

HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



Just before Christmas, Sunbeam held a virtual / video holiday season celebration which included staff and persons-served from across the organization.

Lisa, who lives at a Sunbeam residential home, wrote an original poem "**How Lucky Am I**" for this special occasion.

We hope that you enjoy Lisa's inspiring and uplifting message as much as we did. Thank you, Lisa, for sharing such a wonderful poem to start the New Year on a positive and hopeful note.

How Lucky Am I

A few years ago, when I was a Lass,
I remember Christmas, O what a blast.

We sat around the tree,
drinking hot Tea.

I was spoiled rotten with good compa-
ny,
by Friends and Family who love me.

I may not be able to see you every day
because of COVID,
and we may not be able to share,
but I know you care and are there.

Merry Christmas to all
and Happy New Year,
I hope it comes with good cheer.

From the Desk of the CEO

2020 was very challenging year. There is no doubt that the pandemic continues to touch all aspects of our lives – family, friends, home, employment, and more feelings of separation and isolation than most of us have experienced before.

At the same time, I am pleased to report on the strength and resiliency of Sunbeam's staff, adapting to the ever changing environment while continuing to provide the essential supports and services that our community has come to rely on. Dedication, commitment and teamwork, complemented by technology and innovation have served us well as we continue to safeguard the health and wellness of the persons we serve.

With COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada, and immunizations already happening per the province's COVID-19 vaccine distribution strategy, there is a lot to be hopeful about as we look forward in 2021. We still have a long road ahead, but I believe that patience and kindness will see us through.

Nothing Could Stop Us From Celebrating The Holidays!

Celebrating the holidays in 2020 looked very different from past years. The individuals living in Sunbeam residential group homes would not be able to spend in-person face-to-face time with their families as in past years. Sunbeam's traditional approach to holiday celebrations such as potluck dinners, festive gatherings, the day program Christmas Party, and the Lighting of the Green also had to change due to pandemic precautions.



Staff teams got very creative to plan festive holiday events and activities to keep the family and community connections strong. Virtual / video platforms such as FaceTime and Zoom were used to have families join in some of the holiday activities at the homes. Many residents made homemade Christmas cards to include with gift cards to their families. Some sites took photos of clients by their Christmas tree and were framed as gifts to families. Others used their arts and crafts skills to create original tree ornaments as gifts, and others were inspired to make gift blankets. Some families came for brief but cheery patio "window" visits when weather permitted., and others used virtual / video technology to join Holiday dinners and other celebrations.

Clients and staff at Whaley, Vos, Sims and Kingsway Homes generated some good-natured competition by hosting the "Sunbeam Kingsway Challenge - 2020 Holiday Season Decorating Competition". The outside of the 4 homes were all decked out in holiday splendour with joyful decorations and sparkling lights. Outdoor judging took place and awards were presented:



- ♦ **Best Winter Wonderland—Vos House**
- ♦ **Best Festival of Lights—Whaley House**
- ♦ **Best Holly Jolly Christmas—Sims House**
- ♦ **Best Happy Holidays—Kingsdale House**

At the same virtual / video holiday season celebration where Lisa shared her poem, Melissa from Eagen House showcased her performance of "All I Want for Christmas is You" through singing and dancing, and we enjoyed a showcase of talent from clients living at Paradise, Cornridge Apartment and Birchmount Homes.

"Tis the Season" Auction Exceeds Its Goal!

We are so thankful to the generous community members, staff from across DSO, SDRC and Community Living, and of course you. The Tis the Season online auction exceeded the goal of \$6,000. Our corporate sponsor, **Steve Kidd Employee Benefits Consultants**, was instrumental in this achievement. It was amazing to see such community spirit at such a challenging time. The funds raised will make it possible to increase the **technology lending library** of SDRC, allowing more individuals and families to participate in virtual programs. Special thanks also to our business & corporate supporters who provided some of the auction items:

Ann Martin—Garden House Florist

COBS—Fairway Road, Kitchener

Costco, Waterloo

Elora Mill Spa

Jenn's All In One Gift Baskets

Kitchener Rangers

K-W Titans

M & T Printing Group

Morrows of Drumbo

Pro Resp

Rexall Belmont Avenue

Starks KW

Shakers Pharmacy

Sobey's Bridgeport at Weber
St. Waterloo

Sobey's Ira Needles Blvd.,
Kitchener

TeakFinder, Sebringville



T. A. Appliances &
Barbecues

Ticket Tasket Baskets

Zehrs, Stanley Park
Mall

A Commitment To Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Culture



Recently, Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services formed the **Employee Connections Committee**. The committee has a focus on **inclusion, diversity, equity and organizational culture** across the Sunbeam community. We were thrilled to receive such a great response from staff when the call for committee membership was distributed.

The committee members are creating an annual workplan outlining initiatives and strategies to support the goals of its mandate.

Members will work together to plan and brainstorm ideas that will make a real difference in enhancing the experience of all employees at Sunbeam. We recognize, appreciate and support Sunbeam staff who are committed to delivering essential programs and services across the communities we serve.



The Faces of Sunbeam

Gary Gfroerer, Community Living Supervisor

Tell us a bit about yourself & what led you to this line of work?

After I graduated university I happened to see an ad for youth workers for group homes. I thought that would be a unique opportunity. I liked the idea of helping others. It turned out to be amazing and more than just a job. As an example, my manager was trying to figure how to get one of the bedrooms painted. I offered to do it that day in exchange for being able to stay for supper.

What made you decide to become part of the Sunbeam team?

Prior to starting at Sunbeam, I worked seven years as a front line support person at various group homes. I wanted to move into a supervisory role and Sunbeam was looking for Residential Life Supervisors. I had recently completed my diploma for Business Administration at Laurier. When my first round interview was conducted by one of my professors from Laurier I took it as a sign. The plan was to stay for two years to gain experience. Thirty years later and I still need a bit more experience.

You have been at Sunbeam for over 30 years? How have things changed in that time?

When I started in June 1990 I was one of the first male RLS's at Sunbeam. At that time we only had two group homes in WR but had 75 residents living at the Kingsway Drive site. There was a cafeteria and laundry on site. I remember one evening playing bingo over the PA system. It was so loud I am sure the neighbours wondered what we were doing. We did have fun.

You work along side your wife, Dana Love? How did you meet?

We met in 1986 when I was working for a community agency as an evening staff in one of their homes. Dana was the newly hired night staff. She didn't have a car so I gave her a lift home. The other evening staff working at the same home ended up being our maid of honor and is still a close friend today. Who knew.



Dana Love, Community Living Supervisor

Tell us a bit about yourself & what led you to this line of work?

While attending the University of Waterloo I had two work terms at the Reena Foundation summer camp program near Orangeville. The camp provided summer experiences for teens and adults with Developmental Disabilities. Those two summers changed the direction I had originally intended for my life.

What made you decide to become part of the Sunbeam team?

I would visit my husband Gary when he worked evenings. Our son Conor would join me to visit with residents and staff. We often attended the dances in the gym. Conor loved to help push the wheelchairs to the elevator. After Taylor was born he came on the visits to Dad's work. When the opportunity came to work here I knew what a great place it was. It truly is a family affair now that our granddaughter Emelia joins us on visits to some of the homes and the Kingsway Drive site.



News from Sunbeam Developmental Resource Centre—SDRC

SDRC offers Resource Support to families of children under the age of 18 years, who have an Intellectual Disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder. It provides quick access to short-term support for as long as the client is eligible for developmental services. Resource Support is mainly through telephone contact, email, or scheduled office appointments. For more information on the services we provide visit <http://www.sdrc.ca>

Expanding our technology lending library!

We are very thankful for a grant from United Way Waterloo Region Communities and the Federal Government of Canada, that will allow us to expand our technology lending library. This will make it possible for staff to connect virtually with more families that we serve, as well as allowing them to participate in our online programs. Plans are being finalized around what these resources will look like. Full details will be shared in the next newsletter.



Family Advisory Committee

Sunbeam's **Family Advisory Committee** is one of many ways that families of our clients can engage with us, discuss feedback, and share in relevant learning opportunities. We welcome participation from families having loved ones supported in any of our program areas. For more information please check out the Family Advisory Committee page on our website: www.sunbeamcommunity.ca/family-council/ or by emailing:

l.thies@sunbeamcommunity.ca

Update on COVID-19 Vaccinations - What We Know Today

As shown below, the Ontario Government's originally announced COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Strategy indicated that "**Those living and working in other high-risk congregate settings**" are prioritized for vaccination in "Phase 2" of the province's plan. Per the Government's framework, individuals who live and work at Sunbeam's residential group homes fall within this "Phase 2" category, which was expected to begin in March/April this year.

Sunbeam was fortunate to be offered a limited number of staff vaccinations at the outset. However, due to recent news of delays in vaccine deliveries to Canada, the province has revised its prioritization strategy to currently address vaccinations for residents living in Long-Term Care and high risk Retirement homes only.

We at Sunbeam continue to advocate strongly for the prioritization of vaccinations for individuals living with developmental disabilities and the essential caregivers who support them. Please refer to our website periodically for updated information as it becomes available.

www.sunbeamcommunity.ca

PHASE 2

- Older adults, beginning with those ≥80 years old and decreasing in 5-year increments over the course of vaccine roll-out.
- Those living and working in other high-risk congregate settings.
- Essential Workers, beginning with front-line essential workers.
- Individuals with high-risk chronic conditions, and their caregivers.
- Other populations and communities facing barriers related to the determinants of health across Ontario who are at greater COVID-19 risk (e.g., Black and other racialized populations).

From Ontario's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Strategy

Keeping Busy in Community Living Services

Staff and volunteers have been busy working together to help individuals supported by Sunbeam's group homes and day program to keep engaged in social, recreational and life skills programs.

Keeping friendships strong, making new connections, and always having a variety of fun and stimulating activities to look forward to has made such a positive impact to our clients throughout the pandemic.

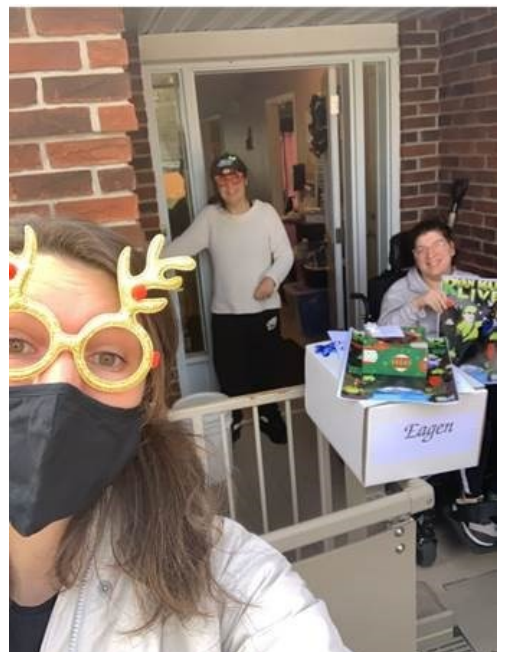
Flexing our creativity, Sunbeam's Community Outreach Program (SCOP) is now providing day program services at some group home sites, periodic in-person programming for community clients when pandemic conditions allow it, and through our new virtual day program which has proven to be extremely popular.

To take it up a notch, day program staff have been putting together "Fun Boxes" full of arts & crafts supplies and goodies for baking. These are delivered to virtual day program attendees, in the community and at group homes, who tune-in to the virtual day program so they may join in all the fun wherever they are.

Special thanks to Annette Hrab, Supervisor and the SCOP team for supporting our community in new and innovative ways.



Our very own "Rudolph", Day Program staff member Giselle, dropped off a Christmas box to residents of our 17 residential homes. It contained all the supplies for the week of cooking, crafts, activities and the Christmas party.



COVID-19 Vaccinations for Sunbeam Front-Line Heroes

Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services has been advocating for the developmental services sector to be included for priority access to COVID-19 vaccinations. Working closely with government and health authorities, locally and provincially, our voice is being heard for both front-line staff vaccinations and vaccinations for the vulnerable persons we serve.



So far over 120 Sunbeam front-line staff have received their first COVID-19 vaccine shot. Per the overall provincial COVID-19 vaccination framework for vulnerable sectors, we anticipate that staff vaccinations will be followed by vaccinations for persons served in congregate living settings. Recognizing that Sunbeam's congregate living programs include a specialization in supporting medically fragile/technology dependent individuals, the nurses and other direct support professionals are the trusted front-line heroes that safeguard the health and well being of the individuals we



VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



When the pandemic forced the suspension of our regular volunteer activities, members of our volunteer team reached out asking if there was a way they could stay connected to the people we serve. In December we were able to begin re-connecting them with our residents through virtual volunteering.

Since then volunteers have been "meeting" once a week via Zoom with people we support. They chat, read stories, tell jokes, sing, play music, do crafts and play games. This format has even made it possible for residents to meet a volunteer's pet. They have re-discovered the thrill of sending and receiving "snail mail". Our volunteers have become more aware of the importance of good communication, and they are also able to empower the people they support by facilitating activities that provide opportunities to make choices. The volunteers flex their creative muscle and plan activities in advance of their weekly "calls". Staff have been very supportive and provide the technical support needed to make these online connections work. How do volunteers feel about the program?

"Virtual volunteering gives me much needed purpose and a connection to the community at a time where people are feeling most lonely. It feels good to talk to someone, and it gives both of us something to look forward to. I'm building a friendship without leaving my home!"

Patty, Sunbeam Volunteer

Holiday News Bulletin
December 2020

**“The Grinch Comes to Sunbeam’s
Kingsway Campus”**

The Grinch paid a surprise window visit to several homes at our Kingsway Campus.



Fortunately, all the Grinch managed to take was a quick peek at the fun and festivities happening at our homes. Then he went on his way.

To see more about our visit from the Grinch, just go to:

[www. sunbeamcommunity.ca/news/](http://www.sunbeamcommunity.ca/news/) and click on the December 18th news item.



www.sunbeamcommunity.ca

Inclusive communities where people of all abilities are valued.