



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 2020

David Curry

Past President of Unitarian House

When I first took over as the Executive Director in 2007, I didn't realize that I would have to become a Property Manager too.

Talk about being pushed into the deep end with the building of the new Day Care on the campus starting week one of my new position. This meant a total disruption to operations at the House with a new water main, an extension to our sewer system and Cleary Avenue dug up to allow for all this work.

I had a guardian angel at that time, David Curry Chair of Property, to guide me through this experience and many more over the last 15 years.

David was not only my mentor but a friend. He taught me the art of project management and we accomplished a lot: the replacement of the Boiler System and water tanks, a new roof, 3 roof top air pressurization systems, upgrade to both the front and back courtyards, renovation to the entrance on 2nd floor, new nurse call system, replacement of the elevators piston just to name a few.

David, a retired Professional Engineer with a Degree in Civil Engineering from Queen's University, Belfast, and a former member of a number of professional Associations, resigned this year after 3 terms as President of the Board of Governors and Chair of many of the Committees, he will be missed.



Christina O'Neil
Executive Director

May Fundraising Dinner Postponed

To keep our residents safe, and to abide by provincial and federal social distancing rules we have made the difficult decision to postpone our annual Fundraising Dinner.

Our scheduled guest speaker, Peggy Taillon, has been very understanding and will be rescheduled for a future date as soon as possible!

This occasion is one that our community looks forward to every year. As our biggest annual fundraiser, it gives us an excuse to come together, dress up and have a good time in honour of Unitarian House of Ottawa.

We look forward to celebrating with you all very soon!

- Susan Faith

Community – A Poem

Unitarian House is a community of warm-hearted friends and family...

It is all about giving and receiving,

It is conversation, music and laughter,

It is tending our gardens, it is happy hour

It is striving to stay safe; it is sitting in the sun

It is love and respect.

- Christina O'Neil

A Little Creativity Goes a Long Way!

Naoko a resident of the Unitarian House Senior Apartments, has been helping lift the spirits of her fellow residents through her beautifully Ikebana, Japanese-style, floral arrangements for years.



These days, since there is no way to receive real flowers safely, Naoko creates her own for all of us to enjoy.



In March the beautiful birds hanging from pine branches... In April the tulips and other spring flowers.

Her amazing creations bring warm feelings and comfort to our hearts.

How can we ever thank her enough?!

- Paula Theetge

Remembering Brenda Mackintosh

We are saddened to announce the sudden passing of Brenda Mackintosh.

She was often spotted around Unitarian House ukulele in hand, offering companionship and support to our 2nd floor residents. Over the past weeks, even while ill, Brenda had been keeping up weekly telephone calls with several residents.

An anchor of our volunteer community Brenda, will be dearly missed.

A Note from Interim President, Merle Bolick



My parents were adherents of the Unitarian Church, and I went to church school off Elgin Street. Dr. David Pohl married both of my sisters in the new church on Cleary. My parents were enthusiastic supporters of the Unitarian House project and some of the first to be on the waiting list. The timing, however, did not work out for them; they eventually went into a for-profit retirement residence.

I spent 30 years in Canada's Immigration Foreign Service, retiring in 2012. When I heard that the Waiting List was open again last year, I did not hesitate to join it, although I had never seen the House in its final form!

Having done so, I feel a responsibility to support Unitarian House of Ottawa and to ensure that I and the Board reflect the needs and interests of residents and our Unitarian House community.

I very much look forward to spending more time in our Home when it's safe again to do so.

In the meantime, Keep Well!

- Merle Bolick
Interim President of the Board

Resident Association Meetings on Hold

The Residents' Association and its Council will not be meeting until restrictions are lifted. We keep in touch with email, announcements and written messages.

- Sandy Castledine

Remembering Joyce Sweet



Unitarian House is saddened to announce the passing of founding member Joyce Sweet. She passed away peacefully, here at home, in early February.

A beautiful lady inside and out, Joyce was an original member of the Founding Committee of Unitarian House. From her work in the early stages of planning, to her work as a member of the Board, she was a forced to be reckoned with.

Making her home first in an apartment on the 3rd floor then on the retirement floor in her final years, Joyce was an incredible member of our community, and was a firm believer in everything Unitarian House stands for.

Her bright smile and warm spirit are greatly missed and she will be fondly remembered... always.

- The Unitarian House Family

A Note from the Resident's Association

Thanks to Ministry of Health restrictions, the vigilance of our staff, the compliance of the residents, and the preparedness and experience/wisdom of our Executive Director, we have **NO** Covid-19 in Unitarian House! We are so grateful for all the above.

So how have we been spending our time in house isolation? Well, we've been walking outside and in; singing on Sundays; buying groceries and meat from our new in-house services; exercising 3x weekly with Heather; visiting the library on Wednesdays; personal laundry; reading; activities on the 2nd floor with Jennifer; and, zooming, skyping, chatting and texting with friends and relatives. The grocery and meat services, singing, and library hours

are all organized and run by resident volunteers.

What do we miss the most while sequestered in-house? As you might imagine, physical contact (hugs etc.) with our loved ones tops the list – but we also miss going off the property for drives, lunch, dinner, shopping, appointments, games of bridge and mahjong, choir with Alan and haircuts with Lyn. All this has been put on hold for now.

The Residents' Association would like to acknowledge the great debt we owe to Christina O'Neil and her staff – which includes the front desk, marketing, activities, dining room staff and maintenance – for taking such good care of us all under very difficult circumstances. We, quite literally, owe you our lives.

- Sandy Castledine
President of the Resident's Association

A Message to our Volunteers



April 30th 2020 would have been our 2019 Volunteer Appreciation luncheon. We wanted to extend a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who worked with us during 2019 and to let you know that once our doors are open again that we will not only celebrate but honour each and every one of you for all of your hard work!

During these trying times the Activity Department has had to make many changes to the way we operate and of the most difficult adjustment was not being able to have our absolutely wonderful team of volunteers here to assist us. We miss your visits! We miss your smiles!

One of the most uplifting things has been the outpouring of offers for support in different

ways. Phone calls, drop offs, fun activity ideas have all been offered and appreciated!

Margaret, who runs our weekly Bingo, sent a gift of books to help keep residents busy. While Julie Smith, has been donating her time and energy to create dozens and dozens of cloth masks & ear saving headbands for the staff. Several of the residents' family members and community advocates have also donated masks and supplies to help keep us all healthy!

We have a long list of resident volunteers within the building who assist at the front desk during evening & weekends, and an even longer list of residents who help patrol the parking lots & grounds to keep the community safe.

Last but certainly not least, thank-you to Shirley one of our terrific Paramed staff, who out of pure kindness has volunteered time after practically every shift, to offer hair trims, washes and styles to the community. She has graciously donated any funds raised to the Unitarian House Financial Assistance Program.

"We call it home: has never resonated more than it does now. Although this is a difficult time, we have come together both inside and outside the House as one big family and because of this have been successful at keeping our community safe.

No matter how big or small your contribution, collective they make a HUGE difference. We can't express our gratitude enough.

We look forward to celebrating our success with all of you when this is over!

Stay safe everyone!

- Jennifer Brierly
Activity & Volunteer Coordinator

Ingenuity at Unitarian House during COVID-19

What can 85 seniors living independently in apartments in Unitarian House, do when faced with lock-down and few options for acquiring groceries. Not everyone has family or friends to do deliveries and not everyone could wait 2 weeks for the on-line shops to deliver.

A few of the residents, working with Executive Director, Christina O'Neil, and the grocery suppliers for Unitarian House, set up a weekly bulk order, packaging, distribution and delivery service for the residents and even some staff.



Starting off with the basics, milk, bread, eggs, veggies and fruit, as requests grew, we added Habitant French Canadian Pea Soup, peanut butter, toothpaste, paper products (no need to hoard toilet paper at Unitarian House!), etc.

Our first order was delivered March 26 and did we get a surprise! The loose spinach and arugula arrived in bags the size of giant pillows. Each carrot weighed about 2 pounds. But we have learned how to be specific in our ordering.

We fill between 27 and 38 individual orders every week. Our total grocery sales to date amount to \$6,697.83.

Without our wonderful suppliers, Aenos Inc, Sysco and The Breadman, our service would not be possible.

A special thank you goes out to Sandra Whicker, Sandy Castledine, Paula Theetge, Alice Bushe and all of their wonderful supporting volunteers, who accept orders, organize and distribute weekly groceries to our Apartment residents.

- Jackie Holzman

Requests for Financial Support Increase due to COVID-19

Here at Unitarian House, we have financial assistance programs in place to assist both our Apartment & Retirement residents, should they fall on hard times. These funds support approximately 25 individuals each year with costs being well over \$100,000 annually.

Over the past two months Unitarian House has seen a significant increase in requests for Financial Assistance from our 2nd Floor Residents, due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on many people's financial situations, due to loss of employment, wavering investments, and market instability.

Economic downturns can be a challenge for even the most prepared person, but for those who are on a fixed income made up of savings accounts, failing investments, Old Age Security, and the Canadian Pension Plan.

This is why our focus for all donations received through the About Us Spring/Summer 2020 Newsletter campaign and the Upcoming Great Canadian Giving Challenge will be directed to our Retirement Living Assistance Fund.

By donating through the enclosed form, you are helping us, help a member of our community stay right here at home, and provide them with financial peace of mind.

- Susan Faith

Video Calls Offer Comfort during COVID



One of the hardest things about the current situation, is the residents missing their families.

Visitors haven't been allowed since mid-March, when COVID-19 was still called the Coronavirus.

Jennifer Brierley, our activity coordinator, has created a twice weekly video-call schedule to help ease the distance for many of our 2nd floor residents.

Through popular video-call applications like Skype, Zoom, Facebook Video, Facetime and Webex, 2nd floor residents are able to speak to and see their families on a fairly regular basis.

Introducing seniors to technology can be tricky, but luckily, we have a pretty technologically savvy team, to help walk them through.

These video-calls have become a bright spot for so many and have created some amazing memories not just for our residents, but for our Unitarian House Staff, as we share in the laughter and tears.

However, as wonderful as the video-calls are, we cannot wait for families to be able to visit again. We miss the visits, the chats, the BBQs and the vibrancy that our residents' families bring to the community.

Afterall, sometimes all anyone needs is a hug... and that's one area where the magic of the internet falls flat.

- Susan Faith

Gardens in Bloom at Unitarian House

The Campus surrounding Unitarian House is bursting with colour from our wonderful gardens and the Residents' raised garden boxes.



We are blessed to have such an amazing gardener, Cheryl, and a fantastic collection of gardening aficionados here who take their passion for growing fresh herbs, vegetables & flowers so seriously!

Our gardens are truly a labour of love!

- Susan Faith

Future Uncertain for Many Unitarian House Events.

The Fall Fair is the largest fundraiser of the year for the Resident's Association, with over \$10,000 raised at the 2019 edition, and an event that both the internal community and our surrounding neighbours look forward to each autumn.

Unfortunately with the current limitations on social gatherings, and the need for physical distancing, it is looking like the Fall Fair, at least in its standard form of community garage sale, 2nd hand clothing, used books, baked goods, live entertainment, raffles, games and concessions, is unlikely to be able to proceed this year.

The Residents' Association and the Fall Fair Committee are working hard to come up with alternate plans, or reschedule to later dates to ensure that this wonderful community event can take place in one form or another.

The annual end of summer Beer Garden & Barbecue is another event whose fate is

currently hanging in the pandemic balance.

This summer event encourages residents, family, friends & staff to get outdoors and enjoy some tasty food, cold beverages and live music, surrounded by the gorgeous courtyard gardens in support of Unitarian House each August.

We rely so heavily on special events to spread awareness and raise funds for our various efforts and associations. Unitarian House, much like other small Not-for-profits in Ottawa, are feeling the pandemic pinch.

-Susan Faith

Editors Note: At the time of distribution the Fall Fair and the Beer Garden have been officially Cancelled.

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".

We have two levels of accommodation: 67 one and two-bedroom apartments (senior apartments), 40 bed-sitting units and 5 two-

room suites (retirement living) for a total capacity of 130 seniors.

As a not-for-profit organization, our rents are at the low end of the market scale (never to exceed 80% of comparable market value) and we budget each year to break even. However, as with any home, maintenance, renovations and upgrades are continually required. Therefore, we rely on our cherished 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 is unique in that we adjust 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 and support, 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, while aging in place.

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 recent economic downturn caused by COVID-19, has wreaked havoc with investments, donations and fundraising. Unitarian House has had to cancel the annual May Fundraising Dinner, while the August Beer Garden and September Fall Fair's futures are uncertain.

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 birthday gifts, to mark anniversaries
- 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
- By going to CanadaHelps.org. Canada Helps deducts a small percentage from all donations made. A 3% fee applies to donations less than \$10,000; 2.5% fee \$10,000-\$49,999; 2.25% fee \$50,000-\$99,999; 2% fee \$100,000+

All charitable contributions are provided with a tax receipt.

With your help we have:

- Purchased a generator to keep critical
- Upgraded & replace the pistons in both of our very busy elevators
- Purchased a new accessible van
- Install electric door openers on all of our retirement living units
- Installed a PA system for the whole building
- Upgraded our courtyard and main entrances
- 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.
- Waterproofed of the North East Wall
- Replaced Hot Water Tanks
- Replaced Patio Doors and Windows
- Continued with General Maintenance & Repairs

Ongoing & Future Projects:

- Financial Assistance Programs
- 2nd floor Bathroom renovations
- 2nd Floor Renovations – new office space, updating Mail room, common areas, & the Nursing Station.
- Elevator cab refurbishing, and new buttons – 2020
- Building Envelope repairs

Should you wish to discuss the best way to give, or have questions about the work we do or how the funds are spent, our Executive Director, Christina O'Neil, is available at 613-722-6690 extension 228 or via email at coneil@unitarianhouse.ca.

For more information on our 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 reach out via email to retire@unitarianhouse.ca.

Unitarian House of Ottawa works! Let's ensure it continues to do so.

With your help, we will meet this challenge and continue to empower our seniors.

For your convenience, a donation form has been enclosed with this Newsletter.

Thank You for Your Support!



Unitarian House of Ottawa “We call it home”

Thank you to the following contributors of this issue: Christina O'Neil, Paula Theetge, Jackie Holzman, Sandy Castledine, Merle Bolick, 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.

New for 2020 – Sign up to receive your 'About Us' Newsletter electronically. Send an email with your name and email address to retire@unitarianhouse.ca

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Executive Director:

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