

# Friends Housing Inc.

A Registered Charitable Organization  
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## Friends Family Communique - Issue #13 (May 2021)

### COVID Update

Good news! The majority of residents have now received their first **COVID vaccine**. For those wanting to do so but have not yet gotten theirs, they may wish to contact Ness Pharmacy, 3065A Ness Ave (204-416-6377) to make an appointment. Crystal and Dana are happy to help make appointments and provide rides to and/or from vaccine appointments. (Note: If transportation is needed, a few days' advance notice is required.)

As we still find some residents at times not having a **mask** on (or on properly) when they should, we would appreciate you reminding your family member of the need to do so (and how to do so) whenever in ANY public space within the building. The office continues to stock a limited supply of **disposable masks** (\$1 each).

A big thanks to [Karen Aptekar](#) for her donation of **digital health thermometers** for residents. Anyone wishing one can get theirs at the office.

For more information or questions, contact Crystal Phillips, Mental Health Director at 204-832-2254 (ph) or [friendshousingcp@gmail.com](mailto:friendshousingcp@gmail.com) (email) OR Dana Herman, Activity Coordinator at 204-953-1161 (ph) or [friendshousing.dh@gmail.com](mailto:friendshousing.dh@gmail.com) (email).

### Board Update

The Board continues to work on the issue of continued subsidy funding after the end of our operating agreement with Manitoba Housing in 2024. Recently, an exploratory committee was formed with members from our board and the board of Fountain Springs Housing, a 30-unit apartment building on Sherbrook Street for those with chronic mental health issues. This committee is discussing not only our immediate need in three years, but also an expansion of similar services to better accommodate the needs of the Winnipeg community.

As well, a meeting was held on May 5 with our Board and Joe Bradbury, CEO of Manitoba Housing. We made our case for continued funding. It was heard, we were acknowledged for the good work we are doing and our need for continued support. As we have heard in the past, there is federal money available for housing now but it depends on provincial contribution, with the details of that partnership still being worked out. Next step: an education session for the Board - which MB Housing will arrange in the next month - about the provincial Rent Assist program and how it might be a tool to provide future subsidy for Friends Housing.

For more information or if you have any questions, contact Board Chair, John Gosselin at 204-488-1237 (ph) or [jgosseli@mymts.net](mailto:jgosseli@mymts.net) (email).

## Building Renovations

It will be busy (and a little disruptive) the next few weeks. The **new ventilation rooftop unit**, now arrived, will be installed towards the end of May. With the outside temperature not too hot or too cold, it should not impact residents' comfort. Those on the 4th floor however, can expect to hear a some banging noise for about 5 days. When completed, it should serve us well for another 25-30 years. (Note: As reported previously, a partial replacement of the roof where the unit sits, as well as an upgrade to the electrical, will be done at the same time. Manitoba Housing's approval of the use of some subsidy funds, along with Friends Housing's capital replacement reserve will cover the costs.)

At the same time, an **office renovation** will take place. Over a 2-day or so period, new carpeting (replacing the existing 15+ year old carpet) will be laid and a fresh coat of paint will be put on the walls. Some new office furniture (ie. smaller desks, shelving) will be brought in. The result will be a layout/design which allows for a little more distancing/privacy and a more pleasant space for staff to work, meetings with residents, etc.

During the office renovation - staff will work out of the Art Room and/or Common Room; activities, for the most part, will continue as usual; and phone calls will be automatically transferred to staff members' cell phones. Residents will be notified of the exact dates once confirmed. (Note: This renovation comes 4 years after Murdoch Management was hired as our property manager and we no longer had an Executive Director. With less office space needed, we "reclaimed" what originally had been a suite, and reverted it back to one, thus enabling us to accommodate an additional tenant. The resulting much smaller office did not have any adjustments made at that time.)

## Staffing Update (Building Maintenance)

Regrettably, **James Botaitis** has resigned, his last day with Friends Housing being April 30. We sincerely thank James for keeping our building and property well-maintained and safe, as well as for the help, respect and kindness he provided to all residents over the past 2 years. He will be missed - and we wish him well in his future endeavours. While management works to find a permanent replacement, we welcome **Reg LeClaire** who, beginning April 29, is filling in for the next 2-3 months. His days/hours are Monday - Friday, 10am - 2pm.

## Programs/Activities

- The **Common Room, Fitness/Gym Room and Art Room** reopened about 8 weeks ago - with some restrictions (eg. only open during office days/hours; limited number allowed at any given time. A daily sign-up sheet for 1-hour periods (this can sometimes be extended) is posted in the building's front foyer each weekday for the following weekday.
- Small **group activities** (group size of 2) - including painting, movies, puzzle making, walking, shopping and bank trips - continue. As usual, sign up is done on the big blackboard.
- Garden season is upon us! Interested residents can sign up for "**1/2 garden box**" space where he/she can plant, weed and harvest the fruits of his/her labours.
- **Income Tax Assistance** - Thanks to Community Financial Counselling Services' Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (a partnership with CRA), residents needing help to complete and file their 2020 tax return got it. In a similar vein, our office staff provided assistance to residents wishing help completing their **2021 Census** form.

## Thank You!

A new **elliptical machine** is now in the Fitness/Gym Room, thanks to a donor (who wishes to remain anonymous) responding to our “call” for donations so we could purchase one. The donation was made “In memory of Helga Berger, and her desire to keep the Friends’ family healthy and happy.”

As well, thanks to the following **donors** for their financial donations over the past few months: Lavina Allan, Scott and Caron Garvey, John and Gail Hunt, Margaret Sanderson and Allan Zaleski. Your kindness helps make residents’ lives better. A **surround sound speaker system** for the Common Room’s TV is now in the plans!

### **Friends Housing Profile\* - Zivey Feldman, Founding Member and Past President**

#### **What stands out for you regarding Friends Housing’s beginnings?**

Parents, in the 1980s were quite desperately looking for good, safe places where their adult children could live quite independently. There were really none to be found. One parent, Helga Berger, was key in getting a small parents’ group together. She had ideas about getting our own building. Soon, a board was formed to allow us to apply for grants. Our initial plan was to invest in an existing building and renovate it to meet our needs. We found one in downtown Winnipeg that we thought would work and a few Board members chipped in to make the down payment. However, we soon learned that the cost to renovate it far exceeded the cost of a new building. So, we lost the non-refundable down payment... and learned a valuable lesson.

#### **Then what happened?**

Helga was determined and persistent. She continued finding government grants, then researching and writing the proposals. There were MANY. At one point, I wanted to “call it quits,” but Helga just kept going - so I just kept signing the grant applications - even when some were “longer than a long shot.” It finally paid off - we got the funding we needed.

#### **Were there any other “bumps” along the way?**

There was some controversy. Some believed we were “ghettoizing” people. Once again, Helga came through - with her qualifications (she was a social worker) and her soothing, calm voice, she presented a strong case, saying the best support for residents were the other residents... for who better to know, understand and help support than someone who has (or is) dealing with similar issues. To this day, residents look out for - and help support - each other.

#### **What was it like when the building was ready for residents to move into?**

It’s something I’ll never forget. Residents were thrilled - their very own place, well equipped and in a beautiful, brand new building. It was a far cry from the old rundown places and rooming houses many had been living in. To me, it really showed how important good housing is for people to get well and be well - physically and mentally. And, at the beginning - and for some time afterward - there was no funding for staff. So, Helga volunteered full time to do anything and everything needed - including writing more funding proposals... this time for staffing!

Editor’s Note: Thank you, Zivey, for agreeing to be interviewed despite qualms about reliving a time which “was not easy.” Your vision and leadership were key in establishing Friends Housing which, now 30+ years later, remains as needed as ever. And your humbleness - which speaks to character and integrity - has not gone unnoticed.

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

### **Next Issue - August 2021**