

It **TAKES** a
Village
to **CARE**

Honouring
a year of
loss, courage,
strength and
resilience.



Reflections and hope

A year under COVID-19

Main Street in The Village of Wentworth Heights was abuzz with activity on March 12, 2020 as the Village celebrated the artwork of a talented retirement home resident.

Guests mingled and viewed the various paintings of landscapes and seascapes; there were speeches, refreshment and food, and the vibrancy of Village life was visceral. All was as it should be in the 19 Villages within the Schlegel family, though we knew a virus was having a devastating impact in other parts of the world and we were preparing.

Just five short days later, under a provincially-declared state-of-emergency and the threat of COVID-19, our Villages were transformed. Team members, residents, families, and community partners struggled to find footing under storms of new regulations, separation and the reality of pandemic not seen in more than a century in a world where information, both factual and less trustworthy, flows in fractions of seconds.

No Village has been untouched in the past year. Some have faced the devastation of loss as residents succumbed to illness despite the greatest of efforts, while others have been spared the acute pain of direct grief. They have not been spared the mourning, however, for to care so deeply for others is to know empathy in every breath. When team members fell ill, their entire Village felt the worry. When the media amplified the anger directed towards long-term care and retirement providers struggling under the weight of outbreak, our team members dried their own tears and came back to the Village. Many worked countless consecutive days, filling the needs left by team members unable to work with their own diagnosis or the worry they felt for their own vulnerable loved ones.

And yet there was beauty and hope in the darkest of days. Team members answered needs in other Villages, leaving their homes and loved ones in support of others. Countless gifts flowed to teams in the Villages and messages of support were louder than the voices of blame. Hope was found in the vials of vaccines that found purchase in the soft upper arms of team members and residents as a year of pandemic closed in, and deepening partnerships with healthcare providers proved that no Village or community is an island. We were reminded that relationships are the foundation of a meaningful life and the value of a warm embrace cannot be matched.

After a year under COVID-19, we reflect on the struggle and the beauty, and we look to the future with hope.



To our team members



It has now been a year since COVID-19 hit us all, but it seems like an eternity.

All of us have suffered in our own ways throughout this ordeal and you have put yourselves directly in the “line of fire” by working on the front lines day-in and day-out, directly vulnerable to the virus.

However, new vaccines are being developed and are now providing hope for our residents in both Long-term Care and Retirement. Team members are also slowly being protected with these vaccines and we are getting there. Please keep in mind that the Schlegel family is always there to support you 100 percent in all your work and endeavours. As I have stated previously, always keep up the Schlegel values of determination as we fight this virus with kindness as we continue to serve our residents. I know that the Schlegel team members, linked arm-in-arm, will overcome this Coronavirus.

I thank you whole-heartedly for everything you do on behalf of the residents, for each one of them is very precious!

Warm regards to all team members,

Ron Schlegel
Chair, Schlegel Villages

Deep gratitude for our trusted supplier partners

This past year has been an incredible challenge. It was all hands on deck like never before to serve our residents and support our teams, especially our front line.

We are so grateful to our supplier partners who walked this past year with us; sharing our vision, values and commitment they continued to support our Villages.

Sometimes it took creativity and risk and sometimes it did not quite pan out as planned, but we were always moving forward together with open minds, transparency and empathy.

In a year when everything changed, we are grateful that the support of our supplier partners remained unwavering.

Diane Stein

Director of Purchasing Operations on behalf of all Schlegel Villages



"There is something magical in the air, I can not explain it...This is something I don't feel in every place I go"

– Dee Preikschas

Thanks to our community partners!



Remembering with love

Loss is no stranger in Schlegel Villages.

By Jane Kuepfer, Schlegel Specialist in Spiritually in Aging, RIA

As neighbours, as families, we are well acquainted with the feelings that accompany the changes of later life – loss of health, loss of home, loss of freedoms, loss of cherished friends.

But nothing could have prepared us for the losses that would come with a pandemic.

In addition to our usual losses, a new danger meant further loss of structure, activities, pleasures, relational contact, and even of life.

Too often, families and friends were not able to say goodbye in the way we all would have liked. And we lost our usual ways to

Grief is love that has lost its object.

grieve – we couldn't come together, to share memories and food, to comfort and connect. While being thankful for the creativity and flexibility that has made virtual Celebrations of Life possible in some villages, we are missing our traditions.

In this space, we honour all those who lived their last days in our villages this past year, and especially those whose days were shortened by the virus.

None of us knows how or when we will die – but we imagine, and our expectations were rudely

interrupted by this pandemic. Because the last days of those we loved were different than expected, we may feel cheated, disappointed. We can't get that sacred time back, and that is upsetting.

Grief is love that has lost its object. It is important to acknowledge that grief, and to honour those we have lost – with our respect, our love, our regrets.

Those whose lives came to an end during this pandemic time will be remembered not only as our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours and friends, but as those whose last days coincided with a time in world history when we all wished things were different. As we wrung our hands, our hearts were wrung of love we longed to live.

Alongside our frustration and sorrow, though, are memories of good times. When we think of those who were with us a year ago, we remember with a smile. We are grateful that our lives touched, and we remember their faces, their names. For those who are family members reading this, we acknowledge your loss. We too miss your loved one, and we miss sharing life with you in our villages.

So how will we move forward from here? The surest way for grief to



heal is for love to stay alive. We will continue to love those we have lost. We will love what they loved, what we loved together... and our love will find a place to go. Our hearts will heal.

For many of us, our faith heritage assures us that life does not end with what we can know, see, and experience here. Life continues beyond this life in some way that is unknowable but real.

Others are content to know that life is complete – we are part of something bigger – and that the life of the world goes on.

While a piece of our hearts has gone with them, those we have loved and lost have left us a legacy of inspiration - lives well lived, impossible circumstances accepted, and freedom ultimately claimed.

May our hearts be held gently and securely as we grieve, and as we go on.



This picture is from March 31, 2020. Not long before this picture was taken, family visits inside became visits through the window.



Connecting with loved ones is so important, we're were thrilled when we could welcome families back to our home!



Intergenerational friendship built through community outreach.



Our team members learned how strong they were when they worked together for a common goal. Our HEROES wear masks!



We came together, through fun and hard work, to weather the storm and came out stronger together!



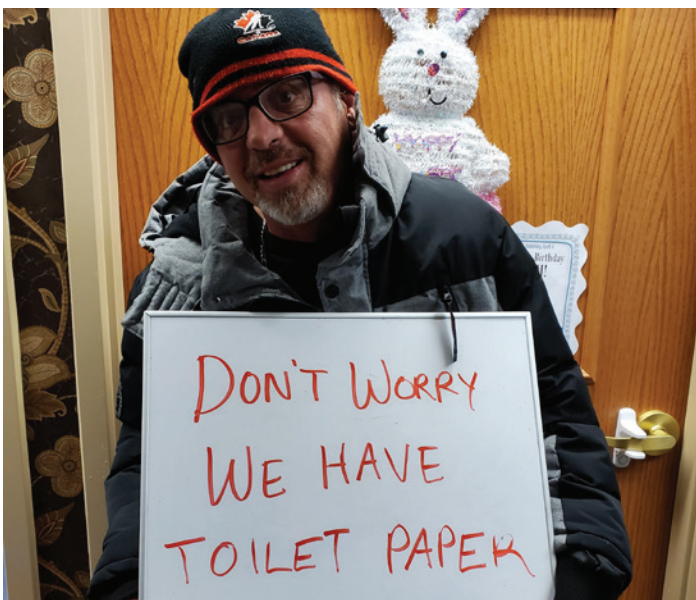
Aspen Lake was grateful for the help of the Public Health Unit on "Swab Day" when every resident was first tested for COVID-19.



Special theme days kept spirits high like this Crazy Hair Day which was fun for residents and team members.



The Village still found a way to give back to causes that are important to us. The Walk for Alzheimer's was held on the property and we raised \$1000 for the local Alzheimer's Association.



Residents sent photo messages to their families and showed their sense of humour!



Santa for Seniors dropping off Christmas gifts for all our residents.



Elliot neighbourhood team working together during outbreak to ensure everything is getting done.



Vaccination Day was filled with emotions: excitement, nervousness, relief and a deep sense of gratitude.

What has been one of the most difficult aspects of your past year, and do you have any advice on how to cope with it?

"The use of social media provided an option to get closer but it does not replace or overcome the need for personal contact. Coleman staff have done an awesome job in offering FaceTime appointments as well as socially distanced outdoor visits when the weather was appropriate to do so, and for this we are truly grateful."

"Mom has been at Arbour Trails since it opened and I would have lunch with her there at least 1x/week and so, over the years, formed several connections with the other residents as well. I also got in the habit of serving coffee towards the end of lunch which became a comfortable, familiar routine for myself, residents and servers alike—something so simple, yet fun—I miss that tremendously!"

"The most difficult aspect was the loss of friends. What helped me cope was my faith and knowing they are in a better place. I'm thankful to have had them as friends."

"One of the most difficult aspects of my past year has been being conflicted with the ethical dilemma of autonomy vs duty to patient care. I do not have any advice with how to cope with it, because it is still an issue myself and many others struggle with every day. Our village has been incredibly fortunate to have not had any detrimental outbreaks thus far, but the fear is strong. I credit an incredible leadership team for supporting us through this uncertain time."

What gives you hope as you look ahead and how can you bring that hope to life for those around you?

"Laughter and patience reinforce the notion of being comfortable with uncertainties which is pretty much daily in Retirement and LTC."

"I have lived through many obstacles, and know that there is support available. Being able to share your experiences can bring hope to those around you. No matter how difficult the situation is, you are not alone."

"The team gives hope. Doing their best to care for everyone. And that this has to be manageable at some point."

"Vaccines and science give me hope for better days to come. I can bring this hope to others by trying to focus on the positive not matter what the situation and supporting the Village Teams in the best way possible."

What is the single greatest lesson you've learned during the past 12 months?

"To embrace every moment with family and friends."

"Be patient and be kind."

"Life is so fragile and so precious."

"Importance of self-care and compassion for others."

"Plans need to be fluid and flexible, all of our must dos can be re-imagined."

"It takes a team of dedicated, caring, committed employees at all levels to run a village."

When people look back on this time, what do you hope they will remember about your Village community?

"It is my hope that when we look back we focus on all of the positive efforts that have been put forth by Coleman staff and all staff who work in LTC. It is so easy to find the negative but, in my opinion, this is wasted energy. Staff showed up day after day to support our loved ones and that is what we need to reflect on and be grateful for as their work is not easy."

"I hope that they remember that each Village is a family that takes care of each other especially in the times that are most difficult."

"I will remember: The graciousness, care, patience, love and kindness of the staff - smiling even on their most tiring days despite monotonous discouraging moments and fatigue. The genial bond and unity that is even more obvious than before COVID lock downs. The smile that caregivers can elicit from a depressed resident. The sacrifice of so many staff members and their families as well. The giving up of family times and celebrations to be with our family. It is each of the staff that I will remember, their kindness and gentle care. I will also remember residents struggling to stay in the present moment and yet losing to that COVID isolation or losing their life."

"How everyone pulled together and did their very best for the vulnerable residents that they care for. I am also so impressed by the resiliency of our elders, they just do what they have to do, mostly without complaint."

Can you describe a time when you saw the idea of “It takes a Village to care” come to life? What was happening and how did it feel to see it or be a part of it?

“It takes a Village to care” came to life every single day. I say this because the Village operated every single day, in outbreak or not, people showed up, residents were fed, bathed, and loved. This was done because the team members care, and they should be the ones recognized worked together to ensure residents are safe, distanced and that the rules are being followed.”

“When we were confined to our suites during our outbreak and the only faces we saw were the smiling, caring ones of the staff, taking temperatures and delivering meals, it was the highlight of our days and what was kept us going. I believe it is the people that care, not the Village, otherwise they wouldn’t have done all they have done for all of us during this difficult time and without them, you would not have a “Village”.

“I was visiting my mother-in-law in her room in December. When I came out of her room, COVID and lock down were just declared in her neighbourhood. There were signs on all doors and the halls. Rooms had personal supplies beside each door. The staff were already in full PPE and wheeling meals in disposable containers down the hall. In one hour, a quiet flawless transformation of the neighbourhood outside the door. Every person had a role and worked together. As I left I knew that the preparation, training, collaboration and camaraderie would keep the residents well and safe. It takes a village, a well prepared Village. Since then all emails and queries have been answered promptly from office, doctors, nurses, PSW and activity staff which makes one feel your loved one is not alone. They are cared for and thus so are we.”

COVID through the eyes of Sharon Ritchie

Love for the people she serves runs deep.

By Kristian Partington

In her past decade working with Schlegel Villages as a housekeeper, Sharon Ritchie has had perfect attendance. She is proud of the work she does and her love for the people she serves runs deep. But COVID-19 hit The Village at St. Clair hard in early December, spreading quickly and affecting dozens of team members and neighbours – many of whom would not survive.

Sharon was not spared, and in the 12 days she was off, the most serious effects in the Village emerged. People she'd grown to

"I felt like I needed to be with them."

know and love were sick and dying, and gone were the kind messages of heroism from the early days of the pandemic in much of the public eye. Through traditional and social media, it felt as though she and her team members bore the brunt of blame and it was one of the hardest periods in life she's ever had to endure.

Sharon returned to The Village on December 20 when things were coming into their most difficult period. Many more team members were off and others were arriving from the Schlegel Villages support office, agencies or other Villages to fill the gaps.

By Christmas Eve, partners from Hotel-Dieu Grace Healthcare were

on site as well, pitching in wherever they could.

Almost all of the team members Sharon worked alongside were off with their own diagnosis and her friends and family questioned why she was returning so quick. If there were neighbours she had grown to love that were going to be taken by COVID, she decided, she wanted to be a familiar voice and touch in that difficult time. It's hard to describe the grief and sorrow she felt but, today, looking back, Sharon says she is grateful she made that choice.

"I felt like I needed to be with them," Sharon says. "I can remember opening up the Village and being the only person on the neighbourhood waiting to welcome all of those people. Then I became so close with a lot of them – they became a part of my life and I became a part of their lives so when this happened, I felt I needed to go back because I wanted to be there."

For Sharon and her team, the pressure of the press and the blame thrust towards The Village through social media at the height of the outbreak made it especially difficult through the grief, but they carried forth.

They had to.

"The people that were passing meant the world to our team and

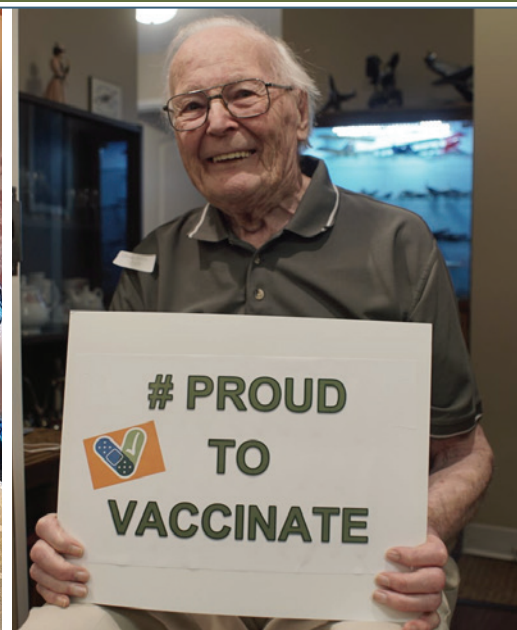
to everybody, and we can't let their passing be in vain," Sharon says. "We have to come up with the good, and I know all those people and they would have wanted that too."

Today she honours the memories of those she loved by working hard to prepare the Village to welcome new neighbours when the time is right.

As Sharon discusses the path forward the grief is still raw, but she's hopeful for the future. There are few corners of the globe that have gone through the past year unscathed, and sorrow in loss carries many forms, but Sharon and her team are not alone. COVID has touched every Schlegel Village and so many other care providers in one way or another, and left scars that will run deep.

Sharon looks to the relationships at the centre of Village life as her beacon for hope, though they do come at a cost. The sorrow of loss has touched all connected to Schlegel Villages but Sharon and so many others were there in times of need.

"We must never forget those who passed, and I know I never will," Sharon says. They will be honoured when the core values and the relationships that make our Villages true homes thrive once again – relationships that thrive in the grace and beauty of a kind caregiver's heart.



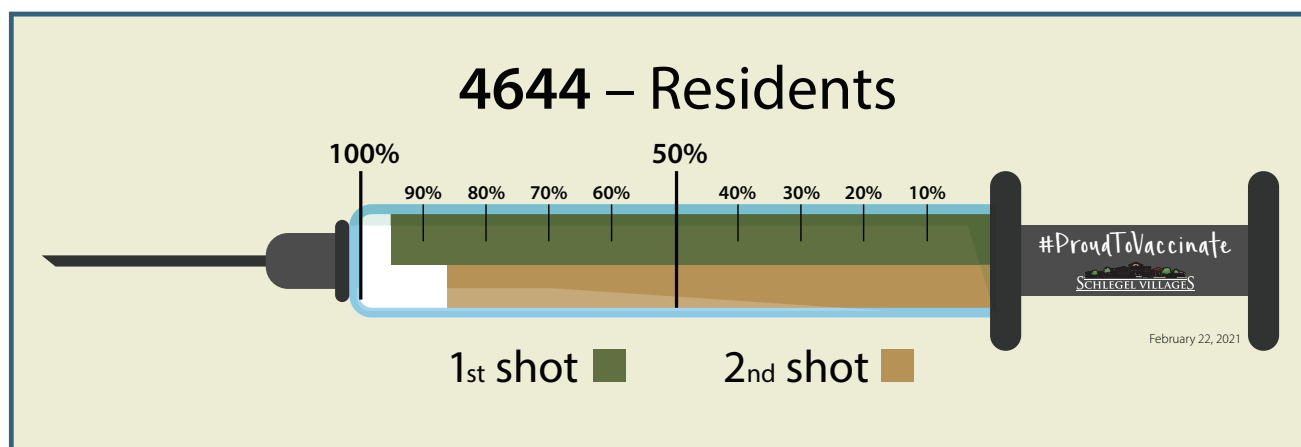
Optimism in vaccination

There were hints of optimism in our community as the vaccination campaign for our team members began in late December, even as some of our Villages faced the ongoing severity of serious outbreaks.

The moment our first residents were able to receive their first inoculations, that optimism began to spread.

By mid-February, despite delays in supply, every eligible resident had the opportunity to receive both doses and our team member numbers continue to climb.

"What gives me hope is knowing that my mom received the vaccination and she will be okay," a family member named Sandra says. "One day we will all be vaccinated and with the love and support from everyone around us, we will all get through this."



A message of gratitude

To reflect upon the past 12 months is to experience an intense range of emotions. Our entire Schlegel Villages community has been inspirational as we endured difficulty, grief and sacrifice together.



Not a day has passed that I haven't been moved by how resilient and deeply-committed our Village teams are to the residents of our Villages. I've always known this about our teams and it has been a source of great pride and inspiration; under COVID-19, however, it was on full display for all to see. The notion that it takes a Village to care is central to our family vision and the spirit of community-building my grandfather passed down to us. In every outbreak situation, whether there were two cases or dozens, Village teams from across the entire organization pulled tightly together to support each other. Some left their homes and families for weeks on end when the call for help was made from a sister Village, while others remained to carry that extra burden. They did so with humble compassion, for that is their calling.

The greatest difficulty, for me, was seeing the great pressure placed upon our leaders and team members, each one of whom cares deeply for the residents they serve. With each person who tested positive, fear and worry etched a little deeper inside us all. When a beloved resident passed, we all shared that grief and we shared the sadness when outbreak protocols

limited the ability of our residents to enjoy Village life outside their rooms or the warm embrace of loved ones. We shared that sadness for the families when they couldn't be with us, for they are such an important part of each Village.

Like so many others, however, I find hope in the mass-vaccinations that I firmly believe will help us return to normal Village life so all of our communities can thrive again. I find hope in the wisdom of our residents, who in their resilience, patience and calm encouragement of our teams reminded us of the great challenges of the past they have overcome.

When we look back at the hardships of the past year, I hope we all remember how we each gave the best of ourselves to each other; we stuck together and, in many ways, grew closer as communities under the most trying of circumstances. Many lessons learned will carry us forward and our strength together will see us through.

With the deepest of gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie".

Jamie Schlegel

Thank you for your generosity!



\$140k+

Team member donations



\$116k+

external donations

Last **12**
months

\$435k+

in support provided



560+ recipients
received pandemic
support funds



35 recipients
received primary
support funds

Pandemic support funds provided



Transportation



Childcare



Team members
diagnosed with COVID 19



For team members who's
cohabiter has lost their income



Giving up another employer

How to donate

Team members

- Bi-weekly payroll deduction
- One time lump sum
- Vacation time
- Success Points

Go to Crossroads
Community to
download and fill out
the donation form.

Residents and family members

Contact wshf@schlegelvillages.com for information.

No donation is too small.

