

The SOCIETY Scoop

Greetings from our President and CEO, Abby Katz Starr

At the halfway mark in our fiscal year, I am pleased to share that several key developments in UHS's long-term strategies are underway. We are in the first stages of transitioning to a new care model, while leveraging our academic partnerships and utilizing new technology to enhance the quality of life on our campus.

Moving towards a new model of care. As a leader in the seniors' services industry, we are laying the groundwork to meet the current and projected demand for dementia-friendly services. We asked our partners at Seneca Polytechnic to collaborate on which models of dementia-care were the best fit for the organization. The research concluded that DementiAbility was the most effective dementia-friendly model of care for our community's needs. Currently we are in the initial stages of investing in staff training with more developments to come.

Improving communication to residents and families. Embracing new technology and its opportunities is another priority for us this year. In the near future UHS will launch Engage+, a digital portal that will provide families with instant access to general information about their loved one's care. Our goal is to give peace of mind to families and streamline the information-sharing process.



Virtual reality as therapeutic intervention.

We are also leveraging our academic partnerships to bring not just new approaches but new tools onto our campus. Our relationship with York University has created an opportunity to access the cutting edge VRx Virtual Reality program for residents and clients. A UHS program for virtual reality therapeutic interventions is currently in development.

By embracing academic partnerships, our organization has been able to explore new care models and technologies to better serve seniors and support our staff. I hope you enjoy this glimpse into UHS' plans to serve our community this fall and beyond. I look forward to sharing more details with you soon.



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Embracing Virtual Reality As A Therapy Tool

Unionville Home Society has partnered with York University and the Connected Minds program to provide a Virtual Reality Therapeutic program to Union Villa residents this coming January.

This past August, the York U team visited our longterm care home to train our Recreation team to use virtual reality headsets. Virtual Reality presents a unique opportunity for therapeutic experiences because of its range of multi-sensory experiences, including 360-degree videos that fully immerse the user in different scenes, easy and enjoyable games, and interactive sessions. Caregivers can even participate for a joint experience with their loved one.

Oriana Schwartzentruber, one of UHS' Social Workers and the lead on this project, says, "I am thrilled that we are prioritizing research partnerships that deliver immediate and concrete benefits to the Union Villa community. The emphasis supporting both caregivers and residents highlights the commitment to viewing staff, families, and residents as essential parts of high quality senior's care."

Through this partnership, UHS is working with Lora Appel, who is leading the project "VR&R: Providing Respite to Caregivers by Managing Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms in People with Dementia Using Immersive VR-Therapy." Lora and her team are dedicated to conducting research with tangible results, ensuring that the entire Union Villa community can fully benefit from the value and impact of the program.

Lora and her team visited Union Villa to meet with Recreation staff to demonstrate the possibilities of the VR program. These demos introduced staff to virtual reality, the research process and how this new technology can be used as a therapeutic tool.

"During the VR session, I experienced sky diving in Dubai, sightseeing on top of a volcano, and doing a 360-degree painting," says Elton Sze, one of Union Villa's Recreation Therapists. "I like that I can use VR to show a resident a location that reminds them of a past memory, like a forest, a garden full of colorful flowers or a busy street in New York City. Many of our residents have barriers to mobility and travel, but thanks to the program, once they put on the headset they can go to a new place instantly."

Thank you to Lora's Team, York university and the Connected Minds program for partnering with UHS to reate new opportunities for therapeutic experiences for residents and their caregivers.



Coming Soon

Information At Your Fingertips

In response to feedback from our Resident Family Satisfaction Survey, Unionville Home Society is in the process of engaging Engage+, a digital portal that will allow families and residents to have resident wellness updates at their fingertips for the first time.

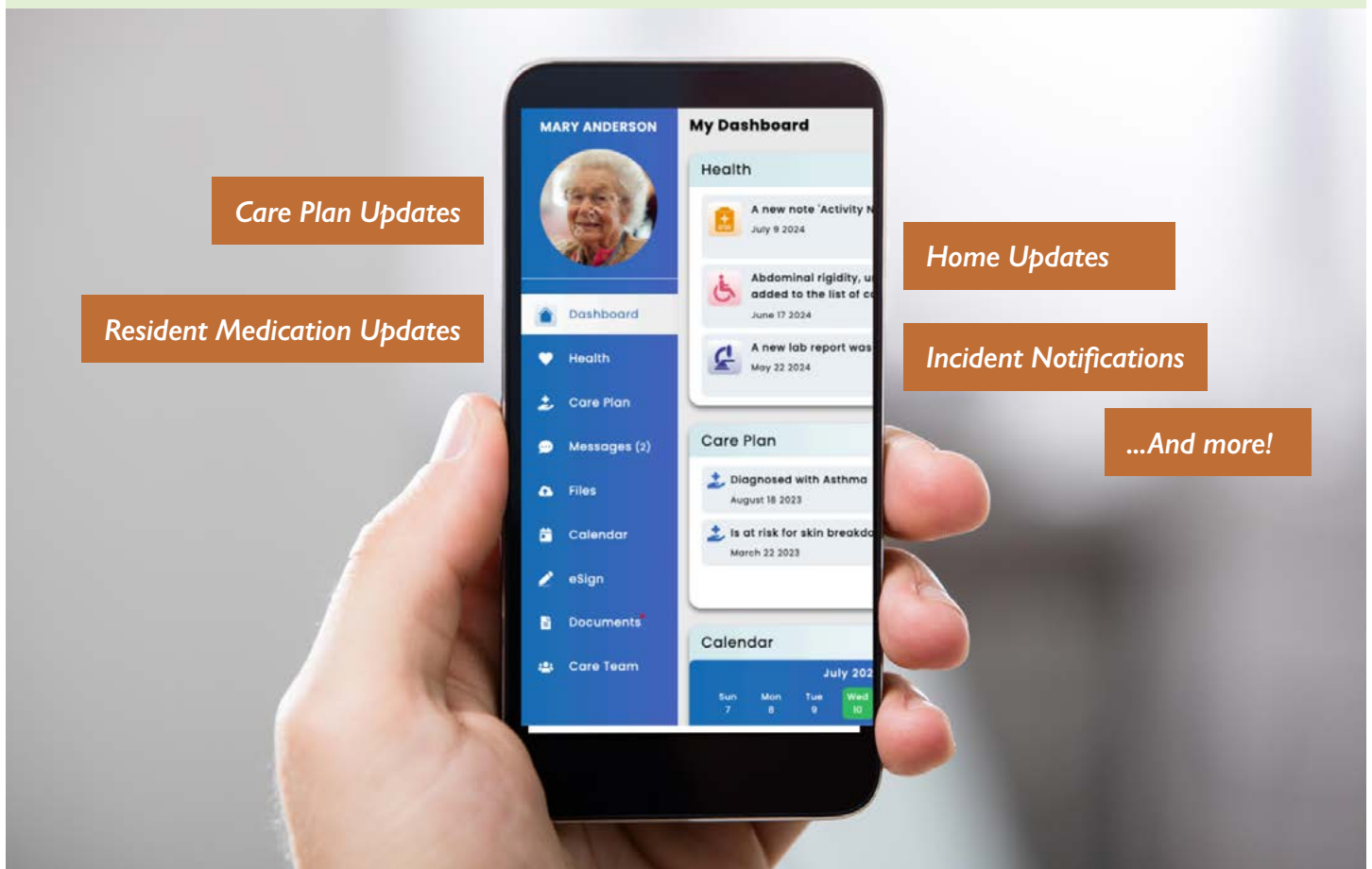
Engage+ will provide easy access to general updates regarding resident care, with the goal to connect families to their loved ones while improving efficiency and time management for everyone involved in resident care.

The information included in the portal will be safe, secure and integrated with the residents' existing electronic health record in cloud software PointClickCare (PCC). PointClickCare is a Canadian company that was one of the first to introduce cloud information and has been the leading provider of secure electronic health records in North America for over 25 years.

They have partnered with Evoke Health to link Engage+ to the existing system of PCC, helping to ensure a low administrative burden on staff.

Engage+ was first adopted earlier this year in Canada by Meighen Health Centre, which is run by the Canadian Salvation Army, with reports of many more long-term care homes interested in the service.

UHS looks forward to providing residents and families with an updated information experience. Expect more details in the coming months.



Going Beyond Traditional Models Of Dementia Care

Unionville Home Society has witnessed the changes in those people coming into our long-term care home. Individuals are coming in much older, on average in their mid to late 80s, with more complex care and medical needs, and typically with some level of cognitive impairment. As our goal is to serve our residents with the best most effective care, we are phasing in a new care model over the next two years known as DementiAbility.



BSO Nurse Kaitlyn getting help folding towels from resident Cheryl

DementiAbility’s goal is to expose the abilities – and the potential – of each person living with dementia.

Through innovative evidence-based, person-centred education, resources, tips, tools and approaches to dementia care, professionals and other care partners will know how to support the whole person so that each person will live each day with meaning, purpose, high self-esteem, independence, love, a sense of belonging and joy. It prioritizes a home-like environment and provides opportunities for residents to engage with meaningful routines and hobbies that come with daily living. Domestic tasks like matching socks in the laundry, watering the garden, putting away dishes, or unpacking groceries, familiar tasks that provide a sense of purpose, normalcy and ownership over one’s daily routine.

Kaitlyn Collins, UHS’ Behavioral Support Nurse Ontario (BSO) nurse says, “While these tasks may seem small, you are supporting residents by giving them the opportunity to be an active participant in their lives in the Home. A quote that always stuck with me is ‘everything you do for

me you take from me’. As a BSO, the biggest benefit of DementiAbility is the sense of purpose, belonging, and community we can give back to the residents.”

The model was chosen through our research partnership with Seneca Polytechnic. A literature review of available studies that looked at emotion-based care models for person’s with cognitive impairment concluded that DementiAbility showed a decrease in ‘responsive’ behaviours, an increase in resident and family satisfaction, and an increase in staff confidence and satisfaction. In April, Kaitlyn and Oriana Schwartzentruber, one of the Home’s Social Workers, delivered a presentation at AdvantAge Ontario’s conference sharing these results with our sister non-profit Homes.

DementiAbility places a strong emphasis on “preparing” the environment for residents with dementia. Says Kaitlyn, “Knowing what residents want and providing avenues to provide it to them will reduce instances of reactive behavior and increase the happiness of both residents and staff.”

Responsive behaviours by persons with dementia are a reaction to the brain changes that are associated with the disease. They include displays of hitting kicking, yelling insults, humming, clicking, pacing or exit-seeking and may well not be typical of how the person was before the cognitive changes. These behaviours are difficult to understand and manage. It takes training and education and that is what we are committing to undertake so we can best meet the needs of our residents.

Over the next two years, Unionville Home Society will train all staff in the DementiaAbility model. Some staff have already completed the training. Families play a significant role by providing a detailed history of their loved one's life before long-term care so staff can create those environments and activities that are familiar, and comforting for the resident. This is a big change, and a large investment, but for the new model to work, every aspect of the home needs of be on the same page.

Direct care staff are already familiar with these concepts due to last year's Gentle Persuasion Approach (GPA) training. GPA focused on the importance of recognizing the person behind the diagnosis, and embracing the mindset of "we work in their home, they don't live where we work".

DementiaAbility is directly aligned with GPA's person-centered approach to care. The first phase of adopting the model is training, but over time, the physical environment will change to provide a more comfortable, home-like atmosphere with contrasting colour signage, unique neighbourhood designs, and activity areas recreating familiar routines.

In preparation for the undertaking, Oriana and Kaitlyn toured Grandview Lodge in Dunnville Ontario, which has a DementiaAbility neighbourhood, and reported on their impressions. "We were so impressed with the interactive spaces that they had added. They had craned in a car that could be tinkered with by residents who were mechanics, they had clothing line station that looked like the side of a house, they had gardens to water and chickens to feed. We are so excited UHS is going in this direction."

DementiaAbility is a big step forward. Stay tuned for ongoing updates on our journey to create a Home where all residents, especially those with dementia, have the supports they need to age well and live better.



Social Worker Oriana and resident Ingrid arranging flowers

My Life: A Resident Profile

Meet Jane Wilson

I was born in 1938, the only girl between two boys. I always knew I wanted to be a nurse. When I was 4 years old I wanted to play dress up as a nurse.

My father was a chemical engineer with good business sense, but his health was not good. He had many heart attack episodes before he passed and was in the hospital a lot. He died when I was 15.

After he died, my mother started working for the first time to help keep food on the table. When I finished high school, I enrolled in nursing at Toronto General Hospital. Around this time I met my future husband Jim. I was 17 and my mother didn't approve because he was Ukrainian, but I didn't care. He loved to dance, told great jokes, and was kind. I worked hard at Nursing School, staying in residence most of the week. We had specific uniforms which were inspected every morning. No crooked stocking lines!

Right after graduation in 1962 I married Jim and we honeymooned in Bermuda. I worked at the hospital for several years before the birth of my first child, Kelly. Her brother Tim followed the next year in 1966. In my third pregnancy, it was a surprise to me and everyone in the room when one baby came out and they said it wasn't done yet—there was another baby still coming! It was twins!

I realized from working with public health nurses that I would benefit from having more education. I enrolled in Ryerson as a Bachelor's of Nursing with a specialty in mental health. My kids were still young, but we got them onboard with helping Mom get her education. They were so good at helping with the household tasks so I could work part-time and school part-time.

Eventually my husband passed after a long fight with diabetes, and I moved into Union Villa as my first choice. Now that I am here, I try to greet people when they first move in and make them as comfortable as possible, I understand how difficult it can be.



I recently became the Resident Council Treasurer. It's very important to represent the voices of the residents, so I take my role on Resident Council very seriously.

I like participating in the programs here, such a big variety being offered all the time. I like it because you are interacting with people of different cognitive abilities. Lindsay, our Recreation Manager, says she has never had a more active participant in programs! I like all types of art and music, but one of my favourite things is knitting. I am really looking forward to submitting my knitting into competition at the Markham Fair again this year. I also love the music therapy program with Kayla, because I love seeing people remember their favourite songs.



Unionville Community Centre for Seniors

Providing social, recreational and cultural activities for older adults

The Unionville Community Centre for Seniors (UCCS) is a vibrant seniors active living centre (SALC) that was established in 1980 and is part of the Unionville Home Society. Currently, UCCS operates from two satellite locations in the heart of Unionville. This membership-based program is open to York Region residents aged 55 and older, with membership available at any time. The annual membership fee is \$30.00 and is renewable each year.

Our SALC offers a variety of programs, events, and services designed to enhance physical health, foster social engagement, and promote the inclusion of seniors in the broader Markham-Unionville community.

For more information about our SALC, please reach out via email at uccs@uhs.on.ca or call us at (437) 431-2831.

Join us to stay active, live well, and maintain social connections. We look forward to welcoming you!

UCCS Satellite Locations:

Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran Church
20 Union Street, Unionville

Central United Church
131 Main Street Unionville,
Unionville



Upcoming UCCS Event

SAVE THE DATE!



UNIONVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR SENIORS (UCCS)

SENIORS ACTIVE LIVING FAIR

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024 | 12:30 PM - 4:30 PM

UNIONVILLE COMMONS

4310 HIGHWAY 7, MARKHAM, ON L3R 6N2

UCCS is proud to host our fourth annual Seniors' Active Living Fair, a public education initiative with a focus on activities that reduce social isolation, support seniors' mental health, promote active and healthy living, offer social engagement opportunities, highlight partnerships, independence and learning for older adults.



Funding provided by:



UNIONVILLE HOME SOCIETY FOUNDATION PRESENTS...

THE
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2024 UNION VILLA DINNER PARTY

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2024

Angus Glen Golf Club

Cocktails...6:00 pm

Dinner...7:00 pm

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Tickets

Until Oct. 11: \$250

As of Oct. 12: \$300

Corporate tables
(8 people): \$2500

Funds raised from the 2024 Union Villa Dinner Party will contribute to advancing and expanding our dementia-friendly care model throughout Union Villa. Implementing true innovation to deliver impactful interventions that will transform the daily experiences for our residents will require a significant financial investment. Your support will help Unionville Home Society to train its staff to use innovative, person-centred approaches to meet the holistic needs of our residents living with dementia. This initiative is a top priority for Union Villa as we work to foster a life enriched with purpose and meaningful engagements.

For more information on tickets, corporate tables, sponsorship, or donating to our silent auction, please contact the Foundation at (905) 477-2822 ext 4270 or by email at dinnerparty@uhs.on.ca. We hope you can join us on November 7th!

**A portion of ticket fees may be eligible for a tax receipt, subject to CRA guidelines*

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FUNERAL HOME
& CREMATION CENTRE

Our Mission

Engaging our communities through a continuum of services that enhances the experience of aging.

Our Vision

A progressive community where older adults thrive, age well and live better.