

Making a Difference Every Day



The ongoing success of Perley Health is due to countless numbers of actions—both large and small—taken by staff, donors and volunteers. Just as staff know that a single act, such as spending extra time with a resident or changing a dressing, can improve an individual resident's wellbeing, donors and volunteers recognize that their selflessness has a tangible impact on quality of life. More than 60 years ago, Dinah Washington found success by singing *What a Difference a Day Makes*. Every day at Perley Health, we see the difference an individual act makes, so we have embraced the song for 2023.

The renovations to establish a secure unit in Rideau Veterans Residence, made possible by generous donor support, will make a difference for years to come. The changes will improve the monitoring of residents prone to wandering and help to accommodate the increasing incidence of adults living with dementia. Consultations with our psychogeriatric resource team and other unit staff inspired a series of improvements to the original design. The nursing station will now be located within the unit, for instance, and a wall will be added near the unit's entrance. This design change promises to improve the experience of Veteran residents and their families, as well as staff.

The return of several key programs also makes a difference. For example, Respite House at Perley Health (formerly known as Guest House) re-opened for overnight stays in October. Closed early on in the pandemic, Respite House is a detached 12-bedroom bungalow that accommodates adults living with mild to moderate dementia for up to 90 days each year. Another important development is the re-opening of our 34-bed convalescent-care unit. The unit provides care to people recovering from illness or surgery and who are not yet well enough to return home.

To help share what we've learned from the pandemic with other long-term care (LTC) homes, our Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ partnered in the publication of the paper *Lessons from Long-Term Care Home Partners during*

the COVID-19 Pandemic. The project involved a partnership with peopleCare Communities, an independent operator of LTC homes and retirement residences in Ontario. The paper is posted to Longwoods.com, a leading website for healthcare research, reports, reviews, commentaries and news from and for academics, scientists, clinicians, policymakers and administrators.

Ontario's LTC sector continues to experience a chronic shortage of frontline staff. The situation has gotten worse during the pandemic, as many have retired or left the LTC and hospital sectors for other opportunities. As a result, employers have had to redouble their recruitment and retention efforts. To find and attract care professionals, we take many actions such as partnering with post-secondary schools in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario. Each year, approximately 500 students enrolled in relevant programs serve short-term placements and practicums at Perley Health. We also encourage nursing schools to incorporate more content related to gerontology and frailty into their programs, and actively post on social media and job boards to raise awareness of career opportunities.

Retaining current staff is of equal importance. I'm pleased that the Board of Directors chose to make staff health and wellness the top priority in our recently updated strategic plan. This priority inspires People First—a series of initiatives that will, over time, drive much-needed culture change.

The financial support of donors makes it possible for Perley Health to increase our contribution to the community and to foster our sustainability. On behalf of the entire community, thank you for making a difference in the lives of Veterans and Seniors.

Akos Hoffer,
CEO, Perley Health