

# Rygiel News

Special COVID-19 edition

May 2020

## Message from the Executive Director

Rygiel is entrusted with the responsibility of supporting more than 200 individuals. Their safety and wellbeing and that of their loved ones and all our staff are of utmost importance. We are grateful that we do not have any reported cases in the agency to date and work hard to help maintain this status.

In all the good that is happening, I respectfully remind all of us of the importance of keeping our guard up. This is the only assurance we can give one another that all our efforts to protect the people we support and one another will continue to be successful.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and hard work of our wonderful staff. I am so grateful for all you do.

This special issue of the Rygiel News pays tribute to the creativity and inspired actions of the people who support and care for our residents, who are missing seeing their families and friends and may be confused about the disruption of their regular activities. Here is a look at some of the ways Rygiel staff are keeping the people they support healthy and occupied while practicing social distancing.



**Brenda shows her appreciation for the workers who support her.**

## New ways to remember loved ones

Special occasions and outings that residents would normally celebrate with their families had to be cancelled or postponed for safety reasons, so staff are finding other ways to mark these milestone events.

Twice a year, in November and April, Thomas normally travels with a staff member to Blenheim, near Windsor. He takes with him a bouquet of flowers and lunch to share with his grandparents, and together they remember Thomas's late mother. He was upset about not being able to make the trip this April, so staff member Janine helped Thomas create a new way to honour his mother's memory. She purchased flower seeds, soil, a watering can and brought in a table to create a workspace where she helped him plant the seeds.

The activity gave him a sense of comfort and responsibility, as it is his job to care for the plants. Once they are big enough, they will be planted in his home's garden, where they will remind Thomas of his mother as they bloom.

At another residence, team leader Kelly's own mother died recently. Kelly and her mother had shared a love of gardening, so Kelly also brought in seeds and other gardening items to the house where she works. The two men who live there helped her start the plants and also care for them.



**Thomas displays his seeds and planting materials.**

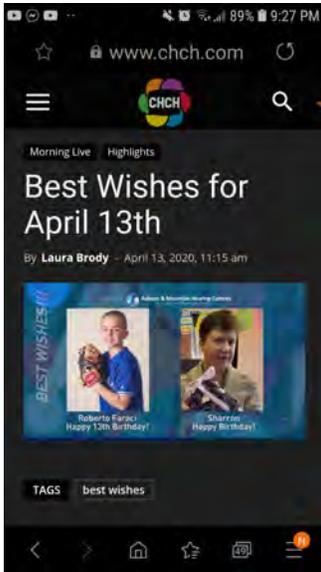
## Birthdays at a distance

Tom turned 60 in April and there were plans for a big party that included his mother and his siblings and their families, but the festivities had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. Staff at his house made him a cake and held an in-house party on his big day. They are looking forward to hosting a family event in the future.

Tom, right, celebrated his 60th birthday with his housemates and staff, far right.



For Sharron's 46th birthday, staff coached Sharron and her parents through the logistics of a Skype call, and co-ordinated a no-contact gift drop-off with her father. They also arranged to have her birthday announced on CHCH television, followed by a house party and cake.



A screenshot of Sharron's birthday announcement on CHCH TV.



Casey moved to Rygiel from her parent's home in February. She loves to sing and had taken singing lessons until her teacher moved to Australia. Before her birthday on April 17, Casey's mother had reconnected with the singing teacher and arranged for staff to download an app that enables Casey to continue her vocal lessons online with her teacher in Australia. The sessions last about 30 minutes. Casey's favourite songs include Hallelujah, True Colours, and some Beatles anthems.

## Using technology to keep in touch

Many residents (and staff) have learned to use technology to keep connected during the pandemic. Some people who belong to Friendship Clubs and other programs are participating in regular chats using Zoom to keep in touch with their friends.

Two housemates who are regular church-goers have been tuning in along with a staff member to a worship service that is broadcast online by their minister on Sunday mornings. They enjoy participating in the service and singing the hymns.

Natasha and Emily mastered the TikTok social media app and have posted positive videos of themselves dancing and singing songs about beating COVID-19.

Luigina used What's App to enable Emily A.'s mom to see and talk to her as Emily recovered from an illness.



A screen shot from Natasha and Emily's TikTok video.

# Singing the COVID blues away

Andrew Ong, helped by Tori VanDyk, normally runs the twice-weekly music program at Rygiel's Cranbook location. During the pandemic Andrew is helping to support residents in a home. However, his music students haven't forgotten him. Sharron loves to sing along to music videos and found one online of Andrew performing that he says was posted years ago. Staff say Sharron was thrilled to see his familiar face and to be able to sing along with him.



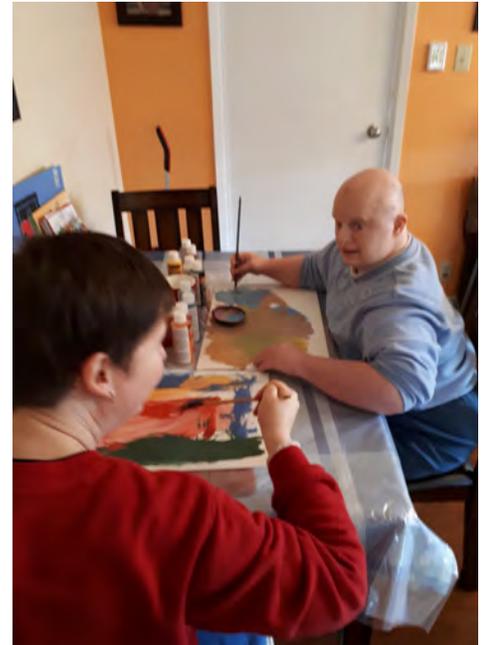
Sharron sings along to music on her computer in this video screenshot.

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## Arts & crafts, baking & beauty

Mariola normally runs Rygiel's day programs. With those closed until the end of the pandemic, she is helping to support residents at a home, and uses exercise, music and baking as healthy outlets to reduce residents' anxiety.

Mariola takes her cue for the day's activities from how the ladies are feeling. Exercise sessions include stretching and dancing to music videos. Some days a spa treatment is in order, complete with facials and cucumber eye treatments.



Putting the finishing touches on a craft.



A spa treatment, left, and completed crafts.



When the weather is warm, many residents enjoy going outside for walks with staff and their housemates. Some people collected stones and painted them to use as decorations in the garden. They've also been baking and trying out new recipes, including making cabbage rolls for the first time.

Their house has also been holding special theme days to keep things interesting. On pyjama day, everyone including staff wore pyjamas all day. On backwards day, clothes were worn inside out and ponytails faced the wrong direction. For a Springtime New Year's Eve event they made party hats and threw home-made confetti after counting down the clock.



**Celebrating Springtime New Year's Eve**



**Painting rocks to decorate the garden**

## Indoor drive-in movie

Many residents had been looking forward to going to a drive-in movie once the warmer weather arrives. Since they now won't be able to go for the foreseeable future, staff staged an indoor drive-in movie night. Using materials they had on hand, such as cardboard from medical supply boxes, they made decorations to create the appropriate atmosphere including stars and a moon to hang on the ceiling. Then they all settled in to enjoy the show!



**After turning the living room into a drive-in movie theatre, everyone enjoyed watching 'Fantasia'.**

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