
Friends Family Communique - Issue #12 (February 2021)

Dealing with the Double Whammy: The Winter Blues + COVID-19

The cold, dark days of winter can be a depressing time for anyone. Add COVID-19, with its accompanying restrictions (ie. less face-to-face connection with family and friends, less able to go out to places whether it be to the library, a coffee place or elsewhere) and feelings of isolation, anxiety and/or fearfulness may “ramp up.” Residents at Friends Housing are no exception and in fact, may experience these feelings in a more pronounced way.

With services/programs having to turn away from group-based to more individual-based... and away from “outside,” ie. community-focussed to in-house focussed, Crystal shares the current situation regarding her and Dana’s resident-focussed work:

“We continue to provide more support over the phone vs. in-person. As well, activities remain pretty much the same, ie. just van trips for groceries (to Giant Tiger and Walmart) and for banking (to whatever banks residents need). But since the last FFC newsletter, residents are now able to use a computer in the Computer Room (he/she just needs to sign up for a designated 1-hour time slot; computers and the computer area are sanitized between uses) - and there have also been some 1-on-1 painting activities. As per public health requirements, our Common Room and Fitness/Gym Room remain closed. And of course, we continue to monitor the situation and as the rules loosen up, changes will be made.”

As a family member, there are things YOU can do too - to connect with and keep in touch with your family member - particularly important now. Some ideas include:

Use new and/or different ways to make connections and stay in contact.

- Through electronic devices - texts, emails, faxes and video visits (eg FaceTime, Zoom, etc).
Did you know... if your family member doesn’t have a computer, you can email (or fax) a note c/o Friends Housing office and staff will print it off and get it to him/her?
- Through online greeting cards. With several providers to choose from (just Google “online greeting cards”), it’s easy and no more expensive than buying and mailing cards - for any and all occasions.
- Through “snail mail.” Who doesn’t like reaching into their mailbox and pulling out a note or card! Don’t have much to say? Then include a news clipping, joke or two, poem or something the person would enjoy.

Do something for others. Find purpose in helping others who can’t get out as much.

- Offer to pick up something he/she needs (eg. groceries, a prescription).
- Order a meal for a family member and have it delivered to their apartment.
- Do a random act of kindness - drop off (mail if more convenient or you live out of town) a fun, little surprise. It can be as simple as a favourite snack treat, magazine or even an old photo or two. And if you want to add a little “mystique,” send it “c/o Friends Housing office” where staff will be happy to get it to your family member.

Mix things up. Be a little creative. You’ll both feel better for it!

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A Registered Charitable Organization
#102 163 045 RR0001

Income Tax Help for Residents

There will be assistance for any resident needing help completing and filing his/her 2020 income tax return, as has been the case for many years now. The details are still being finalized and once known, will be shared with all residents. For more information, contact Crystal at 204-832-2254 (ph) or friendshousing.cp@gmail.com (email).

From the Board...

The Board continues taking steps in two key areas. One is to secure the future of Friends Housing. After board planning (at its regular Board meeting on February 26), meetings will be held with Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation regarding the continued funding AFTER our current operating agreement expires in July 2024. As you may recall, they currently cover the operational costs of the apartment building and townhouses. As of yet, we do not have any commitment that our current funding will continue, and it seems possible that future support will need to come from a different source and/or arrangement. Nonetheless, we remain confident that funding will be secured to ensure Friends Housing's continued operation - and future. The second key area we are working on relates to our plans to meet with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to discuss a possible increase in funding for our mental health support activities. With no increase in funding for nine years now, our primary goal is to keep staff salaries at a reasonable level.

In addition, the Board is also looking into the possibility of a **new van**. With our current, 10- year old one requiring more repairs (ie. higher maintenance cost), it is time to address this issue to ensure continued safe, reliable transport for residents and staff alike. We are currently researching possible funding leads for this. Should anyone have any connection with a possible source(s) of a new or "next to new" van, please contact Crystal.

As well, the apartment's new **ventilation system** remains on track for installation this spring.

The Board continues to meet remotely which, though not ideal, remains necessary. We hope we can again meeting in person this fall. If questions, contact John at 204-488-1237 (ph) or jgosseli@mymts.net (email).

Update: Income Support for Individuals with Disabilities

Further to information in the FFC (August 2020) newsletter about the [Manitoba Disability Support Program](#) (see our website in the "Families" section to refer to it), the consultation is at the next stage - with February 26 being the deadline for submitting your input.

Help determine the eligibility and criteria around a possible new income support program for people with severe and prolonged disabilities. (Currently in Manitoba, such individuals are eligible for Employment Income Assistance (EIA), whereas several other provinces offer separate programs tailored to the unique needs of this population.) Take the online survey at engagemb.ca/manitoba-disability-community or for more information, phone 204-945-1040.

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Thank You, Donors!

We are very grateful for the donations we received in 2020. Funding from our government partners allows us the needed stability and security to provide for our residents and indirectly, residents' families too.

As well, funds from our other donors help us with those important "additional things" which improve the health, wellbeing and overall quality of life of our residents. With COVID-19 disrupting our usual resident programming in 2020 and our need to pivot to more limited, more one-on-one, more in-house activities, we used the opportunity to improve the resident amenities in our building, specifically those in the Common Room. As a result, a new 70" Smart TV with streaming services as well as an additional new sofa (adding to the two previously purchased) are now in place and ready for use when we are able to reopen.

That said, we also look forward to when we can return to our more varied, extensive programming - and reconnecting with our local business and community supporters.

Government/Public Donors:

- Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (Housing component)
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (Mental Health component)

Donors - Financial:

Adolph, Doreen	Murdoch-Schon, Allison
Allan, Lavina	Ridley, Orila
Arcand, Bonne and Marc	Robbins, Delores
Falk, Peter and Ann	Sanderson, Margaret
Feldman, Rhoda and Zivey	Schon, Herb and Carol
Garvey, Scott and Caron	Smith, Gregory and Candice
Gosselin, John	Smith, Jane
Harman, Eric and Sally	Sochasky, Cathy
Hughes, Robert and Marnie	Trochim, Dennis
Kisyk, Elsie	White, Brenda and Richard
McBride, Elizabeth	Zaleski, Maureen and Al
Murdoch Management	

**Note: Some of the donations above were "In Memory" donations, ie. in memory of Elaine Lutz and Helga Berger, both of whom passed away in 2020. The thoughtfulness and kind gesture of these two women - and their families - is truly appreciated. Their doing so also serves as a reminder to others wishing to do the same, ie. be sure your family knows your wishes.

Donors - In Kind:

Anonymous (Additional sofa for Common Room)
Jane Smith (COVID protective gear for staff)
Manitoba Museum (Museum passes)

**Giving is not just about making a donation; it's about making a difference.
Thank you for all those who helped make a difference!**

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Thank You, Donors! (continued)

And for 2021... In addition to the Board working toward getting a new **van** (see information in “From the Board...” article above), we are also looking for financial help in adding to - and updating - the equipment on our Fitness Room/Gym - to help promote better health and wellbeing of our residents. We are looking into the possibility of getting an **elliptical machine**. Mimicking the motion of running (what a treadmill does) but without the impact, it is especially beneficial for those with knee problems or recovering from a lower body injury. For more information or to make a donation, contact Crystal at 204-832-2254 (ph).

Friends Housing Profile* - Tribute to Helga Berger, Founder of Friends Housing

Friends Housing lost a very special person on November 21, 2020 - with the passing of Helga Berger, in Kelowna, BC. Some readers will remember Helga - perhaps attended meetings and even worked with her - in the late 1970s and through the 1980s. Others may have heard of her from their parents/other family members or read about her (eg. in “The Story of Friends Housing” posted on our website... or in the framed, September 24, 1989 Winnipeg Free Press newspaper article hanging on Friends Housing’s reception area wall).

Regardless of whether you knew Helga - or not - the fact remains that SHE is the reason that Friends Housing exists today. (A side note: she was also very involved in leading the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society in its early years.) Driven by personal circumstance, it was her vision, leadership, knowledge, determination and just plain hard work over many years that made Friends Housing a reality. Her ability to communicate and engage others (including co-founder, Don Plummer) in establishing this unique, forward-thinking initiative not only led to the establishment of Friends Housing but helped ensure its continued operation now 30 years later. A wait list for residency since before the building opened and to this day is testament to the fact Friends Housing has served - and continues to serve - the needs of those with chronic serious mental health issues.

What others say in remembering Helga:

“She had great wit and humour. A charmer for certain.”

“Helga was a lovely person.”

“Charismatic. And though not everyone always agreed with what she said, they always greatly respected her and her opinions.”

But perhaps the last sentence in her obituary best sums up Helga: “92 years, survived the Nazis, got two university degrees, built Friends Housing, was a good mom and a good person. She done good.”

Thank you, Helga. You have indeed “done good.”

- Friends Housing

* **Friends Housing Profile** is an ongoing series featuring Board members, staff, volunteers and others who play - or have played - an important role in Friends Housing.

Next Issue: May 2021