

Appendix B

Brant & Brantford Local Housing Corporation

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – January – June 2020

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic several new programs and community partnerships were created to respond to the needs of our communities. Listed below are initiatives; some were temporary support programs and others are ongoing:

- ***New/Completed – Due to COVID-19 – Outreach Calls Project & Senior Housing Project*** - To support social housing tenants in the critical early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic an Outreach Team was established made up of 3 staff from Parks and Recreation redeployed to Health and Human Services and 1 staff from Corporate Initiatives and Community Strategies.

The Outreach project was established to connect with seniors in social housing communities in order to check in on their well-being (mental health, food security, and any other needs or community connections required). This was later expanded to include the family communities who were also struggling with food security, isolation and keeping their children engaged.

Over 1,500 telephone calls were completed by the outreach team to individual tenants including multiple calls to seniors with more complex needs. Some tenants did not have phones, updated phone numbers, or were fearful of answering an unknown number, so in-person contact was made by property management and/or on-site recreation staff to ensure the tenant was coping well and provide any necessary referrals.

Additionally, another team from Parks and Recreation assisted as on-site greeters at senior residences (LHC properties: Brant and Lorne Towers; Albion Towers; Trillium Way and Walkers Green and Affordable Housing: John Noble Apartments). The greeters connected with visitors and asked COVID19 pre-screening health questions which helped to remind tenants and visitors about the importance of not visiting if they were experiencing any symptoms, or had been exposed to anyone with symptoms or exposed to someone who tested positive or had recently returned to Canada (within the last 14 days).

Both redeployed teams worked with the Housing Department to develop scripts, a call log, and a process to respond to tenant concerns. All staff were trained by Living Works which included suicide prevention training. Tenants in senior's social housing sites were prioritized.

Based on feedback from social housing tenants, the outreach teams, and housing staff the following senior support programs were developed/implemented:

- ***New/Completed - Seniors Emergency Food Boxes*** – 160 Residents were identified at Lorne, Brant and Albion Towers through the outreach calls to be in need of emergency non-perishable food boxes.

- **New - Emergency Food Program** - The Brantford Food Bank and the Salvation Army in Paris now coordinate the distribution of emergency food hampers during COVID-19. Tenants can call these two organizations directly to receive food which can be delivered to them.
- **New - Healthy Aging Without Walls** - Many senior tenants shared feelings of loneliness and isolation during COVID-19. City staff were able to apply to bring the Seniors Centre Without Walls provincial program to the City of Brantford so adults 50+ can call in and participate in fun, educational programs with their friends and neighbours.
- **New - Wellness Chats** - In response to the mental health concerns raised by seniors, the City partnered with the Family Counselling Centre of Brant to offer free, group support sessions to adults 50+ during COVID-19.
- **New - Information Package for Seniors**- Every tenant in seniors social housing received a package that included information about (1) accessing groceries, (2) completing taxes, (3) health and mental health resources, (4) online and phone-based social activities, (5) physical distancing measures, (6) Rogers' Connected for Success Program, and (7) instructions for homemade masks (and a few snacks). Subsequently, all tenants in seniors' buildings received calendars for the Healthy Aging Without Walls program and the Wellness Chats.
- **New - Terraband Activities** - Many seniors wanted more information about easy exercises they could do from home. As a result, Terraband equipment was procured for all tenants in the senior's buildings and Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre staff developed a print out of safe, easy exercises for seniors.
- **New - Buzz Me** -Many seniors were interested in receiving weekly calls from the Outreach Team to check in on their health and continue their friendly conversations. City staff worked with the community organization SKIP to launch "Buzz Me" so seniors would continue to have an opportunity to connect with trained volunteers to build meaningful relationships over the phone and receive information about the resources available for seniors.

Some existing community programs at LHC buildings were suspended and/or repurposed to allow for the community partnership programs to continue with enhancements to address COVID-19 restrictions.

- **Ongoing - Wesley Live Well Program** is onsite at Winston Court and Marlene Avenue (not an LHC property) to offer intensive case management services 7 days per week. Due to COVID-19 program services have been modified. Wesley continues to offer some recreational, and life skills training as well as a variety of programming for residents on a one on one basis in addition to intensive case management to improve quality of life and prevent homelessness.

- **Ongoing – Food Share** 28 people enjoyed the monthly Food Share program during the month of June at Winston Court as Wesley program staff assisted with monthly food boxes. Approximately 720 copies of the Winston Court Dispatch Newsletter and activities schedules were distributed to Winston Court tenants during the month of June.
- **Ongoing – Income Tax Clinics** Housing staff assisted the Seniors Resource Centre with facilitated 2 income tax clinics throughout the LHC senior and adult portfolio as well as Slovak Village. Due to COVID-19 the Seniors Resource Centre suspended services during the month of March but was able to modify services and re-open in April 2020. Over 170 returns have been filed thus far for tenants in 2020.
- **Ongoing - Brant County Health Unit (BCHU) partners with the Adult Recreation Therapy Center and Alzheimer Society** to offer Healthy Living programming at senior social housing sites. These programs are funded by the Cities Healthy Aging Budget and addresses aspects of the Cities Age-friendly plan buildings with a focus on health promotion and chronic disease prevention.
- **Ongoing – Due to COVID-19 the Community Paramedicine program** will be modified to enhance its approach to client education. A new group education system has been determined to be more beneficial and new partnerships are currently being formulated which will be able to provide group education on a variety of topics including health, nutrition, safety, fall awareness etc.
- **Ongoing - The SPCA** is a very active partner in our communities offering, food pantries at various sites, rabies and microchip clinics, and ongoing supports to all sites when a client is in need of pet food, supplies or education on proper pet care. Due to COVID-19 the SPCA has provided social housing sites (Brant & Lorne Towers) with emergency pet food and litter packages which continue to be distributed to tenants as needed.
- **Ongoing - Fire safety and tenant fire safety awareness** are critical issues for Brantford Housing, and ongoing partnerships with the Brantford and County of Brant Fire Departments helps support life safety throughout the LHC portfolio.
 - **New – Riverside Fire Safety Week (May 11-15th)** – Due to COVID-19, Housing Services, Brantford Fire Department, Brantford Police Services and Brantford Family and Child Services(BFACS) got creative to encourage tenants to self-test their smoke/carbon monoxide alarms and report any issues so the alarms could be repaired or replaced as needed. Children were encouraged to draw “Thank your First Responders” signs and display them while first responders drove around the community and made some noise! BFACS and Housing Services provided Fire Safety Activities for families to decorate windows and encourage participation.
- **Ongoing - At family LHC** sites our community partners continue to work with staff to plan social-recreational opportunities, including spring garden planting days and back-to-school carnivals. Due to COVID-19 these programs have been modified to follow public health and safety guidelines. These opportunities for inclusion and community outreach are being offered throughout 2020.

- **Completed –Spring Planting Days** – May 29th to June 12th at LHC 9 locations tenants were encouraged grow their own food! Vegetable plants were donated by the Grand River Community Health Centre and Community Gardens. Housing Services organized contests in the family communities to encourage beautification and grounds maintenance. Housing Services purchased bags of soil and flats of flowers from Parks and Recreation.
- **New/Completed – Healthy Kids Play At Home Packs** – On June 26th 95 backpacks were delivered to families with children (0-14 years of age) at Branlyn Meadows, Slovak Village & Daleview Gardens. Backpacks were filled with board games, a Frisbee, soccer ball, kite, sidewalk chalk, a bag of baby potatoes, a deck of playing cards and a summer reading club 2020 activity booklet. Backpacks were provided through the Healthy Kids Program to assist with connecting to services during the summer months.
- **Ongoing - Support for individual tenants** (seniors and vulnerable adults) continues to be provided through partnerships with: Behavioural Supports Ontario, the Alzheimer's Society, the Salvation Army, Integrated Crisis Services (St. Leonard's), the Local Health Integration Network, and the Brantford Food Bank.
- **Ongoing - Family and Children's Services (FACS)** continue to provide services and programs at three Resource Centres located in the Local Housing Corporation (LHC) family sites known as Northland Gardens, Eastdale Gardens and Riverside Gardens. In addition to their own programming, FACS facilitates and hosts other community partners from the health, child/family, and social services sectors. A monthly calendar of activities is produced for the residents in each community. The EarlyON program is provided in the resource centres. Due to COVID-19 some services have been modified but are on-going.
- **Annual – Ongoing planning - The annual Back to School Carnivals** will be held this year on August 25th – 27th with modifications due to COVID-19 (i.e. unit drop offs; by-appointment only haircuts). The Carnivals will be held at 8 sites which will include Riverside Gardens, Slovak Village, Eastdale Gardens, Northland Gardens, Branlynn Meadows/Victoria Park Homes, Paris, Pearl Street, & Daleview Gardens. Children will have an opportunity to get a back pack with school supplies, clothes, food and a haircut. Agencies responsible for putting together this year's event include Jacob's Well Ministries Inc, City of Brantford Housing Services, Brant Family & Children Services, JC Homes/St. Basil's, County of Brant, Brant Community Church, Church of the Nazarene, Freedom Christian Community, Hope CRC, Generations, Grace Gospel – Paris, Paris Presbyterian, GVCC, Shallow Creek Academy of Hair, & Salvation Army.