

RIA Initiatives Leading the Way

Written by Kristian Partington

Through an ever-growing variety of partnerships, the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA) focuses on three pillars to enhance the lives of older adults – research, education and practice. RIA's work is so essential that the Schlegel Family has agreed to match every dollar donated this holiday season. RIA's goal is \$50,000, and with your support it can become \$100,000. Help us reach this goal.

In terms of research, the organization's growing list of research chairs are asking and answering critical questions on a variety of topics, from nutrition to dementia to the role of technology in meeting the complex needs of an aging population. This important work is addressing the needs of the future, and people across the globe are looking to the RIA for answers.

The same can be said for the RIA's focus on education and practice. Excellence in Resident-Centred Care (ERCC) is a prime example of education that impacts the support older adults receive in long-term care and retirement settings. Developed in 2009 by the RIA and Conestoga College, the 12-module program inspires personal support workers to apply best practices and understand that care, in all of its many forms, should be resident-centred.

Earlier this Fall, ERCC was selected for a Ministry-funded initiative to enhance skills for Ontario's personal support workers in long-term care. The PSW Education Fund kicked off in October in collaboration with the Ontario Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care. It has already seen overwhelming success.

The Ministry's confidence, says RIA Director of Community Partnerships and Business Development Gert Hartmann, is a point of pride for the RIA and its partners. "ERCC was developed and piloted with our partners, and showed great value," Gert says, "and now we're seeing an opportunity for this

Enhancing Life

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The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.

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education, which is rooted in best practices, to spread to professionals working across the provincial long-term care sector.”

Gert says the ERCC program was developed to meet the changing demands of long-term care and retirement living and the RIA must continue to set its sights on the future. The needs of older adults in all settings grow ever more complex, and in order to be ahead of the demands the RIA and its partners must innovate now.

“What we need to focus on is the RIA’s ability to leverage its partnerships and the expertise of its research chairs to think ahead,” Gert says. “We’ve got these great programs and tools that we’ve already developed, but we have to push farther and dig deeper to develop the type of education programs that are going to inspire the care partners of the future to be even better.”

She points to the Core Heart Team project, currently underway through the guidance of Schlegel Research Chairs George Heckman and Veronique Boscart, as an example of what’s possible when direct care partners are empowered. The program has trained select PSWs and fellow direct care partners at The Village of Tansley Woods to recognize the warning signs of heart failure. Applying this knowledge in every day practice means better care and better quality of life for residents. Resources, however, are required to ensure the early successes of this program can be replicated across Schlegel Villages and

throughout the sector.

And this is but one example, Gert points out. There are several other projects and studies underway with the potential to impact the lives of countless older adults. Ongoing fundraising efforts to support these initiatives are vital and the RIA needs your support.

“There have been so many great successes,” Gert says, “and the Ministry’s support of the ERCC program proves this, but we can never stand still. We have to keep looking ahead to the innovations and education that will continue to enhance the lives of older adults.”

To find out more about how you can support RIA initiatives, call Gert Hartmann at 519-904-0660 ext 4106 or email gert.hartmann@uwaterloo.ca.

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