

Transformation to a Shared Leadership Model: One Residents' Councils Experience



Photo (L to R): Emmy Fernandes, Abraham Folts (standing) and Diane Fisher

Streetsville Care Community, Mississauga

For years, Streetsville Care Community has had the traditional approach to Residents' Council, more of a hierarchical structure with designated roles and responsibilities. In the fall of 2017, the Ontario Association of Residents Council (OARC) provided the residents and staff with education on a new approach for Residents' Council, the Shared Leadership Model. Based on this education session, our Residents' Council decided to trial the new approach for six months. During the six months, there were many changes to Residents' Council. Residents who previously may not have been active leaders in the home were empowered to be part of a new "Team" approach, to share their personal strengths to enhance the resident experience. Residents felt purposeful and it made for a more sustainable and effective Council.

"As Residents' Council Assistant, my knowledge of each resident as an individual and their social

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histories allowed me to help tap into resident's individual interests and experiences which has resulted in the creation of new subcommittees championed by different residents on the leadership team." – Jessica, Director of Resident Programs and Assistant to Residents' Council.

Emmy has been an active member of the Shared Leadership Team since the trial period in 2017. She is one of 5 resident leaders in the community and



prides herself in small acts of kindness: “I care for them – I show compassion by reminding them of programs and teaching others to respect opinions and differences” – Emmy, Resident at Streetsville Care Community. Emmy is a vital member of the group and takes on a variety of responsibilities throughout the care community. “I feel great! I feel empowered and I am happy to contribute to our community” – Emmy. She has been an advocate for residents and acts as a mentor and a friend. “I focus on welcoming and including new residents in programs. I enjoy the fresh air and going outside on our patio. When I see residents sitting in the halls, I invite them to go out with me. I do not want to see residents isolated. I know they will love the programs. All of the programs have variety to meet everyone’s interests” – Emmy.

Reflecting on this transition and shift to a Shared Leadership Model, the Council as a whole, has really emerged and transformed. We have created a Council of equals, where everyone has something of value to contribute, where we support and highlight individual’s strengths and abilities.

Residents’ Council Leadership Team

This type of team collectively assumes the accountabilities of a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Sharing the administrative responsibilities across the Leadership Team is attractive to many people because it:

- Encourages the elected leaders of the Council to cooperatively work as a group;
- Dilutes the pressure of feeling specialized expertise is required for certain assignments; and
- Gives each leadership team member an opportunity to learn and use different skills.

To learn more about the ‘Shared Leadership Team’ we invite you to visit our archived webinars located on our website www.ontarc.com

The Shared Leadership Team has focused on creating friendships with others, advocating for Resident’s Rights, and has focused on creating an inclusive care community. The Residents’ Councils Shared Leadership Team is proud to represent the residents at Streetsville Care Community.