

THE FRIENDS

DIGNITY • TEAMWORK • INNOVATION • EMPOWERMENT



Friendly Focus

Winter 2021

When Outside is the Brightest Side

It's that time of the year! We're posting our new Advent Calendars and marking down the remaining weeks and days of 2021 as we hurtle towards another Christmas. Thank goodness, the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be over and families are planning to get together for face-to-face celebrations this year. No Debbie Downer here, but, try to remember to stick to the precautions we've all been using to stay safe – distance, fresh air when possible, masks and an assurance that family and guests are either vaccinated or have a recent negative COVID-19 test result. This is especially important if members of your family circle

are immune-compromised.

November has been delightfully mild although forecasts for a snowy winter have been creeping into the weather forecasts. If you've been coasting on summer tires while the weather holds, remember to get your snow tires on. You don't want to spend time digging yourself out of a snow bank when you could be drinking an egg nog with a friend.

Shopping may be a challenge given supply issues, so, order early or be sure your plans are flexible. Sometimes shortages simply mean we have to get

creative; bake gifts, make things, offer gift certificates promising a service or arranging for a subscription to a favourite magazine.

Reach out and touch someone – send a letter or a card through snail mail, create a schedule of regular phone calls to family and friends, use technology to stay in touch, Facetime, text or whatever works best.

The winter edition of The Friendly Focus includes, stories of interesting customs and Holiday ideas from around the world. Please enjoy!

Wishing our readers a happy and healthy holiday brim full of friends, cheer and good wishes.



www.thefriends.on.ca

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



Staff's Crazy Theme Days! Disney characters, the 60/s, crazy socks and hair days, and soon the elves on the tree ladder and onto their seasonal shenanigans. Who knows where they might show up this Christmas!



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

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

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From the CEO's Desk

As I look at the calendar, I find myself thinking about the tumultuous year we've all been through. It has not been an easy year for staff or the clients we serve. Like many of my colleagues across Parry Sound and Muskoka, the agency has struggled with staff shortages and maintaining important services to vulnerable clients. I am so very proud that, despite all of the challenges flung at us, that we have continued to deliver services thanks to the dedication of staff at all levels. As day cares re-open and vaccination rates reach a high level, we can all start to breathe a little easier. This doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels, however, it is a reason to celebrate as we look forward to 2022.

Recently, as part of a strategic

planning exercise being undertaken by the Board of Directors, a questionnaire was circulated to staff asking them for their feedback on a number of questions, one of which was "what do you think the organization does best/is known for?".

Almost overwhelmingly, feedback highlighted the excellence of service provided by the agency and its staff. Thank you to each and every person who was responsible for maintaining service levels through such a difficult time.

Our senior Management Team has also gone through a transition with the retirement of long time staff member and Manager, Kelly Sawyer. Kelly has been with *The Friends* for over 20 years and has made a significant contribution to the success of the organization.

Although she has stepped back from her role in management, she continues to serve on an occasional

basis as a frontline worker. "I like to work directly with people." She has often said, "they're what we're here for." A very big thank you to Kelly for her years of service and for her continued dedication to vulnerable people we serve.

A welcome to Theresa Michell another long time *Friends* staff member who has stepped in to fill Kelly's rather large shoes. Theresa is one of the most dedicated people I know. She will bring her own brand of caring and service to this important position with the agency. I am delighted that our group programs are re-opening and am looking forward to the laughter and good times that always seem to accompany them.

Wishing all of our staff and clients a lovely, festive holiday! Stay safe and enjoy the season.

Marliese Gause,
CEO

Making a Difference

Looking for a way to make a difference? Support *The Friends* with a donation – big or small, we are grateful for all.

Whether your dollar helps a senior attend a program or supports an initiative to serve your community, your contribution is deeply meaningful.

You can donate online at the bottom of our website www.the-friends.on.ca or mail to The Friends, 27 Forest Street, Parry Sound P2A 2R2. You can simply

detach the back page of the newsletter and send with your donation.

Community support and donations/bequests were responsible for fully accessible housing/supports created at Forest Hill Apartments and for the 141 Sharpe Street W site in Gravenhurst. So, yes, your donation makes a difference.

Friendly Focus fans are some of our most generous donors and I would like to take this opportuni-

ty to thank them collectively for their ongoing support. *The Friends* does not hire or use professional fundraisers, we have no fancy advertising or PR campaigns to raise money. Nevertheless, we are proud of the service we provide to vulnerable people across the Districts of East and West Parry Sound and Muskoka. Your contribution is very meaningful to us and to the people we serve. Thank You! Wishing all of our donors, clients, staff and subscribers a very merry, festive holiday and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

What the Agency Does Best!

With Strategic Planning just around the corner, staff were asked to provide some feedback to the following questions (staff responses in italics)

What does *The Friends* organization do better than any other?

- *Consider the health and safety of staff and clients*
- *Training staff to work in multiple programs, a unique organization with many programs that help people stay in their homes*
- *Support those in need, no matter what age or difficulty*
- *Regular time for services –caregivers and clients like the fact that they do not waste a day waiting for services to arrive. They know Friends' staff will be there at the agreed upon time.*
- *Flexibility of the organization – willingness to accommodate when circumstances change*
- *Compassionate, easy to talk to throughout the organization*
- *Versatility, flexibility*
- *We do an excellent job of instilling our core values with supervisors and front line staff to keep propelling them on their desired training/employment outcomes. We ask for and consider*



suggestions from staff. Celebrate wins

What are the biggest 2 challenges facing the organization?

- *Staff shortage*
- *Wage rate*
- *Staffing shortages/recruitment challenges*
- *Staffing and thus growth to address wait lists and expand programs*

If the agency was the sudden recipient of five million dollars, what should it do with the money?

- *Higher wages and benefits for staff, including mileage \$\$*
- *Deliver more services in-home for caregivers*
- *Return of/expansion of Life skills programs for vulnerable individuals*

- *More staff social events*
- *People serving people being the org's business, staffing would be priority. Seasoned, skilled, supported, fairly and well compensated staff is, and will always be the org's most valuable asset. Ideally,*

the org would be a leader in good compensation packages and could thus raise the standard at which community support is compensated across the region. Would also draw new skilled applicants to address our staffing challenges and thus the wait list.

Building a Support System that will Nurture You

If you care for a partner, a parent, someone in your family or a friend or neighbour, you are familiar with the stresses that come with the territory. Here are some suggestions from other caregivers with respect to maintaining a healthy life balance.

- Get help early, such as assistance with caregiving duties, join a support group, involve your family. You will learn that you are not alone.
- Access all the information you can about the health Condition and educate yourself as much as possible about its progression.
- Recognize the hidden grief component of your anger, anxiety, guilt and depression.
- Recognize the signs of denial: for example, you insist "I don't need help", "nothing's wrong" "everything is OK" "The doctor has made a mistake" "She/he's fine today" "No we don't need Power of Attorney" or "Placement in a nursing home is not an option."
- Learn to let go from the start and share your caregiving with others. Your loved one can survive a few hours without you.
- Forgive yourself for not being perfect: caring



for someone with a long term illness means your world has been turned upside down and you will probably have to compromise some of your personal standards of housekeeping, etc.

- Take care of yourself, both physically and emotionally. Have regular check ups. Get as much rest and respite as possible. Eat well balanced meals. Take a daily walk.
- Don't be afraid to acknowledge your feelings of anger, anxiety, helplessness, guilt and despair.
 - Hang on to your sense of self. Keep up your regular activities as much as possible to help preserve your identity.
 - Take one day at a time, but don't neglect to plan for the future. Good planning can include preparing a Power of Attorney, accessing community care early, and looking

into long term care homes.

- Be kind to yourself. Remember you are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal circumstances. Acknowledge your right to feel emotionally off balance.
- Learn how to communicate differently with your loved one if cognitive and language abilities decline. Good communication strategies help avoid frustration.
- Accept yourself for being human. Give yourself a pat on the back for doing the best you can.

Once Upon a Time...

...people believed that:

- It was good luck for the first person up on Christmas Day to open a door and "let Christmas in"
- Bells placed near a baby or

small child would keep evil spirits away

- The number of days between the first snowfall and Christmas told how many snowfalls would come before spring
- A cricket chirping at Christmas brought good luck

- Sparks from a yule log would create warmth in human souls
- A candle left burning all night in an empty room on Christmas eve would bring light, warmth and plenty all year



NEW YEAR'S SUPERSTITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Have some fun...

KISSING AT MIDNIGHT

This one originates from English and German folklore. The superstition claims that a smooch at midnight strengthens a budding romance and sets it up for success. If someone doesn't get kissed, it could foreshadow a loveless future in the romance department.

READING AN ONION

Curious about the weather? Romanians are known for reading the skins of onions to determine the upcoming year's forecast. All they do is peel and salt onions on New Year's Eve, so they're ready to analyze by midnight.

CHOOSING YOUR UNDERWEAR WISELY

On New Year's Day, the color of your underwear speaks volumes. (In Bolivia, at least.) For example, red undies are a symbol of love, while the color gold is thought to bring wealth. Cha-ching!

EATING LONG NOODLES

Some cultures—including China, Japan and other Asian countries—incorporate long noodles into their New Year's Day dishes. The shape is supposed to signify longevity, so don't even think about breaking the noodles before putting them in the pan.

BREAKING DISHWARE

In Denmark, locals break plates, glasses and other dishware on the front porches of their closest friends and family members. Basically, if someone's doorstep is a disaster on New Year's Day, they must be doing something right.

BURNING PHOTOS

In Ecuador, it's common for folks to burn photos before midnight. That way, they can rid themselves of memories they don't want to bring into the New Year.

WEARING WHITE

It's tradition for Brazilians to wear white on New Year's Day. Not only does the color ward off evil spirits, but it also sets the person up for success.



Fill Your Holidays with Fun

As December looms on the horizon, traditional holidays are the ones people build their celebrations around, most of which involve friends and family.

For seniors living alone or at a distance from loved ones, the glow of Christmas can become more subdued over time, especially given the past two years of quarantine-like circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The

good news is that December is chock full of a myriad of lovely ways to celebrate the season, for example, the Audubon Society sponsors its annual Christmas Bird Count week during the week of December 14th. You can find them at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>. Sign up, read the information, and join in the fun. If you don't want to join, you can still sit in your easy chair and count the numbers and kinds of birds visiting your feeders. Do you have more birds visiting than last year? Less? More varieties? Fewer varieties?

The entire world celebrates World Pear Day on the last Saturday in December. Try picking one of every type of pear you can find in your local grocery store and do a taste test. Try a new recipe using pears or simply enjoy a beautiful, ripe pear to celebrate. Sing "A Partridge in a Pear Tree" while you do the dishes or arrange to send a box full of beautiful pears to friends or family.



This one's easy. December 4th is National Cookie day. Bake your favourite cookies and share with friends, neighbours or colleagues. Find new recipes, be adventurous and experiment with a brand new recipe.

Many Europeans celebrate St. Nicholas Day on December 6th. Traditionally, shoes are left by the door awaiting treats, while in other communities St. Nicholas pays a visit to check whether the boys and girls he visits are written up in his

"golden book" ie GOOD BOYS AND GIRLS or in his assistant Peter's "black book" ie naughty boys and girls. The good get gifts left in their shoes, the bad get a lump of coal and a twig. You can celebrate just by having something special for breakfast on December 6th. Light a candle and munch on some gingerbread in memory of good Saint Nick.

December 10th celebrates Worldwide Candle lighting, which is the largest mass candle lighting on the globe. This is the day to light your candles and let them shine, a reminder that after the darkest days, light returns. Candles are a symbol of hope around the world.

For something fun find your ugliest Christmas sweater and celebrate National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day on December 16th. In fact, why not invite some friends, neighbours or family to join you for a hot chocolate and some cookies? Ask them to wear an ugly Christmas Sweater and hand out a prize for the best one.

NEW YEAR AROUND THE WORLD

Customs around the world vary for bringing in the New Year. Here are some examples of how this occasion is celebrated throughout the world.

Australia – One of the first countries to celebrate each year do so with a massive display of fireworks in every major city. Sydney Harbour Bridge usually has a fireworks and light show that attracts around two million people annually.

Ecuador – Has a unique tradition of making effigies that represent people or events of the past year, usually negative. Made with old clothes, straw and papier mache masks that are lit on fire at the stroke of midnight to burn away the past year. Wonder how they'll represent COVID-19?

Europe – Firework displays are popular throughout the

continent. It is also the occasion to make bonfires of discarded Christmas trees

Japan – New Year's eve day is a preparation day to greet the New Year's god, Toshigami. People clean their homes and prepare special food. At midnight Buddhist temples ring their bells one hundred and eight times.

Mexico – In Mexico as well as in Spain, it is traditional to eat twelve grapes, one for each chime of the clock at midnight while making a wish with each one. In Mexico it is also a tradition to wear red underwear if you wish to find

love in the new year and yellow if you want money.

Russia and Ukraine – In these countries New Year is often celebrated in the way Christmas is in the West.

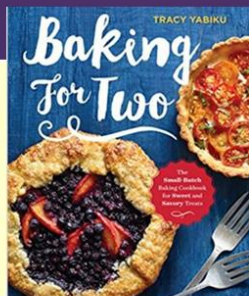
Spruce trees are generally put up in homes, families gather for a large feast, toasting for a happy New Year, and to reflect on the year that was. Gifts are given to family, friends and informal acquaintances.



When It's Just You

Do you live alone? With a spouse in a very small household? Dread baking ginormous recipes that you and/or your loved one will be eating forever?

Find it difficult to scale down some favourite recipes? Well, here's the answer. A few years ago I discovered "America's Test Kitchen, Baking for Two". It's part of a series of cookbooks, provides all kinds of helpful pointers and best of all provides a variety of scaled back recipes that make baking a pleasure. You can bake a mini pie, scones for two, loaf cakes or even a small



loaf of bread. The recipes allow you to bake a diverse selection of goodies without worrying about baked goods going stale or filling up your freezer with leftovers. We all love to bake for family and friends but, when it's just you....this book is a true gem.

Fun Facts

According to a 1995 survey, seven out of ten British dogs get Christmas gifts from their masters.

Electric Christmas tree lights were first used in 1895. The idea for using electric Christmas tree lights came from an American, Ralph E. Morris. The new lights proved safer than traditional candles.

In Britain, eating mince pies at Christmas dates back to the 16th century. It is still believed that to eat a mince pie on each of the twelve days of Christmas will bring twelve happy months in the year to come.

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does! ~ William James

Easing the Path of All

After a year of upset, isolation and division, resolve to make 2022 the Year of Kindness. Be gentle with others and leave judgemental attitudes at the door. Volunteer your skills. Every sector of the economy has been struggling to maintain staffing levels.

Offering your skills on a volunteer basis for a short-term assignment or to fill in on an emergency basis, might make all the difference in the world.

Make a conscious effort to make a difference, whether it's a donation, a smile or a helping hand, you can ease someone's path today.

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/Meals on Wheels/Volunteer Transportation) 705.746.5602 1.800.883.0058 belvedereheights.com aholloway@belvedereheights.com

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

1.800.605.2075

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



ARE YOU READY FOR SNOW?

A brief message from the Public Health Agency of Canada

Please remember to prepare for the winter weather. Check and maintain personal assistive devices including walkers, canes, scooters and wheelchairs to ensure you are ready for the winter weather.

Protect yourself. Anyone can fall! You can prevent falls by making the needed adjustments to your home and Life-style. Make sure you eat well, stay fit and use whatever devices will facilitate your daily life while keeping you safe. Your independence and well being are at stake.



Bill of Rights

Courtesy, Respect and Freedom from Abuse. A person receiving community service has a 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.

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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 Gravenhurst Building project.

You can now donate online. Click on the Canada Helps logo on our website
www.thefriends.on.ca

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Email: _____

Return to:

The Friends • 27 Forest St • Parry Sound

Ontario • P2A 2R2 • 1.888.746.5102

info@thefriends.on.ca