

The *Birch Leaf News*

Spring 2021



Spring at the Birches is a time when we are grateful to see many things blossoming in the beautiful nature and gardens outside of our windows! But even more wonderful, this Spring we saw smiles blossoming on the faces of many of our wonderful residents during our Tea Party, as well as when we had treats and flowers donated by the Four Harbours Legion for Mothers Day! Thank you the Legion, and thank you to these lovely smiling faces for brightening our days!



Speaking of smiles, here are some of the notes from our ***Leaf of Respect Wall***, which are sure to make you grin from ear to ear!:

"Thanks for the great day on Mothers Day girls and the kitchen staff, we couldn't have done it without you — Rebecca"

"Thank you Bridge and Lisa for the extra help when we were short! Your awesome!"

"Thank you to everyone here at the Birches for welcoming me here and being so friendly! Everyone is so great! — Sam "

HOT TOPIC: Mental Health during the Pandemic



Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, local Psychologist Dr. Simon Sherry shared that the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to increase anxiety among the general population, and that has certainly been a lived experience for many of us during this time. To rebound from new anxieties, it can be a good idea to focus on “recharging activities”. At this time, you might not be able to do a lot of the things that usually make you feel good (going out to socialize, getting a massage, etc.) so here are some suggestions:

- 1.** If things are feeling out of control, rely on **new routines** to help you feel a sense of normalcy. Even though your normal routines might be shaken, try to commit to some things you will still do every day. For example, you could decide that you’ll try to go to bed 8 hours before it’s time to get up. Bonus: getting enough sleep will be really helpful right now, too!
- 2.** If things start to feel monotonous, add in a **wacky factor to spice things up!** Do something fun and silly! Play a game, dance around, or play a harmless prank on your family/roommates!
- 3.** Add in a **bit of exercise**. It might seem hard if you are used to being active in ways you aren’t able to right now, but you can do something active in the yard! Or try looking up some exercise videos you can follow right at home! The key is finding something simple to get your body moving in ways that will make it feel good.
- 4.** Make the choice to **eat well** as much as possible. It’s easy to rely on comfort foods right now, and that is totally understandable. But as the days go by and you get sick of junk food, make sure you have some healthy options around to fuel you!
- 5. Be kind to yourself.** Don’t beat yourself up for feeling anxious. This has been an uncertain and fearful time. And feeling anxious doesn’t mean you can’t draw on your own resilience, too. This is an opportunity to be a great role model for everyone around you, as you take steps to overcome anxiety and stay well!

EFAP — Support for Our Staff:

COVID-19 has impacted our family life, community life, and work-life in so many ways. Stress can take its toll. We want to remind our team that all of our staff and their families have access to one of the best EFAP programs in the country!

You can contact our EFAP at 1-844-880-9137 or www.workhealthlife.com for a wide range of supports — like Counselling, Parenting Support, Nutrition Support, Stress Management Coaching, and even helpful articles!

You do so much for others — EFAP is there to support YOU!

Who's Who...?

Wendy Baker, Administrative Assistant/Clerk

Wendy is an amazing member of the Birches team! Many people think of her as the "hub" of all-things-Birches because she can often be found at the front desk, and she knows "a little bit about a lot of things!"

"I'm willing to help anybody that needs a hand," she says, "and if I don't know the answer I will point them in the direction of someone who might be able to help!"

Wendy's job impacts many parts of our work! She plays a big role in human resources, scheduling, and recruitment. She provides lots of administrative support to the management team, with everything from taking minutes, to playing a role in paperwork related to admissions, discharges and transfers. She is also often the first voice or face family members see when they reach in to our Birches world, at our reception desk!

"I love my job," she says, "I enjoy coming to work. There's a big picture to it all, and everybody needs to work together to help with that big picture, as a team. I like all of the staff and the residents!"

Wendy also grew up in this community and continues to live really close by. She loves having a fulfilling job, that's also only 5 minutes from home! Thanks for being an amazing part of our team, Wendy!



More words of thanks from our **Leaf of Respect Wall!**

"A huge thank you to Molly and the rest of the Birches crew for making my birthday an extra special day. Very appreciated girls — Rebecca"

"Thank you Wendy for being so great when giving tubs! — Sam"

"Thank you Sarah for being a wonderful mentor/trainer! — Sam"

"Thank you everyone for helping me work my way back — Sherry"

"Thank you Julie for showing me the ropes! — Sam"

"Kudos to the Port City staff who come and help us in dire straits when we run short—a big thank you to all of them! — Rebecca"

"Brittany, thank you for taking down all the Easter decorations! — Erica"

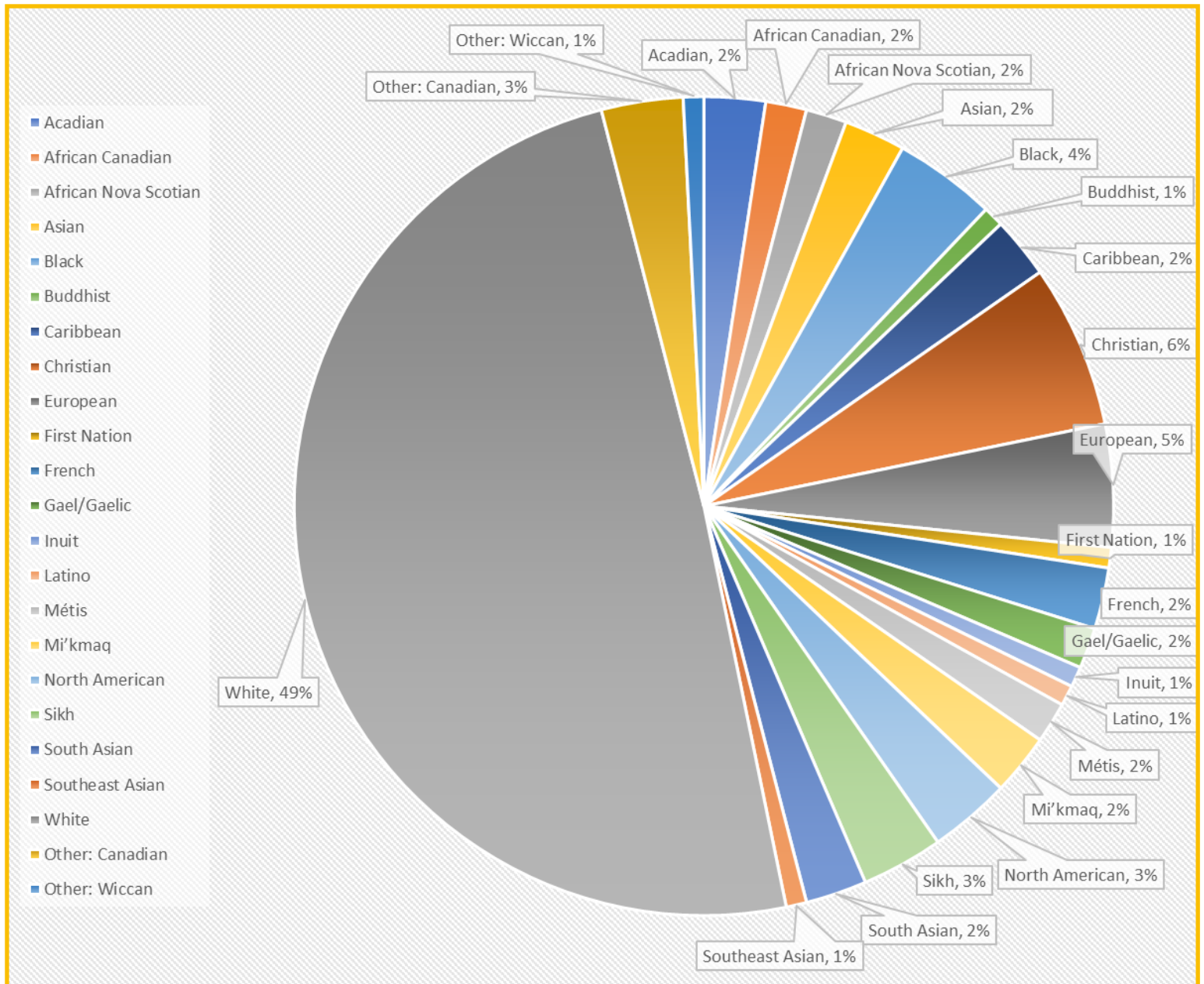
"Thank you to everyone for all you do!"

Spotlight on Diversity...

In our last newsletter, we let you know about our **Workplace Diversity Questionnaire for Staff**. We have now completed the questionnaire, compiled the results, and discussed them as a committee. We wanted to take this chance to let you know a bit about the overall results and next steps in these next few pages.

The questionnaire went out to all Ocean View, Birches, and Port City Home Services staff, and we were thrilled to have 86 staff respond. One of the goals of the questionnaire was to get a sense of the diversity existing on our team. The committee was pleasantly surprised to find we have a variety of voices represented on our team.

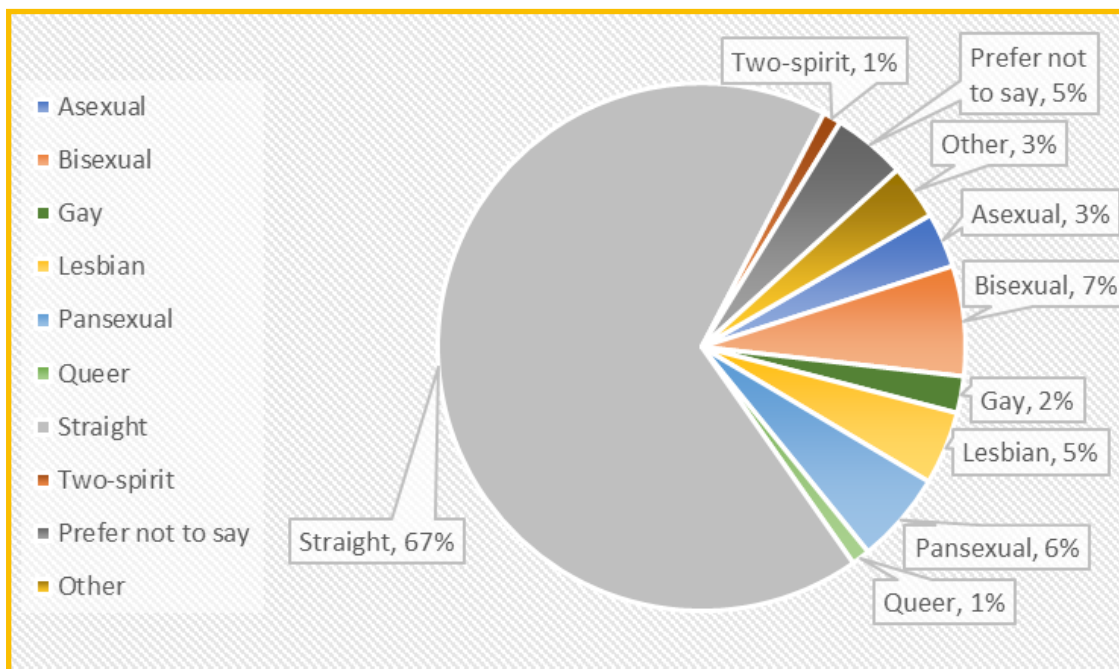
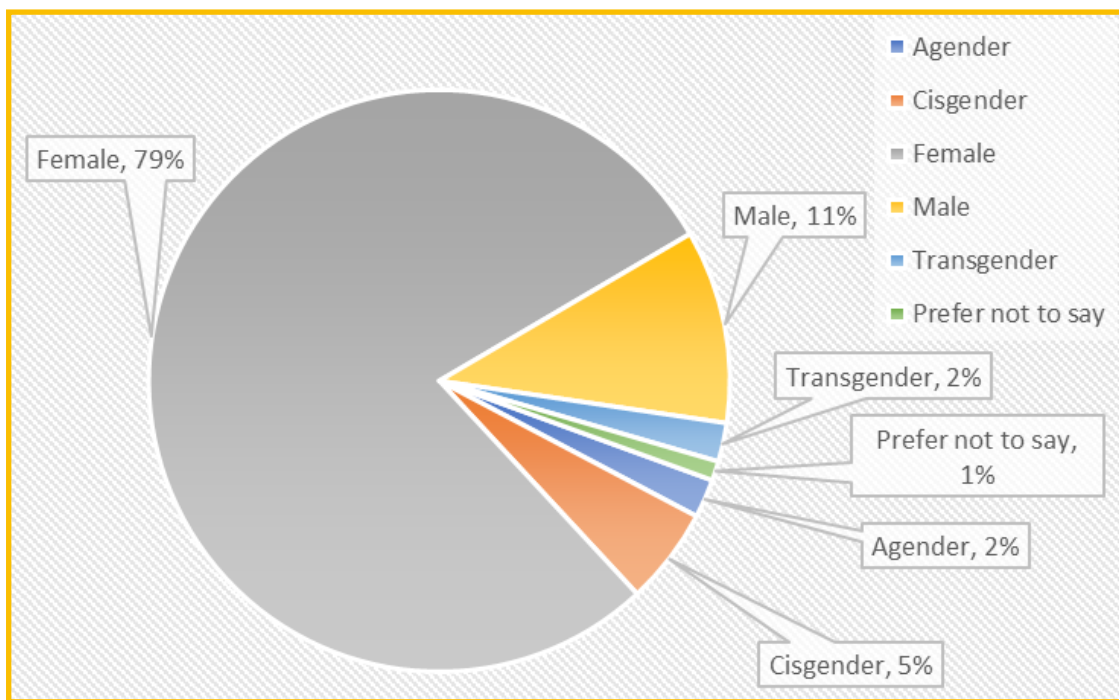
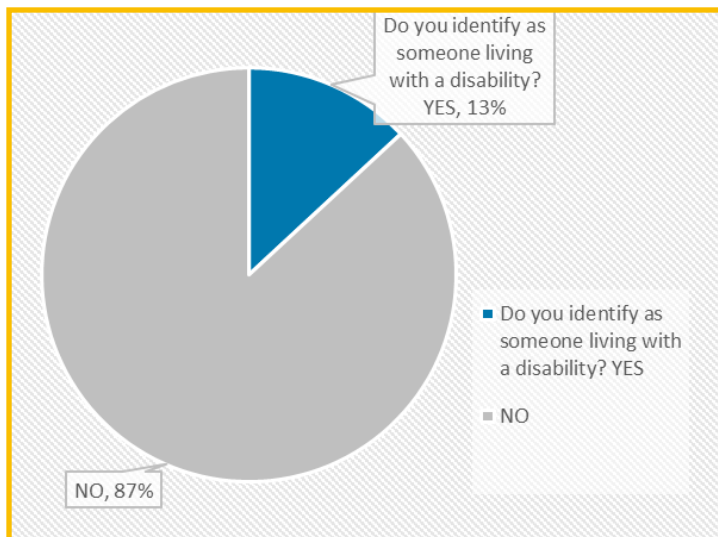
We provided a number of opportunities for the team to answer **“Do any of the following words describe how you identify personally?”** Here are some of the results:



Spotlight on Diversity

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As we mentioned on our last page, in our Diversity Questionnaire we provided a number of opportunities for the team to answer **"Do any of the following words describe how you identify personally?"** Here are some more of those responses:



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The Diversity Questionnaire also gave members of our team the opportunity to answer questions about their experience as part of our organization. With this feedback, the committee hoped to discover our baseline so we knew where there was room to grow and improve.

One of our key takeaways from this feedback is that there certainly is a need for this committee and its work. We were surprised and disappointed to hear that we are far way from hitting the mark in terms of inclusivity in our workplace 100% of the time, despite the importance we place on respect.

Here are a couple of the key results that helped paint this picture:

- Unfortunately, results showed that 23% of respondents disagreed with the statement "People of all identities/backgrounds are respected and valued here."
- 21% of respondents agreed with the statement "I have heard remarks, expressions or slurs in our workplace that I found hurtful based on my identity."

The committee was disheartened to read these responses. However, we are so grateful to the team for their feedback and honesty, and we are committed to making change and improving the lived experience in our workplace.

The committee has created a number of initial Action Items based on the Questionnaire responses. Our first step will be evaluating our "Respectful Workplace" and "Bullying in the Workplace" policies to ensure staff have:

- a clear path to bring forward complaints/concerns;
- meaningful and varied ways of seeking resolution;
- and avenues that will help them feel safe to bring this information forward.

The feedback from the questionnaire also helped the committee finalize a diversity framework and strategy to guide its work. Members of the committee will present the framework to the Board in an upcoming meeting, to ensure we have support at all levels to move forward this important work.

We are grateful to have formed this committee so we can address the issues that exist, and ensure this is a wonderful place to work. There is much work to be done, and the Diversity Committee commits to reissuing the Questionnaire in early 2022 to ensure we are moving forward in the right direction!



What's Going On... Some important dates of note, from our Diversity Committee

National Indigenous Peoples Day is coming up on June 21

Also called National Aboriginal Day by many, National Indigenous Peoples Day takes place on June 21. It is an opportunity for Canadians to show their respect for, and to learn more about, the rich culture, heritage and contributions of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

This day is an important reminder that the history of indigenous peoples is intertwined with the history of Canada, and that all Canadians should seek to learn more about this history. One good place to start is the Canadian Geographic resource that shares more about the history of First Nations, Inuit and Metis of Canada at <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/>



In June, Pride Month is celebrated across the country! Here closer to home, the Halifax Pride Festival will be celebrated in August 2021

Pride is a time to celebrate the history, culture, activism, and resilience of the LGBTQ2+ community.

This Pride Month, one step we all can take to ensure we make all members of our community feel welcome is to broaden our understanding of diverse identities under the LGBTQ2+ umbrella.

There are many resources available to help you learn about identities you may be unfamiliar with, such as "agender", "transgender", "pansexual" or "two-spirit". Although it's an American-based website, our Diversity Committee found <https://pflag.org/glossary> to be a great place to start learning!

As you learn, keep in mind that it is always best to respect and use the terms each individual prefers when referring to their own identity, as they know their own experience and identity best!

Spotlight on Quality & Risk

A recent message from Dion regarding our Quality & Risk team:

"As many of you know, Maddie Kubiseski has been accepted into Medical School at Dalhousie University and will be leaving us in June. I am so thankful for the work that Maddie has done for Ocean View/The Birches in the past 2 years but her dream has always been to become a physician and so she's on her destined path. We all wish Maddie great success in her future and I am sure she will remember fondly her work within our organizations.



We are all sharing our congrats to Maddie (pictured with Dion), and our kudos for all of the contributions she has made to our work!

I am pleased to announce that Sharon Costey will be joining our team as Quality and Risk Manager for our long term care facilities (Ocean View and The Birches). Sharon comes to this role with 20+ years experience in a variety of roles. She is Certified in LEAN management (Yellow belt) and is a Registered Dietician. Sharon has completed an undergraduate degree in Nutrition (Mount Saint Vincent) as well as Masters degrees in Health Science (University of Toronto) and Public Administration (Dalhousie University). She is a current faculty member in the School of Health Services Administration at Dalhousie University, teaching Quality Management in the Diploma program. She previously taught in the Nutrition program at Mount Saint Vincent University. Sharon will have a regular office at Ocean View Continuing Care (2nd floor) and will also be designating 1 day per week on site at The Birches. Please welcome Sharon to the team! "

Let's Learn About... Protection for Persons In Care Act (PPCA).

It can be uncomfortable to think about, but it is important for us all to be able to recognize what abuse might look like. According to PPCA, "abuse" includes:

- Physical force resulting in pain, discomfort or injury, including slapping, hitting, beating, burning, rough handling, tying up or binding
- Mistreatment causing emotional harm, including threatening, intimidating, humiliating, harassing, coercing or restricting from appropriate social contact
- Administration, withholding or prescribing of medication for inappropriate purposes
- Sexual contact, activity or behavior between a service provider and patient/resident
- Non-consensual sexual contact, activity or behaviour between patients/residents
- Misappropriation or improper/illegal conversion of money/other valuable possessions
- Failure to provide adequate nutrition, care, medical attention, or necessities of life without valid consent.

According to PPCA, abuse doesn't occur when a service provider carries out duties in accordance with professional standards/practices and facility policies/procedures.

To learn more about this important Act, please visit <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/ppcact/>

Spotlight on Safety - Dealing with Heat

As Summer approaches, you can protect yourself & others from heat stress:

- Drink lots of water and natural fruit juices even if you don't feel very thirsty. Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and caffeinated soft drinks which cause dehydration.
- Block out direct sunlight and other heat sources where possible. In areas without air conditioning, keep shades or drapes drawn and blinds closed, but try to keep windows slightly open.
- Whatever you're doing, set a healthy work pace and reduce activity in the heat.
- Take regular rest breaks, especially in times of higher temperatures and humidity. During breaks, rest in an air conditioned area.
- At work, rotate people through hot, heavy demand jobs if possible. Schedule more physically demanding tasks in the cooler times of the day.
- Where possible, wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose clothing. Use sunscreen and wear a hat when working outdoors. Pay special attention when wearing PPEs.
- Avoid heavy meals and increase salt intake (if your healthcare provider approves).
- Regular exercise and fitness will help reduce the risk of heat illnesses.
- Wherever possible, turn off heat generating equipment that's not being used.
- Those on medications or with medical conditions may be more susceptible to heat illness. Talk to your healthcare provider about how to care for yourself in the heat.
- Know the signs of heat illnesses; monitor yourself; and use a buddy system to watch for symptoms. Some symptoms of **heat exhaustion** include headache, dizziness, fainting, weakness, wet skin, irritability, confusion, thirst, nausea, or vomiting. Some symptoms of **heat stroke** include confusion, fainting, collapsing, seizure, stopping sweating, fast pulse, headache or dizziness. *Heat Stroke is experienced when all of the body's available water and salt is used up—get medical aid immediately for heat stroke.

Stay safe and enjoy your summer by being mindful and prepared for the heat!

As SUMMER approaches, here are some ways for residents to stay safe, and ways staff and families can help:

- Residents should wear sunscreen and a hat outdoors!
- Long sleeves, sunglasses, and hydration also help reduce risks associated with sun & heat while outdoors.
- Residents should use sturdy footwear and footrests at all times too. Though they're popular, slide-on shoes/slippers/sandals are not safe.



What's Going On?

- **Some exciting facility updates:**

- Warmer weather is here! We have a second new ice and water dispenser installed in the Evergreen Lounge for staff and residents! We also have installed new wall-mounted fans in strategic areas to help staff stay cool and safe on warmer days
- We have assembled a team to source and install a new Nurse Call system to better serve our residents and provide staff with a state-of-the-art system to help provide the best care possible to our residents! It will be a portable system that can be moved to our new facility once construction is complete.
- Speaking of the redevelopment of the Birches, while we are still in very early stages, work is ongoing on the "New Birches Build" project, and we expect to award a Project Management contract sometime in the summer to help us move this exciting project forward! We have also been doing lots of research on best practice, and building designs that will meet the expectations of LTC homes today!

- **May 10—16 was Nurses Week!**

We shared our appreciation for the hard work and dedication of our amazing nurses! Thank you for all you do!



- **There are some new folks contributing to our work at The Birches:**

Sarah Estabrooks — we are pleased to let you know that Sarah Estabrooks will be with our team as Interim Recreation Programmer for the next year and a half. Sarah has extensive experience and is delighted to be joining TBNH team!

Krista Stewart — Effective June 9th and continuing to August 13th, Krista Stewart RN will be our Acting Site Manager for the Birches. With many years of experience as a Neighbourhood Manager at Ocean View, Krista will bring lots of passion and knowledge to this role!

Shirley Landry — Shirley Landry, LPN is joining the Birches team as a Team Leader! Shirley brings a wealth of experience in long term and community care; and a passion for ensuring we excel in meeting resident and family expectations! Many of you will remember Shirley from her previous contributions to the Birches community!

Chris Beck — Chris has taken on the exciting temporary position of Special Project Lead for Ocean View and the Birches. One of his focuses is supporting the redevelopment plan for The Birches. He is also overseeing capital projects, and supporting with facility support management! Chris brings extensive experience in overseeing capital projects, managing maintenance teams, and project management!

Welcome all, to the Birches family!