



# THE FRIENDS

DIGNITY • TEAMWORK • INNOVATION • EMPOWERMENT

Friendly Focus

Spring 2024

## Jumping Into Spring

There are exciting projects underway as we step into Spring 2024. In Muskoka, the Muskoka Landtrust is working tirelessly to develop much needed affordable housing, check page 5 for more information. The Muskoka Community Foundation is also working with communities to better understand potential solutions to ongoing housing issues experienced in the area. As a provider of RGI fully accessible supportive housing, *The Friends* organization supports these initiatives. On the home front, *The Friends* are exploring new virtual

programs for individuals who are housebound in order to bring engaging programs that are available at the “flick of a switch.” On page 9 we celebrate other community groups who are making Parry Sound Muskoka a better place to live, work and play.

*Featured Below:*

Heather Becker and Jean Fraser enjoy “Hat day”

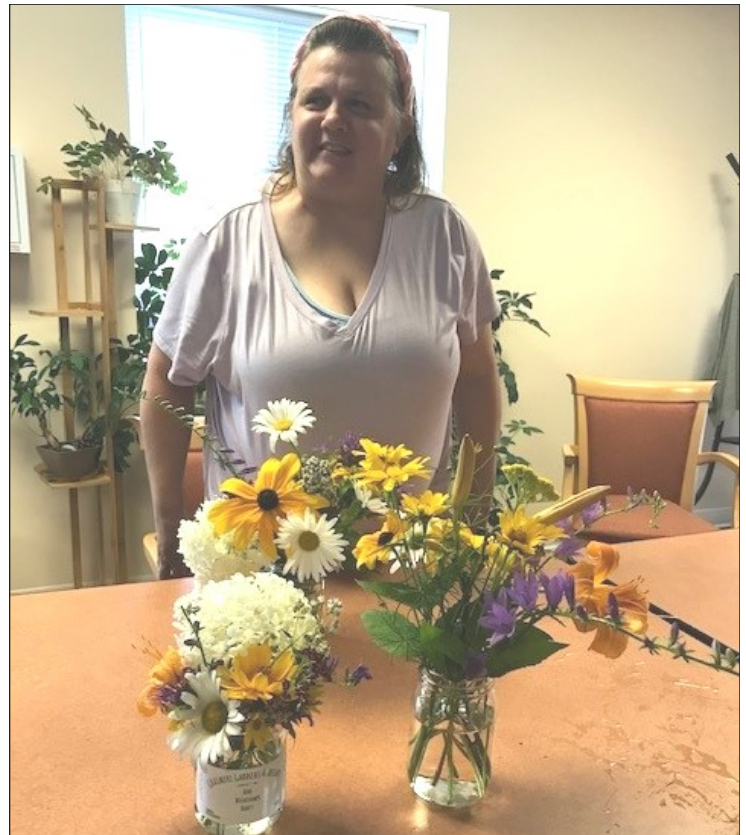


# It's Been a Busy Season at *The Friends!*



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*Muskoka ADAP Flower Arranging*

## What We Do

The Friends is a non-profit charitable organization providing services to individuals with physical Disabilities, and seniors. In Muskoka and Parry Sound the organization has been serving the community for over 30 years. Some of the programs and services the agency provides: attendant care, adult day programs, caregiver support, respite, alzheimer overnight respite, P.A.T.H (Priority Assistance to Transition Home) from the hospital, post stroke, supportive housing, and 24/7 assisted living.

### Contact us

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## THE FRIENDS

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The Friends newsletter can also be read online at  
www.thefriends.on.ca

Send content or comments to  
info@thefriends.on.ca

**Supported by:**



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North East Local Health  
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# From the CEO's Desk

As we begin to enjoy the "outside" world again, *The Friends* agency is busy repairing, refurbishing and cleaning spaces both inside Forest Hill Apartments in Parry Sound and our building at 141 Sharpe Street East in Gravenhurst. The Senior Team and I have also been exploring how we can provide more meaningful programs that reduce social isolation for seniors and individuals with physical disabilities who have difficulty

getting to and from opportunities to enjoy the company of others. We hope to expand engaging virtual programs that are literally only a "click" away from participation. Please stay "tuned" for more information in the weeks to come. We also want to engage community groups by inviting them to share their mission and their activities with us to increase understanding both of our organization and the work of our partners. Accessible, affordable transportation continues to present

significant barriers to anyone on a fixed income and we continue to work with our community partners to find solutions. Staffing presents an ongoing challenge especially in Muskoka. If you live in Muskoka and are interested in a meaningful job with *The Friends*...just give us a call. You can keep abreast of the latest news and developments by following us on our Facebook page. Wishing everyone a happy and sunny Spring.

**Marliese Gause,**  
CEO

## Fundraising

The agency is so very grateful to many of our readers and community members who support us through donations.

Your dollars help us subsidize transportation costs for seniors and individuals with physical disabilities as well as working towards larger projects such as refurbishing our accessible garden area, installing an elevator at 141 Sharpe Street East Gravenhurst and ultimately, to provide additional accessible housing in the Muskoka/Parry Sound areas that we serve.

**Thanks to your generosity we have raised \$3,016.00 from January 1st to March 31st, 2024, a**



**whopping \$1,260.00 MORE than the same period in 2023.** We continue to raise funds to support low income seniors and individuals with disabilities as well as projects such as expanding housing opportunities and programs to meet community needs.

A very BIG thank you. Please connect with our Facebook site (*The Friends*... Supporting those

with Long Term Health Care Needs) to get up to date information about an upcoming fundraiser you might wish to participate in. In the meantime, enjoy the warmer weather.

## What We Do

The Friends provides a broad basket of services throughout the communities we serve in East/West Parry Sound and Muskoka, however in addition to direct service provision, the agency also provides accessible, supportive housing in Parry Sound and Muskoka. The agency has a keen understanding of the importance of diverse housing options. For individuals who struggle with physical disabilities, fully accessible housing with supportive



services on site can make a huge difference in quality of life as well as reducing inappropriate admission to Long Term Care. Accessible, supportive housing serves people as young as 18 and as old as 90, as long as these individuals can direct their own care. The agency wholeheartedly supports initiatives that aim to increase affordable, accessible housing, such as the project spearheaded by the Muskoka Land Trust.

## What is the Muskoka Land Trust?

### Closing the Gap in the Muskoka Housing Continuum

Designed to provide homeownership & rental opportunity in the affordability gap.



MCLT's mission is to build attainable and affordable rental housing that not only provides shelter, but also promotes community health and well-being while minimizing environmental impact.

#### What work is currently underway?

MCLT is currently working with the Town of Huntsville, the District of Muskoka and various stakeholders towards getting shovels in the ground for Phase 1 of its inaugural Micro Community Rental Housing initiative in Huntsville Ontario.

#### What can you do to help?

The MCLT is seeking community support through donations or through awareness activities. If you'd like to give, or to get involved, please reach out to Sandi Martin, Executive Director via the MCLT website at <https://www.muskokacommunitylandtrust.org/contact>

The Ache for Home lives in all of us, the safe place we can go as we are and not be questioned.

*~Maya Angelou Poet, Activist*

As an agency that cares about and supports accessible, supportive housing projects throughout the area we serve, we are excited about the Muskoka Landtrust's housing initiative.

#### What is the Muskoka Land-trust?

The Muskoka Community Land Trust (MCLT) was created in response to the District of Muskoka's Housing and Homelessness Task Force in

2019, and was formally incorporated as a non-profit in 2021. Led by a board of nine dedicated volunteers representing a diverse cross-section of Muskoka, the MCLT is dedicated to non-profit housing development with a strong emphasis on sustainability and affordability.

#### What are the Muskoka Landtrust's aims and objectives?

## *Are You Housebound? Feeling Isolated?*

According to a report by the Federal Government, social isolation can have a significant negative impact on a senior's health and wellness. Social isolation can "reduce social skills" and is considered a risk factor with respect to good physical and mental health.

Given the lack of adequate affordable and accessible transportation options across the Districts of East/West Parry Sound and Muskoka, seniors and individuals who cannot drive are

often faced with significant disadvantages when it comes to socialization.

Since C.O.V.I.D., *The Friends* agency has been offering the option to attend social/recreational programs virtually. These programs include easy exercise, games, opportunities to get to know others, share stories and learn. The agency can provide hands on support to get started, including the provision of equipment if needed.

There is recognition that virtual programs cannot replace an in-person experience, however, for those who have difficulty getting out of the house, it can provide an opportunity to meet others, share stories, access information and find another "window onto the world. "

Programs are available in Muskoka and Parry Sound regions. If this is something that you are interested in, please give us a call. 1.888.746.5102 or contact us by email [Itiido@thefriends.on.ca](mailto:Itiido@thefriends.on.ca).

## *IS YOUR ELECTRICITY BILL COMING AS A SHOCK?*

A BIG thank you to the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) for providing the following information to Parry Sound residents.

### **Is your electricity bill coming as a shock each month?**

On March 1st, 2024, the Ontario Government increased the income thresholds for the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) by 35%, meaning that more families are now eligible for assistance. For example, a four-person household can now have a combined maximum income of \$65,000 after tax deductions, to qualify for a monthly rebate of \$40. Households eligible for the OESP can receive credits of \$35 to \$75 through the program depending on household size. Higher monthly credits of between \$52 to \$113 are available to customers who identify as Indigenous, living with Indigenous family members, using electric heating or using certain electricity-intensive medical devices.

This program provides financial relief to lower-

income households across the province by offering monthly credits on electricity bills, including seniors.



As an intake agency in the province for this program, and with the program now available to more people, we encourage you to apply to see if you qualify. Applications can be completed online at [www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca](http://www.OntarioElectricitySupport.ca) or if you require assistance to complete an

application, please contact our intake team at 1-800-461-4464 ext. 500. There is no deadline and families can apply at any time.

Please note: if you are a recipient of Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and you pay an electricity bill directly, you are automatically eligible for this monthly credit on your bill through the Ontario Electricity Support Program. Please contact your case worker for more information.

For more information, please call 1-855-831-8151 (toll-free within Ontario)

# Supporting Post Stroke Programs

Ask anyone who has either struggled with recovery after a stroke and they will tell you that ongoing support through recovery is key to improving their quality of life and independence. *The Friends* agency is one of five agencies across the North East that provides an innovative post-stroke recovery program including Caregiver Support and Respite services.

The program is designed to support individuals in improving the areas impacted by stroke with individualized exercises and supports. Often, it's the personal element in that support that makes all the difference, knowing that help is there, that improvement is possible and the positive reinforcement of a smile. Losing key functions like speech and motor skills can have a devastating impact on an individual's sense of self-

worth. Below is one stroke survivor's story. For information about the program contact [rstanton@thefriends.on.ca](mailto:rstanton@thefriends.on.ca)



## Words of Appreciation Post Stroke

*The Friends* is one of five agencies funded to provide post-stroke services. Recently, a client reached out to share her experience and her appreciation. It's always rewarding to know that the services provided continue to make a difference in people's lives.

I honestly don't know how to thank THE FRIENDS for everything they have done for me. They have help [ed] learn and understand "my" stroke and I choose the word "my" stroke because everyone's stroke is different and unique, which makes working with stroke victims very difficult and challenging and I

imagine rewarding in the end. My stroke was not visual, meaning you couldn't tell I even had a stroke by looking at me but I had many cognitive and vision issues. THE FRIENDS helped me understand my stroke and through techniques and exercises they have taught me how to overcome my stroke issues and taught me different strategies on how to deal with the day to day issues I was experiencing. In a very short time with all their knowledge and dedication, I feel [I] have fully recovered from my stroke and feel I can cope and deal [with] things better now than I did before my stroke, thanks to all the things I have been taught by the wonderful people of THE FRIENDS. FOREVER Grateful

## Gardening for your Health and your Community

Did you know that gardening is good for your health? According to studies, growing your own flowers and vegetables can build self-esteem, support heart health, reduce stress and symptoms of depression and anxiety, increase your "happiness" and improve your diet. Gardening can also be a way to share fresh produce with your community.

When planning this year's bounty consider how you might be able to share your hard work with others. Many Food-share groups find it difficult to keep an inventory of fresh fruits

and vegetables on their shelves and are grateful not just



for dollars, but for produce. Here are some tips if you want to give back to your community while at the same time enjoying a favourite hobby:

- contact your local foodshare and find out what kind of produce is most needed and govern your gardening plan accordingly.
  - ask how and where produce should be delivered
  - connect with other gardeners in your neighbourhood and organize a plan to share fresh produce collectively
  - some municipalities provide community garden access for a minimal fee, some ask that gardeners donate a percentage of their produce to local foodbanks. If you live in an apartment check with your local municipality to see whether there are gardening plots available.

## Remembering Pat Stephen

Recently, a long time Adult Day Program participant passed away, leaving friends, family and staff mourning her loss. Sometimes we forget the impact that people can have on our lives so I am sharing a staff person's recollections of the warmth, joy and sheer happiness that Pat brought to the program, to her fellow participants and to staff.

Thank you to Adult Day Program staff for their fond memories.

*Pat was a big part of the Huntsville Day Program! Pat was our in-house DJ and she shared music with us every day that she attended. Her knowledge and love of music was amazing. She would assist the staff in exercises (if they forgot steps), because after all she had been doing them for close to 17 years! Pat was a very unique woman, her memory was*

*superb, the way she could remember all the rules to the millions of games we played was beyond amazing, she could remember people's names and where they sat from years ago! She would always welcome new clients and share her story of joining The Friends, and in doing so helped alleviate their anxiety. I do believe her warm welcome was a big reason our new clients agreed to come back! I myself depended on her excellent memory many times over the past 15 years that I've been Pat's friend.*

*Pat was a wonderful loving friend to us all and we all miss her so much, more than words can express!*

You can honour Pat or others who are attending Adult Day programs throughout the region by donating to *The Friends* agency (see page 12 for donation information) Alternatively, you can donate online [www.thefriends.on.ca](http://www.thefriends.on.ca)



## Working Together for our Communities

The Friends agency would like to honour the work of Food Share organizations throughout the area we serve. Organizations like Harvest Share, Manna Food Bank and the Table Soup Kitchen provide grassroots support and a life affirming helping hand to those suffering from a temporary life crisis as well as supporting seniors and families trying to manage on a limited budget.

### **The Table Soup Kitchen**

**Foundation** in Huntsville (Muskoka North).

<https://www.thetablefoundation.ca/>

*The Table Soup Kitchen Foundation is a non-profit, non-denominational Christian charity committed to lovingly serving people who are in need in the Muskoka area. If you are hungry, hurting, or homeless and require assistance, please take a look at our ministries for more information. We want you to know that you are loved and that God desires to meet your needs with help of our Table family.*

The Table Soup offers a men's hostel, <https://www.thetablefoundation.ca/mens-hostel>. As well, they offer food rescue, a food bank, food bank gardens and a soup kitchen.

For central Muskoka there's the **West Muskoka Lakes Food Bank** <https://westmuskokafoodbank.org/>

*The West Muskoka Food Bank is open every **Thursday from 3:00 – 5:00 PM and Friday from 9:00 – 11:00 AM.***

*All residents in need in West Muskoka are welcome.*

*Volunteers faithfully man the food bank during open hours and also provide assistance with shopping, food donation pick-up, sorting and greeting clients. We respect the dignity of each of our clients, so there is no "means test." The only information that we require is your name, community, phone number, and the number of adults and children in your family. We do not collect financial information. We respect our clients and feel that respect is returned. All information is confidential and used for statistical and reporting purposes only.*

In Bracebridge there's **Manna Food Bank** who is currently seeking a new permanent home.

<https://mannafood>

[bank.myshopify.com/](http://bank.myshopify.com/)

*The Manna Food Bank is a Bracebridge-based volunteer-run charitable organization whose mandate is to ensure that the immediate needs of the hungry are met.*

### **Muskoka North Food Co-op**

**MNGFC** connects local farmers to a growing consumer base through a Grocery Retail Market, Café, and Commercial Production Kitchen. As a community-owned grocery store

& food hub, MNGFC provides sustainable, ethical, and good food for the communities it serves. MNGFC is an innovative solution to pressing social, economic and environmental problems facing Ontario and the globe: insecure local food systems, catastrophic global food production, rising transportation costs, and the steady depletion of Canada's small scale farmers. **Harvest Share Community Food Programs.** Improving access to healthy, nutritious food for individuals & families in need in the District of Parry Sound.

<https://>

[parrysoundharvestshare.com/](https://parrysoundharvestshare.com/)

Also join them for community meals, 1st & 3rd Wed monthly

### **The Salvation Army Emergency Food Bank.**

Serving Parry Sound & Area. Available by appointment only, Tue - Fri 1-3.

Anyone in need is eligible. Limit of one visit per month.

<https://centraleastontario>.

[cioc.ca/record/PSD0547](http://cioc.ca/record/PSD0547)

### **Argyle & District Food Bank**

serving low income families and individuals in need. Residency Requirements: Hwy 522 between Commanda and Loring 705.757.2171 Call ahead of time.

### **Burk's Falls & District Food Bank.**

Provides non perishable foods to individuals in need: fresh foods, hygiene products and baby items provided when available. Christmas baskets are provided seasonally. <https://www.northeasthealthline.ca/display.aspx?id=166455>

## Small Batch Scones

This recipe is super easy and works perfectly for a two-some. Pre-heat oven to 350

You will need:

1 cup of flour, 1 ½ tsps. baking powder, 2 tbsps sugar, ¼ cup raisins or dried cranberries or diced dried apricots

½ cup whipping cream (at least 35%) 1 tsp. vanilla  
1 egg yolk



- Add baking powder & sugar to flour
- Mix egg yolk with chilled whipping cream, add to flour mix
- Gently fold together with fork or spatula, add dried fruit, mix gently
- Using a spatula or spoon, put mixture on a floured surface, gently shape into a generous round ball, flatten, cut into four slices and place on a parchment shielded baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes until the scones are a golden brown. Cool and enjoy.

## Bill of Rights

**Courtesy, Respect and Freedom from Abuse.** A person receiving a community service has the right to be dealt with by the service provider in a courteous and respectful manner and to be free from mental, physical and financial abuse by the service provider.

**Privacy and Freedom to Make Your Own Decisions.** A person receiving community service has a right to be dealt with by the service provider in a manner that respects the person's dignity and privacy and that promotes the person's autonomy.

**Being an Individual.** A person receiving community service has a right to be dealt with by the service provider in a manner that recognizes that persons' needs and preferences, including preference based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors.

**Information and Answers.** A person receiving community service has a right to information about the community services provided to him or her and to be told who will be providing the community services.

**Participation in Their Care Decisions.** A person applying to community services has a right to participate in the service provider's assessment of his or her requirements and a person who is determined under this Act to be eligible for a community service has the right to participate in the service provider's development of the person's plan of service, the service provider's review of the person's requirements and the service provider's evaluation and revision of the person's plan of service.

**Control and Consent.** A person has the right to refuse consent to provision of any community service.

**Freedom to Speak Out.** A person receiving community service has a right to raise concerns or recommend changes in connection with the community service provided to him or her in connection with policies and decisions that affect his or her interests to the service provider, government officials or any other person without fear of interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

**Knowing the Rules.** A person receiving community service has the right to be informed of the laws, rules and policies affecting the operation of the service provider and to be informed in writing of the procedures for initiating complaints about the service provider.

**Confidentiality.** A person receiving community service has the right to have his or her records kept confidential in accordance with the law.

# Resources

**Eastholme Community Support Services**  
 (Congregate Dining/Meals on Wheels/Volunteer Transportation) epscssp@ontera.net  
 705.724.6028 1.888.521.0000 www.eastholme.ca

**West Parry Sound District Community Support Services** (Congregate Dining/Exercise/Meals on Wheels/Volunteer Transportation) 705.746.5602 linda@csswest.ca www.parrysoundsupportservices.ca

**NE Home & Community Care**  
 705.746.4602 1.800.440.6762  
 www.healthcareathome.ca/northeast

**North Simcoe Muskoka Home & Community Care**  
 705.721.8010 Ext. 6100 Toll Free: 1.888.721.2222  
 Ex 6100 www.healthcareathome.ca/nsm

**Alzheimer Society of Muskoka**  
 Serving Muskoka & Parry Sound  
 1.800.605.2075  
 www.alzheimermuskoka.ca

**Port Loring** (Meals on Wheels & Volunteer Transport) 705.757.2530

## Muskoka/Parry Sound Mental Health Services

www.mpscmhs.on.ca  
 Bracebridge: 705.645.2262 Fax 705.645.7473  
 Huntsville: 705.789.8891 Fax:705.789.3002  
 Parry Sound: 705.746.4264; Fax:705.746.1537 Toll Free:1.866.829.7049

### Crisis Lines:

Muskoka and area: 1.888.893.8333  
 Parry Sound and area, incl. Sundridge:  
 1.800.461.5424

**Ontario Renovates**, District of Muskoka – Assistance for Accessibility Modifications 1.800.461.4210

**Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit** – flu clinics/health information 1.877.721.7520

**Walk in Clinic** Bracebridge Medical Ctr.  
 705.646.7634

**Scams and Frauds** – Crime Stoppers –  
 1.800.222.8477

**Senior’s Programs & Services Muskoka**  
 705.645.2100 ext.199

**McConnell Foundation Muskoka** – Financial Assistance for eye glasses/assistive devices/dentures/dental 705.645.2412

**Muskoka Senior’s** (Meals on Wheels, Transportation (Huntsville and area), Congregate dining)  
 705.789.6676

**Red Cross** - Transportation (South Muskoka) 705.721.3313 ext. 5602

**Elder Abuse** – Senior’s Safety Line – call if you are being mistreated, bullied or neglected 1.888.299.1011

**Assistive Device Exchange A.D.E.** – Data base of devices for sale or free  
 www.Assistivedeviceexchange.com



# THE FRIENDS

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## FRIENDLY FEEDBACK

Please fill out the following and return it to the address below

- I would like to receive a copy of The Friends' newsletter.  
- annual subscription fee \$7
- I would like to receive more information about the Friends' programs.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer.
- I would like to make a contribution in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
to support the ongoing work of The Friends.
- I would like to make a donation to the Muskoka Building project.

You can now donate online. Click on the Canada Helps logo on our website [www.thefriends.on.ca](http://www.thefriends.on.ca)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Return to:  
The Friends • 27 Forest St • Parry Sound  
Ontario • P2A 2R2 • 1.888.746.5102  
[info@thefriends.on.ca](mailto:info@thefriends.on.ca)