



About Us

A Newsletter for Friends of Unitarian House

Unitarian House of Ottawa

Ottawa's not-for-profit Retirement Residence and Senior Apartments



Spring/Summer 2021

Christina O'Neil... Saying Good Bye after 31 years.

I didn't realize how difficult it would be to write my retirement editorial for the Spring Newsletter, until I started...



Vyvian with Christina's black lab Chelsea

I have an unopened card at home that was written by one of the first residents who moved into Unitarian House in March of 1984. Vyvian was 106 years old when she passed away in 2016 and I still think of her.

Vyvian was the kind of person I aspire to be, a strong independent woman not afraid to speak her mind. When Vyvian decided that because her family lived out of town, she needed help to make her funeral arrangements, I was enlisted.

I called the caterer to check on their menu, to arrange for Alex Campbell to write her eulogy and was sent out to purchase the "green" napkins, plates, and décor. To this day, I have never found out why they had to be "green".

I remember laughing with her during those days of "preparing for the end" and it was then that I realized a very important person in my life would not be there when I retired. So, not being shy, I asked Vyvian if she would write me a retirement note. Five years later I still have that card. To me it is a very special gift from a friend who made a difference in my life so I promised that I would keep it sealed till my retirement day. I can't wait to find out what she wrote.

I have so many memories of this community; some of them are of musicians, doctors, nurses, editors, engineers, writers, carpenters, veterans, teachers; seniors from every walk of life.

I can picture the residents working in the gardens, running the tuck shop, going to see the mayor to get traffic lights at Richmond and Cleary, and most recently protesting the LRT from going through the property.

I remember nursing Lolita, a very overweight Chihuahua who looked like a football with legs and organizing morning medications for Russell the cat. At this point in my story, I feel like breaking out in the song, "We are Family" but trust me, I can't carry a tune.

It is hard to believe I have spent 31 years at Unitarian House. I began my time here as the Activity Director in 1990. Then I went back to school to get my RN and I returned full time January 2nd 1998, two days before the great ice storm and now I am leaving, hopefully, near the end of year two of a pandemic.

I know that it is not a "goodbye" it is more like an "I'll see you around".

I know I'll be back as a volunteer. In the meantime, I have always liked the idea of being a bartender, so wish me success in my new career!



Christina, Bette & Jen on her favourite holiday, Halloween!

- Christina

Introducing Melanie Lefebvre New Executive Director



Born in a small village in Québec, and raised in Hamilton, Mélanie moved to Ottawa in 1996 to continue her studies in French and attend La Cité Collégiale, where she received her certification as an RPN.

After graduation she moved on to the University of Ottawa and in 2002, she received her Bachelors of Science in Nursing.

Shortly after, she became the youngest Director of Care for a 60-bed retirement community in Orleans. A year later, she became the youngest Executive Director for the same company!

As an active member of the community, Mélanie is very fond of volunteering. She gives her time to the ROSSS as a member of the Board of Directors and was an active member of CARP for over 4 years (before Covid).

Mélanie lives in Manotick with her husband Craig and their two children, Justin and Emma. When not in the office, you can usually find her in a dojo watching her daughter's martial arts or watching her son play hockey and soccer. As a family they enjoy downhill skiing and spending time at their cottage.

She is honoured to be serving the community of Unitarian House of Ottawa and she looks forward to starting this new chapter of her career where she can dedicate herself to both her work and her family.

In true Unitarian House fashion, we say to Melanie – “Welcome Home!”

Note from Merle Bolick, President of the Board

It's been a long winter of isolation and discontent. You haven't seen Governors around but, like the unborn grass under its snowy mantle (thank you, Anne Murray), the Board has been working invisibly to ensure that Unitarian House and its residents continue to flourish.

We have a new Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer in Walter Nibogie and Trevor Shannon. The Bylaw Committee has drafted an update to reflect the realities of Pandemic times and virtual meetings. And our Search Committee succeeded in finding an extremely qualified successor to our esteemed Executive Director, Christina O'Neil, who has agreed to delay her retirement until the Fall. I met Mélanie Lefebvre during her tour of UHO, and I think everyone will be happy with the transition in September.

As you may know, Sandy Castledine will be leaving the Board in May to make way for Mo Gabe, the new President of the Residents' Association. We thank Sandy for her many contributions and look forward to having Mo on our team.

Finally, a big (virtual) pat on the back for all of us involved in Unitarian House. A 100% vaccination rate is just as it should be. A big thanks to Ottawa Public Health and to the superb organization by Christina, Larissa, and all the staff - of door-to-door vaccinations for residents and early vaccination of staff. Congratulations to everyone!

And Happy Spring.

- Merle Bolick, President of the Board



Residents Celebrate Vaccination

Staff and volunteers woke early to knock on doors, serve coffee and take temperatures while we excitedly awaited the arrival of a team of paramedics to administer our vaccines.

Residents sat in the entry way to their apartments and enjoyed the unofficial “gathering” with their friends and neighbours.

You could feel the excitement as it was the first time in ages that we had been able to “gather” together!

Applause and cheers rang out as residents watched the buses filled with paramedics and support staff paraded into the building!

To mark the occasion Second floor residents, toasted their 2nd dose of Pfizer vaccines with Mimosa’s and a special brunch on March 24th.

We are so very thankful to the kind and compassionate care we received each vaccination day.

The team from the Ottawa Hospital and the Ottawa Paramedics put everyone at ease and made the process seamless!



The Grand Parade A new Family-Friendly “FUNdraiser”



We are excited to announce a brand-new Fundraising initiative here at Unitarian House!

This year we have proudly teamed up with the Blue Sea

Foundation to be the first Ottawa organization to take part in the Canada-wide event “The Grand Parade”.

The Grand Parade is a charitable walk, where family & friends team up to gather pledges and raise funds in honour of their favourite charitable senior organization. Here in Ottawa-Westboro that organization is Unitarian House of Ottawa!

We’ll be raising funds to support the various Financial Assistance programs here at Unitarian House. These programs help us ensure that the members of our community remain here, at home, should they outlive their financial resources.

The event will be taking place on Saturday September 18th 2021, with the plans for an in-person walk beginning and ending on our beautiful property. Don’t worry we have a back up plan for a virtual event, should that not be possible.

We hope we can count on you to enter a team and join us to support Unitarian House in this fun, new experience!

Registration for walkers and their teams begins on July 1st 2021.

For more information visit thegrandparade.org.

Celebrating the Little Things

If the past 15 months has taught all of us here at Unitarian House anything, it's to celebrate even the smallest moments in the biggest ways we can!



That means we take every opportunity we can to dress up, serve a special lunch, sip a beverage in the sun, or wear a silly hat!

We have become experts at throwing fun and entertaining socially-distanced, parties! And together we have made it through this past year, with lots of laughs, love and a pile of creativity!

In the fall when the colder weather was getting us down, we threw a party with cupcakes, party hats and googly eyed glasses. At Christmas, When Santa and his elves couldn't visit, we had them made of balloons! At Easter we donned our decked-out bonnets and served tea.



Santa and his jolly elf were graciously donated by Brad the Balloon Guy!

You name it and we celebrated it! New Years Eve, Shrove Tuesday, Earth Day, Mardi-Gras, Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Victoria Day, and even national Squirrel Day, we have raised our glasses and toasted each in style!

One day soon we will be celebrating "the old-fashioned way" again, but until then the residents at Unitarian House of Ottawa continue to prove that Seniors Have More Fun!

New Horizons Grant Drumming our way to Fitness!

When Unitarian House first learned about the possibility of receiving a federal grant through the New Horizons program, our Activities Director, Jennifer Brierley jumped at the chance!

Through Jen's hard work we were approved for this program and received \$5000 in funding to put towards activities and programming for residents of the 2nd Floor.

The majority of this funding is being used to start a new fitness program – Drum Fit!

This exercise program is designed to stimulate cognitive recognition, increase muscle development and dexterity through simple drumming, music and motion.

This new weekly class will provide a fun and social environment for our residents. The best part, it uses stability balls (instead of noisy snare drums) and special plastic drumsticks making it ideal for our residents who love music (but hate noise) to drum along while they get fit!

We used the remainder of the grant to help cover the cost of a new Smart TV for the 2nd floor lounge where residents can enjoy a variety of entertaining and education programming!

We look forward to sharing videos & photos of the new Drum Fit program with you, later this summer through our Social Media pages!

- Jennifer Brierley, Activities Director



Retirement Living... Which Waiting List should I be on?

As many of you know Unitarian House offers two entirely different kinds of Senior Living - Retirement Living & Independent Living.

The independent living Senior Apartments, work just like a regular apartment building and is not part of our licensed Retirement Home. These apartments offer complete independence, but with the security of being in a Senior's community with access to our Nursing Department only in the case of an emergency.

Weekly, exercise classes, happy hours & activities through the Residents' Association are available to Independent Living residents.

The Retirement Living Floor is a licensed Retirement Home. These suites still offer independence but include the peace of mind of having someone else take care of the majority of your day-to-day tasks.

On the Retirement Living (2nd) Floor, we provide your meals, do the housekeeping, your person laundry & linens and take care of the standard utility bills (heat, hydro, water).

We also offer medication management, cuing and basic daily care with our wonderful nursing staff present 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

As well as weekly exercise classes and happy hours, the Retirement Living Floor also has the added bonus of other daily activities, communal dining in our cozy dining room, and access to services and care that the Independent Living Apartments do not.

So how do you choose?

If you are happily preparing your own meals, cleaning your own house, washing your own laundry, buying your own groceries, managing your own medications, need little to no help with day-to-day living, and have good mobility, then staying on the Senior Apartment Waiting

List is absolutely the right choice!

If you are starting to rely on take-out and heat and serve meals, need help with your medications, are relying on family and friends to assist with the shopping, chores and care, or are concerned about being able to maintain your household it's time to switch (or apply) to the Retirement Living Waiting List!

For more information on Retirement Living units at Unitarian House reach out to Susan our Administration & Marketing Manager! retire@unitarianhouse.ca or 613-722-6690 ext 234

Please note: The Waiting List for the Senior Apartments has been closed to new applications since 2019.



Dietary Aide, Carolina, serves tea to a Retirement Floor resident, during our Easter celebration

Association Annual Meeting

The date for the Association Annual Meeting has been set for Sunday September 26th 2021.

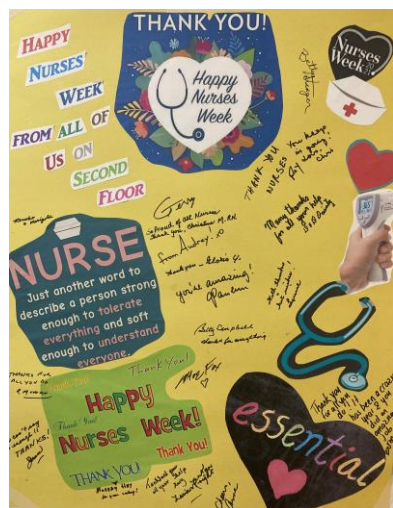
Association Membership renewal packages will be sent out in late August, along with the agenda for the Annual Meeting and the current Financial Audit.

We are hoping to be able to host the entire Association this year, but should the group size be limited due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, we will operate on a first come first basis via RSVP for in person attendance.

We are also looking into offering an electronic/virtual option for those who are unable to attend in person. More information will be provided in the renewal package.

Thank you to our Nursing Staff!

It just so happens that this edition of our Newsletter is going to print during National Nursing Week! The residents of the Retirement floor created this colourful card to thank the many members of our compassionate, caring and kind, Nursing Team for their continued hard work and determination!



Welcome Mo Gabe!

New Residents' Association President

Mo has been a resident of Unitarian House since 2016. During her time here she has been a passionate volunteer and an active member of the Association.

Her beautiful handmade cards can often be found for sale at our Front Desk with proceeds coming back to Unitarian House.

Please join all of us in welcoming Mo Gabe in her new position as Residents' Association President. Mo we know you'll be great!

Note from the Residents' Association

Whilst most of our residents know exactly what the Residents' Association (RA) does, we realized recently that many new residents have moved into Unitarian House since the start of the pandemic last year. There may also be people outside the House who want to know what our function is.

All residents of Unitarian House are automatically members of the RA. Before COVID-19 arrived in the world, we held four general meetings a year and preparatory

meetings of what we call the Residents' Council which is composed of RA executive officers and others who perform regular important functions in Unitarian House, such as our Floor Representatives and those responsible for the Tuck Shop, extra Activities, the 50/50 Draw and for evening Security checks.

All of these meetings have been cancelled during the time of the pandemic, except for two Zoom meetings of the Council in recent months. This year, we will again have to cancel our Annual General Meeting and will have to elect new officers via a paper ballot.

However, that does not mean that the Residents' Association has been idle - quite the contrary! Many initiatives to help all residents with the new and strange aspects of life in these difficult times have been taken on by the officers of the RA and by other willing residents - as always, here, people are very helpful.

- Mo Gabe, Residents' Association President

Unitarian House – Who We Are

Unitarian House was originally conceived in 1973 as an outreach program to provide seniors with affordable accommodation, support, services and a continuum of care.

Over the years, we have gained an outstanding reputation as a caring, vibrant and diversified community of residents, staff and volunteers. Our residents enjoy, and contribute to, many stimulating activities in a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere that feels like "Home".

As a not-for-profit organization, our rents are at the lower end of the market scale and we budget each year to break even.

As with any home, maintenance, renovations and upgrades are continually required. Therefore, we rely on our donors and volunteers to help us raise the required funds, so that our residents can continue to enjoy all the comforts and security of Home.

Unitarian House adjusts the support offered to each resident as their needs change, without increasing their monthly fees. If we aren't able to provide the level of additional care they need, we help our residents and families source the right add-ons through affordable outside care providers. This allows our residents to stay here, at home, longer while still maintaining their health & independence!

How You Can Help!

Through the early years, Unitarian House developed a donor program and an investment fund which have served us well. These are designed to ensure we are able to continue to maintain the building in both a safe and attractive condition and also to cover the cost of the financial assistance programs.

Unfortunately, the continuing economic downturn caused by COVID-19, has wreaked havoc with investments, donations and fundraising. For the last 2 years, Unitarian House has had to cancel the annual May Fundraising Dinner, the August Beer Garden and September Fall Fair.

Your gift, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated and is needed more now than ever before.

There are many ways to contribute:

- a one-time gift, a monthly donation, donations as gifts, to mark birthday, anniversaries or other occasions.
- bequest / planned giving/transfer of investments, securities
- in memoriam - list Unitarian House as the recipient for donations

Contributions can be made:

- By cheque send your donation to: Unitarian House, 20 Cleary Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K2A 3Z9.
- By credit card – just call or drop in during the work hours Monday to Friday 8:30-4:30
- **COMING SOON** Online – We are excited to announce the restructuring of our website

to allow online donations directly to Unitarian House! Launching Fall 2021.

All charitable contributions over \$10.00 are provided with a tax receipt.

With your help we have:

- Purchased a generator to keep critical systems running
- Upgraded & replaced the pistons in both of our very busy elevators
- Installed electric door openers on all of our retirement living units
- Upgraded our courtyard, main entrances, & Offices
- Upgraded 2nd Floor Lounges including a custom-built Entertainment Wall with 55" Smart TV
- Upgraded all apartment windows
- Replaced Heating and Cooling Systems
- Replaced & Maintained the Roof
- Upgraded the Plumbing Distribution System
- Installed a Sprinkler System on 1st & 2nd floors.
- Upgraded our Laundry Room
- Upgraded the flooring on 1st & 2nd floors.

Ongoing & Future Projects:

- Financial Assistance Programs
- 2nd Floor Renovations – Replacing windows, updating the Reception Desk & the Nursing Station.
- Replacing flooring & Updating stairwells
- Boiler replacement & repair
- Building Envelope repairs

Should you wish to discuss the best way to give, the work we do or how the funds are spent, our Executive Director is available at 613-722-6690 extension 228.

For more information on current projects or to enquire about other types of donations, contact our Administration and Marketing Manager, Susan Faith, at 613-722-6690 extension 234 or email retire@unitarianhouse.ca.

Unitarian House of Ottawa We Call it Home!



Thank you to the following contributors of this issue: Christina O’Neil, Mo Gabe, Merle Bolick, Mélanie Lefevbre, Jennifer Brierley and Susan Faith.

About Us is published twice each year with a Spring/Summer issue and a Fall/Winter edition. These two newsletters keep friends of Unitarian House informed of the ongoing activities and needs of our home.

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