Bringing the Residents’ Bill of Rights Alive with the OARC

Schlegel CLRI and the RIA team up to help launch new education program

Written by Kristian Partington

For nearly three years, the Ontario Association of Residents’ Councils (OARC) has been developing an education program called Through our Eyes: Bringing the Residents Bill of Rights Alive. At its core, the program is meant to empower long-term care residents and help them discover their voices in the operation of their homes. And it meets a real need.

The OARC was consistently hearing that current education related to the Bill of Rights wasn’t resulting in any changes. So they took up the challenge and developed Through our Eyes. The program’s goal is to make the words of the Bill of Rights come alive and be embodied and practiced by everyone in long-term care. One of the key factors contributing to the program’s success is the recognition that residents are the experts. The education is co-developed and delivered by residents and team members. Hearing from residents about their lived experience helps program participants connect the learn-

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When the OARC introduced the program to the team at the Schlegel Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care (CLRI) and the RIA, it sounded like the perfect platform for collaboration. The Schlegel CLRI and the RIA have developed an extensive network of people who are passionate about enhancing the lives of long-term care residents and older adults, so who better to support the spread of this exciting program?

To help share news about Through our Eyes, the Schlegel CLRI and RIA organized a webinar in collaboration with the OARC. The webinar, featuring Dee Lender, OARC’s executive director, sold out in 4 days and more space had to be created for all of the interested participants.

“It’s funny how the stars align,” Dee says. “We weren’t sure when the launch of this program was actually going to come to fruition . . . and this soft launch enabled us to have that spread across Ontario to 192 sites.” A video is currently in the final stages of production, again made possible thanks to the RIA partnership, creating new opportunities to inform people about the education opportunities within the program.

Dee looks forward to sharing the video at major upcoming conferences, including the annual Ontario Long-Term Care Association event in early April. “We’re just so excited because this will be the hard launch,” she says. “We’ll be in the room, able to see the expressions of the owners and operators and senior leaders who are there.”

Based on a trial that ran in 11 homes between June and November last year, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and the OARC team and its many members across the province are grateful for the partnerships that have made it all possible.

Such partnerships, Dee says, “are critical in our ability to meet the ever-increasing demand in education needs and supports for raising residents’ councils and residents’ lived experience to be the best that it can be.”