

## Friends Housing Inc.

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## Friends' Family Communique - November 2020 (Issue #11)

### COVID-19 Update

With Manitoba government's "code red" (Critical) pandemic status as of November 12, restrictions for the following four weeks mean two key changes - in effect until further notice - at Friends Housing.

These are:

1) Crystal and Dana are "**tag teaming**" - with Crystal in the office Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and Dana in the office Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Both are working from home the other weekdays. Whoever is in the office will do shopping and bank trips and run activities while whoever is working from home will take and make calls to residents to offer support. The office days/hours remain unchanged.

2) Activities outside the building have been scaled back - and consist of **shopping and bank trips ONLY**. In addition, there is now a more restricted limit on the number of passengers in the van (ie. just 2 passengers/van trip) AND residents are allowed a maximum of 2 shopping trips/month. **Shopping trips** now happen 3 days a week and alternate between Walmart and Giant Tiger. **Bank trips** take place twice a month on days which coincide with Canada Pension Plan and Employment Income Assistance (EIA) pay days. Staff will ensure all residents who need to go to the bank on the designated bank days will get there and back. As usual, residents need to sign up for shopping and bank trips. For more information, contact Crystal (204-832-2254 - ph; [friendshousingcp@gmail.com](mailto:friendshousingcp@gmail.com) - email).

There is no better time than now to rally around your family member and help him/her out. Drive her/him to errands/appointments... drop off - or order and have delivered - meals (perhaps from Food For Thought, Harmans Food Service or Supper Central - all are local providers)... phone, FaceTime or email to "check in" more often. Maybe discuss the need to plan ahead as much as possible, encouraging/reminding to keep a running shopping list to help get through this challenging time.

**Recreational programs/activities** will focus on those within the building. New resources/supplies (eg. air hockey, indoor bowling, ring toss dart board, craft supplies) have been purchased to offer some new programs and greater variety. As well, an indoor walking program, using the fitness room equipment, is planned. Residents sign up for any/all activities of interest as usual. If questions or for more information, contact Dana (204-953-1161 - ph; [friendshousing.dh@gmail.com](mailto:friendshousing.dh@gmail.com) - email).

### Annual General Meeting 2020

The Friends Housing AGM took place on October 23, 2020. Due to ongoing COVID health directives, we were unable to have a public meeting. As you may well already know, the

members of the Board of Directors are also the members of Friends Housing that are able to do the business of the AGM.

The meeting, held by telephone conference call, began with approval of our audited financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2020. We did quite well last year - housing operations recorded a small surplus of \$12,320, which we are obliged to return to Manitoba Housing; Mental Health support also had a surplus, of \$3,000, which we can (and will) be putting towards this year's activities.

The other business consisted of approving the current members as ongoing Board members, and re-appointing the officers, ie. John Gosselin. (Chair), Eleanor Webb (Vice-Chair), Lavina Allan (Secretary) and Dennis Perko (Treasurer). Directors-at-Large remain Peter Burnett, Herb Schon and Jane Smith. Minutes of the meeting and more detail on the financial statements can be obtained by contacting Crystal (204-832-2254 – ph; [friendshousing.cp@gmail.com](mailto:friendshousing.cp@gmail.com) - email).

We welcomed **four new residents** to the apartment building this year. Otherwise, the year has focussed primarily on adapting to the challenges presented by the COVID-19. Though we were not challenged financially by this, residents have definitely felt the effects of limited socializing and outings. Supporting them through this has been our main goal. As well, Murdoch Management has helped us implement current pandemic mitigation practices for apartments.

The key focus for the coming year will be working toward **securing the future of Friends Housing** when our funding agreement with Manitoba Housing expires in 2024. The Board will begin working on a plan to move forward on this issue.

As well, Murdoch Management will help with getting a meeting with Manitoba Housing to express concerns about the absence of a future plan for funding. This meeting, at our suggestion, will be hosted by Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association, of which we are a member.

We are cautiously optimistic that we will be successful in achieving our goal to secure ongoing operating funding to enable Friends Housing to continue to meet and serve the needs of current and future residents.

Lastly, as always, we are grateful to Crystal for all the work she does at Friends Housing - for the Board, residents and families. As well, we greatly appreciate Dana's work in ensuring a wide variety of programs/activities are available for residents... and the Murdoch Management team (Dennis, James and Henny) for helping keep our building safe, clean and in good repair.

- Respectfully submitted, John Gosselin, Chair

## **Friends Housing Christmas 2020**

It'll begin to look a lot like Christmas beginning November 30 when our Christmas tree and other decorations are up in the Common Room and front foyer.

And despite being unable to hold our usual, very popular Christmas Dinner (for residents) and Family Celebration (for residents and families) this year, Crystal and Dana are working on a "Plan B." This will see them prepare a traditional Christmas turkey dinner for residents on-site, then package and deliver a dinner to every resident's suite on December 23 - along with the usual small gifts from the Board and likely too, a little festive "something else."

With the silent auction, a key part of the usual Christmas Friends' Family Celebration and a major fundraiser for us, not happening this year, we hope families consider

making a donation in its place. With payment method options recently increased, it is more convenient than ever to do so - cheque or cash donations (both done through Crystal) or credit card or PayPal donations (both done through Canada Helps website, ie. [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org); search "Friends Housing"). Receipts for income tax purposes will be happily provided.

On a similar note, as year end often has people thinking about charitable donations, we kindly ask that you consider Friends Housing in your year-end philanthropic donations. All donations go toward resident activities and amenities aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of our residents, your family. One of our current needs is new equipment for the Fitness Room - including a treadmill to replace one of our two which is no longer working.

### **Common Room Upgrades**

Speaking of donations, a sincere thanks to those who responded to our "call for donations" toward a new TV for the Common Room. We're pleased to report we reached our goal - and it will be in place by the end of November.

As well, another (ie. a third) new couch, adding to the two purchased earlier this fall from prior donations and which now fulfills our need, was donated by another generous donor and is now in place. With winter and COVID meaning even greater use of the Common Room, these new amenities are sure to be well used and enjoyed by residents.

### **Profile: Gwen May - A "Friend" of Friends Housing Before Friends Housing Even Existed**

**I'm intrigued by this title. Tell us more about your connection with Friends Housing.**

Well, it was 1978. A registered nurse, I was the Psychiatric Day Program Coordinator, Mental Health Services at Grace General Hospital. Along with two colleagues there - Suzy Naylor, an RN who was the Community Mental Health Nurse and Dorothy Chow, a registered social worker, we worked with many young adults, and in doing so, also met many of their parents.

At the time, deinstitutionalization of mental health patients was happening. Patients were being moved out of hospitals (the Grace, back then, had two in-patient units; a total of about 40 patients) and into the community.

We saw parents struggling with how to help their children become independent living, self-supporting adults - all the community supports needed just weren't there.

We saw a real need for a parents' self-help group - and decided to start one.

**Weren't hospitals in the business of acute care, not community care let alone self- help groups? Wasn't that a "tough sell" to the Management?**

No, it really wasn't. Grace General Hospital was very progressive and community-minded - it wasn't just about the patients but also families and community. It also helped that Suzy and I had a wonderful, very supportive and forward-thinking Nursing Manager, Helen Willison.

### **So, then what happened?**

We invited parents/families we knew to a meeting. It was held in January 1979. We met in a room in the Psychiatric Day Program area which was in the basement of the hospital's apartment building that used to be just behind it. Suzy, Dorothy and I served as resource people at this meeting - and at the monthly meetings thereafter. It started small, with about 6-8 parents, but very quickly grew to 20+ people. Families were looking for help AND they also wanted to help. Before long, the group took off on its own with such definiteness. It was a wonderful self-help group! Four members in particular who I remember are Helga Berger, Ann and Peter Falk, and Wilma Joss.

Editor's Notes: These parents were not only instrumental in forming Friends Housing but many also contributed greatly to the formation, in 1979, of what is now the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society. Of note too, earlier that same year, a similar group in Ontario as well as a national organization (now called the Schizophrenia Society of Canada) were also established.

Thank you Gwen, a sharp and charming 88+ years' young Winnipegger, for adding to the "Story of Friends Housing." Thanks also to Peter and Ann Falk for it was only through their casual mention of "a nurse, Gwen May" being pivotal in bringing parents/families together that provided a clue which ultimately led to learning more about our history and the people in it. If any reader has any information about our history - no matter how trivial it may seem - we would love for you to share it. Contact Crystal.

### **Holiday Hours**

Friends Housing office will be closed Thursday, December 24 - Monday, December 28 inclusive and Thursday, December 31 - Sunday, January 3 inclusive.

**From the Board and Staff...**

**Season's Greetings! Wishing you and your family health and happiness in the coming year.**

**Next Issue - February 2021**