



St. Michael's
HEALTH GROUP

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Caring & Sharing



*"They've made a big difference to
my mobility." - Gerrit, Centenarian*



Message from John Kopeck

President and CEO

Spring is the season of hope. As the vaccine rollout continues, we can all be hopeful for brighter days ahead. We are feeling optimistic and are planning ahead but also remembering how almost a year ago COVID-19 changed all of our lives.

This anniversary of uncertain days is important to mark. It is an opportunity to say thank you to every member of the St. Michael's community who has gone above and beyond to continue to support our residents and the important work we do. It is through the humanity and the spirit of our St. Michael's community that is helping us overcome the challenges and encouraging us to look ahead to brighter days.

COVID has also certainly shone a spotlight on the care of our seniors throughout Canada. Perhaps the most important outcome of this pandemic in relation to seniors, is that it has emphasized the importance of caring for our seniors.

During the pandemic, we haven't skipped a beat in our commitment to the care of our residents. We at St. Michael's are extremely proud of how we have taken on the challenges and, thankfully, we were able to quickly adjust and implement critical safety measures at all our sites.

So many things have changed over the past year – we're all experiencing it. St. Michael's has had to adapt and a number of our fundraising initiatives have been cancelled or put on hold over this past year. We have cancelled our annual This Is Home fundraising breakfast, once again, traditionally a much-needed revenue source. As difficult as these decisions have been and the financial implications they have had, we will not waiver from the priority to ensure seniors in our care are well taken care of.

We wish we could say we will not face more challenges with the road ahead. The past year has taught us to anticipate change and exude resiliency in the face of unpredictability. It has also shown us we are more adaptable than we may have thought and we can rely on each other to find solutions.

While we reflect upon this past year, we are also looking ahead with optimism and awaiting a future that will see us safely back together again.

Please stay well and thank you for all your continued support of St. Michael's.

Take care and stay safe.
John Kopeck, President & CEO

Welcome Shayne to the Board

St. Michael's Health Group is pleased to welcome Shayne Saskiw to our Board of Directors. Shayne has a proven track record of innovative and dynamic leadership in government relations, litigation and is an advocate for the betterment of rural Alberta.



Currently, Shayne is the Principal and Co-founder of Alberta Counsel, a legal and lobbying firm, the first of its kind in the province. He splits his time between his law practice and his government relations role. He continues his leadership efforts through running the firm as well as works extensively with clients on government relations plans, establishes positive relationships between clients and elected representatives in all levels of government, provides legal counsel and strategic advice, and advises on media and government sources for issues management. While the firm's clients range across many industries, Shayne currently works extensively with clients in the healthcare sector as well as multiple professional business associations, municipalities, and Indigenous communities & organizations. Prior to his political work and founding Alberta Counsel in 2015, he had over a decade of experience in practicing law, focusing on tax litigation at the Tax Court of Canada.

Shayne's leadership and political expertise will be invaluable to the Board of St. Michael's and will strengthen our commitment to providing quality care to seniors.

Making a Difference

Occupational and physiotherapists have been important health care team professionals in long-term care homes for many years. The Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy (OT/PT) team at St. Michael's is no exception and plays a significant role in promoting independence and maintaining optimal health for the residents.

"While the needs of residents vary and may be addressed in different service delivery models," says Romy, Physiotherapist with St. Michael's. "Our main goal is to provide the residents the ability to maintain function and mobility."

Each resident, upon admission, is assessed. If appropriate, they are invited to participate in various activities and groups depending on their needs and provided with equipment, such as wheelchairs and walkers. The goal of the OT/PT department is to provide residents with an opportunity to maintain their level of activity and remain as independent as possible. "The real joy is when you can see the residents having fun and enjoying the programs," adds Kathy, Occupational Therapist at St. Michael's.

Gerrit, one of St. Michael's centenarians turning 101 years old in October, came to St. Michael's in March 2020 so he could be closer to his wife. "When Gerrit came to our care he required assistance for standing. Now he's able to stand on his own and perform all of the exercises, no problem. It's really quite remarkable," says Lana, Therapy Assistant.

"They've made a big difference to my mobility," says Gerrit. "I really like coming to the gym. The staff and volunteers are great. I really appreciate all of the compassion and care each and every staff member and volunteer gives to the residents."



"We not only work with the residents but encourage family involvement," Kathy notes. "We provide education on proper use of equipment and any other questions or concerns they may have." Romy adds, "We provide one on one sessions for families and work on empowering them and providing a greater sense of understanding."

The OT/PT department also provides staff with education and training sessions, enabling staff to improve the care experience and support resident's independence and social participation. OT/PT also offers a day program to the community at large. Participants join in exercise sessions focusing on balance, strength, endurance, coordination, and fine motor skills. The treatments are covered by AHS and most participants come twice a week. The program is extremely busy and can have a waitlist.

"While our role is varied and changes daily depending on the needs of the residents," says Kathy, "it is incredibly fulfilling seeing the smiles on the residents' faces when they overcome a challenge."

Pastoral Care

Life, Light and Hope



During the preparation for the blessing of the paska last month I was reminded of Gordon Lightfoot's song, "Pussy Willows, cat-tails, soft winds, and roses." Once again, I am made aware of the sanctity of life and the holy tension that exists between the new life we celebrate at Easter and the blessing of the pussy willows we hand out at Psalm Sunday compared to the roses we place at the foot of the bed when a loved one passes away here at St. Michael's. Both provide an opportunity to redefine the sentiment behind these roses, and re-envision them as a symbol of rising to a new life. Four residents went home to meet the Lord during a ten day period surrounding Easter this year; wonderful friends, who I will miss dearly.

For the second year in a row, we celebrated Easter amidst the confines COVID-19 has placed upon us. Thankfully, we were still able to have a service to bless the paska, I handed out pussy willows, read through the Holy week readings on each of the pods, and sang well-known Easter hymns. Let's be confident of the life, the hope, the victory we celebrate on Easter morning even amidst the roses; grateful for the "warm breath of Spring!" The Lord is Risen! He is Risen indeed!



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You help tremendously.

There is no doubt this year has been challenging for many that is why the need is so great. St. Michael's has been providing great care throughout the pandemic and you are the one who can continue to make the difference.

Your donation is needed more than ever and will make a significant impact. We realize many are struggling and understand not everyone may be able to contribute at this time.

We appreciate your support and value every gift - big or small. Remember, whatever support you can provide helps the caring continue and benefits our seniors.

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Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20.

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St. Michael's Long Term Care Centre

It Started with a Phone Call

It started with a phone call – the Assistant Principal of Father Leo Green Elementary School reached out to us to ask if we would be interested in a window visit from the students during one of their winter wellness walks. The children came and danced, waved, and said hello to residents through windows. The students loved it, the residents loved it, and so we decided to make it a regular occurrence.

Since February, Father Leo Green students have been visiting the residents at St. Michael's Long Term Care Centre every second Thursday. Every visit brings new classes and new faces, and more fun and joy! The students regularly create cards, artwork, and inspiring posters for the residents to enjoy. They bring picture books to show and read through the windows, they plan dances to brighten the residents' days, and are also pen pals with whom the residents exchange letters and stories. The residents gather at the windows and dance along with the students, wave, smile, and laugh! It's amazing, even through a window, the connections made between young and old.

We will continue these biweekly window visits until the end of the school year, and we are hoping to start them up again in the fall! We are so thankful to the staff and students at Father Leo Green Elementary School for reaching out to us and creating such meaningful connections.



Millennium Pavilion

Easter Extravaganza

Residents joined in an action-packed celebration for Easter. Easter-themed hangman, egg decorating, church services, and a fun-filled Easter party were all part of the festivities. Residents were treated to an array of delicious snacks and drinks. Then they participated in an Easter egg hunt and were invited to participate in the egg and spoon game. The objective of the race is very simple, to carry an egg on the spoon and cross the finish line as fast as possible. Each competitor was provided with a disposable spoon and an egg. The competitors then lined up with the eggs positioned on the spoon and walked as quickly as possible holding the spoon with just one hand. Some residents decided they wanted to hold the spoon, while others were more adventurous and tried to hold the egg with their mouth. All residents made it to the finish line and were given a prize!



Vegreville Manor

Saddling Up for a Good Time

Yee-haw, Vegreville Manor western days was a great way to bring in the warmer weather. Jeans, cowboy boots and hats, even a few western buckles were worn with pride. The chuck wagon arrived and served up a hearty cowboy meal, with a delicious cowboy haystack. Rodeo Fun was where the real cowboys (residents) came to show their skill. Trying to lasso the wild horse was a challenge, but the cowboys and girls showed many how it was done. It became quite clear that many residents have the experience with roping and were very willing to share the tricks of the trade. Throwing cow chips brought out many stories from their younger years as this was something they did with siblings to amuse themselves. Memories about farm life and going to rodeos became the topic of their conversations.

The challenges we all have faced have been a lot easier with the variety of daily activities. Life is full of so many different surprises and new ones; residents are always ready to explore. We are all looking forward to the warmer days ahead as we enjoy the summer weather.



Grove Manor

Hopping to the Challenge

Employees at Grove Manor hopped up to the challenge to make sure our residents had a fun-filled Easter celebration. "This year we have had some challenges due to the pandemic and had to put some of our activities on hold," says Sandy, Activity Convenor at Grove Manor. "One of those programs is the 'bunny' races."

The activity is an adaptation of a horse race, which involves the staff playing the part of the "horse" dressed as bunnies. Residents then place mock wagers on which "bunny" will win the race.

"This is one of our residents' favorite activities and we wanted to make sure we were able to host the activity safely," Sandy noted. "So the activity required more staff to accommodate social distancing and maximum participant restrictions."

Sign-up sheets went up to all staff members and the response was tremendous. "Staff were very supportive. Some were on duty and some even came in on their day off to ensure we were able to host the activity." Staff members dressed up in bunny ears and tails and hopped their way to the finish line.

"There was a ton of laughter, cheers, and many thanks from residents for the enjoyable afternoon," adds Sandy. "A huge thank you to all the Grove Manor staff who participated in making the 'bunny' races a great day for residents!"

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