Everyone has a role to play in changing the culture of aging

The RIA and Schlegel Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care (CLRI) co-hosted the second Culture Change Exchange on December 7, 2016. Over 25 presenters from Ontario’s long-term care (LTC) sector shared their wisdom on changing the culture of aging to a sold-out crowd.

Dr. Al Power, a geriatrician, clinical associate professor and culture change educator, was the keynote speaker. He spoke about taking those first steps on a culture change journey, “My very simple definition of culture change is that if we want to think differently and act differently, we have to shift our systems and operations to enable that.”

Enhancing Life

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.

Continued on next page...
Al emphasized the need for collaboration. Involving all stakeholders is key (residents, family members, team members, community members) when trying to make change. It’s important to hear everyone’s voice, Al says, to make sure everyone is heard and engaged in the process. He noted that regular huddles or learning circles are great ways to accomplish this.

Al also spoke about some of the challenges that many face when trying to make change. There are sometimes those who aren’t on board and don’t want to change. He shared some powerful advice, “There is really only one person that any of us can change, and that is ourselves. That’s the only power we have, and we can use it to embrace and model culture change values, and to invite and engage people to join in and think about things in a new way.”

Many Culture Change Exchange attendees were inspired by the enthusiasm and commitment of the various presenters. A few of the speakers came from LTC homes that were portrayed negatively in the news. They described using that experience as incentive to enrich their culture and better serve their residents, family members, teams and community.

Attendees also appreciated hearing the many and different ways that LTC homes are involved in culture change - their approaches, successes, lessons learned, resources and goals. This was summed up by one attendee’s comment, “We thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and are leaving fully inspired to make real changes in our home!”

The basis for this event stems from growing interest in culture change, says Kate Ducak, culture change project officer at the RIA/Schlegel CLRI. She explains, “We had such an incredibly positive response to the first Culture Change Exchange in May this year. LTC communities want to learn more about culture change and share their experiences, so we’re keeping that momentum going”.

The next Culture Change Exchange is taking place on March 16, 2017. A call for presenters will be issued in January 2017 so if you have a story to share about culture change in your home, stay tuned!