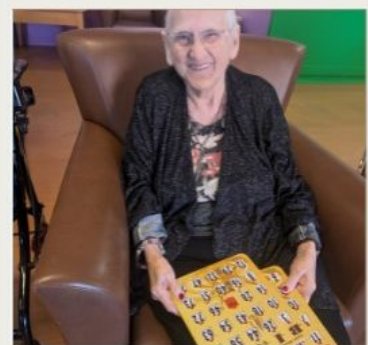
Tullamore Community,
Brampton, ON



Foyer Des Pionniers,
Hearst, ON



Bignucolo Residence,
Chapleau, ON



Berkshire Care Centre,
Windsor ON

Thank you to everyone that participated in our 2024 photo contest, where we asked residents to show us what ‘a good day in long-term care’ looks like. We were reminded that it’s the simple things that make life special, like enjoying time outdoors, playing a game with friends, or the satisfaction of completing a puzzle.

Residents’ Council Week photos Page 12: Glen Rouge Community (Scarborough), Cooksville Care Centre (Mississauga), Glen Stor Dun Lodge (Cornwall) and Valley Manor (Barry’s Bay).

Residents Partnering for Quality Improvement and Positive Change



The Sharron Cooke Legacy Award is awarded on an annual basis to a long-term care home that demonstrates a commitment to partnering with residents on a specific quality improvement project or initiative.

The award honours its namesake, OARC's longest serving Board Chair, who led with tenacity and heart, and helped to envision this special award prior to her passing in August 2022.

Last summer, OARC received five applications for the Sharron Cooke Annual Legacy Award, each showcasing a unique resident-centred program. We struck a small adjudication committee comprised of OARC Resident Leaders to carefully review each submission, and select our recipient.

Sharron Cooke Legacy Award Recipient 2024, Kensington Village, London



Taste of Home

What? Residents involved on the Council and Food Committee wanted to improve their home's menu options.

Who? Residents collaborated with LTC home Administration, Dietary and Recreation Departments and families.

How? Resident recipes were sought, prepared and taste-tested on Saturday mornings, with favourite selections added to home's regular menu cycles.

Outcome: Residents are proud to see their cherished recipes incorporated and mealtimes are more enjoyable!

Advice to other homes: Start small and scale the program. Keep an open mind. Include home management in all discussions to explore actionable ideas.

Honourable Mentions for Inspiring Submissions:

Welcome Club, Meadow Park Chatham, Chatham
Welcome Tea, Southbridge Lakehead, Thunder Bay
Carnival Day, King Nursing Home, Bolton
Dream Team, Trillium Community, Kingston

(Read about each initiative on page 15!)

Applications open Summer 2025:

www.ontarc.com/residents-council-week/sharron-cooke-legacy-award.html

Award presented during RC Week

Spotlight on 2024 Award Applications

Welcome Club



At Meadow Park Chatham, a formalized group of resident peer mentors founded a club dedicated to making residents feel welcome and included. The group meets monthly to identify opportunities to build connections and to develop their capacity as peer mentors. Residents have received education about communication strategies and understanding peers living with dementia. Being a peer mentor gives residents a sense of purpose, while contributing to a positive home culture!

At Southbridge Lakehead, what started as a welcoming program for new residents and families, evolved into a Residents' Council-led initiative designed to make new team members feel welcome. Residents designed refreshment cups with welcoming messages to hand out at staff orientation, and they use these interactions as an opportunity to teach the team about Residents' Council and residents' rights.



Welcome Tea

Dream Team



At Trillium Community, residents and team members work together to identify and make resident dreams come true. With the generous support of donations, the team has helped residents to make some lifelong dreams a reality, including the coordination of special outings to attend sporting events, a Ringo Starr concert and a family reunion at a cottage. The dedicated efforts of the Dream Team also enabled the purchase of custom hearing aids for two residents, giving them a new lease on life!

Teamwork really does make the dream work!

At King Nursing Home, the idea to create an interactive and memorable event for residents became a reality thanks to the collaborative efforts of the whole team. The home hosted a full day event featuring 11 activity stations and concession stations serving up classic carnival treats. The event not only provided entertainment, but it also strengthened bonds among team members and residents.



Carnival Day



We're stronger together!

**Join our network of
close to 500 Residents'
Councils across Ontario.**

**We hope we can count on your Home's
support for the 2025-2026 membership year.**
Learn more: www.ontarc.com/membership.html