

Friends Family Communique - May 2020 (Issue #9)

COVID-19 and Friends Housing: An Update

We continue working hard to help keep residents, staff and visitors safe. Updates for residents are posted on the notice board in the lobby while families will continue to be kept informed - in the same way(s) as done with the prior two notices sent out.

Staffing

Staffing continues with 2 staff. Crystal works Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm - in the office Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; from home Tuesdays and Thursdays (with office calls forwarded to her cell phone). We encourage residents to make appointments to speak to Crystal in person (only one visitor is allowed in the office at a time) or to meet via phone. Though having family visit is fine, we are discouraging residents from having friends at the building. James continues his regular Monday to Friday building maintenance schedule, keeping the building as germ-free as possible. And though Dana, Activities Coordinator remains not working at present, the good news is that she is expected back June 29. At that time, she will focus on 1-on-1 and small group activities (eg. crafts, neighbourhood walks), with cooking classes and group outings to events/venues beginning sometime later.

Programs/Activities

With the continuing need for Programs/Activities to be curtailed, we will NOT have a **summer student** nor a **Summer BBQ** for family, residents, staff and Board this year.

That being said, key programs/activities which continue are:

Grocery Shopping Trips:

- Crystal, “pinch hitting” for Dana, drives residents to and from grocery store shopping trips. Those riding in the van are required to wear a mask. We have a 2-week rotating shopping day schedule, where Week #1 is to Superstore (Monday and Wednesday) and Giant Tiger (usually Friday), and Week #2 is to Superstore (Monday and Wednesday) and Walmart (usually Friday). This schedule then repeats. (Trips to Superstore are limited to once/person/week.)
- If a resident has forgotten or needs anything between times, he/she is encouraged to order and have it delivered, purchase it at the nearby convenience store and/or seek family help.

Bank Trips:

- Similarly, bank trips continue - and are scheduled to coincide closely with CPP days (ie. third last business day of each month) and EIA days (ie. mid-month and end of month).

Income Tax Assistance:

- With the cancellation of the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) this spring - a program which has, for years, provided help to many residents, a big thanks goes to John Gosselin who, with his accounting background and familiarity with tax software, stepped in to help interested residents on May 11 complete their **2019 income tax returns** in time to meet Canada Revenue Agency’s extended deadline of June 1.

Friends Housing Inc.

A Registered Charitable Organization
#102 163 045 RR0001

100-890 Sturgeon Road
Winnipeg, MB R2Y 0L2
204-953-1160 (ph)
204-953-1162 (fax)
fhousing@shaw.ca (email)
friendshousinginc.ca (website)

Common Room

It remains open ONLY when Crystal is in the office. As well, for social distancing purposes, a maximum of 5 people at any given time are allowed in the room - and only one person/couch (exception: if it is a couple living in the same household). Coffee, tea, and water remain unavailable.

How Families Can Help

- Keep in close contact - preferably, by phone, video chat or email - with your family member(s) to monitor how they are coping and provide help as needed.
- Remind/reinforce the public health messages regarding hand washing, social distancing and staying at home. And when visiting Friends Housing, abide by these practices too.
- Remind/reinforce the message regarding if he/she is feeling ill, to stay in their apartment and promptly advise someone (eg. family, Crystal or Health Links, 204-788-8200 - ie. the 24/7/365 telephone health information line). **Note:** Friends Housing office has very limited supplies of personal protective equipment, ie. face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer if needed.

Any questions or concerns? If so, contact Crystal at 403-832-2254 (ph) or friendshousing.cp@gmail.com (email).

Board Update

We were pleased in early May to get approval from Manitoba Housing to keep last year's surplus monies to cover the cost of replacing the **apartment building's rooftop and ventilation system**. You may recall we had talked about the ventilation system, but with the roof also nearing the end of its lifespan, it was subsequently deemed to be more cost-effective to do both projects at the same time. These renovations will extend the life of our building and help relieve the pressure on future finances. It will go to tender in June with installation possibly over a few days in November (the time lag due to the fact it takes some time to manufacture the ventilation unit).

Fundraising for a **new van** and **Common Room furniture** is on hold until pandemic restrictions have been reduced somewhat, and new safety procedures are in place.

If any questions, contact John, Board Chair, 204-488-1237 (phone) or jgosseli@mymts.net

What Do Readers Think... About the FFC Newsletter?

Since the first issue of Friends Family Communique (FFC) "rolled off the press" 2 1/2 years ago, it seemed time to formally seek reader feedback. We wanted to get a sense if it was "on track" in being informative, relevant - and desired by families. So, a survey questionnaire was developed, a sample of readers (ie. family members) were chosen and phone interviews took place the end of March/beginning of April.

Overall, Friends Family Communique was found to be informative, relevant and appreciated - and its frequency (ie. quarterly) and length (ie. 3-4 pages) "fine, as is." Note: the regularly featured "Profile" article was consistently mentioned as a highlight so see Page 3! However, we are always open to getting reader feedback. Comments should be forwarded to Crystal.

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Friends Housing Profile*: Herb Schon, Board Director

How and when did you get involved with Friends Housing?

In the late 1980s, our young adult daughter was soon graduating from a program at Sara Riel Inc and she was in need of a home to move into. Hearing about Friends Housing, we submitted an application. She was one of the original group of "first tenants" in the apartment building and has lived there ever since. It was a case of "being in the right place at the right time."

What has been your involvement since?

Many years, off and on, I've sat on the Board - often as a Director, some years as Vice-Chair. Before that, I had never sat on a Board before, but they were in need of directors so I "jumped in, cold turkey."

Is there a particular issue - or time - on the Board that is particularly memorable?

About 15-20 years ago, rust spots began appearing on several 4th floor apartment ceilings; there was even water dripping in some apartments. The cause was a building construction issue - the metal flashing over the windows, designed to divert water away from/outside the building walls was incorrectly installed so water was going inside the building instead! Eventually, everything got resolved, including 4th floor tenants' ceilings repaired and repainted.

Another vivid memory - the first meetings, when the apartment building was newly opened, were held in a room in the northwest corner of the apartment building. Some days, it was "colder than Siberia" in there! (Note: this "room" has long since become part of a resident's apartment - and as warm as the other apartments in the building.)

What major change(s) have you seen at Friends Housing over the years?

A key change is the average age of residents. With many original residents, it has become much higher. This speaks to "good things" about Friends Housing - including the building and what it offers its residents, as well as some good facilities nearby (eg. Grace Hospital, ACCESS West). Our "always lengthy" wait list for getting an apartment proves the need for such supportive living housing in Winnipeg. But one bit of advice to anyone building another such building - make ALL apartments no bigger than 1-bedroom ones - as this not only meets the needs of singles and couples, but also enables more housing for more residents.

What message would you like to give to other families?

We need new Board members. New ideas and energy keep Friends Housing best serving the needs of its residents. At the beginning, it was hoped that **every** resident's family would contribute by providing one person to sit on the Board. I encourage families to seriously think about this. And, if readers know anyone outside their family who may be interested in getting involved, I encourage them to talk to him/her too. (It was, after all, a "talk over the fence" to my neighbour - and now Chair of Friends Housing - John Gosselin that lead to his coming onto the Board.) To learn more about the Board or organization, contact any Board member or Crystal.

* Friends Housing Profile is an ongoing series featuring Board members, staff, family and other volunteers.

Next Issue: August 2020